

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Beyond COVID-19 business transformational opportunities: Develop e-satisfaction for predicting repeat purchase behavior based on “goodwill e-trust” ; Case of South Korean SMEs

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### ABSTRACT

The increasing prevalence of e-commerce has transformed online shopping into one of the most favored methods for consumers. This study investigates the factors influencing initial e-trust formation toward e-commerce adoption, focusing on information quality, web interface, and company reputation. It aims to assess how e-trust affects customer satisfaction and the sustained use of e-commerce, and explores the moderating role of perceived privacy concerns. Utilizing a randomized distribution of questionnaires among 236 participants, and employing a seven-point Likert scale, the study gathered data both online and offline.

Statistical analyses using SPSS AMOS confirmed the acceptance of all proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that e-trust, grounded in goodwill-trust theory, significantly influences trust and satisfaction, thereby enhancing future purchase intentions and positively affecting online shopping behavior. The study demonstrates that understanding and addressing the antecedents of e-trust is crucial for fostering consumer satisfaction and promoting continued e-commerce adoption.

Notably, Post-COVID-19 consumers showed a decrease in privacy concerns compared to Pre-COVID-19, indicating reduced fear and apprehension associated with online shopping. This reduction in privacy concerns is linked to an increased likelihood of repurchase behavior. Theoretical implications suggest that the research provides valuable insights for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping them enhance customer trust and satisfaction, thus gaining a competitive edge over larger e-commerce firms. The findings underscore the long-term impact of e-trust on consumer adoption in the globalized e-commerce landscape.

**Keywords:** e-business; e-commerce, information quality; web interface; company reputation; e-trust; e-satisfaction; perceived privacy concerns

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## 1. Introduction

The number of SMEs is increasing with globalization, and IOT, cloud computing, big data, and other Internet- and mobile-based digital technologies have a significant impact on this transformation<sup>[1]</sup> SMEs

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have become important engines of economic growth<sup>[2]</sup>. South Korea focuses more on industrial and technological development<sup>[3,4]</sup> identified approximately 3 million SMEs in Korea as of 2004, including 84,000 medium-sized businesses, 230,000 small businesses (with 10–50 employees), and 2.68 million micro-sized businesses. SMEs make up the bulk of the Korean economy<sup>[4]</sup> In 2020, South Korea had approximately 7.3 million SMEs compared to about 9.3 thousand large enterprises.

A growing number of retailers are now attempting to conduct business via e-commerce, which can provide information about their goods or services to potential customers using the interactive and multimedia capabilities of e-commerce, engage in online transactions with customers, and simultaneously market goods and services online<sup>[5]</sup>.

In South Korea, 80.6% of the overall population has access to the Internet at home<sup>[6]</sup> and two-thirds of Koreans who have access to the Internet at home shop online. Nowadays, many retailers actively use their websites as a primary channel for marketing and selling their goods or services, while also offering reliable e-commerce services<sup>[7]</sup>. E-commerce activity has been increasing as a result of high-speed Internet access connections, less connection fees, and better-informed consumers<sup>[8]</sup>. A worldwide trend is the rise in business-to-consumer e-commerce transactions, while it is anticipated that online retailers and the number of online shopping consumers will grow speedy in the future<sup>[8]</sup>.

However, the information, e-commerce (EC), and online markets have all contributed to the Internet's rapid development and advancement in each of these fields. The most active drivers of the developing global economy are information and communication technology (ICT) and trust; There are 1.46 billion Internet users worldwide, up 305.5% since 2000<sup>[9]</sup>. Different researchers have approached the idea of trust in different ways with respect to time and requirement of research, trust relationship with experience, measurements of instruments for trust building, live streaming attributes on trust, relationship of trust with TAM, and many more<sup>[10-14]</sup>.

Currently, individuals engage in economic activities like online payment and shopping<sup>[15]</sup>. Customers will not adapt until they have grown to trust the business; in particular, shopping channel customers increase their level of e-trust through repeated trials and feel satisfied<sup>[16]</sup>.

Business-to-consumer e-commerce (B2C, EC) relies heavily on consumer trust, which has been thoroughly researched in the marketing community<sup>[17]</sup>.

The researcher<sup>[18]</sup> examined consumers' use of the Internet to gather information before engaging in any transactions in electronic marketplaces; thus, the quality and quantity of the information provided on the firm website serves as the customer's first point for initial E-trust development. Therefore, initial trust building is likely to be influenced by the information quality, the design of the web interface, and the reputation of the company<sup>[18]</sup>. These three trust factors about service quality are the major predictors of goodwill for e-retailers and are used in this research to further examine the influence of e-trust on customer e-satisfaction and continuous use of e-commerce in the future. The suggested name is “Goodwill e-trust theory” ‘s influence on e-satisfaction towards customers’ repeated purchase behavior.

It is crucial for SMEs to concentrate on and strengthen the antecedent factors that support initial trust development to get satisfied customers to further the continuous use of e-commerce adoption. It is also important to understand the role of trust in boosting satisfaction levels that influence customer retention through the continuous use of e-commerce<sup>[19]</sup>. Although trust has been described in the literature as a dynamic notion, few studies have explored the function of antecedent variables of trust that support commerce's long-term adoption behavior. In the context of Internet shopping and trust, the majority of prior research only focused on privacy risk, ease of use, usefulness, negative influence of security and

antecedents<sup>[11,18,20-24]</sup>, whereas in the context of customer satisfaction, the majority of research<sup>[25-30]</sup> examined the influence of privacy, security, experience, delivery services, service quality or packaging and few of the initial platform trust of potential customers, but did not investigate the potential influence of antecedents in building platform trust that lead to satisfaction to further obtain continuous adoption of e-commerce in South Korea. A research gap was observed in the literature; therefore, this study focused on the antecedents of platform trust in creating initial trust in e-commerce. The web interface, the company's reputation, and the quality of the information are significant determinants of platform e-trust.

We investigate modern consumer behavior towards e-commerce adoption. Higher levels of e-trust lead to higher levels of e-satisfaction, which encourages consumers to repurchase their shopping needs. The study will examine all of the factors influencing urban consumers in South Korea, which have never been explored before; therefore, further study is required. The objective of this study is to obtain empirical evidence that e-commerce platform trust affects satisfaction during online purchasing, and satisfaction further influences customer behavior for the continuous use of e-commerce through different mobile applications or websites of SMEs.

Unexpectedly, the "COVID-19" outbreak's spread has had an impact on consumer behavior. Online shopping patterns have changed because of the pandemic. To prevent transmission, consumers avoid personal contact and adopt online shopping behaviors<sup>[31]</sup>. In contrast to other nations affected by COVID-19, South Korea has not imposed a nationwide "lockdown." Similar short-term localized measures have been implemented in high-incidence areas in South Korea<sup>[32]</sup>; where residents were advised to stay inside their houses for a minimum of two weeks following the reporting of a significant cluster of illnesses linked to the Shincheonji religious organization.

Additionally, in the COVID-19 era, online shopping has become an essential service that increases convenience in the daily lives of modern society. In the early days of the pandemic, many countries suffered from the hoarding of daily necessities due to life-threatening diseases, and people became more health-conscious after COVID-19<sup>[32]</sup>. However, in Korea, people are able to get on with their daily lives without hoarding. One reason for this difference is Korea's secured transactions and delivery culture represented by "living logistics" services<sup>[32]</sup>. It is routine for Koreans to order and receive items with ease without facing privacy fear through a few taps of their smartphones and have online shopping delivered conveniently to their doorsteps<sup>[33]</sup>.

Moreover, the study investigated the contribution of COVID-19 with e-commerce retailers' COUPANG.COM sales revenue perspective, reducing privacy concerns, and supports in building e-trust and satisfaction toward the continuous use of SMEs' e-commerce websites and applications, boosting total revenue in 2022<sup>[34]</sup>. Coupang has grown rapidly over the last few years revenue difference is much higher than before<sup>[34]</sup>.

However, the literature has focused on the mediating effect of security and privacy concerns on online purchase intention or the mediating role of privacy stress on repurchase intention, while the literature has neglected to address the largest (EC) e-commerce retailer business in South Korea's study of platform e-trust with moderation of privacy concerns (Post-COVID-19 change) in order to further improve customer satisfaction and ongoing usage of e-commerce<sup>[35,36]</sup> ignored the moderating role of perceived privacy concerns in relation between platform e-trust and customer e-satisfaction. By "privacy concerns" research mean being so worried, anxious or scared that you feel compelled to either take steps to preserve your personal information usage or accept the stressful but constant usage of online shopping<sup>[31,37]</sup>.

Moreover, there is a lack of understanding about how Post-COVID-19 privacy concerns (negatively) impact the relationship between platform trust and consumer satisfaction, which further leads to continuous purchase willingness in urban areas of South Korea. Our research aims to bridge this gap and examine the change in "privacy concerns" of consumers about the largest market in South Korea when it comes to Internet buying. E-business can attract more customers and increase revenue by improving service quality factors that support the development of initial platform e-trust. These findings will assist many B2C SMEs internationally in focusing on their e-commerce service quality attributes by understanding the factors that may help boost total sales revenue, similar to COUPANG.COM in South Korea.

The results reveal interesting conclusions and present several managerial recommendations for Small and online retailers of services.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

In our research we want to confirm the following research questions.

- ✓ Does goodwill-trust theory play a major role in influencing trust and satisfaction to boost future purchase intention?
- ✓ Does the positive relationship between e-trust and e-satisfaction boost consumer online\_shopping behavior?
- ✓ Does technology adoption boost consumer e-satisfaction, attract more users, and increase retailer sales revenue?
- ✓ Does privacy fear of online shopping reduced in Korean consumers?
- ✓ Whether privacy concerns affected the consumer behavior for online shopping?
- ✓ How effectively does privacy-concern moderation influence the relationship between e-trust and e-satisfaction?

## **2. Theoretical background and Hypotheses Development**

### **2.1. E-commerce adoption**

Online buying is a relatively new business trend that is rapidly becoming ingrained in people's lives in a distinctive way. The tendency toward regional economic cooperation is becoming increasingly obvious in the information age and age of economic globalization<sup>[38]</sup>. However, as internationalization progressed, governments started to place an ever-growing value on e-commerce and committed themselves to both expanding their scope and building a regional e-commerce network. In South Korea, e-commerce is a growing business that is expanding rapidly with an annual rise in transaction size.

In South Korea, the Internet is developing quickly, and users are often of high caliber. Several B2C online stores can be found in flagship stores such as COUPANG. The payments in South Korea are comparatively safe.

With 20 million active consumers, Coupang.com is the second-largest business-to-consumer (B2C) logistics provider in Korea.

Coupang is the largest online shopping medium for Korean residents, and is now a significant aspect of the company. Online shopping malls in South Korea had a market value of 13,460 billion Korean Won in 2006, and this amount is still rising<sup>[39]</sup>. Internet shopping malls are expanding rapidly in Korea as a result of the country's rapidly growing Internet user base; however, structural vulnerability is also becoming apparent.

In Korea, Internet shopping malls are used by approximately 55.8% of Internet users<sup>[40]</sup>. Since online shopping technology has evolved significantly in recent years, we should examine South Korea's ongoing online shopping platform trust and continuous buying behavior and use cutting-edge Internet technology to support the growth of domestic online retailers, such as COUPANG. Unquestionably, internet purchasing significantly increased satisfaction levels.

In this study, we focused on Coupang.com. Largest online retailer. Coupang, Inc. is a South Korean company that owns and runs e-commerce businesses via its mobile applications and websites<sup>[41]</sup> It offers a range of goods and services, including travel and restaurant order and delivery services, fashion, beauty items, fresh food and groceries, sporting goods, technology, and everyday consumables. Seoul, South Korea, is the headquarters of Coupang Inc.

Lockdowns have an impact on traditional retailers, whose survival has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, e-commerce has expanded quickly throughout the world<sup>[42]</sup>. Coupang's revenue history, both quarterly and annual, and growth rates from 2020 to 2023. The sum of the money that a business receives from its customers in exchange for selling products or services is known as revenue. Revenue is the first-line item from which all costs and expenses are deducted to determine net income<sup>[43]</sup>.

The largest South Korean e-commerce company experienced a significant shift from 2019 to 2022. In this study, we considered the prerequisites (**Goodwill E-Trust Theory Model**) of initial platform trust, which in turn affects consumer satisfaction and the ongoing usage of the EC platform. However, the question is whether this revenue gain might be the result of a shift in consumer perceptions regarding online purchasing and decreased privacy concerns.

## **2.2. Impact of Information Quality of website on e-trust**

A large portion of the efficacy and quality of information is contributed by social networking and the internet. "The function of the value of the output produced by a system as perceived by the user, web content to be personalized, complete, relevant, easy to understand, and secure" is the definition of information quality<sup>[44]</sup>. Information in the digital age may be shared anonymously and is readily changed, copied, and misrepresented, and consumers must rely on this information at their disposal to make decisions. For this reason, the accuracy and quality of this information are crucial when it comes to online purchasing, the adoption of which is probable among consumers who regard it as credible. Online information can affect people's attitudes, convictions, and actions<sup>[45]</sup>. Information quality describes the extent to which information is helpful in completing a given task, for example, its relevance, completeness, and currency. People make trust-related assumptions based on what they know, which might effect their perceptions about trust and distrust<sup>[46]</sup>, Therefore, any missing data or information would lead to major failures for EC businesses rather than successes.

Authors<sup>[47]</sup> confirmed that information is becoming a precondition for establishing a strong relationship between sellers and customers, given the massive and rapidly growing amount of commerce that consumers and businesses are undertaking online. It has been established that information quality affects consumer trust, and interactive websites make information communication a crucial component of websites<sup>[47,48]</sup>.

The literature indicates that the importance of information quality and how consumers feel about information are crucial factors in deciding whether to shop online. Whether to buy a specific product is one kind of decision based on platform trust, where online information has a big impact. Researchers have explored the relationship between information quality and trust in e-government systems<sup>[49]</sup>. Another study tested the influence of information quality on perceived value and intention from the perspective of apparel

retail websites<sup>[50]</sup>; but ignored the information quality of websites to develop initial platform trust for the biggest South Korean retailer, the EC business.

Thus, it is imperative to assess trust and information quality prior to e-commerce adoption. Customers' e-trust that businesses will prove to be towards their benefit. Consumer confidence is higher in the field of internet retail because there is no direct or face-to-face interaction between the customer and the business; instead, communication occurs over long distances; Additionally, the company's products are only shown as images on websites that cater to online shoppers<sup>[51]</sup>. Based on research support regarding the worth of information quality, it can be said that information quality is the motivating factor and the best predictor for developing e-trust for EC retailers. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore how the service quality dimension "information quality" supports in consumers' "initial e-trust" supports the development of the largest online retailer (COUPANG) in South Korea.

Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Information quality has a positive effect on initial EC trust development.

### **2.3. Impact of website interface on platform e-trust**

There are studies conducted about worth of website interface with different perspectives<sup>[52-55]</sup>.

The purchasing procedure in e-commerce is virtually completed through websites or other interfaces.

A recent study conducted by<sup>[56]</sup> stated that a customer-focused website must have a visually appealing layout that takes color theory and component placement into consideration, making it easy for customers to find the products they are looking for and, when necessary, compare products. This is because poorly designed websites result in lower profits for retailers.

Prior research by<sup>[57]</sup> explored how human warmth and sociability can be integrated through the web interface to positively impact consumer attitudes towards online shopping, and explored the relationship of website interface positive impact on consumer attitude in online shopping. They suggested that website interface plays a major role in influencing consumers decisions for online shopping and influences trust and intention<sup>[12,58]</sup>. A recent study conducted in Malaysia found that website design is the process of building websites that integrate elements of graphic design, content creation, and web page layout to improve customer trust and retention<sup>[59]</sup>.

However, few studies have systematically examined how website interface quality influences users' initial trust in online shopping. The effect of the website interface may be more pronounced and can lead to the development of initial trust in the success of electronic e-commerce.

Therefore, creating an interactive website is not the only requirement for e-commerce success; interface websites have emerged as a key concept in recent years. Website interactivity is essential for the realization of e-business as it fosters a positive attitude toward online retailers, increases adhesiveness, and inspires consumer trust in the website to encourage more online purchases.

Thus we hypothesize that:

H2: Website interface has a positive effect on initial EC trust development.

### **2.4. Website Reputation on platform trust**

The worth of website reputation cannot be ignored with technological development shopping websites and online retailers' applications. The reputation of a business, individual, good or service, or any other component of the Internet and digital platforms is reflected on their websites. A website's reputation is

shaped by the material that it distributes, the way it interacts with people, its participation in social media, and other factors. When discussing the importance of reputations and brands in relation to web user trust, these concepts are frequently abstract and superficial<sup>[60]</sup> the meaning of reputations is frequently left up to the respondent's interpretation, who is just asked to estimate if the firm has a good or negative reputation.

Despite the fact that reputation has been the subject of prior research by marketing scholars, some studies indicate that a more favorable reputation helps to increase sales and market share, foster stronger loyalty, the distribution of online services may be significantly impacted by reputation, and reputation-building initiatives may be a crucial factor in Internet companies' ability to compete successfully<sup>[61]</sup>. This implies that the most well-known service providers, such as Google or eBay, are currently enjoying the strongest profitability and devoted customer bases. Corporate websites have great potential for reputation building. As businesses establish their online identities through the inclusion of mission and vision statements, it is critical to focus more on the accessibility and content of these online assets when managing a company's reputation<sup>[61]</sup>.

Reputation management is a relatively recent term in marketing: an organization can guarantee that its target market will see it favorably by practicing good reputation management<sup>[62]</sup> and many businesses undervalue the value of their own reputation capital and pay insufficient attention to their reputation.

In an online setting, reputation is even more crucial. Reputation mostly refers to digital insights and reputation, and has garnered significant interest from practitioners but not much from researchers<sup>[63]</sup>. Online reputation management requires further consideration, because of the differences between the B2C and B2B sectors. The value of reputation emphasizes the need to identify its role in the early development toward retail websites. Is it the reputation of the online retailer Coupang that has boosted the profit profile in recent years? What might be the influence of Coupang reputation on the E-trust of Coupang users?

Therefore we hypothesize that,

H3: Website reputation has a positive effect on initial EC trust development.

## **2.5. E-Trust, Customer E-Satisfaction and Continuous use of E-Commerce**

The most important factor that influences the success of e-commerce transactions in satisfying customers is e-trust. A key element in the success of technology-based businesses is e-trust<sup>[64]</sup> The Experienced customers with a product or service are known as e-satisfaction, and the expectations and beliefs that e-sellers are trustworthy and will fulfill their commitments are known as e-trust.

The degree to which a website's or products advantages are regarded in line with customer expectations is known as consumer satisfaction and It is always thought of as the intensity of a person's emotions following a comparison of the website's or products performance with their expectations<sup>[51]</sup>. E-satisfaction refers to the consumer's impression of satisfaction, indicating whether the respondent is pleased or disappointed with how well a product meets their expectations<sup>[65]</sup>.

E-commerce trust is essential for providing customer e-satisfaction<sup>[66]</sup> stated that customer e-trust significantly and positively influences e-satisfaction. Authors<sup>[66]</sup> found that e-satisfaction strongly affects repurchase intentions. E-trust has been shown to have a positive and substantial influence on e-satisfaction, and e-satisfaction has been shown to positively and significantly influence e-WOM and Repurchase Intention, according to a study conducted on Indonesian tourism<sup>[67]</sup>. We anticipated that trust in e-commerce would positively impact online customers' satisfaction levels.

Therefore, from the previous discussion, it can be assumed that e-trust has a major positive impact on customer e-satisfaction, which further influences the repurchase behavior of consumers. Online customer satisfaction or e-satisfaction results from e-trust development. Therefore, online retailers must focus on the development of e-trust to boost customer e-satisfaction and the continuous use of their online retailing products and services for the long run.

Thus we hypothesize that,

H4: initial EC e-trust positively effect on customer e-satisfaction.

H5: customer e-satisfaction positively boosts consumer behavior for continuous use of e-commerce.

## **2.6. Moderator Privacy concern (Pre-COVID-19 and Post-COVID-19)**

Customers' primary privacy concerns when they shop online are violations of privacy and confidentiality, which are characterized by the abuse and loss of control over personal information after the transaction. Multiple studies have revealed that consumers are persistently concerned about their privacy when engaging in internet activities<sup>[68-72]</sup>. The literature<sup>[73,74]</sup> suggests that an Internet retailer should consider concerns about the privacy of personal data and that online retailers have an ethical obligation to protect the privacy of their customers' personal information and to keep it from being sold or disclosed to outside parties.

The research conducted by<sup>[74]</sup> highlighted that it is now simpler to gather and share client personal information with other parties thanks to developing technologies and marketing tools.

The COVID-19 crisis underlined the significance of a company's digital reputation (given the restrictions on face-to-face business transactions) and highlighted the need to strengthen studies on digital transition in the context of B2C trade. However, there is a lack of research on the specific aspects of online reputation in the B2C context with privacy concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created both a demand and an opportunity for online grocery buying commerce<sup>[75]</sup> which has changed from face-to-face to virtual or hybrid format during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the promised policies of the Coupang website, the decrease in consumers' perceived privacy concerns before and after the pandemic encouraged e-commerce adoption, as most customers were more concerned about their privacy Pre-COVID-19. This study looks at privacy concerns that were low (Post-COVID-19) vs. high (Pre-COVID-19) in the link that moderates the relationship between platform e-trust and consumer e-satisfaction.

This study compares and examines the effects of the moderating factor privacy concern on the relationship between e-trust and e-satisfaction, which in turn affects consumers' continued usage of online shopping behavior.

Thus we hypothesize that;

H6: The relationship between E-trust and customer e-satisfaction will be moderated by privacy concern.

H6a: E-trust has shown less or no influence on building e-satisfaction when customer have High privacy concern (Pre-COVID-19).

H6b: E-trust has shown greater influence on building e-satisfaction when customer have shown low privacy concern (Post-COVID-19).



## 2.7. Goodwill E-Trust Theory Model

We suggest the name of this research model “Goodwill E-Trust Theory” (Figure 1A) to achieve continuous buying behavior and increase the profitability of online retailers on e-commerce platforms. Interactivity and reputation are the major factors to build goodwill<sup>[76]</sup>. Long-term intangible assets such as information on websites are part of goodwill in the digital economy. We believe that information quality, website interactivity, and company reputation are integral predictors when considering the goodwill of e-retailers to create initial e-trust development for e-business customers, and have reasonable literature support<sup>[76-78]</sup>.

Research describes goodwill trust as a moral attribute. Thus, the goodwill perspective emphasizes the role of interpersonal interactions in digitalizing e-commerce businesses<sup>[79]</sup>. Goodwill gained through the factors “information quality, website interactivity, and company reputation” contributes to the establishment of initial trust. Goodwill initial trust relationship is supported by researchers<sup>[78]</sup>, which is particularly crucial for web-based enterprises (e-businesses) as gaining clients' trust is one of the primary success elements in e-commerce, two-dimension model of trust<sup>[78,80-83]</sup> and model developed by the authors<sup>[78]</sup> also give support to this research model “Goodwill E-Trust Theory” used in study. The derived research theory is illustrated in Figure 1B.

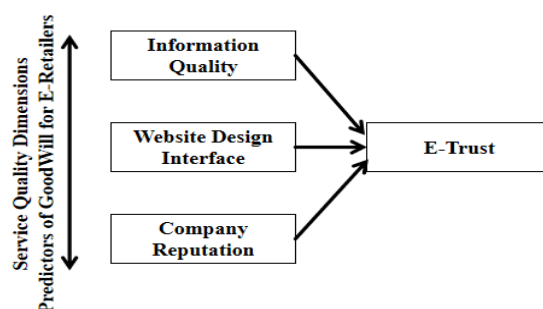


Figure 1A. Goodwill E-Trust Theory.

Figure 1B illustrates a conceptual framework showing how B2C SMEs’ e-trust in online shopping affects customer e-satisfaction and continuous purchase intention (repeat purchase behavior) with moderation of Privacy Stress (Pre-COVID-19 vs. Post-COVID-19).

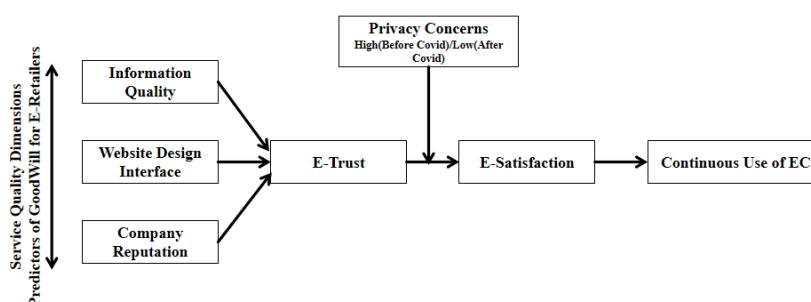


Figure 1B. Research Model Based on Goodwill E-Trust Theory.

## 3. Data Collection and Research Methodology

### 3.1. Sample and Procedure

To test the internal validity of the model, we conducted a field study with data collected via online and offline questionnaires in various cities across South Korea. The study targeted respondents who had online shopping experience.

### **3.2. Permissions and Data Collection**

Permissions were obtained from the Department of International Trade and the Department of Management at INJE University, South Korea. Data collection occurred from October 2023 to January 2024.

### **3.3. Sampling and Recruitment**

We used a stratified random sampling method, with participants randomly selected from Busan and Gimhae. Participants were sourced through a market research platform, ensuring representation from both male and female consumers. Out of 350 initial responses, 200 were collected online and 150 offline.

### **3.4. Survey Details**

Participants, all with over one year of online shopping experience, provided insights into their e-trust and e-satisfaction with the "coupang.com" e-commerce marketplace.

### **3.5. Data Cleaning and Final Sample**

After excluding 114 responses due to incomplete data and failed attention checks, the final dataset comprised 236 valid responses used for analysis.

### **3.6. Ethical Approval**

Prior to the start of the study, the authors submitted their proposal to the department. For data collection ethical approval was obtained for the study from department of international trade and department of management. The study was approved by ethics committee of Inje University of South Korea.

### **3.7. Informed Consent**

All respondents provided informed written consent before completing the survey and data was collected through questionnaire distribution.

“You are being asked to participate in a research study. This consent form will give you information about the study to help you decide whether you want to participate. It is your choice whether or not you want to be in this research study.

We are conducting research at Inje University. Our research task is to collect data from coupang website users. We will greatly appreciate your perceptions of online shopping as a consumer. We want to explore the consumer perception about online shopping behavior by using coupang website. The goal of this study is to help researchers, policy developers, e-commerce retailers and IT developers, to better understand **the e-trust and e-satisfaction consumer get through experience of online shopping.**

Please rate your feeling honestly based on what you actually feel about online shopping website “coupang” the given statements according to the following scales. The results of the survey will be aggregated for academic purposes. Therefore, any information that you provide will be strictly confidential. Thank you very much for taking the time to help us with our survey. Your responses are valuable to our work”

Most respondents were graduates, undergraduate students, and employees. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were asked to fill out an online and offline questionnaire. The questionnaire was set up so that the participants were required to answer all questions before they could submit their responses. Our questionnaire used seven-point Likert items for most constructs.

### 3.8. Research Instrument

We adopted a quantitative approach to address this research question. We developed three major predictors for goodwill e-trust theory influencing trust, satisfaction, and continuous purchase intention of consumers based on the specific e-commerce retailer platform “COUPANG.COM”. To gather information about e-commerce e-trust, e-satisfaction for online shopping perception measurement of constructs was adopted from existing literature. The questions were structured on a seven-step scale. Based on the stated definitions, the scale and literature initial scale items were generated. This study used 7-point likert scale, and the measurement items are shown in **Table 1**; to test the scale, the reliability and validity of the measurement items were assessed.

Items that indicated information quality were extracted from a previous study that examined the information quality of e-commerce in the apparel industry<sup>[50]</sup>. Items indicating website design interactivity were extracted from a previous study examining the perception of website quality interactivity in e-commerce<sup>[84]</sup> and a study examining website interactivity for the apparel industry<sup>[50]</sup>. The items that indicated Company reputation Scale was adapted from a study examining perceived company reputation influence on initial trust development<sup>[36,85]</sup>.

The items that indicated Trust in E-Commerce adoption were adopted from previous research examining the relationship of trust in the e-commerce apparel industry<sup>[86]</sup> and a previous study examining trust factors from the perspective of continuous purchase intention<sup>[36]</sup>. The items that indicated the Customer Satisfaction Scale were adopted from a study examining the relationship between online purchase decisions and customer satisfaction<sup>[87]</sup> and from a previous study examining customer satisfaction relationships with continuous use intention<sup>[88]</sup> related to our research. The items that indicated continuous use of e-commerce were adopted from previous research examining the relationship between privacy stress and brand trust and continuous purchasing intention<sup>[36]</sup> and from a previous study examining online purchase decisions and satisfaction<sup>[87]</sup>. The items that indicated Perceived privacy Concern was measured using items adopted from previous study<sup>[36]</sup> and<sup>[89]</sup> and we confirmed each respondent perception about “Pre-Covid.19 Privacy Concerns” and Post-Covid.19 Privacy Concerns” while do shopping from online retailers of Coupang.com website.

**Table 1.** Measurement Items of the Questionnaire.

Variables	Item	Reference	Cronbach's Alpha
information quality	1. The Coupang website provides accurate information.	[50]	0.934
	2. The Coupang website is informative.		
	3. The Coupang website provides updated information.		
	4. The Coupang website provides high quality information.		
	5. The Coupang website provides relevant information.		
Website design interactivity	1. This website has a search tool that enables me to locate products.	[84]	0.941
	2. This website have a tool that makes product comparisons easy.		
	3. I feel that this is a very engaging website.	[50]	
	4. The interactive features of coupang website help me to accomplish my shopping task.		
	5. I can interact with website in order to get information tailored my specific needs.		
Company reputation	1. This company is well known	[85]	0.922
	2. This company has a good reputation	[36]	
	3. This company has a reputation for being honest		
	4. This company is known to be concerned about customers		
Trust on E-commerce	1. I trust that Coupang website will consider my interests when collecting, processing my personal information.	[36, 86]	0.948

Variables	Item	Reference	Cronbach's Alpha
adoption (PlatFORM trust)	2. I trust that Coupang website is trustworthy in using my personal information. 3. I feel safe in my transactions with the Coupang website. 4. I trust the Coupang website to keep my personal information safe. 5. I trust the Coupang website to administrators will not misuse my personal information.		
Customer Satisfaction:	1. I feel satisfied shopping at online websit (Coupang). 2. The internet (Coupang) Online shopping website and application in korea, is an ideal shopping place for me. 3. The internet (Coupang) online website always fulfills my shopping need. 4. I had a great time buying on the internet (Coupang) website.	[87] [88]	0.914
Continuous use of E-Commerce:	1. I intend to shop again at internet (Coupang) in the near future. 2. I will actively look for the product they need on internet (Coupang) in future as well. 3. I intend to repurchase various products from internet (Coupang) 4. I intend to use internet (Coupang) for shopping regularly in near future.	[36] [87]	0.939
Perceived Privacy Concerns	1. I am uncomfortable with how my personal information from online shopping at coupang 2. I am concerned that my friends will see my purchase records on the coupang shopping website 3. I feel threat of personal information in the online shoping activities will be used without authentication 4. I am worried that the personal information in the online shopping activities will be used by other parties without any authorization	[36]	BPP 0.722 APP 0.812

**Table 1.** (Continued).

*Note:* This tables shows the measurement of adopted items and their source.

## 4. Empirical specifications / Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Validity and reliability Tests

We performed Cronbach alpha, Guidelines suggested by<sup>[90]</sup> Cronbach-alpha (0.8 ~ 0.9) of all variables indicate a good internal consistency, CFA confirmed model good fitness, To test the **internal consistency** of the variables in the component we calculated **Cronbach's alpha**, and confirmed reliability<sup>[92]</sup>. Reliability analysis was performed for all constructs in Table.2. The results show that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values are high, and both are more than 0.7, and the difference is also much less; see **Table 2**. Results are consistent with the research "Internal consistency and reliability were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, values > 0.9 is pretended excellent, > 0.8 = good, > 0.7 = acceptable, > 0.6 = doubtful, > 0.5 = poor and < 0.5 = unsatisfactory<sup>[91]</sup>.

In addition to Cronbach's alpha, **exploratory factor analysis (EFA)** Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis, construct reliability (CR) measures were used to assess reliability and evaluate hypotheses using the program SPSS (version 22.0) AMOS (Version 21.0), and we assessed the dimensionality of variables by performing **EFA** to evaluate the **reliability and validity** of the study guided by the authors<sup>[92]</sup>, We evaluated each factors in terms of whether a sufficient number of items had a factor loading greater than 0.40, as suggested by<sup>[93]</sup>. The test was performed with all constructs in **Table 2**. All the indicators have significant factor loading between 0.7 ~ 0.9.

Next, AVE and construct validity were assessed by examining convergent validity. The values of the average variance extracted for all constructs are presented in **Table 2** higher than 0.5, which indicates that all constructs fulfill the criteria of convergent validity. Evidence of convergent validity was determined by

inspecting the variance extracted for each factor (**Table 2** Analysis also has KMO statistics for all items value more than 0.6, which means that the factor analysis and sample are suitable for the data<sup>[91,92]</sup>).

After confirming the Fit Indices, validity, and reliability of variables, our next step was to evaluate the Structural Model<sup>[91,94]</sup> to conclude the hypothesized relationship between variables. Next, a **structural regression model** was used to determine the impact of service quality dimensions on e-trust and e-trust on e-satisfaction, and the impact of e-satisfaction was analyzed to determine its influence on the continuous use of e-commerce. The moderator influence of perceived privacy concerns was also investigated and all hypotheses were tested.

**Table 2.** Items, standardized loading, construct reliability and average variance extracted.

Validity and Reliability of Variables								
Constructs	Factor Loading	Mean	S. D	KMO	Sig.	Alpha	AVE	C.R
Information quality	0.857	5.780	1.2523	0.887	0.000	0.934	0.798	0.952
	0.861	5.932	1.0777					
	0.930	5.852	1.3461					
	0.898	5.648	1.4671					
	0.917	5.953	1.2890					
Website interface	0.873	5.907	1.2027	0.887	0.000	0.941	0.809	0.955
	0.894	5.924	1.2959					
	0.927	5.949	1.2228					
	0.896	5.928	1.2095					
	0.906	5.911	1.2533					
Company reputation	0.903	6.195	0.9063	0.802	0.000	0.922	0.820	0.948
	0.930	6.055	1.1855					
	0.926	6.008	1.3046					
	0.862	6.271	1.0327					
E-Trust	0.918	5.941	1.3000	0.896	0.000	0.948	0.835	0.962
	0.908	6.034	1.2024					
	0.923	6.059	1.2259					
	0.944	6.085	1.0443					
	0.874	6.280	0.9666					
Customer e-satisfaction	0.889	6.165	1.0159	0.841	0.000	0.914	0.798	0.940
	0.855	6.186	1.0474					
	0.912	6.110	1.1207					
	0.916	6.186	0.9671					
Continuous use of EC	0.907	6.076	1.1571	0.809	0.000	0.939	0.851	0.958
	0.897	6.085	1.0921					
	0.938	6.339	0.9955					
	0.948	6.178	1.2858					
	0.699	1.165	0.3722					
0.809	1.263	0.4410						
0.787	1.305	0.4614						
0.733	1.233	0.4237						
0.603	1.153	0.3603	0.763	0.000	0.812	0.644	0.877	
0.870	1.174	0.3797						
0.822	1.220	0.4154						
0.884	1.203	0.4034						

**Source:** Output from SPSS

**Note:** The table shows the factor loading of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), reliability test, construct reliability, and average variance extracted, proving the validity and reliability of the research framework. \*Items as in table1. C.R: construct reliability; AVE: average variance extracted. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were relatively high, indicating good measurement reliability.

## 4.2. Fit indices Commonly Reported for CFA and SEM

To analyze reliability and validity, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed on all constructs as shown in **Table 3**. All the indicators had significant factor loadings between 0.7 and 0.9, indicating strong construct validity, while the significant correlation between constructs exceeded the required threshold, as displayed in **Tables 3 and 4**. These results align with recent research that underscores the importance of strong factor loadings and correlations in establishing construct validity<sup>[95,96]</sup>. The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) was reported as 0.938, indicating a good model fit according to contemporary standards<sup>[97]</sup>. Additionally, the comparative fit index (CFI) was above 0.90, specifically 0.938, demonstrating that the model meets the criteria for a satisfactory fit<sup>[98]</sup>. According to current guidelines, an RMSEA value of 0.05 or less suggests a "close fit," values between 0.05 and 0.08 are deemed acceptable, values between 0.08 and 0.1 are considered marginal, and values greater than 0.1 are seen as poor<sup>[99]</sup>.

**Table 3.** Acceptable Fit Values.

Fit Indices	The goodness of Fit Values
CNIM/DF	3.690
CFI	0.938
TLI	0.767
AGFI	0.890
GFI	0.979
NFI	0.921
RMSEA	0.107

*Source: Output from AMOS*

*Note: To analyze reliability and validity, CFA was performed with all constructs. The results indicate good factor loading between 0.7 ~ 0.9. \* The results obtained are supported by research<sup>[100]</sup>.*

**Table 4.** Correlations among dimensions of the v.

Scale	Information Quality	Website interface	Company Reputation	E-Trust	E-Satisfaction	Continuous use of EC
Information Quality	-					
Website interface	0.902**	-				
Company Reputation	0.891**	0.891**	-			
E-Trust	0.862**	0.903**	0.869**	-		
E-Satisfaction	0.860**	0.896**	0.829**	0.871**	-	
Continuous use of EC	0.801**	0.844**	0.817**	0.785***	0.881**	-

*Source: Output from SPSS*

*Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed).*

Results indicate that the Pearson's correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $P = 0.000$ ), which is also significant at the 0.05 level, demonstrating a significant correlation between variables. Recent research emphasizes the importance of testing the significance of correlation coefficients in validating research findings<sup>[101]</sup>. The significant correlation between constructs exceeded the required value, as shown in Table 4, and aligns with contemporary studies that confirm a positive correlation between measures of related constructs<sup>[102,103]</sup>.

## 5. Hypotheses Testing

### 5.1. SEM Analysis Model (Service Quality Dimensions on E-Trust for E-Commerce adoption)

#### 5.1.1. Results for H1, H2, & H3

After confirming validity and reliability of constructs we evaluated the structural model, in support of hypotheses for Goodwill e-trust theory, firstly we investigated the influence of Information Quality (IQ), Website design (WD) and Company Reputation (CR) on e-Trust, as **Table 5** shows, results confirmed a significant positive influence of IQ on e-trust, WD on e-trust, CR on e-trust.

The impact of information quality on e-trust C. R=2.710, S. E= 0.051,  $\beta=0.151$ ,  $*P<0.05= 0.007$ , with a significant beta value; **relationship was statistically significant, in Table 5 supported H1.**

The impact of website quality on e-trust C. R=10.586, S. E= 0.051,  $\beta=0.051$ ,  $***P<0.001= 0.001$ , with a significant beta value; **relationship was statistically significant, in Table 5 supported H2.**

The impact of company reputation on e-trust C. R=3.777, S. E= 0.060,  $\beta=0.215$ ,  $***P<0.001= 0.001$ , with a significant beta value; **relationship was statistically significant, in Table 5 supported H3.**

### 5.2. SEM Analysis Model (E-Trust on E-Satisfaction for E-Commerce adoption)

#### 5.2.1. Results for H4

The impact of e-trust on the e-satisfaction of customer relationship is as follows: C. R=27.447, S. E= 0.032,  $\beta=0.869$   $***P<0.001= 0.001$ , with significant beta value; **relationship was statistically significant in Table 5 supported H4.** Consumers in South Korea are generally satisfied with the e-commerce retailer Coupang.com.

### 5.3. SEM Analysis Model (E-Satisfaction on Continuous use of E-Commerce)

#### 5.3.1. Results for H5

The impact of e-satisfaction on the continuous use of EC, relationship shows; C. R=27.448, S. E= 0.039,  $\beta=1.072$   $***P<0.001= 0.001$ , with significant beta value; **relationship was statistically significant, in Table 5, supported H5.**

**Table 5.** Goodwill theory on E-Trust, E-Trust on Esatisfaction, E-Satisfaction on Continuous use of EC.

Hypotheses	Standardized Estimates ( $\beta$ )	Regression Weights		
		S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>
E-Trust ← IQ	0.151	0.051	2.710	0.007(*)
E-Trust ← WD	0.576	0.051	10.586	0.001(***)
E-Trust ← CR	0.215	0.060	3.777	0.001(***)
E-Satisfaction ← E-Trust	0.869	0.032	27.447	0.001(***)
Continuous Use of EC ← E-Satisfaction	1.072	0.039	27.478	0.001(***)

**\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001**

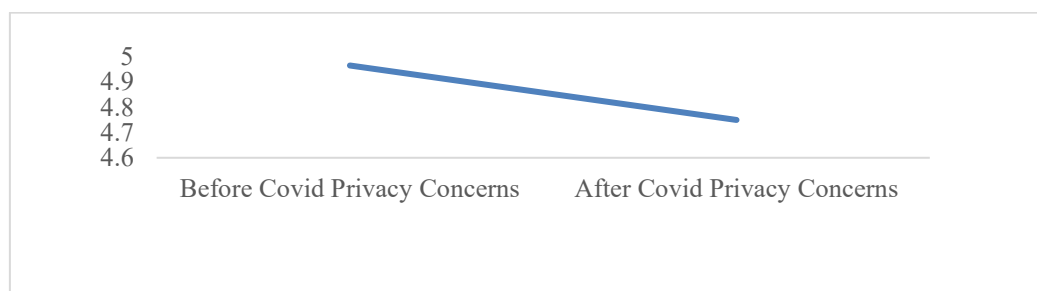
Source: Output from AMOS.

### 5.4. Change in Perceived privacy concerns Pre-COVID-19 vs Post-COVID-19

#### 5.4.1. Results for H6

The moderation test was applied using AMOS to determine the difference in overall perceived privacy concerns Pre-COVID-19 (High) vs Post-COVID-19 (low) towards E-Commerce platform “coupang online shopping” behavior. Descriptive statistics for perceived privacy concerns Pre-COVID-19 (High) score higher than perceived privacy concerns Post-COVID-19 (low) in urban e-commerce customers of Coupang.

T value, P value, which was statistically significant (P-value 0.000<0.05), as shown in **Table 6**. Thus, higher perceived privacy concerns Pre-COVID-19, than perceived privacy concerns Post-COVID-19 (low) were measured in customers, as shown in **Figure 2**. Thus, **result was significantly supported H6a, H6b**.



**Figure 2.** Privacy Concerns Pre-COVID-19 (High) vs Post-COVID-19 (low).

*Source:* Output from SPSS.

*Note:* Mean value of Pre-Covid and Post-Covid privacy concerns. Higher Privacy fear Pre-Covid, decreased privacy fear Post-Covid.

**Table 6.** Standardized Parameter Estimates of the Effects of E-Trust on E-Satisfaction

Moderation: Before vs. After COVID-19 Perceived Privacy Concerns.

Hypotheses			Perceived Privacy Concerns		
			Standardized Estimates	Regression Weights	
				C.R	p
<b>Post-COVID-19. Perception</b> <b>H6b Supported</b>	e-satisfaction	← APP*e-trust	<b>0.661</b>	<b>3.023</b>	<b>0.003</b>
<b>Pre-COVID-19. Perception</b> <b>H6a Supported</b>	e-satisfaction	← BPP*e-trust	<b>0.329</b>	<b>1.511</b>	<b>0.131</b>

**\*P<0.05 \*\*P<0.01 \*\*\*P<0.001**

*Source:* Output from AMOS (Multi-Group Analysis).

*Note:* Change in relationship between e-trust and e-satisfaction with moderation factor Post-COVID privacy concerns, moderation exit; No Change in relationship between e-trust and e-satisfaction with moderation factor Pre-COVID privacy concerns, moderation does not exist.

This research tested the measurement model of the Post-COVID-19. perceived privacy concerns is different from the measurement model Pre-COVID-19. Results conclude that, response about “Pre-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” of respondents (C. R=1.511, P=0.131, B=0.329) vs. “Post-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” of respondents (C. R=3.023, P=0.003, B=0.661), the difference in perceived privacy perceptions exists and variable acting as a moderator variable. The results proved that e-trust has less or no influence on building e-satisfaction when customers have high privacy concern fears (Pre-COVID-19); while e-trust has a greater influence on building e-satisfaction when customers have shown low privacy concern fears (Post-COVID-19).

Research results conclude that, “Post-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” significantly influences the relationship of e-trust with e-satisfaction while “Pre-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” relationship between e-trust with e-satisfaction is not statistically significant. It is examined “Pre-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” vs “Post-COVID-19 perceived privacy concerns” plays a moderating role between e-trust with e-satisfaction in case of **H6 supported by results, Table 6** which indicates that “Post-COVID-19 with



decrease in perceived privacy concerns” of customers can be important factor to enhance and boost e-commerce retailers sale.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study introduces the "Goodwill E-Trust Theory," a structural model designed to establish initial customer trust using three key traits in the online retail industry: information quality, website interactivity, and company reputation. It examines how these traits influence e-trust and customer satisfaction, while also considering the moderating role of perceived privacy concerns in South Korea's online retail sector.

By analyzing quantitative survey data, the study identifies these traits as crucial sources of goodwill that foster e-trust and e-satisfaction, impacting ongoing purchasing behavior. In the context of South Korea's expanding e-commerce market, understanding these trust-building factors is essential for enhancing user satisfaction and encouraging continuous platform adoption. The findings highlight that trust is central to e-commerce success, and recognizing these antecedents is vital for e-retailers aiming to remain competitive and achieve long-term success.

This research aims to develop and validate a new theory to enhance e-trust in e-commerce adoption. It successfully highlights the role of three goodwill trust indicators—information quality, website interactivity, and reputation—in fostering e-trust and satisfaction. Future studies should gather more data to further explore these relationships. The findings confirm that these trust indicators significantly influence e-trust and e-satisfaction, aligning with previous research, and repeat purchase behavior. e-satisfaction positive influence on continuous use of ecommerce (purchase repeat) supported by results of previous research “Authors<sup>[66,67]</sup> **examined that e-satisfaction strongly affects repurchase intention**”

A lot of personal data is frequently collected about a customer's interactions with an e-business without the customer's awareness which creates privacy fear in customers mind, experts often cite privacy concerns and stress as a barrier to e-commerce or negative influence of privacy on satisfaction, our research results are different from<sup>[31]</sup> study. Offering protection can reduce the risk of personal data being lost or misused. Research on the economics of privacy supports this by showing that addressing privacy concerns can increase profitability. Lower privacy concerns enhance individual satisfaction and improve societal and social reputation, benefiting the digital e-commerce economy<sup>[104]</sup>. Consumers often lack complete information about data collection, usage, and implications. This research addresses whether COVID-19 increased revenue from 2019 to 2022 and if the pandemic boosted online shopping by reducing privacy concerns. The findings confirm that, Post-COVID-19, decreased privacy concerns led to increased online shopping. Thus, e-trust has a lesser impact on e-satisfaction when privacy concerns are high (Pre-COVID-19) but a stronger impact when privacy concerns are low (Post-COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic alleviated concerns about privacy, increased satisfaction towards COUPANG retailers, and attracted more users which led to an increase in e-commerce buying, increase in retailers’ sales, which led to an increase in e-commerce sales revenue?

Furthermore, the findings provide guidance to e-commerce retailers. To create and maintain goodwill of online retail business retailers, they must develop interactive websites, provide quality information about products, and create company reputation, which will help in the development of initial e-trust, further positively influencing e-satisfaction and ongoing purchase behavior. Small- and medium-sized e-companies increase their innovative strength by developing attractive websites with quality information and good

reputation in order to build initial e-trust to feel customers are more satisfied with future repeat purchase behavior.

This study provides valuable insights for e-commerce retailers to alleviate consumer privacy concerns and enhance online purchasing experiences. By fostering satisfaction, trust, and privacy, it influences e-trust and e-satisfaction, encouraging repeat purchases, which boosts customer loyalty, sales, and profitability.

Consumers are more inclined to make repeat purchases from Coupang.com, which they perceive as trustworthy and low in privacy risk, leading to increased loyalty and profitability for the retailer. The Goodwill E-Trust Theory underpins online business success by emphasizing the need for e-trust and e-satisfaction to attract repeat customers and sustain growth.

The findings suggest that e-businesses, managers, and website developers should prioritize website interactivity, high-quality information, and a reputable online image. These elements distinguish successful e-retail strategies from offline retailers and are crucial for long-term success and profitability in the e-commerce sector.

This study explored how key antecedents build platform trust, leading to user e-satisfaction and sustained e-commerce adoption in South Korea. It found that "information quality, website interactivity, and company reputation" are crucial in enhancing e-commerce trust. These factors significantly boost customer e-satisfaction, which promotes continued user engagement and platform adoption. These findings align with our objectives, showing that focusing on these antecedents can enhance competitiveness and ensure long-term success in the South Korean e-commerce market.

Additionally, recent research indicates that post-COVID-19, perceived privacy concerns have decreased among consumers, resulting in increased online shopping behavior in South Korea. These results are supported by the study's findings<sup>[105]</sup>. This shift suggests that e-trust had a more substantial impact on building e-satisfaction after the pandemic when customers had fewer privacy concerns, compared to before the pandemic when privacy was a significant worry, our study results get support from results proved by<sup>[106]</sup>. As consumers grew more accustomed to digital platforms and experienced improved security measures, trust became a key factor in enhancing satisfaction with online shopping<sup>[107]</sup>.

## **6.2. Study Limitations**

Despite achieving its objectives, this study has several limitations. It focused primarily on a specific demographic in South Korea, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or age groups. Additionally, the rapid evolution of e-commerce technologies and consumer behaviors means that factors influencing trust and satisfaction may change over time, requiring ongoing updates. Lastly, while the study identified key antecedents, it did not examine their potential interactions or consider external factors such as government regulations and cultural influences.

Future research should include a broader demographic, encompassing various age groups and geographic regions, to enhance the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal studies are needed to track how technological advancements and changing consumer preferences influence e-commerce trust and satisfaction over time. Additionally, investigating the interactions between identified antecedents and external factors, such as cultural norms and regulatory environments, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of trust-building in e-commerce. Exploring emerging technologies like blockchain and artificial intelligence could also provide valuable insights into future trends in e-commerce.

As this study was conducted in South Korea, to generalize more results more research is needed to include other global online retailers to understand the relationship between goodwill e-trust theory and customer e-satisfaction.

### **6.3. Implications**

The findings of the current study will be highly helpful to website developers, e-retailers specializing in small and medium-sized enterprises, and marketing strategists who wish to build lasting relationships with customers by providing them with modern conveniences. This research is beneficial for SME's to influence innovation success in terms of profit margin maximization through customer satisfaction. SME owners can sustainably boost profits by carefully creating trust, following website and applications interactive strategies, and providing more quality information. Creating goodwill to obtain e-trust is the crucial key to successful growth in the life cycle of ICT global digital world competition.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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