

## Navigating Consumer Behavior in the Niche Market of Artisan Tea Blends: Insight from Indonesia's E-Commerce Sector

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**ABSTRACT:** This research explores the factors that influence consumer behavior when purchasing artisan tea blends through e-commerce platforms. It investigates how aspects such as personal characteristics, cultural perceptions, trust endorsements, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and online shopping preferences affect purchase intentions, using quantitative methods. The findings from Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) indicate that cultural perceptions, personal traits, and trust endorsements significantly influence purchase intentions, while perceived usefulness and online shopping preferences have less impact. These results suggest that for niche products like artisan tea blends, online marketing strategies should focus on cultural relevance, building trust, and understanding consumer characteristics to drive engagement and purchases.

**KEYWORDS:** Artisan Tea Blends, Consumer Behavior, E-commerce, Purchase Intention

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the e-commerce industry has seen substantial growth, driven by key factors such as greater internet access, advancements in mobile technology, and shifts in consumer behavior (Yacob et al., 2023). According to Statista Market Insights, Indonesia's e-commerce user base reached 178.94 million in 2022, a 12.79% increase from the previous year's 158.65 million, with projections estimating a rise to 196.47 million by the end of 2023 (Mustajab, 2023). E-commerce offers significant advantages, including time savings by eliminating the need for in-store visits, and the ability to shop from any location with internet access, at any time. In addition to purchasing, consumers can use the internet to research products and compare prices before deciding whether to buy online or in physical stores. However, e-commerce also has its challenges. Research indicates that 35% of high-end products sold online are counterfeit, leading to concerns about trust. Additional costs, such as delivery fees, may also increase the overall purchase price, and unsolicited messages from sellers can be bothersome (Kawa and Wałęsiak, 2019). To meet the diverse needs of Indonesian consumers, various types of e-commerce platforms have emerged, including classified ad websites, online marketplaces, e-commerce malls, social commerce, livestream shopping, and crowdfunding platforms. Examples of prominent online marketplaces include Tokopedia, Bukalapak, Shopee, and Lazada, while Sociolla and Zalora are notable e-commerce malls. The growth of e-commerce has transformed consumer-business interactions, and the tea industry is no exception. The Food and Beverage (F&B) sector ranks as the second-largest contributor to the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market in e-commerce, with tea being the fastest-growing product in 2023, showing a 49% growth rate and surpassing Rp 0.3 trillion in sales (Compas, n.d.). This indicates rising demand for tea products in the e-commerce sector. The tea industry, which is a key part of Indonesia's plantation sector, plays a crucial role in the national economy.



Figure 1. Artisan Tea Blend



In 2022, it was estimated to contribute 3.76% to the national GDP and 30.32% to the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries sectors, making it a leading contributor in this area, according to BPS-Statistics Indonesia (2023). Alongside oil and gas, tea is a major export commodity that significantly supports Indonesia's economic activity. Tea (*Camellia Sinensis*) is rich in essential vitamins and minerals and is widely recognized by nutritionists for its health benefits, making it a valuable beverage choice globally. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (n.d.) ranks tea as the most popular beverage in the world, second only to water. Before consumption, harvested tea leaves must go through essential processing. Despite tea's economic importance in Indonesia, the industry faces notable challenges, particularly the common perception of tea as a low-cost beverage. This is mainly due to the saturation of the domestic market with medium to low-quality tea products, which has led to limited public awareness regarding tea quality and proper brewing methods (Rafani et al., 2022). The emergence of artisan tea blends has opened up a new market for premium tea products. The term "artisan" generally refers to a craftsperson with specialized skills in creating handmade products (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Artisan tea blends, as shown in Figure 1, are mixtures of various types of tea (*Camellia Sinensis*), often combined with flavor extracts and other dried ingredients like fruits, flowers, herbs, and spices to create unique flavors and aromas. The goal of artisan tea blending is to develop new varieties, add value, promote health benefits, and achieve balanced flavors and aromas while maintaining consistency in production (Pan et al., 2022; Somantri, 2022; Rafani et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020). The ongoing growth of the tea industry and technological advancements have reshaped consumer purchasing behavior. Understanding consumer behavior is essential for businesses to comprehend how individuals, groups, and organizations make decisions about selecting, buying, using, and discarding products, services, ideas, or experiences to meet their needs and preferences (Kotler and Keller, 2021). This behavior is shaped by both external factors—such as social class, cultural influences, reference groups, and family dynamics—and internal factors like motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes (Schiffman et al., 2010). Technological development and the widespread use of the internet have led to significant changes in consumer buying habits, with many now opting to make purchases through e-commerce platforms (Alalwan, 2018). Key factors influencing consumer behavior in e-commerce include website quality, security features, trust, pricing, and product quality (Alalwan, 2018; Lien et al., 2015). Effective website design—characterized by easy navigation, clear information, and appealing visuals—can improve the shopping experience and positively impact purchase intentions (Wen et al., 2018). In addition, security and privacy are critical concerns, as consumers are more likely to shop on platforms that protect their personal and payment information (Handoyo, 2024). Unlike traditional sales models where products like tea can be evaluated through direct sensory experiences, e-commerce poses challenges because of the absence of physical interaction. Many consumers are hesitant to make online purchases due to this limitation, as e-commerce platforms primarily provide product information without offering experiential services. Although consumers may be interested in products, this gap can increase hesitation and complicate the decision-making process (Xie et al., 2023; Mousavizadeh et al., 2016). This study investigates consumer behavior in purchasing tea through e-commerce, with a focus on purchase intentions. Drawing on established models and prior research, it examines how factors like personal characteristics, cultural perceptions, trust endorsements, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and online shopping preferences influence e-commerce purchase intentions. The primary research question asks: what are the factors affecting consumer behavior when purchasing artisan tea blends online, and how significant are these factors? The study proceeds by outlining the conceptual background, developing hypotheses, describing the research methodology, discussing the results and contributions, and concluding with the key findings.

## LITERATURE REVIEW/ HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Online purchase intention strongly predicts actual purchasing decisions, as it reflects the relationship between intended behavior and actual actions (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). Consumers who enjoy new experiences are more inclined to buy online from e-commerce platforms that enhance perceived ease of use through user-friendly features like well-organized catalogs, trusted websites, efficient payment systems, and helpful tools such as search functions, price comparisons, and shopping carts (Moslehpour et al., 2018). Behavioral intentions, which represent a consumer's commitment to actions like buying artisan tea blends online, require a change in behavior and the development of positive attitudes. Despite e-commerce growth in agricultural products like tea, there is still significant potential for expansion in this market segment.

### 1. Consumer Personal Characteristics

In the tea industry, consumer behavior is increasingly shaped by awareness of nutrition and health, with factors like motivation, lifestyle, and demographic variables such as gender, age, and income playing crucial roles (Czarniecka-Skubina



et al., 2022). Women under 40 in major cities prefer green tea, while those aged 25-40 with higher education and better financial standing show a preference for white and red teas. The growing awareness of health and the environment has driven interest in organic and natural teas, as tea's health benefits are well recognized (Sumi and Kabir, 2018; Fang et al., 2019; Dlodla et al., 2021; Czarniecka-Skubina et al., 2022). Sustainability concerns also influence purchasing behavior, particularly for consumers who prioritize environmental harmony (Tong et al., 2021). Experienced online shoppers who are knowledgeable about tea, including varieties, health benefits, history, processing, and brewing methods, exhibit greater confidence in their online buying decisions, increasing the likelihood of purchase (Xie et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2022; Stranieri et al., 2017).

**H1:** *Personal characteristics positively influence the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

## 2. Cultural Perception

Culture, which encompasses shared values, beliefs, and preferences, plays a vital role in consumer behavior (Schiffman et al., 2010). How individuals interpret stimuli shapes their perception of products (Kotler and Keller, 2021). Consumer motivations, driven by needs and desires, often reflect personal identity and value symbolic meanings over functionality. Tea is perceived as a cultural product rather than just a fast-moving consumer good. For instance, Chinese tea consumption is shaped by cultural elements like renqing, mianzi, and man-nature unity, influencing choices based on social status, relationship-building, and sustainability (Tong et al., 2021). The cultural significance of tea is often associated with higher prices, and businesses can increase consumer curiosity and purchase intention by offering engaging cultural experiences (Xie et al., 2023). Positive online shopping experiences, especially with agricultural products like tea, can also enhance trust and purchasing intentions (Ma et al., 2022).

**H2:** *Cultural perception positively influences the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

## 3. Trust Endorsement

As a globally popular beverage, tea buyers are often selective about brand and quality, making brand reputation, certifications, and awards key factors in building trust (Xie et al., 2023). As the tea market grows, challenges such as information gaps, low customer confidence, and high prices contribute to consumer hesitation. This has led to greater demand for quality certifications, labeling, and safety regulations. Trust in online green agri-food products, including tea, can reduce consumer resistance and increase the likelihood of purchase (Ma et al., 2022; Sumi and Kabir, 2018). Commercial attributes such as brand, packaging, and advertising significantly influence tea selection, with promotional efforts playing a key role in increasing brand awareness and driving short-term sales (Czarniecka-Skubina et al., 2022; Buil et al., 2013). Highlighting award-winning products can further build trust and lower reluctance to purchase tea online, as awards indicate quality and industry competitiveness (Xie et al., 2023).

**H3:** *Trust endorsement positively influences the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

## 4. Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness, a key aspect of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) introduced by Davis (1989), significantly affects consumer attitudes and intentions to use technology by improving performance expectations. This concept is crucial in e-commerce, especially on C2C platforms, where it helps build trust between unfamiliar buyers and sellers, contributing to the growth of SMEs in Indonesia (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). People with high conscientiousness tend to perceive e-commerce platforms as useful, which leads to increased online shopping, as they carefully assess the effectiveness of technological applications (Moslehpour et al., 2018). Additionally, perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between regulatory fit and consumer behavior, where a website's alignment with customer needs boosts perceived usefulness, positively influencing attitudes and purchase intentions (Ashraf et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2023).

**H4:** *Perceived usefulness positively influences the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

## 5. Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use, as defined by Davis (1989), refers to the belief that using a system requires minimal effort, which strongly influences consumers' perceived usefulness, attitudes, and intentions to adopt technology. Consumers prefer products or services that are easy to use, avoiding those that are complex or require significant effort. This concept is

applicable to various digital contexts, including e-commerce, m-commerce, and internet applications (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). Moslehpour et al. (2018) found that perceived ease of use significantly impacts e-purchase intentions, as user-friendly e-commerce platforms increase customer confidence and the likelihood of completing purchases. A simple, intuitive design reduces anxiety and perceived risk, especially for less tech-savvy users, and encourages browsing, which may lead to increased sales (Ashraf et al., 2016). Enhancements in product variety, convenience, and information reliability on digital platforms help bridge the gap between consumer willingness and behavior, boosting overall satisfaction (Xie et al., 2023).

**H5:** *Perceived ease of use positively influences the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

6. Online Shopping Preferences

Product attributes like price, taste, nutritional value, natural content, safety, and freshness are crucial in meeting consumer needs and guiding tea purchasing decisions. These attributes enhance perceived quality and value, which in turn influence purchase intentions. Packaging and labelling are vital for enhancing product value and building consumer trust (Sumi and Kabir, 2018). Price has a negative effect on perceived value, particularly for organic tea, but businesses can offset this by offering competitive pricing or differentiating their products to stand out in the market (Ma et al., 2022). Chinese consumers, for example, prioritize practicality over brand when buying for personal use, focusing on value for money rather than brand prestige (Tong et al., 2021). While factors like product origin and promotional elements such as packaging and advertising are less significant, they still influence consumer choices. Online shopping preferences are shaped by reference groups and information provided by e-commerce platforms, which help consumers evaluate product value based on price, origin, quality, reviews, sales volume, and customer service (Ma et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2019).

**H6:** *Online shopping preference positively influences the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce.*

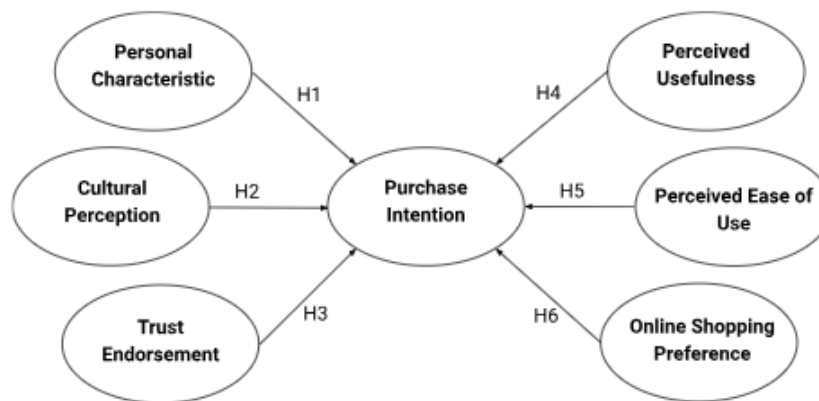


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

**METHODOLOGY**

The study utilized questionnaires, adapted from previous research, to examine consumer behavior related to purchasing artisan tea blends via e-commerce. Artisan tea blends represent a niche market within the broader tea industry. The survey, distributed online through Google Forms, targeted individuals aware of artisan tea blends. The study population included Indonesian e-commerce users aged 15-64, a group that encompasses approximately 58.63 million people (Kementerian Perdagangan Indonesia, n.d.). Non-probability sampling was used to distribute the survey through online communities such as tea-related groups, mailing lists, and private social media groups, specifically targeting those familiar with artisan tea blends and e-commerce. A total of 112 responses were collected, with 110 deemed valid. Although the sample size may seem small, it meets the requirements for Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. Based on the 22 measurement items, the optimal sample size was calculated, with a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 responses per question (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, the required sample size ranged from 110 to 220, and the 110 responses satisfied this requirement. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree"). Of the survey respondents, 65.5% were female and 34.5% were male. Regarding age distribution, 1.8% were under 20, 46.4% were



between 21-30, 30.9% were between 31-40, 18.2% were between 41-50, and 2.7% were over 51. Most respondents were well-educated: 67.3% held undergraduate degrees, 20.9% had postgraduate degrees, 7.3% had a diploma, and 4.5% had completed high school. The majority were employed as salaried workers (38.15%), entrepreneurs (29.15%), or students (16.4%), while 16.3% were self-employed, freelancers, retirees, or homemakers. Most respondents belonged to middle- to high-income families: 24.5% earned Rp 5-10 million per month, 23.6% earned Rp 10-20 million, and 21.8% earned more than Rp 20 million. The remainder included 18.2% earning less than Rp 3 million and 11.8% earning Rp 3-5 million. In terms of e-commerce usage, 46.4% had been using online platforms for over six years, 40.9% had used them for 4-6 years, and 12.7% had been using them for 1-3 years. As for geographic location, 66.4% resided in large or medium-sized cities (tier 2), 30% in mega cities (tier 1), and 3.6% in small towns or rural areas (tier 3), as classified by the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS). The study employed Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) due to the exploratory nature of the research, which seeks to investigate relationships between variables. PLS-SEM is ideal for early-stage theory development (Hair et al., 2014). The SmartPLS 3 software was used to account for measurement errors in latent constructs while simultaneously evaluating the significance of structural paths. Path analysis was utilized to assess the statistical significance and validity of the proposed structural model.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was applied. Composite reliability was used instead of Cronbach’s alpha to assess internal consistency, as it uses actual factor loadings to calculate factor scores (Peterson and Kim, 2013; Sumi and Kabir, 2018). All sub-constructs demonstrated composite reliability values exceeding the threshold of 0.7, confirming the reliability of the measurement model, as detailed in Table 1. Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Indicators with factor loadings of 0.7 or higher satisfied the validity criteria, allowing for further evaluation of the model. The overall validity of the constructs was supported by AVE values exceeding 0.5 (Cheung et al., 2024; Rönkkö and Cho, 2022). Discriminant validity was confirmed at the construct level, as the square roots of the AVEs for each construct were higher than any correlations with other constructs, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 1. Analysis of Measurement Model**

	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted</b>
Personal Characteristic		0.946	0.777
1. I am aware of, have heard about, have seen information on, or have tried artisan tea blends	0.901		
2. I have participated in a tea event, either online or offline	0.852		
3. I know that tea has many health benefits	0.880		
4. I am aware of, have heard about, have seen information on some oldest classic tea blends	0.874		
5. I am familiar with tea brewing methods	0.899		
Cultural Perception		0.946	0.898
1. There is a cultural connection between the artisan tea blends I buy and the e-commerce purchasing process	0.948		
2. I feel cultural nuances when purchasing artisan tea blends via e-commerce	0.947		
Trust Endorsement		0.923	0.800
1. I ensure that the artisan tea I buy online has proper authorization or certification (organic, fair-trade, halal, HACCP, etc.)	0.878		
2. I consider the brand's reputation in the industry when buying artisan tea online	0.916		
3. I'll check if there are any awards the artisan tea blends have won	0.888		





Perceived Usefulness		0.933	0.875
1. Purchasing artisan tea blends via e-commerce is easier and faster, saving time and energy	0.937		
2. Purchasing artisan tea blends online offers a wider variety of products to choose from	0.934		
Perceived Ease of Use		0.928	0.866
1. I buy artisan tea via e-commerce because prices are clearer and more transparent	0.924		
2. The information about artisan tea blends displayed on e-commerce is accurate and reliable	0.937		
Online Shopping Preference		0.952	
1. I compare prices of similar variants of tea blends between online and offline stores	0.851		
2. I compare the quality differences between similar artisan tea blends online and offline	0.915		
3. I check if the tea or other ingredients in the blends come from historical sources	0.865		
4. I read reviews or comments from other buyers on e-commerce stores	0.884		
5. I check the sales number of artisan tea blends in e-commerce stores	0.875		
6. I value the customer service (service, attitude, and professionalism) provided during my online shopping for artisan tea blends	0.868		
Purchase Intention		0.931	0.871
1. I did not hesitate to purchase artisan tea through ecommerce	0.929		
2. I am interested in purchasing artisan tea via ecommerce	0.938		

Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed to estimate the standardized path coefficients (direct effects). PLS-SEM was chosen for this study to measure the strength of the relationships between constructs, with the significance of the path coefficients evaluated using bootstrap t-values, which must exceed 2.0. The PLS path coefficients are illustrated in Figure 3.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity**

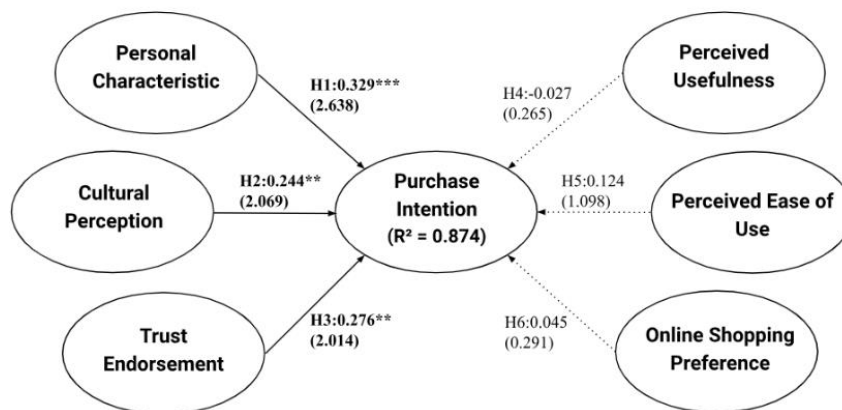
	Personal Characteristic	Cultural Perception	Trust Endorsement	PU	PEOU	Online Shopping Preference	Purchase Intention
Personal Characteristic	<b>0,881</b>						
Cultural Perception	0,870	<b>0,947</b>					
Trust Endorsement	0,854	0,807	<b>0,894</b>				
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	0,861	0,838	0,835	<b>0,935</b>			
Perceived	0,856	0,809	0,863	0,816	<b>0,930</b>		



Ease of Use (PEOU)							
Online Shopping Preference	0,887	0,850	0,924	0,864	0,870	<b>0,877</b>	
Purchase Intention	0,899	0,868	0,880	0,831	0,858	0,883	<b>0,933</b>

The bold numbers of the diagonal are the square roots of average variance extracted (AVE). Off-diagonal elements are correlations among constructs.

To determine statistical significance, 500 bootstrap resamples were utilized. R-squared ( $R^2$ ) quantifies the variance in endogenous variables explained by the model (Hayes, 2021). Instead of offering a comprehensive goodness-of-fit index, PLS primarily assesses validity through  $R^2$  and structural paths. The model accounts for 87.4% of the variance in the intention to purchase artisan tea blends ( $R^2 = 0.874$ ), surpassing the recommended minimum significance threshold of 0.20, leaving 12.6% attributed to other factors. Therefore, the model demonstrates a good fit overall.



Path coefficient (t-values)

The dotted line indicates the insignificant relationship

Figure 3. Result of Path Analysis Model

Table 3 shows the ultimate decision of the proposed hypothesis of the model. From Table 3, the  $t$ -value for the path of H1 (2.64), H2 (2.07), and H3 (2.01) were higher than the standard value. H1, H2, and H3 are supported by high path coefficients and significance level. H4, H5, and H6 did not have significant  $p$ -values. Therefore, personal characteristic, cultural perception, and trust endorsement have a positive influence on intention to buy artisan tea blends.

Table 3. Path Analysis

Between Facets	Path Analysis	$t$ -value	$p$ -values	Hypothesis	Decision
Personal Characteristic -> Purchase Intention	0.329	2.638	0.009***	H1	Supported
Cultural Perception -> Purchase Intention	0.244	2.069	0.039**	H2	Supported



Trust Endorsement Intention -> Purchase Intention	0.276	2.014	0.045**	H3	Supported
Perceived Usefulness Intention -> Purchase Intention	-0.027	0.265	0.791	H4	Not Supported
Perceived ease of use Intention -> Purchase Intention	0.124	1.098	0.273	H5	Not Supported
Online Shopping Preference -> Purchase Intention	0.045	0.291	0.771	H6	Not Supported

\*p < 0.1; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\*p < 0.01 (one-tailed test).

**CONCLUSION**

This study validated the constructs and sub-constructs used to assess the factors influencing the purchase intention of artisan tea blends in e-commerce, confirming both their reliability and validity. The findings indicate that personal characteristics, cultural perceptions, and trust endorsements are key drivers of consumer behavior in this niche market. In Indonesia, where artisan tea blends are a relatively new product following their success in Western markets, personal characteristics significantly impact purchase intention. Consumers with substantial knowledge and experience related to artisan tea blends, including awareness of their health benefits, historical importance, and involvement in tea-related activities, are more likely to have a strong intention to purchase these products online. This suggests that effective marketing strategies should highlight the tea-making process, history, and proper brewing techniques to appeal to these consumers. However, the study revealed a negative response to perceived usefulness. Typically, consumers who find an online platform useful are more likely to make purchases (Moslehpour et al., 2018). The unexpected result implies that, while consumers may acknowledge the convenience and variety offered by e-commerce platforms, these factors might detract from the perceived value, authenticity, and quality they seek in artisan tea blends. This consumer segment appears to prioritize a more personalized, culturally connected, and premium shopping experience over the convenience and diversity typical of e-commerce. Although perceived usefulness and ease of use did not directly influence purchase intention in this study, they may still be significant in other contexts. In certain scenarios, these factors could act as mediators, offering different insights than when treated as direct predictors (Moslehpour et al., 2018). Furthermore, consumers might use online platforms for research rather than purchases, suggesting that finding a platform useful doesn't necessarily translate to purchase intent (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). The findings highlight that businesses can attract informed consumers by emphasizing cultural stories around artisan tea blends, offering educational content, ensuring a shopping experience aligned with consumer preferences, and building trust through endorsements and certifications. Marketers should adopt a targeted approach, focusing on these unique selling points to stand out in the competitive e-commerce market. Additionally, policymakers should support the artisan tea industry by implementing favorable policies, ensuring consumer protection, and fostering economic growth. Certification bodies need to strengthen oversight to maintain the safety and quality of artisan tea blends sold online.

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