International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies
Vol.17, No.2, pp.49-80, 2026
doi: 10.7903/ijecs.2676

UNRAVELING CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE PURCHASE INTENTION DRIVERS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

In the context of digital transformation and globalization, cross-border e-commerce has become a key driver of international trade, especially in developing markets such as Vietnam. This study surveys 356 Vietnamese consumers to investigate factors affecting cross-border e-commerce purchase intention. Drawing on an integrated theoretical framework comprising Social Identity Theory (SIT), the Information Acceptance Model (IAM), and the Hierarchy of Effects Model (HOE), the study examines the roles of country of origin, product involvement, consumer ethnocentrism, online review quality, brand image, perceived product quality, and consumer attitude. PLS-SEM analysis confirms most hypotheses, with perceived product quality and consumer attitude emerging as key mediators. Notably, consumer ethnocentrism shows no significant effect, reflecting a generational shift in Vietnamese cross-border purchasing behavior. These findings have practical implications for businesses, policymakers, and platform operators seeking to optimize consumer engagement in cross-border e-commerce.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Cross-border E-commerce; PLS-SEM; Purchase Intention; Vietnam.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the expansion of international cooperation, cross-border e-commerce is increasingly asserting its significant role in the global economy. The growth of cross-border e-commerce has broken down barriers between countries and territories, promoting the development of borderless trade and contributing to the development of the world economy [1]. Global cross-border e-commerce reached approximately 1.6 trillion USD in 2023 and is projected to exceed 3.3 trillion USD by 2028, reflecting compound annual growth of 107% globally in the period 2023-2028 [2]. In Vietnam, consumer demand for foreign products through cross-border e-commerce platforms has been increasing, especially in large cities where consumers have high living standards and technology literacy.

The development of cross-border e-commerce brings many benefits to both customers and businesses. For businesses, cross-border e-commerce enables easy access to foreign markets through global connections with local markets. For customers, the benefits include reduced transaction costs, expanded product variety, and lower prices through market competition [3]. However, cross-border e-commerce also faces notable challenges, such as variable digital service quality, delayed deliveries, and inadequate return policies [4]. These advantages and disadvantages can both directly and indirectly affect customers' purchasing intentions.

Based on previous studies, consumers' cross-border online purchasing intentions are not only influenced by price or convenience, but also by many different psychological and contextual factors, including trust in product and service providers, perceived risk, perceptions of product quality, opportunity costs, and geographical distance [5, 6, 7]. Three interrelated research gaps motivate the present study. First, prior studies have largely examined individual antecedents of purchase intention in isolation, leaving the combined cognitive, informational, and attitudinal mechanisms that jointly drive cross-border decisions underexplored [5, 6, 7]. Second, the mechanisms through which country-level signals and online information cues translate into purchase behavior via attitudinal mediators remain insufficiently theorized in the Vietnamese context, where rapid platform adoption coincides with shifting generational attitudes toward foreign products [8, 9]. Third, the boundary conditions of consumer ethnocentrism in digitally mediated cross-border commerce have not been empirically examined in Vietnam, despite growing

debate about the contingent nature of identity-based resistance to foreign goods in e-commerce environments [10, 11, 12].

To address these gaps, the study is guided by three research questions.

- **RQ1:** What cognitive and informational antecedents jointly influence perceived product quality and consumer attitude in Vietnamese cross-border e-commerce?
- **RQ2:** Through which attitudinal mediation pathways do country-level signals, product involvement, online review quality, and brand image translate into purchase intention?
- **RQ3:** Does consumer ethnocentrism retain a significant inhibitory effect on cross-border purchase intention and perceived product quality among Vietnamese consumers?

Guided by these questions, the study pursues four objectives. *First*, it identifies and measures the cognitive and informational factors that influence perceived product quality and consumer attitude toward cross-border e-commerce. *Second*, it examines the mediation roles of perceived product quality and consumer attitude in transmitting upstream antecedent effects on purchase intention. *Third*, it assesses whether consumer ethnocentrism remains a significant behavioral barrier in the Vietnamese digital cross-border context. *Fourth*, it derives theoretically grounded recommendations for businesses, platform operators, and policymakers operating in this market.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews theoretical foundations and develops hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents quantitative findings and discusses them in relation to the three research questions. Section 5 provides practical and managerial recommendations, theoretical contributions, and directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

2.1 Cross-border E-commerce

Cross-border e-commerce is a business model that involves commercial activities on e-commerce platforms by transacting parties from different countries, relying on cross-

border logistics to complete physical distribution and other related transaction processes [5, 13, 14]. Put simply, this is the selling of goods and services online to consumers in other countries through online platforms or stores. Cross-border e-commerce can thus be defined as an international trade model in which the signing, transactions, and payments of goods between commercial entities in different regions and countries are carried out through cross-border e-commerce platforms [1].

2.2 Theoretical Background

Social Identity Theory (SIT), put forth by Tajfel & Turner [15], suggests that pro-in-group and out-group behavior stems from each individual's self-definition through belonging to one or more social groups. In the context of cross-border e-commerce, ethnocentric consumers tend to buy domestic goods because they believe that doing so protects the national economy, which negatively affects attitudes and intentions to purchase cross-border [11, 16]. The effects of country of origin also stem from national stereotypes and bias toward internal social groups [17].

The Information Acceptance Model (IAM) explains individuals' information-receiving behavior, focusing on the influence of information reliability and quality in shaping behavioral intentions in technology-mediated environments [18]. In online purchasing, users leverage social information-sharing tools such as online reviews, feedback systems, comments, and reputation ratings to evaluate the credibility of information [19, 20, 21]. This helps customers authenticate product and service information provided by sellers, and refer to the choices of previous users to facilitate their purchasing decisions.

The Hierarchy of Effects (HOE) model describes the process by which consumers receive and respond to information, progressing from cognition and attitude through to actual purchasing behavior [22]. Cognition is reflected in a consumer's thoughts, beliefs, or understanding about a product's attributes, characteristics, and benefits [22, 23]. The emotional phase refers to the formation of consumers' attitudes and emotions toward the product and its distribution platform [24, 25]. Ultimately, behavior reflects consumers' implementation intentions or actual purchasing actions, completing the full cognition-attitude-behavior sequence [22]. Previous research indicates a positive relationship between the level of consumer engagement and cognitive involvement, and also a strong correlation between engagement and purchase intention in cross-border e-commerce [26].

2.3 Research Model and Hypotheses

Country of origin can be defined as a consumer's overall assessment of the country of origin of a product brand, based on information received from various sources [27, 28, 29]. Perceptions of a country may be shaped by variables such as representative products, economic and political development, historical events, traditions, and technological proficiency [30, 31]. When consumers lack detailed information about a product, they often make evaluative inferences about product characteristics based on their perception of the country of manufacture [31]. Accordingly, products associated with a positive national reputation provide consumers with a reliable and stable reference base from which to evaluate product quality [32, 33, 34]. Therefore:

> **H1: Country of origin (COO) has a positive impact on perceived product quality (PQ).**

Nguyen et al. [8] argued that when lacking specific information about a product or unfamiliar with the brand, customers often rely on existing country impressions to associate each nation and its products with certain characteristics. These results are consistent with the cognitive view supported by Witek-Hajduk and Grudecka [35], who point out that product origin is an external factor in consumers' information processing with the potential to influence purchase intentions. When a country projects a positive image, consumers tend to appreciate the overall quality of products from that country, and their purchasing intention increases accordingly [33, 34]. Kartikasari [9], drawing on a cross-border e-commerce context in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region, similarly found that consumer behavior toward domestic versus foreign products varies by product category, suggesting that country-of-origin effects are context-sensitive. Therefore:

> **H2: Country of origin (COO) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).**

Product involvement refers to the degree of relevance that consumers feel about a product, based on personal needs, preferences, and values [36]. The higher the level of involvement with a product, the more likely consumers are to seek detailed information [37]. A high level of involvement can result from consumers accumulating information and knowledge about a product category, and can also motivate further learning [38]. Therefore:

H3: Product involvement (PI) has a positive impact on perceived product quality (PQ).

Previous research has emphasized that product involvement plays a crucial role in consumer behavior because the level of interest affects the complexity and depth of cognitive processing in purchasing decisions [39]. When involvement is high, a strong correlation between engagement, attitude, and purchase intention emerges [26, 39, 40]. When consumers actively seek information, compare quality, and consider options, their purchase intention is likely to increase [41]. Therefore:

H4: Product involvement (PI) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

Consumer ethnocentrism is characterized by a strong belief in one's cultural traditions and values as superior to those of other cultural groups [10, 11, 42]. According to Huddleston et al. [16], ethnocentric consumers believe that buying imported products is harmful to the domestic economy. Research on participants from multiple countries shows that ethnocentrism influences perceived product quality, with nationalist tendencies varying by nationality and cultural relativism [42]. This influence is often negative, as ethnocentrism reflects biased attitudes toward one's own culture. Therefore:

H5: Consumer ethnocentrism (CE) has a negative impact on perceived product quality (PQ).

Consumer ethnocentrism strongly influences cross-border purchasing intentions, although its impact may differ between developed and emerging markets. In cross-border trade, ethnocentrism can cause consumers to underestimate foreign products and prioritize domestic purchases [11]. The relationship between consumer nationalism and foreign product purchase intentions is negative across multiple market studies [12, 43]. Therefore:

H6: Consumer ethnocentrism (CE) has a negative impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

Online review quality is defined as the content quality of a review from the perspective of information characteristics such as relevance, understandability, completeness, and objectivity [20, 44]. The usefulness of these reviews for purchasing decisions depends on factors such as reliability, content quality, language clarity, and transparency, and does not rely on emotional factors alone [20, 21, 45]. Han & Han [46] showed that online

review quality directly affects review usefulness, which in turn positively affects consumers' purchase intention on cross-border e-commerce platforms. High-quality online reviews help ease cross-border consumers' worries by providing transparent, clear, and trustworthy information, consistent with the information-quality principles of the IAM [18]. Therefore:

H7: Online review quality (RQL) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

Online reviews with stronger argument quality tend to be more trustworthy and exert a greater influence on consumer attitudes than reviews with weak argument quality [47, 48]. The quality of online product assessments and the value of individual reviews are crucial in determining customer attitudes [49]. Furthermore, the balance between positive and negative reviews, the consistency of information, and the order in which reviews appear can influence how consumers evaluate their usefulness, thereby shaping consumer attitudes [48]. Dat et al. [50] demonstrated that online information cues and social signals significantly shape platform engagement and purchase decisions among Generation Z consumers, reinforcing the central role of information quality in e-commerce contexts. Therefore:

H8: Online review quality (RQL) has a positive impact on consumer attitude (CA).

Brand image refers to the perception, impression, and reputation of a brand in consumers' minds and among the public [51, 52]. Brand image is considered a primary factor directly influencing purchase intention in online purchasing environments [53, 54]. When purchasing a new product, consumers often rely on brand image to make inferences about product quality [55]. Furthermore, consumers are more likely to purchase online products from established brands, as a good brand image has a positive impact on purchase intention [56]. Therefore:

H9: Brand image (BI) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

A brand is not simply a logo, name, symbol, or label, but also an impression left in consumers' thoughts and emotions, creating specific meanings and experiences. An excellent brand image can unconsciously influence consumers' purchasing attitudes [52]. Previous studies have demonstrated that this influence is significant and positive. In the

context of e-commerce, brand image also indirectly affects purchase intention through consumer attitudes [57]. Lim et al. [58], applying Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation to gamified e-commerce settings, similarly find that brand awareness exerts the strongest influence on purchase intention among the factors examined. Therefore:

H10: Brand image (BI) has a positive impact on consumer attitude (CA).

Perceived product quality refers to assessments of the overall excellence or superiority of a product [59]. In the e-commerce context, quality perception plays a particularly important role for buyers due to information asymmetry related to product quality [7]. As a result, rational consumers are more likely to favor foreign products that offer guaranteed quality and safety. Firjatillah et al. [60] indicate that perceived product quality not only influences consumer attitudes but also stimulates electronic word-of-mouth behavior, which in turn affects consumers' purchase decisions on e-commerce platforms. Consumers who have positive experiences with a high-quality product frequently share positive reviews, which further influence the attitudes of other consumers. Therefore:

H11: Perceived product quality (PQ) has a positive impact on consumer attitude (CA).

Many previous studies have confirmed the relationship between perceived product quality and purchase intention, initially focusing on domestic or traditional commercial products. In recent years, research on product quality perception has increased significantly in e-commerce, especially in cross-border e-commerce [7, 61]. Most studies suggest that positive perceptions of product quality will enhance consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore:

H12: Perceived product quality (PQ) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude is one of the three most important determinants of behavioral intention, referring to the extent to which an individual evaluates a behavior as positive or negative [62]. Consumer attitudes encompass perceptions toward purchasing behavior, products, sellers, and other elements relating to cross-border e-commerce; the more positive the attitude toward a behavior, the stronger the individual's intention to engage in that behavior [63]. Many studies in Vietnam and around the world have confirmed the positive relationship between consumer attitudes and cross-border e-commerce purchase intention [4, 40, 61].

Therefore:

H13: Consumer attitude (CA) has a positive impact on consumers' cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI).

Figure 1 presents the proposed research model integrating SIT, IAM, and HOE. The model positions perceived product quality and consumer attitude as mediating constructs connecting upstream antecedents (country of origin, product involvement, ethnocentrism, online review quality, and brand image) to cross-border e-commerce purchase intention. No single theory is sufficient to account for the full range of drivers operating in cross-border e-commerce contexts. SIT alone addresses identity-based motivations but does not explain how online information shapes product evaluation. IAM captures information processing but omits the broader social identity signals embedded in country-of-origin cues. HOE provides the structural sequence from cognition through behavior and attitude, but does not specify which cognitive inputs activate that sequence. The three theories are therefore complementary rather than redundant. SIT explains why country-of-origin perceptions and ethnocentrism operate as cognitive inputs that activate in-group/out-group distinctions. IAM explains how online review quality functions as an informational signal that consumers evaluate for credibility and usefulness. HOE then provides the overarching process architecture within which these inputs translate sequentially into perceived product quality, consumer attitude, and ultimately purchase intention. This integrative logic is reflected in Figure 1 and motivates the hypothesis structure of the study.

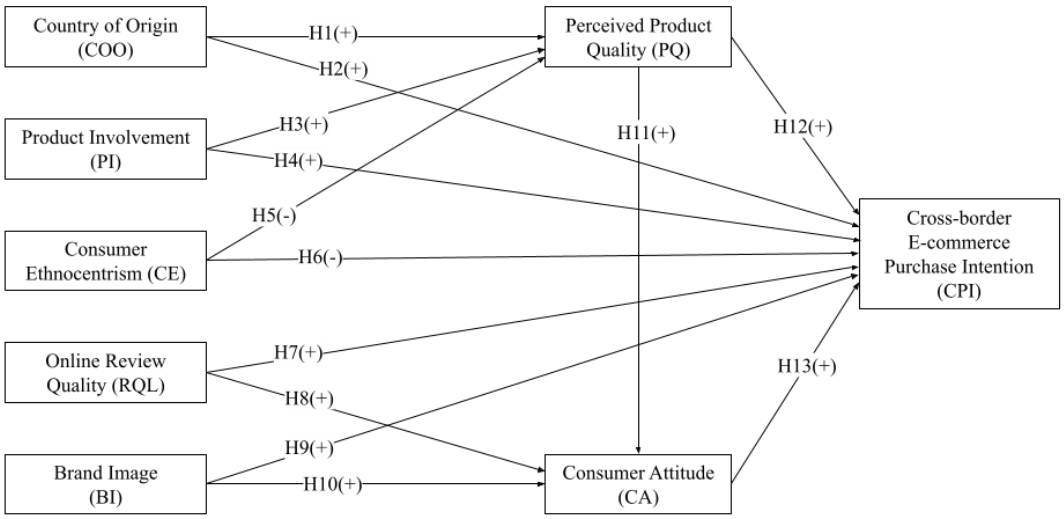

Figure 1. Proposed research model

Source: The authors proposed

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design supported by a structured scale development process. Prior to the quantitative survey, a literature-based scale development phase was undertaken, in which existing measurement instruments were reviewed, adapted, and validated through expert review and pilot testing. This preliminary phase does not constitute a full qualitative methodology but provides the systematic groundwork for the quantitative instruments used in the study. Based on previous studies, scales were developed with 8 latent variables and 35 observed variables, specifically: Country Of Origin (COO, 5 items); Product Involvement (PI, 5 items); Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE, 4 items); Brand Image (BI, 5 items); Online Review Quality (RQL, 4 items); Perceived Product Quality (PQ, 4 items); Consumer Attitude (CA, 4 items); and Cross-border E-commerce Purchase Intention (CPI, 4 items). All items and their sources are listed in the Appendix. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used to measure the main items in the questionnaire. A draft questionnaire was sent to 10 experts and potential respondents to check the appropriateness of the statements, spelling, and relevance. A pilot survey on a small sample of 20 respondents was also conducted, and feedback was incorporated before the official survey launch.

The authors conducted a face-to-face and online survey (via Google Form) with respondents who met the following criteria: (1) aged 18 to 60; (2) resided in Vietnam; and (3) had made a cross-border e-commerce purchase in the last 3 months. A convenience sampling method was used. Regarding sample size, following Cohen [64], the minimum sample size for a PLS-SEM model was determined to be 137. Following Kock & Hadaya [65], the sample size with PLS-SEM should exceed the square of 2.48 divided by the smallest path coefficient; given that the smallest significant path coefficient is 0.136, the appropriate minimum sample size is 333. The research team collected 400 samples to minimize sampling error and ensure input data quality. After screening, 356 samples were eligible for official analysis, with 44 responses eliminated due to invalid response patterns. Sample information is listed in Table 1.

To address common method bias (CMB), the study used procedural remedies, including

anonymous questionnaire administration and a mix of positively and negatively worded items. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its wide applicability and ability to ensure high reliability in model analysis, as well as its advantage in handling formative measurement models without requiring large sample sizes [64, 65, 66]. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0. This study employed reliability analysis with Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), convergent validity, discriminant validity with the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), and structural equation modeling.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the study sample (N=356)

Criteria	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	235	66.01
	Male	121	33.99
Age	18-21	134	37.64
	22-29	116	32.58
	30-39	72	20.22
	40-49	26	7.30
	50-60	8	2.25
Occupation	Student	116	32.58
	Office staff	112	31.46
	Government employee	34	9.55
	Business owner	42	11.80
	Freelancer	26	7.30
	Other	26	7.30
Education	College/University (studying)	108	30.34
	College/University (graduated)	176	49.44
	Postgraduate	35	9.83
	Other	37	10.39

Criteria	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monthly income	< 5 million VND	15	4.21
	5 - < 10 million VND	96	26.97
	10 - < 20 million VND	111	31.18
	20 - 30 million VND	83	23.31
	> 30 million VND	51	14.33
Monthly CBEC expenditure	< 200,000 VND	36	10.11
	200,000 - < 500,000 VND	43	12.08
	500,000 - < 1 million VND	85	23.88
	1 million - < 2 million VND	88	24.72
	2 million - < 5 million VND	65	18.26
	≥ 5 million VND	39	10.96

Source: The authors analyzed and compiled

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Quantitative Research Results

Reliability and Convergence

Observed variables are considered quality when outer loadings are greater than or equal to 0.708 [66]. Through the analysis process, observed variable PI3 (0.607) was eliminated due to ineligibility; the remaining variables all met the required threshold. The reliability of the scale was evaluated based on Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.815 to 0.906 and CR values range from 0.878 to 0.934, both exceeding the threshold of 0.7 [66]. The average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeds 0.5, meeting the standard for convergent validity [66]. All variables satisfy these standards, and no further elimination was necessary.

Table 2. Reliability and convergence results

	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
BI	0.886	0.917	0.688
CA	0.854	0.901	0.695
CE	0.815	0.878	0.644
COO	0.877	0.911	0.671
CPI	0.874	0.914	0.726
PI	0.869	0.911	0.718
PQ	0.906	0.934	0.780
RQL	0.839	0.892	0.674

Source: The authors analyzed

Discriminant Validity

To evaluate discriminant validity, the study uses two methods simultaneously. Fornell and Larcker [67] suggested that discriminant validity is guaranteed when the square root of the AVE of each latent variable exceeds all correlation coefficients between other latent variables. Additionally, with the HTMT index, a value below 0.9 satisfies the discriminant validity requirement [68]. Tables 3 and 4 show that all factors ensure discrimination.

Table 3. Results of assessing discrimination according to Fornell-Larcker

	BI	CA	CE	COO	CPI	PI	PQ	RQL
BI	**0.829**							
CA	0.663	**0.834**						
CE	-0.173	-0.194	**0.802**					
COO	0.432	0.495	-0.318	**0.819**				
CPI	0.600	0.685	-0.326	0.651	**0.852**			
PI	0.425	0.512	-0.325	0.538	0.682	**0.847**		
PQ	0.412	0.557	-0.336	0.698	0.695	0.719	**0.883**	
RQL	0.514	0.623	-0.125	0.345	0.520	0.310	0.294	**0.821**

Note: The square root of the AVE of each variable is shown in bold

Source: The authors analyzed

Table 4. Results of evaluating discrimination according to HTMT

	BI	CA	CE	COO	CPI	PI	PQ	RQL
BI								
CA	0.760							
CE	0.202	0.231						
COO	0.489	0.571	0.374					
CPI	0.680	0.789	0.384	0.740				
PI	0.483	0.593	0.386	0.617	0.779			
PQ	0.460	0.633	0.391	0.782	0.777	0.810		
RQL	0.592	0.735	0.151	0.401	0.605	0.361	0.336	

Source: The authors analyzed

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The study uses the Bootstrapping method (n = 5,000) to perform model testing. The R^2 coefficients of perceived product quality (PQ), consumer attitude (CA), and cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI) are 0.655, 0.625, and 0.706, respectively, indicating that the independent variables explain 65.5%, 62.5%, and 70.6% of the variance in these constructs. All inner VIF values are less than 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity [66].

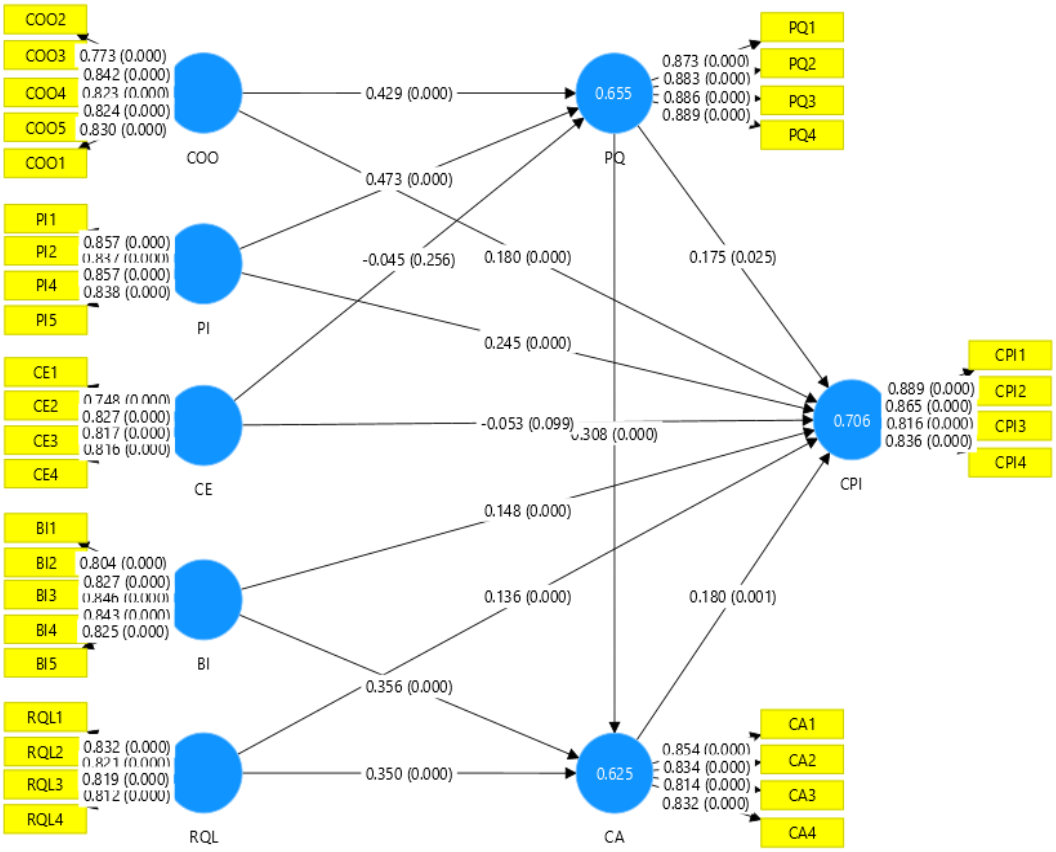

Figure 2. Structural model testing results

Source: The authors analyzed

Table 5 presents the results of evaluating the impact of relationships between variables. The paths CE→PQ (p = 0.241) and CE→CPI (p = 0.101), corresponding to hypotheses H5 and H6, are not statistically significant as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold. All remaining impact relationships are significant ($p < 0.05$). The standardized regression coefficients (Original Sample) indicate the strength and direction of the relationships. The variance accounted for (VAF) was calculated to quantify mediation. PQ mediates the effect of COO on CPI (VAF = 29%) and PI on CPI (VAF = 25%), indicating partial mediation. CA mediates the effect of BI on CPI (VAF = 30%) and RQL on CPI (VAF = 31%), also indicating partial mediation.

Table 5. Path coefficients and hypothesis testing results

Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	p-Values	Decision
BI → CA	0.356	9.046	0.000	Accepted
BI → CPI	0.148	3.532	0.000	Accepted
CA → CPI	0.180	3.531	0.000	Accepted
CE → CPI	-0.053	1.640	0.101	Rejected
CE → PQ	-0.045	1.173	0.241	Rejected
COO → CPI	0.180	3.644	0.000	Accepted
COO → PQ	0.429	12.222	0.000	Accepted
PI → CPI	0.245	4.732	0.000	Accepted
PI → PQ	0.473	13.036	0.000	Accepted
PQ → CA	0.308	8.492	0.000	Accepted
PQ → CPI	0.175	2.309	0.021	Accepted
RQL → CA	0.350	7.762	0.000	Accepted
RQL → CPI	0.136	3.623	0.000	Accepted

Source: The authors analyzed and concluded

Among the independent variables, two have a positive impact on PQ: PI (β = 0.473) and COO (β = 0.429). Three variables positively influence CA: BI (β = 0.356), RQL (β = 0.350), and PQ (β = 0.308). Six variables significantly affect CPI: PI (β = 0.245), COO (β = 0.180), CA (β = 0.180), PQ (β = 0.175), BI (β = 0.148), and RQL (β = 0.136).

4.2 Discussion

The research results show significant similarities and differences compared to previous studies and clearly reflect the characteristics of the cross-border e-commerce context in Vietnam.

Country of origin (COO) and product involvement (PI) both have a positive impact on perceived product quality (PQ), supporting H1 and H3. This is consistent with previous studies [27, 29, 31, 35, 33]. Products from countries with a positive image are perceived as higher in quality. At the same time, when the level of consumer involvement is high,

the process of perceiving and evaluating product quality becomes more complex and comprehensive [38]. In Vietnam, consumers often associate each country with certain product characteristics, thereby forming evaluations based on origin [8, 17]. This finding is also consistent with Kartikasari's work [9], which demonstrates that origin-related signals consistently inform consumer product judgments across Southeast Asian e-commerce markets.

Online review quality (RQL), brand image (BI), and perceived product quality (PQ) all have a positive impact on consumer attitude (CA), supporting H8, H10, and H11. This is consistent with studies by Lee and Ro [49], Lin and Chuang [57], and Park and Kim [45] and Saktiawan et al. [56]. In a cross-border e-commerce environment, quality online reviews, reputable brands, and positive product perceptions strengthen trust, create favorable attitudes, and drive purchasing behavior. In Vietnam, consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and international brands when purchasing through cross-border e-commerce platforms [19, 21, 44, 46]. The role of online information cues in shaping purchase decisions among young consumers has been further confirmed by Dat et al. [50] in the IJECS, where social signals and platform-mediated trust were shown to drive digital commerce engagement. The role of brand awareness in shaping purchase intention through attitude has also been confirmed in the IJECS by Lim et al. [58], who found that brand awareness was the strongest driver of purchase intention in a gamified digital commerce setting, underscoring the broader relevance of brand-related signals.

Hypotheses H5 and H6 are rejected. Consumer ethnocentrism shows no significant impact on perceived product quality (CE → PQ) or cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CE → CPI). This is contrary to some prior studies [10, 11, 12, 42, 43] but consistent with Nguyen et al. [8]. In the Vietnamese context, particularly if the sample is dominated by younger consumers, the role of ethnocentrism in cross-border e-commerce purchasing behavior has diminished significantly. This reflects a generational shift in awareness and consumption attitudes among young Vietnamese consumers in the context of extensive international integration. While the "Vietnamese people use Vietnamese products" campaign has promoted ethnocentrism among some segments, cross-border e-commerce products, particularly those from China, that offer attractive prices, acceptable quality, fast shipping, and diverse designs exert a strong pull on purchase intention. This finding also resonates with Kartikasari [9], who noted that the effect of ethnocentrism on foreign product behavior varies considerably by product category, suggesting the need for

context-specific analysis. From a theoretical standpoint, this result has implications for the applicability of SIT in digital cross-border consumption contexts. SIT predicts that in-group favoritism should suppress foreign product purchasing; however, the anonymity and algorithmic mediation of e-commerce platforms may attenuate the salience of national identity during online transactions. When consumers interact with products primarily through images, reviews, and price signals rather than through visible national markers, group boundaries become less cognitively accessible, weakening the mechanism through which ethnocentrism operates. Contextual factors such as platform price competitiveness, product category novelty, and the perceived quality-price ratio of foreign goods may further override identity-based resistance, particularly among younger cohorts who exhibit greater cosmopolitan orientation. These considerations point toward a contingent view of SIT applicability, one in which the theory's predictive power varies as a function of platform type, product involvement, and consumer generational cohort.

Country of origin (COO), product involvement (PI), online review quality (RQL), and brand image (BI) all have positive effects on cross-border purchase intention, supporting H2, H4, H7, and H9. Among these, product involvement (PI) ($\beta = 0.245$) is the strongest factor influencing consumers' purchase decisions. This means that when customers feel highly interested in a product [36], they have a higher tendency to make cross-border purchases. These results are consistent with previous studies [20, 29, 33, 41, 44, 55]. Businesses seeking to promote cross-border shopping behavior should focus simultaneously on building brand image, improving online review quality, establishing clear product origin, and especially increasing customer interest and attachment to the product.

Perceived product quality (PQ) and consumer attitude (CA) both have a positive influence on cross-border e-commerce purchase intention (CPI), supporting H12 and H13. This result is consistent with studies by Ma et al. [7], and Natalia and Dewi [63], which found that perceived product quality and positive consumer attitude both contribute to cross-border purchase intention. In the Vietnamese market context, consumers tend to choose products with evident quality and good reviews from previous buyers. These findings confirm that improving product quality and building positive customer attitudes not only strengthen domestic purchase intentions but also robustly promote cross-border shopping on contemporary e-commerce platforms [61]. Firjatillah et al. [60] further demonstrate that high perceived quality stimulates electronic word-of-mouth, amplifying these effects

across e-commerce ecosystems.

Taken together, the findings provide direct answers to the three research questions. Addressing RQ1, product involvement and country of origin are the dominant cognitive antecedents of perceived product quality, while online review quality, brand image, and PQ jointly shape consumer attitude, confirming that cognitive elaboration and informational signaling are both necessary within the HOE sequence. Addressing RQ2, partial mediation through PQ and CA reveals a dual-pathway structure in which upstream antecedents exert both direct and attitude-mediated effects on purchase intention. Addressing RQ3, the non-significance of consumer ethnocentrism on both PQ and CPI confirms that identity-based resistance to foreign goods has substantially diminished, suggesting that platform-mediated anonymity and price-quality trade-offs override in-group favoritism under current market conditions.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Practical and Managerial Implications

For cross-border e-commerce companies, the path coefficient results suggest a clear prioritization of managerial investment. Product involvement ($\beta = 0.245$) is the strongest direct predictor of purchase intention, indicating that deepening consumer engagement with the product should be the primary strategic focus. Sellers should invest in immersive product presentation formats such as short-form video, interactive 360-degree imagery, and live commerce demonstrations, which raise perceived involvement before purchase. Country of origin ($\beta = 0.180$ on CPI; $\beta = 0.429$ on PQ) represents the second lever, suggesting that clear, visible origin labelling and targeted communication of sourcing country reputation can meaningfully shift perceived quality and purchase likelihood. Brand image ($\beta = 0.148$ on CPI; $\beta = 0.356$ on CA) should be cultivated through consistent visual identity across platforms and authentic partnerships with local key opinion leaders. Experiential videos, high-quality images, and verified reviews from real users can help increase consumer engagement and understanding [37, 41]. Beyond activities on e-commerce platforms, increasing brand recognition on social networks, websites, and mobile applications, combined with local key opinion consumers, will help improve conversion rates.

For cross-border e-commerce platforms, prioritizing online review quality is a critical

recommendation, given its significant effect on both attitude and purchase intention. Filtering and displaying comprehensive, authentic, and verified reviews from real buyers will help consumers feel more confident. Platforms may also consider integrating AI-driven recommendation algorithms that personalize product suggestions based on browsing and purchase history to shorten decision time. Enhancing user experience is equally important; cross-border e-commerce platforms should develop user-friendly interfaces, smart search engines, detailed product filters, and multilingual customer support. For state management agencies, completing the legal framework for cross-border e-commerce and strengthening inspection and supervision of cross-border e-commerce activities are urgent priorities. A clear legal corridor will help reduce risks and increase consumer confidence, while clear policies on product origin will also help consumers assess product quality more effectively.

For individual consumers, improving the ability to evaluate the authenticity and reliability of reviews on online channels is essential. Online review quality positively influences both attitude and purchase intention, so consumers should focus on reviewing previous user feedback, making multi-dimensional comparisons, and limiting emotional decisions. Building the habit of prioritizing products with clear origins, especially from countries with a strong reputation for product quality, enables better choices and reduces exposure to deceptive marketing.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions. The integrated use of SIT, IAM, and HOE offers a more complete account of the cognitive-affective-behavioral sequence driving cross-border purchase decisions than any single theory provides. First, the study supports the applicability of HOE as an organizing framework for cross-border e-commerce purchase intention in a developing market context, confirming that the cognition-attitude-behavior sequence operates in digital international commerce as in traditional retail settings and extending HOE beyond its original advertising domain. This validation is particularly significant given that HOE was originally developed to explain how advertising exposure progresses from awareness through affect to purchase behavior. Applying it to cross-border e-commerce shows that the same sequential logic governs digitally mediated international consumption, where country-of-origin cues and product involvement activate cognitive processing, online reviews and brand signals shape

affective evaluations, and attitude then converts to behavioral intention. The model therefore has broader applicability as a meta-framework for e-commerce consumer behavior research in emerging markets.

Second, the non-significance of consumer ethnocentrism qualifies SIT's predictive scope: identity-based resistance to foreign goods is contingent on generational cohort and platform context, supporting a view in which platform anonymity and algorithmic mediation attenuate in-group favoritism. This finding advances a contingent rather than universal application of SIT: when consumers engage with products primarily through price signals, user-generated reviews, and algorithmic recommendations rather than through overt national markers, group-based identity cues become less salient and their inhibitory effect on purchase behavior diminishes. For SIT scholarship, this suggests that the theory's predictive power in consumption contexts is moderated by the degree to which national identity is made cognitively accessible during the shopping process.

Third, demonstrating that PQ and CA jointly mediate the effects of five antecedents maps the dual mediation architecture through which cross-border purchase decisions form, providing explanatory structure that multi-theory integration uniquely enables. Prior single-theory studies have typically identified one mediating pathway; the present model reveals that cognitive and affective mediation operate in parallel, with partial mediation confirming that antecedents also exert direct influence on purchase intention. This dual-pathway structure implies that interventions targeting either perceived quality or consumer attitude will have measurable downstream effects, and that the relative importance of each pathway may vary across product categories and cultural contexts.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study has several limitations that point toward future research directions. The convenience sampling method may limit representativeness; future studies should apply probability sampling and stratify by platform usage intensity or product category. The single-platform and single-country scope constrains generalizability; comparative studies across platform types and national contexts would clarify whether the attenuation of ethnocentrism reflects a Vietnam-specific pattern or a broader emerging-market trend. In particular, replicating this model across Southeast Asian markets with differing levels of digital infrastructure maturity and nationalist policy environments, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, would test whether the weakening of ethnocentrism is a

region-wide digital commerce phenomenon or reflects Vietnam's specific combination of rapid platform penetration and young demographic profile. Cross-national comparisons would also clarify the extent to which country-of-origin effects are amplified or diminished when the sourcing country carries historically contested associations. Furthermore, the current study relies on self-reported purchase intention rather than actual purchase behavior; future research using transaction-level data from platform partners would provide a more objective test of the model's predictive validity.

Several theoretically motivated extensions also deserve attention. Future studies could incorporate platform trust or perceived security as additional mediators to account for the risk dimension in cross-border transactions. The moderating role of digital literacy on the review quality-attitude pathway is an underexplored boundary condition given the variation in digital competency across Vietnamese consumer cohorts. Longitudinal designs would help determine whether the diminishing role of ethnocentrism reflects a stable structural shift or a temporary effect of current platform price competitiveness. The rapid growth of live-streaming and social commerce also suggests examining whether the involvement-intention pathway operates differently when product discovery occurs through algorithmic social feeds rather than intentional browsing. From a methodological standpoint, future research could employ mixed-methods designs combining PLS-SEM with qualitative interviews or eye-tracking experiments to unpack the cognitive processes underlying country-of-origin and involvement effects. Incorporating time-series or panel data would allow researchers to track how the relative influence of antecedents shifts as consumers accumulate cross-border shopping experience, providing a dynamic perspective that cross-sectional survey designs cannot offer.

Acknowledgments: The authors express their gratitude to the Posts and Telecommunications Institute of Technology (PTIT), Hanoi, Vietnam, for its valuable and supportive academic environment throughout this research project.

Disclosure statement: The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Data availability statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Variable and Source	Code	Item
Country of Origin (COO) - 5 items [28]; [29]; [31]; [33]	COO1	When purchasing high-value products, I always seek information about the country in which the product was manufactured.
	COO2	To ensure that I purchase the highest-quality product or brand, I routinely consider the country of origin of the product.
	COO3	I consider it important to seek information about a product's country of origin when making a purchase decision.
	COO4	When purchasing a product I have never encountered before, the country of origin is the first piece of information I take into account.
	COO5	I typically pay attention to the "Made in…" label on products.
Product Involvement (PI) - 5 items [26]; [36]; [40]; [41]	PI1	I often think about products that interest me, even when I have no immediate intention to purchase them.
	PI2	I tend to choose products that I perceive as compatible with my personal needs and preferences.
	PI3	I regularly take into account the opinions of friends and family members regarding cross-border e-commerce products.
	PI4	I am willing to invest a considerable amount of time in researching and deliberating about cross-border e-commerce products.
	PI5	I am willing to spend more money to purchase a product that I consider important or well-suited to my needs.
Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE) - 4 items	CE1	I believe we should only purchase products from abroad when they are unavailable domestically.
	CE2	In my view, Vietnamese consumers should only purchase products manufactured in Vietnam.

[8]; [10]; [11]; [12]	CE3	I believe Vietnamese consumers should refrain from purchasing foreign products, as doing so may harm domestic manufacturers and contribute to unemployment.
	CE4	I believe foreign products should be subject to heavy tariffs in order to restrict their importation into Vietnam.
Online Review Quality (RQL) - 4 items [20]; [46]; [47]; [44]	RQL1	Online reviews and comments influence my purchase decisions.
	RQL2	I find online reviews to be useful in my purchase evaluation process.
	RQL3	After reading product reviews, I tend to reconsider my intention to purchase that product.
	RQL4	I consider online reviews on e-commerce websites to be a reliable source of information.
Brand Image (BI) - 5 items [52]; [53]; [55]; [57]	BI1	I generally give priority to purchasing products from well-known brands.
	BI2	I prefer to purchase products from brands I am personally familiar with over those I am not.
	BI3	I tend to purchase products from brands associated with a positive image.
	BI4	I give priority to products from brands whose characteristics I can readily recall.
	BI5	I choose products from brands that are positively regarded by people in my social environment.
Perceived Product Quality (PQ) - 4 items [33]; [59]; [60]	PQ1	I believe that cross-border e-commerce products are capable of meeting my quality requirements.
	PQ2	I hold a favorable assessment of the quality of cross-border e-commerce products.
	PQ3	I believe the quality of cross-border e-commerce products is commensurate with their price.
	PQ4	I believe the quality of cross-border e-commerce products is continuously improving.

Variable and Source	Code	Item
Consumer Attitude (CA) - 4 items [4]; [61]; [62]; [63]	CA1	I find cross-border e-commerce activities to be appealing.
	CA2	I regard cross-border e-commerce shopping as a favorable mode of purchasing.
	CA3	Cross-border e-commerce enables me to conveniently access goods from multiple countries simultaneously.
	CA4	I believe cross-border e-commerce will become increasingly prevalent in the future.
Cross-Border E-Commerce Purchase Intention (CPI) - 4 items [5]; [6]; [44]	CPI1	I will seriously consider participating in cross-border e-commerce shopping.
	CPI2	I am willing to engage in cross-border e-commerce shopping.
	CPI3	I intend to shop regularly through cross-border e-commerce platforms in the future.
	CPI4	I have no hesitation in recommending cross-border e-commerce shopping to my family and friends.

Source: The authors proposed based on the previous research