



## THE ROLE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT PURCHASING OTOP E-COMMERCE PRODUCTS IN THAILAND: A STIMULUS-ORGANISM-RESPONSE APPROACH

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### Abstract

This study examines how user-generated content (UGC) influences Thai consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions toward OTOP products on e-commerce platforms. The research applies the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, integrated with the 4P marketing mix and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), to analyze the relationships between consumer perception (stimulus), attitude toward use (organism), and behavioral intention (response). A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected from 385 Thai consumers who have previously purchased OTOP products online. The questionnaire consisted of four sections covering demographic characteristics, consumer perception, attitude toward use, and purchase intention, measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and simple linear regression.

The results indicate that all key constructs, perception (mean = 3.84), attitude (mean = 3.81), and intention (mean = 3.81) are at a high level of agreement. Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between perception and attitude ( $r = 0.72$ ), attitude and intention ( $r = 0.78$ ), and perception and intention ( $r = 0.68$ ), all statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Regression analysis further confirmed that perception significantly influences attitude ( $\beta = 0.72$ ,  $R^2 = 0.52$ ), while attitude strongly predicts purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.78$ ,  $R^2 = 0.61$ ). UGC related to platform credibility, perceived price fairness, and product transparency plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing confidence in online purchasing. The findings highlight the significant role of UGC in strengthening consumer trust, improving attitudes toward e-commerce platforms, and increasing purchase intentions for OTOP products. This study provides practical implications for businesses and policymakers to leverage UGC strategies to enhance digital marketing effectiveness and promote sustainable growth of OTOP products in the e-commerce environment.

**Keywords:** User Generated Content, OTOP, Intention to use, E-commerce

### Introduction

The One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program was introduced in 2001 under the administration of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra as part of a broader national strategy to revitalize Thailand's economy following the 1997 Asian financial crisis. This crisis led to a sharp increase in poverty and inequality, alongside declines in employment, wages, and social welfare (Hewison, 2002). Although macroeconomic recovery began in the early 2000s, national output remained below pre-crisis levels,



necessitating structural interventions aimed at sustainable and inclusive growth (Thepchalerm & Ho, 2022).

In response, the OTOP initiative was designed to stimulate economic development by empowering local communities at the sub-district (tambon) level. The program encourages the production of unique, culturally embedded goods based on indigenous knowledge, local resources, and traditional craftsmanship (Tuamsuk et al., 2013). By promoting niche products tied to community identity, OTOP aims to generate income, create employment opportunities, strengthen local economies, and preserve cultural heritage (Rujiprak & Limprasert, 2020). These localized benefits are expected to contribute cumulatively to national economic growth. The Thai government established OTOP Centers nationwide to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and community entrepreneurs. These centers, in collaboration with relevant government agencies, provide assistance across the production cycle, including product development, quality control, packaging, and marketing (Phachi District Community Development Office, 2017). OTOP products are classified into five categories food, beverages, clothing, arts and souvenirs, and herbal products and are evaluated using a five-star rating system that reflects product quality and export potential (Abdourrahmane & Sukhabot, 2014). High-rated products receive enhanced support for both domestic and international market expansion.

Overall, the OTOP program has achieved moderate success. It has certified over 150,000 products from more than 80,000 businesses and has gained widespread national recognition (Akasarakul, 2017). Moreover, the initiative has played a significant role in preserving traditional knowledge and cultural practices that might otherwise have diminished over time (Rujiprak & Limprasert, 2020). Despite these achievements, critical challenges remain particularly in the context of digital transformation. In recent years, Thailand has experienced rapid growth in e-commerce adoption, supported by widespread internet access and high smartphone penetration. Platforms such as Shopee dominate online retail activity, reflecting consumers' familiarity with digital purchasing. However, OTOP businesses have not fully capitalized on this shift; specifically, empirical data indicate that a staggering 97.25% of OTOP sales still occur offline, with only 2.75% generated through online channels (Plongoon et al., 2025). Additionally, OTOP-related websites exhibit low user engagement, characterized by minimal traffic and short visitation durations. Structural limitations such as the absence of multilingual interfaces further restrict access to international consumers.

This disparity highlights a significant digital gap in the OTOP ecosystem. Key challenges include low online visibility due to weak social media presence and inadequate search engine optimization (SEO), limited consumer trust stemming from concerns about product authenticity and quality, brand fragmentation caused by the lack of a unified digital identity, and poor integration between inventory systems and online sales platforms. Collectively, these issues hinder the competitiveness of OTOP products in the digital marketplace. In contrast, Japan's One Village One Product (OVOP) model demonstrates more effective digital integration, supported by decentralized governance, stronger local funding, and direct-to-consumer marketing strategies. Compared to this model, Thailand's OTOP system remains relatively centralized, limiting the ability of



local communities to independently develop digital capabilities. Without targeted interventions, this structural imbalance may undermine the long-term sustainability of OTOP.

In response to these challenges, there is a clear need to develop a tailored e-commerce model. Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by examining consumer behavior within digital environments, with a particular focus on the role of user-generated content (UGC). Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, UGC is conceptualized as a key external stimulus that influences consumer cognition and emotional responses, ultimately shaping behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention. Specifically, online reviews, ratings, and social media content provide informational and social cues that affect consumer perceptions, attitudes, and trust toward OTOP products. By analyzing these relationships, this study aims to provide insights into how digital engagement strategies can enhance the effectiveness of OTOP e-commerce initiatives.

### Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of user-generated digital content on consumer perception and intention to use OTOP-branded products within the context of e-commerce. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework, this research conceptualizes user-generated content as a stimulus that shapes internal consumer evaluations (organism), which in turn influence behavioral intentions (response).

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Analyze the relationship between user-generated content and consumer perception of OTOP-branded products, as well as its influence on attitudes toward using digital marketplaces.
2. Examine the relationship between consumer attitudes toward using digital marketplaces and their intention to use such platforms for purchasing OTOP products.

### Scope of study

This study focuses on Thai consumers who purchase OTOP-branded products through e-commerce platforms. The survey collected responses from 385 individuals with actual online purchasing experience, ensuring that the data reflect relevant consumer perceptions and behaviors. Geographically, the study encompasses Thailand as a whole. Data was collected via an online survey, allowing responses from consumers across different regions. This approach provides a comprehensive perspective on how Thai consumers engage with OTOP products through e-commerce platforms and enables insights that can inform digital marketing strategies, enhance consumer engagement, and promote sustainable growth for OTOP enterprises in the online marketplace.



## Literature Review

The research framework in this study is based on established theories and prior findings, providing a solid foundation for the constructs used. The conceptual foundation integrates OTOP and e-commerce, the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, the Technology Acceptance Model, the 4P Marketing Mix, impulse buying theory, and user-generated content (UGC). These frameworks collectively explain how digital environments influence consumer perception and behavioral intention, particularly for OTOP products in Thailand. OTOP products face challenges in market access, scalability, and visibility due to their localized nature. To mitigate these barriers, e-commerce provides a strategic solution by enabling broader market reach and enhancing product competitiveness (Srisawat et al., 2021). Digital channels, including online catalogs, reviews, and social media, allow producers to engage consumers and leverage value co-creation, building trust and perceived authenticity (Liu et al., 2013). Successful adoption, however, depends on perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and digital literacy among local entrepreneurs (Iam-khong, 2023). Effective digital marketing through storytelling and high-quality visuals communicates cultural significance and differentiates OTOP products from mass-produced goods.

The S-O-R model explains how external stimuli shape internal states. Building upon this framework, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) further highlights how perceived usefulness and ease of use affect adoption. In the e-commerce context, these constructs translate into consumer evaluations of product authenticity, trust, and quality derived from interactions with UGC. Linking TAM with the S-O-R model provides a comprehensive understanding of how technology acceptance and digital stimuli jointly influence consumer behavior toward culturally significant OTOP products.

The 4P Marketing Mix product, price, place, and promotion further frames how marketing strategies impact consumer decisions (McCarthy, 1960). Product quality, authenticity, and design influence perceived value, while pricing affects affordability and trust. E-commerce platforms enhance product availability and convenience (place), and promotional strategies, including firm-generated and UGC content, drive awareness, credibility, and engagement. Impulse buying, defined as unplanned, emotionally driven purchases, is particularly relevant in online shopping where features such as one-click ordering, personalized recommendations, and flash sales accelerate the consumer decision process (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). For OTOP products, emotional and cultural resonance can trigger impulse purchases by providing immediate gratification and aesthetic or nostalgic appeal (Amos et al., 2014).

UGC is central to shaping consumer perceptions and decisions in digital environments. Reviews, ratings, social media posts, and testimonials provide authentic, credible insights that reduce uncertainty and increase trust (Kim & Johnson, 2016). In the context of OTOP, UGC compensates for the lack of standardized product information and enhances social proof, particularly for small, community-based brands (Hajli, 2015). By integrating UGC into digital marketing, OTOP producers can build reputations and foster engagement, transforming static listings into interactive, credible, and culturally rich experiences. Thailand's e-commerce ecosystem has rapidly

expanded, driven by internet penetration, smartphone usage, and government initiatives (Amornkitvikai et al., 2022). Platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, and Facebook Marketplace combine retail and interactive content, enabling producers to showcase products through live demonstrations and storytelling. Advancements in digital payment systems and logistics, including rural delivery, have further lowered entry barriers. Despite these developments, gaps in digital literacy, trust, and resources among local producers hinder full integration of OTOP into the digital economy.

Overall, the literature highlights the critical roles of digital platforms, UGC, consumer perception, and e-commerce strategies in influencing online purchasing behavior. By synthesizing these perspectives, this study provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how UGC affects consumer perception and purchase intention toward OTOP products in Thailand's digital marketplace.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, which provides a systematic approach to understanding how external factors influence internal psychological states and drive behavioral outcomes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the context of OTOP-branded products purchased through e-commerce platforms, this framework explains how consumer interactions with digital content shape perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions.

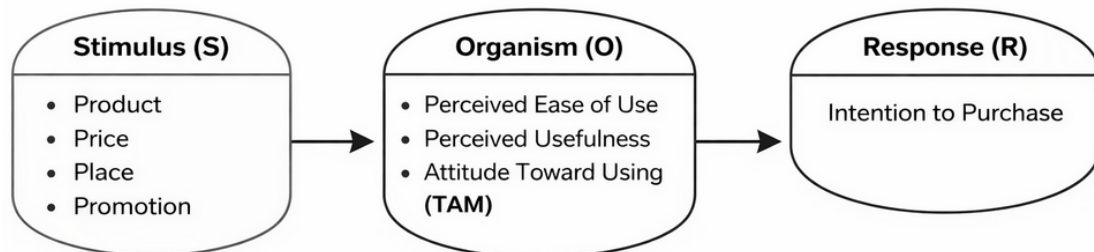


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Research Model

Within this framework, Stimulus (S) represents the external input, which in this study consists of digital content encountered by consumers online. This study places particular emphasis on user-generated content (UGC), such as reviews, testimonials, ratings, and social media discourse surrounding OTOP products. These stimuli influence consumer perceptions regarding product quality, authenticity, trustworthiness, and cultural value, serving as the environmental trigger that initiates the decision-making process. The Organism (O) component reflects the internal cognitive and emotional processing of the stimulus. In this research, it corresponds to consumers' attitudes toward using e-commerce platforms to purchase OTOP products, encompassing trust, comfort, and preference for online transactions. This stage captures how perceptions shaped by digital content are internalized and translated into psychological dispositions that guide behavior. The Response (R) represents the behavioral outcome, operationalized as the consumer's intention to use e-commerce platforms for purchasing OTOP-branded products. This stage reflects the likelihood



that consumers will act on their attitudes, providing a direct link between perception, internal evaluation, and online purchase behavior. By applying the S-O-R model, the study systematically examines the causal sequence from digital stimuli to consumer perception and attitude, culminating in purchase intention. This framework clarifies the psychological mechanisms underpinning consumer decisions in digital marketplaces, offering practical insights for optimizing online marketing strategies for OTOP products.

## Methodology

### Research Method/Instrument

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine Thai consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions toward purchasing OTOP products through e-commerce. Data were collected via an online survey targeting 385 consumers with prior OTOP purchase experience, selected using convenience sampling and determined by Cochran's formula for an unknown population. The structured questionnaire included demographics and measures of consumer perception, attitude, and intention to use, all on a 5-point Likert scale. Consumer perception focused on the influence of user-generated content on perceived quality, authenticity, and value. Attitude assessed opinions on e-commerce convenience and reliability, while intention to use measured repeat purchase and recommendation behaviors. Data were analyzed with statistical software using descriptive and inferential methods, including correlation and regression, to test the study hypotheses.

### Data analysis

The collected data were processed and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were first employed to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and the main features of the study variables. Pearson's Correlation was then used to examine the strength and direction of linear relationships between the independent and dependent variables. To assess the predictive influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable, Simple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted, allowing the development of a regression model for hypothesis testing. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, based on a pilot test with 30 individuals resembling the target population. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.74 exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instrument had high internal consistency. Overall, these statistical analyses provided a systematic approach to describe the data, explore relationships among variables, and test the study hypotheses. The combination of descriptive and inferential methods ensured both comprehensive understanding and valid interpretation of the research findings.

## The Results



**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Consumer Perception of OTOP Products**

Item Code	Item (Short Description)	Mean	SD	Interpretation
CS1	UGC increases confidence in purchasing OTOP products	3.77	1.09	Agree
CS2	Reviews/comments positively influence perception of OTOP products	3.83	1.01	Agree
CS3	Prices of OTOP products are fair	3.86	1.07	Agree
CS4	UGC helps judge price quality value of OTOP products	3.82	0.97	Agree
CS5	E-market platforms influence my OTOP purchasing decisions	3.90	0.98	Agree
CS6	I prefer platforms with more UGC for OTOP products	3.90	0.95	Agree
CS7	UGC promotions increase my likelihood of purchasing OTOP products	3.83	1.06	Agree
CS8	UGC is more convincing than official advertising	3.81	0.98	Agree

The results show that respondents generally agree that UGC positively influences their perception of OTOP products, including confidence in purchasing, price value judgments, platform choice, and persuasiveness compared to official advertising. The high mean scores from 3.77 to 3.90 underline a robust consumer consensus that UGC functions as a more credible source of information than official advertisements for OTOP products, with SDs around 1.0, indicating moderate variation.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Toward Using OTOP Products via E-Commerce**

Item Code	Item (Short Description)	Mean	SD	Interpretation
CS1	UGC increases confidence in purchasing OTOP products	3.77	1.09	Agree
CS2	Reviews/comments positively influence perception of OTOP products	3.83	1.01	Agree
CS3	Prices of OTOP products are fair	3.86	1.07	Agree
CS4	UGC helps judge price quality value of OTOP products	3.82	0.97	Agree



CS5	E-market platforms influence my OTOP purchasing decisions	3.90	0.98	Agree
CS6	I prefer platforms with more UGC for OTOP products	3.90	0.95	Agree
CS7	UGC promotions increase my likelihood of purchasing OTOP products	3.83	1.06	Agree
CS8	UGC is more convincing than official advertising	3.81	0.98	Agree

Respondents express generally positive attitudes toward using UGC when buying OTOP products online. UGC is perceived as useful, easy to use, and trustworthy, supporting confidence and comfort in online purchases. Mean scores range from 3.56 to 3.88, with SDs near 1.0.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Actual Use and Purchase Intention for OTOP Products**

Item Code	Item (Short Description)	Mean	SD	Interpretation
PI1	UGC increases willingness to try OTOP products for the first time	3.75	1.09	Agree
PI2	More likely to purchase OTOP online after seeing UGC	3.85	1.14	Agree
PI3	UGC leads to unplanned purchases of OTOP products	3.83	1.19	Agree
PI4	Interesting UGC makes me choose OTOP over originally planned items	3.80	1.13	Agree
PI5	Likely to remain loyal to OTOP products discovered through UGC	3.81	1.16	Agree
PI6	Likely to recommend OTOP products to others after seeing positive UGC	3.82	1.16	Agree

Positive UGC is associated with higher purchase intention, impulse buying, loyalty, and recommendations of OTOP products. Mean scores range from 3.75 to 3.85, and SDs from 1.09 to 1.19, reflecting moderate variation in respondents' behavioral tendencies influenced by UGC.

**Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Results for S-O-R Model Pathways**

Test	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	$\beta$ (Coeffi.)	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>	Hypothesis	F-Test	DW-Test
1	Attitude (O)	Perception (S)	0.72	<0.001	0.52	H1 Supported	414	1.75



2	Intention (R)	Attitude (O)	0.78	<0.001	0.61	H2 Supported	598	1.81
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Simple linear regressions tested the core S-O-R model hypotheses. Test 1 examined H1 (Perception → Attitude), showing that consumer perception significantly predicts attitude toward OTOP e-commerce use ( $\beta = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), explaining 52% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.52$ ). The F-test ( $F = 414$ ) confirms the model is highly significant, and the Durbin-Watson value ( $DW = 1.75$ ) indicates mostly independent residuals with minimal positive autocorrelation. Test 2 assessed H2 (Attitude → Intention), with attitude strongly predicting purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and accounting for 61% of variance ( $R^2 = 0.61$ ). The F-test ( $F = 598$ ) indicates high model significance, and  $DW = 1.81$  confirms residual independence. Overall, these results support the full S-O-R pathway, demonstrating that UGC-influenced perceptions shape attitudes, which in turn drive purchase intentions for OTOP products.

### Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the applicability of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework in explaining consumer behavior toward OTOP-branded products in e-commerce environments. The results demonstrate that consumer perception of user-generated content (UGC) significantly influences attitudes toward purchasing OTOP products online, which in turn strongly predicts purchase intention. However, this study did not explicitly differentiate between UGC formats. Future research should examine how different types of UGC (e.g., video, image, and text) influence consumer perception across various OTOP product categories to provide more targeted insights for entrepreneurs. Both relationships were statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ , with substantial explanatory power, indicating that UGC plays a central role in shaping consumer decision-making in digital marketplaces. The strength of the relationship between perception and attitude, as well as between attitude and intention, confirms the sequential process proposed by the S-O-R model. Attitudes emerged as a critical mediating factor, reinforcing the idea that consumers do not act directly on external stimuli but rather process them cognitively and emotionally before forming behavioral intentions. The high explanatory power of the second model further suggests that attitudes toward e-commerce platforms are a dominant driver of purchase intention for OTOP products.

Descriptive findings also provide important contextual insights. The sample was largely composed of younger consumers, with the majority aged between under 24 and 44, reflecting the core demographic of Thailand's e-commerce users. The dominance of Shopee as the preferred platform highlights the importance of platform-specific dynamics in shaping consumer behavior. Additionally, the consistently high mean scores across perception, attitude, and intention indicate a generally favorable consumer outlook toward OTOP products in online environments. The results suggest a relatively stable influence of UGC across different stages of the decision-making process. Unlike traditional marketing models that assume declining effectiveness across stages, UGC appears to maintain consistent impact from initial perception through to purchase intention. This finding highlights the unique role of UGC in reducing uncertainty and sustaining consumer engagement throughout the online purchasing journey.



### Future Research Directions

Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies tracking actual purchases on platforms such as Shopee. Given that Shopee accounts for 72.7% of the market, monitoring users from initial exposure to user-generated content (UGC) through to completed purchases would provide robust evidence of cause-and-effect relationships. Measurements should be taken at multiple stages: immediately after encountering UGC, during the decision-making process, and following purchase completion. Experimental designs that randomly assign participants to view either UGC or standard advertisements would allow researchers to isolate the specific influence of UGC on consumer behavior, with platform data providing objective purchase outcomes rather than relying solely on self-reported intentions.

Researchers should also examine the effectiveness of different UGC formats in influencing attitudes and purchase intentions for OTOP products. Comparing text reviews, product photos, unboxing videos, and live-streaming content can identify the most impactful forms of content. Considering that 79.48% of the current sample was under 24–44 years of age, younger consumers may exhibit distinct preferences for certain UGC types. Controlled experiments on e-commerce platforms can provide insights into which content formats most effectively convert interest into sales, thereby offering actionable guidance for OTOP sellers.

Future studies should address underrepresented demographic groups. The current sample included only 6.49% of participants aged 55 or older and 26.23% with a high school education. This imbalance is likely a result of convenience sampling, which may have disproportionately captured younger, digitally active respondents. As a result, the findings may not fully reflect the preferences and behaviors of older consumers, particularly in certain OTOP product niches where this group may play a more significant role. Additional research should investigate whether older and less-educated consumers respond to UGC similarly to younger, digitally native populations. Rural consumers, who may have been underrepresented in urban-focused sampling, also warrant targeted study. Employing random sampling techniques that better reflect the full Thai population would enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Comparative analyses across countries with similar initiatives, such as Japan's One Village One Product, could clarify the generalizability of the S-O-R model in cross-cultural contexts. Differences in cultural perceptions of authenticity, e-commerce development, and internet accessibility may affect the influence of UGC on consumer behavior. International collaborations could provide a broader perspective and test whether findings are specific to Thailand or applicable in other cultural settings.

Finally, advanced statistical methods, such as structural equation modeling (SEM), could improve the precision and explanatory power of future research. Techniques like confirmatory factor analysis can verify whether survey items accurately capture their intended constructs, while mediation analysis can examine the indirect effects of consumer perception on purchase intention via attitudes. Including control variables such as income and urban/rural location would further strengthen the



reliability of results, building upon the foundation established by the current regression-based analysis.

### Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for policymakers and OTOP entrepreneurs. First, efforts should be made to actively promote the creation and dissemination of high-quality user-generated content (UGC), particularly on dominant e-commerce platforms such as Shopee. Government agencies and local development programs could provide training initiatives that help OTOP producers create engaging digital content, including product demonstrations, short-form videos, and customer interaction strategies.

Second, marketing strategies should be tailored to different product categories and consumer segments. Given the strong role of attitudes in shaping purchase intention, campaigns should emphasize authenticity, trust, and storytelling through peer-generated content. Encouraging satisfied customers to share reviews, photos, and experiences can enhance credibility and reduce uncertainty in online purchasing environments.

Third, targeted support should be provided to improve digital participation among underrepresented groups, particularly older and rural consumers. Expanding digital literacy programs and improving access to e-commerce platforms can help ensure more inclusive engagement with OTOP products.

Finally, policymakers should consider platform-specific strategies, recognizing that consumer behavior may vary across e-commerce environments. Collaborations between government agencies and major platforms can further enhance visibility and competitiveness of OTOP products in the digital marketplace.

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