

Social Media Influence and Economic Constraints in Technology Purchase Decisions: An Integrative Framework for Emerging Digital Markets

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Abstract

Social media platforms increasingly shape technology purchase decisions by reducing information-search costs and exposing consumers to digital advertising, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer recommendations, and credibility cues. However, favorable digital evaluations do not necessarily translate into effective purchases because consumers remain subject to price and resource constraints. This study develops an integrative conceptual framework connecting digital information mechanisms, social influence mechanisms, and economic constraints in technology purchase decision-making. Drawing on an integrative synthesis of literature from digital marketing, social commerce, information economics, and consumer choice, the framework identifies social media engagement, digital advertising, influencer recommendations, electronic word-of-mouth, information credibility, price sensitivity, and economic capacity as complementary explanatory constructs. The framework distinguishes between digital desirability and economic feasibility and derives research propositions for subsequent empirical validation. The study contributes an empirically testable analytical structure for examining technology purchase decisions in emerging digital markets and provides a basis for subsequent quantitative validation using multivariate and computational methods.

Keywords

Social media, Technology purchase decisions, Electronic word-of-mouth, Information credibility, Economic constraints, Digital economy

1. Introduction

Digital platforms have transformed consumer decision-making by changing how individuals search for, evaluate, and exchange information about products and services. Social media platforms, in particular, give consumers immediate access to advertising, product information, user-generated content, reviews, and recommendations, altering traditional information-search and evaluation processes. These platforms have also become relevant components of contemporary digital markets, where interactions between consumers, firms, and content creators can influence preferences and purchasing decisions [1, 2, 3, 4].

Technology products constitute a particularly relevant context for examining digital consumer behavior because purchasing decisions often involve comparing multiple alternatives across technical specifications, prices, brands, and expected product performance. Consumers increasingly rely on social media platforms to access demonstrations, comparisons, reviews, and recommendations before making these decisions. Consequently, social media platforms function not only as communication channels but also as information environments that support evaluating technology-related purchase alternatives.

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From an economic perspective, information acquisition is costly because consumers must devote time and effort to searching for and comparing alternatives. Digital platforms can reduce these search costs by facilitating access to product characteristics, prices, and competing options, potentially improving the efficiency of consumer decision-making. However, lower search costs do not necessarily imply uniform purchasing outcomes, as the effects of digital information depend on platform design, product differentiation, and the characteristics of individual consumers [5, 6, 7, 8].

Beyond reducing information-search costs, social media can also shape consumer preferences through persuasive mechanisms. Digital advertising, user-generated content, influencer recommendations, and electronic word-of-mouth can affect brand attitudes, perceived value, trust, and purchase intention. Previous studies have shown that these effects depend on factors such as information quality, source credibility, social interaction, and parasocial relationships, particularly among younger consumers [9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14].

In emerging digital markets such as Ecuador, these relationships warrant particular attention because expanding digital connectivity increases consumers' exposure to commercial information, even as purchasing decisions remain subject to heterogeneous economic resources. Official statistics indicate that Internet use in Ecuador increased from 69.7% in 2022 to 77.2% in 2024, while the proportion of households with Internet access reached 66.0% in 2024 [15]. This expanding digital environment provides greater opportunities for technology-related search, comparison, and social influence, but does not eliminate differences in purchasing capacity. Consequently, examining digital influence together with economic constraints provides a more comprehensive perspective on technology purchase decisions.

Although previous research has extensively examined social media advertising, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, trust, and purchase intention, these mechanisms are often analyzed primarily from a digital marketing or social commerce perspective. For technology purchases, however, digital influence operates alongside economic constraints that can determine whether favorable attitudes and purchase intentions translate into actual purchasing decisions. Therefore, jointly examining social media-related factors, price sensitivity, and economic capacity provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding consumer behavior in this context. This study addresses this gap by developing an integrative framework that connects digital influence mechanisms with the economic determinants that condition technology purchase decisions.

Accordingly, this study develops an integrative framework for explaining technology purchase decisions through the joint consideration of social media engagement, digital advertising, influencer recommendations, electronic word-of-mouth, information credibility, price sensitivity, and economic capacity. By connecting digital and economic determinants within a common analytical structure, the study seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which online influence can shape product evaluation while recognizing the resource constraints that condition effective purchasing behavior. The resulting framework contributes to the intersection of digital consumer behavior, information economics, and technology-mediated decision-making and establishes propositions for future data-driven validation.

2. Related Work

2.1. Social Media and Consumer Decision-Making

Consumer decision-making involves a sequence of activities through which individuals identify needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, make purchasing decisions, and assess their choices after acquisition. In digital environments, this process is increasingly shaped by the interaction between commercial information, user-generated content, social interaction, and perceived trustworthiness. Social media platforms can intervene particularly during the information-search and alternative-evaluation stages by exposing consumers to product information, experiences shared by other users, and commercially generated content. Consequently, purchasing decisions in digital environments cannot be understood solely as responses to advertising, but rather as outcomes of multiple informational and social influences [16, 11].

Research on social commerce has consistently identified trust, information quality, social interaction, and perceived usefulness as important determinants of purchase intention. Consumers are more likely to adopt information obtained through digital platforms when they perceive it as credible, relevant, and supported by the experiences of other users. In this context, social interaction can reduce uncertainty and strengthen confidence in products or sellers, thereby increasing the likelihood of favorable purchase intentions. These findings suggest that the effect of social media on consumer behavior depends not only on exposure to content, but also on how users evaluate the reliability and usefulness of the information they receive [11, 17, 18, 19].

Digital advertising represents another mechanism through which social media can influence consumer decision-making. Advertising effectiveness depends not only on exposure but also on characteristics such as informativeness, interactivity, perceived relevance, and the consumer's level of engagement with the platform. Previous studies indicate that social media marketing activities can influence brand perceptions, purchase intention, and consumer responses, while the magnitude of these effects may vary across platforms and forms of interaction. Therefore, the role of digital advertising should be analyzed in relation to both message characteristics and the specific social media environment in which consumers encounter commercial content [9, 10, 20].

Taken together, previous research indicates that social media affects consumer decision-making through multiple interconnected mechanisms rather than through exposure alone. Advertising, information quality, social interaction, and perceived credibility can influence how consumers evaluate alternatives and form purchase intentions. These mechanisms are particularly relevant in technology-related purchases, where consumers often rely on digital information before committing financial resources. However, the persuasive value of social media content also depends on who provides the information and how trustworthy that source is perceived to be. This makes electronic word-of-mouth, online reviews, and influencer credibility especially important for understanding technology purchase decisions.

2.2. Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Influencers, and Trust

Electronic word-of-mouth is a central source of information in digital purchase environments because consumers can evaluate products through the experiences and opinions shared by others. Online reviews can reduce uncertainty, facilitate comparison, and provide signals about expected product quality and performance before purchase. Their influence, however, depends on characteristics such as message valence, information quality, reviewer identity, and perceived credibility. As a result, reviews are not merely informal opinions but informational signals that can affect trust, product evaluation, and purchasing decisions, with recent evidence further supporting the role of electronic word-of-mouth and trust in online consumer behavior [21, 22, 23, 24, 25].

Influencer-generated content adds a further layer of social influence to digital purchasing environments. Consumers may respond more favorably to product recommendations when influencers are perceived as credible, knowledgeable, authentic, or similar to their audiences. The persuasive effect of these recommendations is therefore not determined solely by audience size or visibility, but also by the perceived fit between the influencer, the promoted product, and the consumer's own preferences. Prior research further indicates that identification with influencers, perceived credibility, and parasocial relationships can strengthen trust in branded content and increase purchase intention, particularly among younger users; recent meta-analytic evidence also confirms the relevance of influencer and content characteristics for consumer responses [26, 27, 12, 13, 14].

Trust plays a central role in determining whether digital information is incorporated into consumer decision-making. In social commerce environments, consumers are more likely to rely on reviews, recommendations, and branded content when they perceive the information source as credible and the content as useful and consistent. Trust can therefore operate as a mechanism through which social interaction, information quality, and source credibility influence purchase intention. Recent evidence further suggests that eWOM credibility facilitates information adoption and can subsequently influence consumers' purchase intentions, reinforcing the role of credibility as an intermediate mechanism

between digital information and behavioral responses [28]. This relationship is especially relevant for technology products, where consumers often face uncertainty regarding product performance, compatibility, durability, and value before purchase [11, 17, 12, 19].

Overall, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer recommendations, and perceived credibility constitute complementary mechanisms through which social media can affect the evaluation of technology products. Reviews provide experience-based information, influencers introduce socially embedded recommendations, and trust determines the extent to which consumers accept these signals when forming purchase intentions. Nevertheless, favorable digital information does not by itself guarantee an actual purchase, since consumer decisions remain subject to economic factors such as product price and available financial resources. Understanding technology purchase behavior therefore requires integrating these social and informational mechanisms with the economic constraints that shape consumers' effective purchasing capacity.

2.3. Economic Constraints and Digital Purchase Behavior

From a microeconomic perspective, consumer purchasing decisions are constrained by available income, product prices, preferences, and expected utility. Consumers seek to allocate limited resources among competing alternatives, which means that favorable attitudes toward a product do not necessarily result in an actual purchase. This distinction is particularly relevant for technology products, which may require relatively important financial commitments and involve comparisons among brands, specifications, quality, and expected performance. Accordingly, digital influence should be interpreted within the broader economic context in which consumers make purchasing decisions rather than as an independent determinant of behavior [8].

Information acquisition also represents an economic cost. Consumers devote time and effort to searching for product characteristics, prices, alternatives, and expected benefits before making a purchase. According to the economics of information, this search continues while the expected marginal benefit of obtaining additional information exceeds its marginal cost. Digital platforms can reduce these search costs by allowing consumers to compare products, prices, reviews, and competing alternatives more efficiently. Previous research has shown that electronic markets can improve access to information and facilitate price comparison, although the magnitude of these effects depends on platform design, market characteristics, and product differentiation [5, 6, 7, 8].

However, reducing information-search costs does not eliminate consumers' budget constraints. Social media may increase awareness of a technology product, improve its perceived value, or strengthen purchase intention through advertising, reviews, and recommendations, while the final decision remains conditioned by whether the consumer has sufficient purchasing capacity. Price sensitivity and available resources are therefore relevant for distinguishing between favorable digital attitudes and effective purchasing behavior. A consumer may perceive a product positively after interacting with digital content but postpone or reject the purchase when its price exceeds the resources available or when competing expenditures provide greater expected utility.

This interaction suggests that digital and economic determinants should be examined simultaneously when analyzing technology purchase decisions. Social media can influence preferences, reduce uncertainty, and lower information-search costs, whereas product price and economic capacity determine important boundaries on consumers' effective ability to purchase. Consequently, the relationship between social media influence and purchasing behavior may change when economic variables are incorporated into the analysis. Assessing these factors jointly provides a more comprehensive framework for determining whether digital influence remains associated with technology purchase decisions after accounting for traditional economic constraints. This integrated perspective provides the conceptual basis for the analytical framework developed in the following sections.

3. Research Approach

3.1. Conceptual Scope

This study adopts an integrative conceptual approach to examine how social media-related mechanisms and economic constraints jointly shape technology purchase decisions. Rather than treating social media exposure as an isolated determinant of consumer behavior, the proposed approach connects insights from digital marketing, social commerce, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer research, the economics of information, and consumer choice.

The analysis focuses on technology-related purchasing decisions because these products frequently require consumers to evaluate price, technical characteristics, expected performance, brand alternatives, and information obtained from digital sources. Social media can facilitate access to this information while introducing persuasive mechanisms through advertising, reviews, recommendations, influencers, and interactions with other users. However, favorable digital evaluations remain subject to budget constraints and differences in purchasing capacity. Accordingly, the framework organizes technology purchase decision-making into three complementary dimensions: digital information mechanisms, social influence mechanisms, and economic constraints, which jointly explain how digital exposure can shape preferences while economic conditions limit or enable purchasing behavior.

3.2. Integrative Literature Synthesis

The conceptual framework was developed through a theory-driven integrative synthesis of peer-reviewed literature addressing social media marketing, social commerce, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, digital information, information-search costs, and consumer purchasing behavior. The synthesis was designed to identify theoretical and empirical contributions directly supporting the constructs and relationships included in the framework rather than to provide an exhaustive systematic review. Seminal studies were retained when they established foundational concepts, while recent empirical studies and meta-analyses were incorporated to reflect contemporary developments in digital consumer research.

Studies were considered conceptually relevant when they addressed at least one of three analytical domains: digital information acquisition, social influence and credibility, or economic constraints on purchasing behavior. Research unrelated to consumer decision-making or without a direct conceptual connection to the proposed constructs was not incorporated into the framework. Accordingly, the synthesis should be interpreted as integrative and theory-driven rather than systematic or bibliometrically exhaustive.

The selected literature was organized according to the analytical role of each construct within the technology purchase decision process. Constructs associated with information acquisition and product evaluation were classified as digital information mechanisms; variables related to persuasion, recommendations, credibility, and interpersonal influence were grouped as social influence mechanisms; and price-related considerations and purchasing capacity were classified as economic constraints. This classification provided the basis for integrating perspectives from marketing, information systems, and economics within a common analytical framework.

3.3. Analytical Dimensions

The framework is organized around three complementary analytical dimensions. Digital information mechanisms encompass the processes through which consumers access and evaluate product-related information through social media, including social media engagement and digital advertising. These mechanisms are associated with information acquisition, product awareness, and the reduction of search-related barriers.

Social influence mechanisms include electronic word-of-mouth, influencer recommendations, and information credibility. These constructs capture the extent to which consumers incorporate socially

generated information, recommendations, and perceived trustworthiness into technology product evaluation and purchase intention.

Finally, economic constraints are represented by price sensitivity and economic capacity. These factors determine whether favorable product evaluations and purchase intentions can be translated into effective purchasing decisions. The three dimensions are therefore treated as complementary components of the same decision process rather than as independent or competing explanations.

3.4. Construct Mapping

Based on the analytical dimensions defined above, seven explanatory constructs and one outcome construct were incorporated into the proposed framework. The constructs were grouped according to their primary role in the technology purchase decision process, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Constructs included in the proposed integrative framework.

Analytical dimension	Construct	Code	Analytical role
Digital information	Social Media Engagement	SM	Technology-related information search
	Digital Advertising Influence	AD	Commercial information exposure
Social influence	Influencer Recommendations	INF	Creator-generated recommendations
	Electronic Word-of-Mouth	EWOM	Reviews and consumer experiences
	Information Credibility	CR	Reliability and trustworthiness assessment
Economic constraints	Price Sensitivity	PS	Price and affordability evaluation
	Economic Capacity	EC	Available financial resources
Outcome	Technology Purchase Decision	TPD	Acquire, postpone, substitute, or reject

The proposed analytical relationship can be represented conceptually as:

$$TPD = f(SM, AD, INF, EWOM, CR, PS, EC) \quad (1)$$

where (TPD) represents the technology purchase decision; (SM) represents social media engagement; (AD) represents digital advertising influence; (INF) represents influencer recommendations; (EWOM) represents electronic word-of-mouth; (CR) represents information credibility; (PS) represents price sensitivity; and (EC) represents economic capacity.

This expression should not be interpreted as an estimated econometric model in the present study. Instead, it represents the conceptual structure proposed for subsequent empirical validation.

The relationships among these constructs are further developed in the proposed integrative framework presented in the following section.

4. Proposed Integrative Framework

The proposed framework explains technology purchase decisions as the result of interactions among three complementary domains: digital information mechanisms, social influence mechanisms, and economic constraints. Rather than assuming that social media exposure directly produces purchasing behavior, the framework considers a sequential decision process in which consumers first obtain

information, subsequently evaluate socially mediated signals, and finally assess whether the resulting purchase alternative is compatible with their economic resources.

This structure recognizes an important distinction between digital desirability and economic feasibility. Social media may increase product awareness, reduce uncertainty, modify preferences, and strengthen purchase intention, but these effects do not automatically imply that a transaction will occur. Technology purchase decisions emerge when digital and social influences interact with consumers' price perceptions and available financial resources.

Within this framework, digital desirability refers to a favorable product evaluation resulting from informational and social influence mechanisms, whereas economic feasibility refers to the compatibility of that preference with product price and the consumer's available financial resources.

4.1. Digital Information Mechanisms

The first component of the proposed framework represents the informational role of social media in technology purchase decision-making. As illustrated in Figure 1, this dimension comprises Social Media Engagement (SM) and Digital Advertising Influence (AD), which jointly contribute to consumers' access to and processing of technology-related information.

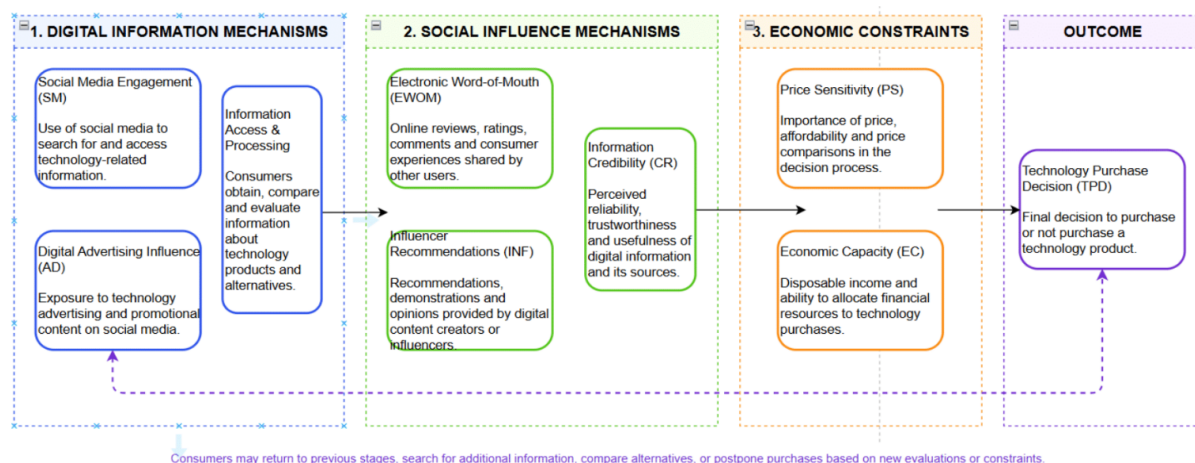


Figure 1: Proposed integrative framework for technology purchase decisions.

Social Media Engagement (SM) refers specifically to the use of social media as an information-search and product-evaluation environment. Consumers can use digital platforms to identify technology products, compare alternatives, examine product characteristics, and access information generated by firms and other users. In this sense, social media engagement can expand the set of alternatives considered by consumers and reduce some of the time and effort associated with product information search.

Digital Advertising Influence (AD) represents the commercially generated component of this informational environment. Social media advertising can increase awareness of technology products and provide information concerning characteristics, prices, promotions, and potential benefits. However, advertising exposure is not assumed to translate directly into a purchase decision. Its contribution depends on the extent to which consumers consider the information relevant and useful during product evaluation [9, 10, 20].

Taken together, SM and AD constitute the initial informational layer of the framework. Their principal role is to facilitate information access and processing, thereby supporting product awareness and alternative evaluation before social signals and economic constraints are considered. This interpretation is consistent with the economics of information, according to which digital environments can reduce information-search barriers and facilitate comparison among market alternatives [5, 7, 8].

4.2. Social Influence Mechanisms

The second component of the framework represents the social influence mechanisms involved in technology product evaluation. After consumers access product-related information, they may also consider opinions, experiences, recommendations, ratings, and evaluations generated by other individuals. As illustrated in Figure 1, this dimension comprises Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM), Influencer Recommendations (INF), and Information Credibility (CR).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) refers to consumer-generated information such as online reviews, ratings, comments, product comparisons, and experiences shared by other users. These signals can complement commercially generated information by providing experience-based evidence about product quality, performance, and potential limitations. Their influence depends on characteristics such as information quality, message valence, reviewer characteristics, and perceived usefulness [21, 22, 24, 25].

Influencer Recommendations (INF) represent a different form of social influence because content creators combine product information with source-related characteristics such as expertise, perceived authenticity, identification, and credibility. Their recommendations, demonstrations, and opinions may affect which technology products consumers consider and how those alternatives are evaluated. Consequently, influencer influence depends not only on visibility or audience size but also on the perceived relationship between the source, the promoted product, and the consumer [26, 27, 12, 13, 14].

Information Credibility (CR) represents the consumer's evaluation of the reliability, trustworthiness, and usefulness of digitally mediated information. The framework assumes that reviews and influencer recommendations are not automatically incorporated into purchase decisions. Instead, consumers assess whether these signals are sufficiently credible before using them to evaluate a technology product. Recent evidence also suggests that eWOM credibility can facilitate information adoption and subsequently influence purchase intention, supporting the role of credibility as an evaluative mechanism between digital information and behavioral responses [11, 17, 28].

Taken together, EWOM, INF, and CR constitute the social evaluation layer of the framework. EWOM and influencer recommendations provide socially generated signals, while credibility determines the extent to which those signals are considered trustworthy and useful during product evaluation. These mechanisms may strengthen purchase intention, but favorable evaluations still do not guarantee an effective purchase. The resulting intention must subsequently be considered in relation to price sensitivity and economic capacity, which constitute the economic constraints examined in the next component of the framework.

4.3. Economic Constraints

The third component of the framework represents the economic conditions that determine whether a favorable technology product evaluation can be translated into a final purchase-related decision. As shown in Figure 1, this dimension comprises Price Sensitivity (PS) and Economic Capacity (EC). Unlike the previous components, which explain how consumers obtain and evaluate digital information, economic constraints determine whether the preferred alternative is financially feasible.

Price Sensitivity (PS) refers to the importance consumers assign to price, affordability, and differences among competing alternatives. A consumer may evaluate a technology product favorably but reconsider the decision when its price exceeds an acceptable threshold or when more affordable substitutes are available. Price sensitivity therefore affects the relationship between product preference and the final decision rather than simply reflecting interest in lower prices.

Economic Capacity (EC) represents the consumer's perceived ability to allocate available financial resources to a technology purchase. This construct differs from price sensitivity because it concerns purchasing capacity rather than the evaluation of product cost. Even when consumers perceive a product as valuable and develop a favorable purchase intention, limited financial resources may lead them to postpone the purchase, select a substitute, or reject the transaction.

Taken together, PS and EC constitute the economic feasibility layer of the framework. Their inclusion emphasizes that digitally generated interest and purchase intention operate within a budget constraint.

Consequently, technology purchase decisions depend not only on whether consumers want a product, but also on whether its acquisition is compatible with their available resources.

4.4. Integration of Digital, Social, and Economic Mechanisms

The central contribution of the proposed framework lies in the integration of digital information, social influence, and economic constraints within a common technology purchase decision process. Figure 1 illustrates how these mechanisms perform different but complementary functions rather than acting as isolated predictors of consumer behavior.

At the initial stage, Social Media Engagement (SM) and Digital Advertising Influence (AD) facilitate access to product-related information and increase awareness of available technology alternatives. Consumers can use this information to identify products, compare characteristics, and form an initial evaluation of the alternatives available to them.

The second stage incorporates socially generated signals. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM) and Influencer Recommendations (INF) introduce the experiences, opinions, and recommendations of other actors into the evaluation process, while Information Credibility (CR) reflects the extent to which consumers consider these signals sufficiently trustworthy and useful. Together, these mechanisms can strengthen or weaken product evaluation and purchase intention.

The third stage concerns economic feasibility. Even when digital and social mechanisms generate a favorable product evaluation, Price Sensitivity (PS) and Economic Capacity (EC) can determine whether the consumer proceeds with the purchase, chooses an alternative, postpones the decision, or rejects the acquisition. The final Technology Purchase Decision (TPD) therefore reflects the interaction between digital desirability and economic feasibility.

The framework should not be interpreted as a strictly linear model. Consumers may return to previous stages, search for additional information, compare alternative products, reconsider recommendations, or reassess affordability when new information or economic constraints emerge. The feedback mechanism represented in Figure 1 captures this iterative character of technology purchase decision-making.

4.5. Research Propositions Derived from the Framework

Based on the relationships represented in the integrative framework, five research propositions are formulated to guide subsequent empirical validation.

- **P1. Digital information mechanism:** Social media engagement and digital advertising are expected to facilitate technology product evaluation by increasing access to product-related information and purchase alternatives.
- **P2. Social influence mechanism:** Electronic word-of-mouth and influencer recommendations are expected to contribute to technology product evaluation and purchase intention through complementary social influence mechanisms.
- **P3. Credibility mechanism:** Perceived information credibility is expected to function as an evaluative pathway through which electronic word-of-mouth and influencer recommendations contribute to technology product evaluation and purchase intention.
- **P4. Economic constraint mechanism:** Greater price sensitivity and lower economic capacity are expected to increase the likelihood that favorable product evaluations and purchase intentions result in postponement, substitution, or rejection rather than acquisition.
- **P5. Integrated mechanism:** Technology purchase decisions are expected to be more comprehensively explained when digital information, social influence, credibility, and economic constraints are considered jointly rather than through social media exposure alone.

4.6. Framework for Future Empirical Validation

The proposed framework is designed to support subsequent quantitative validation. Depending on the empirical design, the explanatory constructs may be operationalized through validated multi-

item scales or observed indicators, while TPD may be represented as a continuous, binary, ordinal, or multinomial outcome. The appropriate estimator should therefore be selected according to the measurement properties of the resulting variables.

$$TPD_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SM_i + \beta_2 AD_i + \beta_3 INF_i + \beta_4 EWOM_i + \beta_5 CR_i + \beta_6 PS_i + \beta_7 EC_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where TPD_i represents the technology purchase decision for consumer i ; SM represents social media engagement; AD represents digital advertising influence; INF represents influencer recommendations; $EWOM$ represents electronic word-of-mouth; CR represents information credibility; PS represents price sensitivity; and EC represents economic capacity. The coefficients $\beta_1 \dots \beta_7$ represent relationships to be estimated in future empirical applications and should not be interpreted as results of the present conceptual study.

The expression above should be interpreted as a baseline analytical index rather than as a mandatory linear specification. If TPD is operationalized through the four outcomes proposed in Table 1—acquisition, postponement, substitution, or rejection—a multinomial or another appropriate generalized model would be required.

This reduced-form specification would primarily assess direct associations with TPD . It would not by itself provide a complete test of the pathway and economic-constraint mechanisms represented in P3 and P4. Testing these propositions would require an extended specification incorporating purchase intention as an intermediate variable and, where appropriate, mediation, moderation, or structural-equation procedures.

Direct relationships could be evaluated using multivariate regression or generalized linear models, while structural equation modeling may be appropriate when latent constructs and indirect relationships are considered. P5 could be tested by comparing a reduced specification based on social media engagement with the complete framework and assessing changes in explanatory power or model fit through adjusted R^2 , information criteria, or likelihood-based measures.

For larger behavioral or digital-trace datasets, regularized regression and tree-based predictive models could provide complementary benchmarks for identifying influential predictors, nonlinear relationships, and interactions. These computational approaches should complement, rather than replace, confirmatory tests of the research propositions.

Extended models could examine Information Credibility as an intervening mechanism and Economic Capacity as a boundary condition between purchase intention and purchase-related outcomes, thereby testing whether the mechanisms proposed conceptually are supported by observed consumer data.

The framework therefore provides not only a conceptual representation of technology purchase decision-making but also a structured basis for subsequent data-driven validation in emerging digital markets.

5. Discussion

5.1. Implications of the Integrative Framework

The proposed framework extends conventional interpretations of social media influence by distinguishing between the mechanisms that shape product evaluation and the conditions that determine whether a purchase can actually occur. Previous research has established that digital advertising, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer recommendations, and information credibility can affect consumer attitudes and purchase intention [25, 13, 18]. However, examining these mechanisms independently may provide only a partial explanation of technology purchase decisions.

The framework addresses this limitation by organizing consumer decision-making around three complementary layers: digital information, social influence, and economic feasibility. Digital information and social influence explain how consumers obtain, interpret, and evaluate technology-related information, whereas economic feasibility recognizes that favorable evaluations remain subject to price

and resource constraints. Social media influence should therefore not be interpreted as a direct path from exposure to purchase: consumers may encounter advertising, consult reviews, follow influencer recommendations, and develop favorable attitudes without completing the transaction. Information credibility affects whether digitally mediated signals are incorporated into product evaluation, while price sensitivity and economic capacity condition the transition from purchase intention to a final purchase-related decision.

The framework consequently distinguishes between digital desirability and economic feasibility. Digital desirability reflects the favorable evaluation of a product generated through informational and social mechanisms, whereas economic feasibility reflects the compatibility of that product with the consumer's financial resources. Their interaction provides a broader explanation of technology purchase decision-making than approaches based exclusively on digital exposure or purchase intention.

5.2. Implications for Emerging Economies

The distinction between digital desirability and economic feasibility may be particularly important in emerging economies, where expanding access to social media and digital information does not necessarily imply equivalent growth in purchasing capacity. Consumers may be highly exposed to technology products, advertising, reviews, and recommendations while remaining subject to heterogeneous income levels and strong price sensitivity. Under these conditions, favorable digital evaluations may lead not only to purchase but also to postponement, substitution toward a more affordable alternative, or rejection of the acquisition. The framework captures these outcomes by positioning economic constraints between favorable product evaluation and the final technology purchase decision.

This perspective is relevant to contexts such as Ecuador, where the continued expansion of digital connectivity increases opportunities for online information search and commercial interaction [15]. For firms operating in these markets, increasing advertising exposure alone may therefore be insufficient. Digital strategies may be more effective when credible product information, reviews, comparisons, and recommendations are combined with pricing structures and purchasing alternatives that reflect consumers' economic conditions.

More broadly, the framework suggests that digital participation and effective market participation are conceptually different phenomena. Consumers may have extensive access to digital information while facing economic barriers to acquiring the products they evaluate online. This distinction provides a useful basis for future research on digital consumer behavior in emerging markets.

5.3. Theoretical Contributions

The first theoretical contribution of this study is the integration of perspectives that are frequently examined separately. Research on digital marketing and social commerce has primarily emphasized advertising, electronic word-of-mouth, influencers, credibility, and purchase intention, whereas information economics and consumer-choice perspectives emphasize search costs, prices, resource allocation, and budget constraints [2, 8]. The proposed framework connects these mechanisms within a common technology purchase decision structure.

A second contribution is the distinction between information exposure and information acceptance. Consumers can encounter substantial amounts of technology-related content without incorporating all of it into their decisions. By explicitly including Information Credibility (CR), the framework recognizes that digitally mediated information must first be considered reliable and useful before it can meaningfully contribute to product evaluation.

A third contribution is the separation of Price Sensitivity (PS) and Economic Capacity (EC). Although both belong to the economic dimension, they represent different mechanisms. Price sensitivity concerns how consumers evaluate the cost and affordability of competing products, whereas economic capacity refers to the resources available to complete a purchase. This distinction helps explain why consumers with similar product preferences may reach different purchasing decisions.

Finally, the framework conceptualizes technology purchase decision-making as an iterative rather than strictly linear process. Consumers may return to information search, reassess reviews, compare alternative products, reconsider recommendations, or postpone purchasing decisions as new information or economic constraints emerge. This feedback structure provides a more flexible representation of digitally mediated consumer decision-making.

5.4. Limitations

The principal limitation of this study is its conceptual nature. The proposed relationships are theoretically derived from an integrative synthesis of existing literature and have not been tested using an original empirical dataset. Consequently, the research propositions should be interpreted as relationships requiring subsequent validation rather than as statistically confirmed effects.

In addition, the literature synthesis was theory-driven rather than systematic. Although foundational studies, recent empirical research, and meta-analyses were incorporated to support the proposed constructs, the literature-selection process does not guarantee exhaustive coverage of all relevant studies. Consequently, potential selection bias should be considered when interpreting the scope of the framework.

A second limitation concerns the scope of the framework. Technology purchase decisions may also be influenced by factors not explicitly incorporated into the model, including perceived risk, brand loyalty, product involvement, technological literacy, previous purchasing experience, financing availability, and platform-specific characteristics.

The relative importance of the proposed constructs may also vary across technology categories and consumer groups. For example, price sensitivity, influencer recommendations, or electronic word-of-mouth may have different effects for smartphones, computers, accessories, or other technology products. Likewise, differences in income, age, digital experience, and market conditions may modify the relationships represented in the framework.

These limitations define the boundaries of the present conceptual contribution and indicate the areas in which empirical testing is necessary before broader generalizations can be established.

5.5. Future Research

Future research should empirically validate the proposed framework using original consumer data. The constructs identified in the model—Social Media Engagement, Digital Advertising Influence, Influencer Recommendations, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Information Credibility, Price Sensitivity, Economic Capacity, and Technology Purchase Decision—can be operationalized through multi-item measures and evaluated using appropriate quantitative methods.

Longitudinal designs would provide additional evidence by examining how consumer decisions evolve as new digital information, product prices, and economic conditions change over time. Comparative studies across geographical regions, socioeconomic groups, and emerging digital markets could further determine whether the relative importance of digital influence and economic constraints remains stable across contexts.

Future extensions may also incorporate perceived risk, brand loyalty, technological literacy, financing mechanisms, and product involvement. Such analyses would help determine the explanatory capacity of the proposed framework and support the development of a more comprehensive data-driven model of technology purchase decision-making.

6. Conclusion

This study developed an integrative framework for understanding technology purchase decisions through the joint consideration of digital information mechanisms, social influence mechanisms, and economic constraints. The framework brings together Social Media Engagement, Digital Advertising Influence, Influencer Recommendations, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Information Credibility, Price

Sensitivity, and Economic Capacity within a common analytical structure centered on the Technology Purchase Decision.

The main conceptual contribution lies in distinguishing between digital desirability and economic feasibility. Social media can facilitate information search, increase product awareness, expose consumers to socially generated evaluations, and contribute to favorable purchase intentions. However, these effects do not necessarily result in an effective purchase. Information credibility influences whether digital signals are incorporated into product evaluation, while price sensitivity and economic capacity determine whether a preferred alternative is financially feasible.

The framework therefore extends digital consumer research by connecting mechanisms commonly examined in social media marketing and social commerce with concepts derived from information economics and consumer choice. It also provides a structured basis for subsequent quantitative validation. Nevertheless, because the present study is conceptual and does not employ an original empirical dataset, the proposed relationships should be interpreted as theoretically grounded research propositions rather than confirmed behavioral effects.

Future empirical studies should test the proposed relationships using consumer, behavioral, or digital-platform data and appropriate multivariate methods. Such validation would make it possible to estimate the relative importance of digital, social, and economic mechanisms and to examine more complex relationships involving credibility and economic capacity. Overall, technology purchase decisions are not determined solely by what consumers encounter online, but by how they evaluate that information and whether their economic circumstances allow favorable intentions to become actual purchasing decisions.

Declaration on Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) as an AI-assisted tool for grammar and spelling checking, paraphrasing and rewording, improving writing style and clarity, formatting assistance, and organizing information provided by the authors. The tool was not used to generate the research data, conduct the statistical analyses, determine the empirical results, or formulate the scientific conclusions of the study. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed, verified, and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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