

## Article

# Examining Consumers' Attitudes toward Gmarket Online Shopping

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**Abstract:** In this study, we examine the consumers' attitudes toward Gmarket online shopping in Korea. We use a model to explain that consumers' attitudes toward online shopping are influenced by psychological, personal, and technological characteristics. We hypothesize that three major behavioral beliefs; perceived trust (psychological), perceived benefits (personal), and perceived website quality (technological) influence consumers' attitudes toward online shopping. A questionnaire was designed and administered by surveying the Gmarket online shoppers in Korea. A total of 338 valid responses were collected and Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used for data analysis. The findings indicate that consumers' online shopping attitudes are a function of perceived benefits, trust, and perceived website quality. We found that 57.9 percent of the variation in online shopping attitudes results from perceived benefits, trust, and perceived website quality. Trust was found to be the most important predictor of consumers' online shopping attitudes. We offer academic and practical implications that are useful in designing e-marketing strategies for competing in the online shopping cyberspace market in Korea. We recommend for the replication of a similar model in other parts of the world like Uganda (Jumia), China (Taobao), Japan (Rakuten), and the United States of America (eBay).

**Keywords:** Korea; Gmarket; online shopping; website; trust; attitudes

## 1. Introduction

The number of people using the Internet as of June 2019 exceeds 4.42 billion [1]. This represents an Internet penetration rate of 57.3% of the total world population [1]. South Korea (hereafter Korea) is one of the most Internet-connected countries in the world, with an online penetration rate of about 90% [2]. Internet penetration has enabled online retailing to grow rapidly all-over the world making it internationally competitive [3] (p. 408). The online shopping market in Korea is not an exception to this trend, making it very competitive only for a few players to survive [4] (p. 378). The online penetration of Internet technology has enabled retailers in Korea to engage in online commerce, which has impacted consumers' lives by changing the way they do shopping [5]. Retailers enjoy a higher level of customer reach and customers can transact anytime anywhere [6,7]. However, despite the growing number of online users, a few studies have tried to examine the factors that influence consumers' attitude toward online shopping websites [7–9].

In the Korean retail business, the number of online shopping websites is significantly increasing [5]. Gmarket, which was founded in 2000 is one of the early mover in the Korean online shopping market [5,8]. The company revolutionized the Korean online shopping market by integrating buyers and sellers internationally using an auction format, which enabled large companies like Samsung and LG to take advantage of the competitive auctions that enabled them to sell their products and services [5]. Other retailers like GS Home shopping (Seoul, Korea) and Daum communications opened

online shopping websites which increased competition in the market [5]. Tesco entered the Korean online market in 2009 and started virtual stores that allowed consumers to shop as they wait for public transportation [5]. Other players like Coupang integrated their businesses by making large investments in apps, which accounts for the biggest part of its operations [5]. Daum Kakao (Jeju City, Korea) and LG CNS (Seoul, Korea) co-developed Kakao Pay which partners with online shopping malls like GS Home shopping, Kyobo Bookstore, and Aladdin [5]. Kakao Pay faces competition with Apple Pay and Alipay in the digital wallets business [10]. Consumers in Korea can now do online shopping from local shopping websites such as Gmarket, ABC Mart, Auction, Danawa, e-mart, Hyundai hmall, Interpark, Lotte imall, 11th Street, T-Mon, and others [8,11,12]. The Market shares of the top shopping websites are approximately as follows; Gmarket (35%), 11th Street (34.2%), Auction (29.1%), WeMakePrice (20%), Interpark (19.9%), Coupang (14%), and Lotte (10%) [12]. The Korean government created favorable policies for developing Information Technology (IT) [8] which attracted foreign e-commerce players like eBay to enter the Korean market in 2004 by acquiring Auction, a Korean company whose business model was similar [5].

Online shopping in Korea is a fast-expanding market (FEM) [5]. It may have probably reached its maturity stage because the market is fully developed [8,13]. Electronic commerce is mature when it is in a state of full development [13] (p. 40). In order for the online shopping to grow further, there is a need for online retailers to adopt growth strategies which involve carrying out further innovations [14]. A fast-expanding market is a focal point because of its rapid growth and opportunities [5,15]. The process of FEM cycle involves: an innovation rising to impact a society; the innovation then prompts the society to embrace it through adoption and diffusion; after, the speed at which the innovation is taken is so fast to an extent of attracting more players; and finally resulting in consistent growth of the FEM, which leads to spill overs [5].

Depending on when an innovation is adopted, research on diffusion of innovation categorizes consumers as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards [16,17]. This categorization is important for developing marketing strategies for penetrating the customer classes, targeting new products and services prospects, and predicting the continuous diffusion of new services and products [17]. Electronic commerce in Korea may have reached a saturation point because the country has enjoyed a high Internet penetration rate for more than a decade and consumers are knowledgeable, well informed about technology and are enthusiastic to experiment anything new [5,18]. Current online shoppers in Korea may thus be classified as the early adopters [18]. Therefore, this study is motivated to examine the current shoppers' attitudes toward online shopping within the context of Korea as a developed economy and a fast-expanding market. Examining attitudes is important because they influence consumers' repurchase intention [19] and affect potential consumers' adoption intention [7].

As compared with traditional shopping, online shopping is advantageous in various ways [20,21]. It enables the purchase of products and services anytime and anywhere [20,22]. It allows consumers to save money, time, and effort to purchase products [20,23]. It offers consumers the ability to search more information about products or services with a high level of convenience [5,24]. These advantages have an effect on consumers' attitudes toward online shopping [7,20]. However, online shopping is disadvantageous in ways such as, consumers cannot smell or touch the products [7]. Online transactions are less trusted [6] as compared to offline transactions [25] (p. 4). Through online shopping, consumers can directly purchase products from online retailers facilitated by websites [26] (p. 37). This gives consumers an online shopping experience [8] facilitated by the website environment which is different from the one experienced from offline retailers [20,26]. When consumers get a good website shopping experience, their trust is increased [8] (p. 532). Customers' information security and privacy concerns affect their online purchase intentions [26–28]. Ethical practices such as transaction safety and elimination of online frauds enhance the brand image of online retailers [29]. The design and appearance of online retailers' website affects consumers' attitudes toward online shopping [28,30]. When the quality of an online retailers' website is high, attitudes toward that online retailer are more positive [26,31].

Where information search capabilities of an online retailer are appealing, simple, and powerful, customers have an incentive to write positive comments about that retailer [30]. These customers' comments are referred to as the electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Positive comments enhance website quality. Higher website quality results into increased customer trust perceptions, although building trust is challenging [32,33]. Strategies involving existing customer retention with an objective of making repeated purchases are becoming a more important concern for online retailers than ever before [3].

In this research, we validate empirically the antecedents of consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. We base on variables adapted from past studies to investigate how perceived website quality affects electronic word of mouth, perceived benefits, trust, and online shopping attitudes in Korea. We assess the relationship between eWOM, trust, and attitude. We examine the mediating role played by eWOM between trust and perceived website quality. We also examine the mediating role played by eWOM between trust and perceived benefit. We examine the mediating role played by trust between perceived website quality and online shopping attitudes.

In the next section, the relevant literature is discussed. In Section 3, we provide the research hypotheses and the research model. In Section 4, we provide the research methodology. In Section 5, we provide the data processing and analysis. Section 6 provides the findings. These are followed by discussions, implications, and conclusions.

## 2. Literature Review

The term online shopping refers to the motives or reasons behind a consumer's shopping action as well as the consumer's attitudes and intentions with regard to buying behavior in an online environment [4,34]. The objective of this study is to predict consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. Online shopping in Korea is regarded as a FEM, users are the early adopters [18], thus measuring their attitudes is important since attitude is a major predictor of behavioral and repurchase intentions based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [35].

### 2.1. Attitudes

Attitude refers to an individual evaluation of the psychological state that captures attributes such as pleasant–unpleasant, harmful–beneficial, and good–bad [36,37]. It also refers to the degree of a customer's positive feelings about participating in online shopping [28,38]. A customer with a more positive attitude is more likely to make an online purchase [38]. The TRA encompasses behavior, intention, and attitude as core constructs [39]. Behavior results from intention, which results from attitude [40,41]. Several researchers have investigated how attitude affects behavioral intention or actual behavior [21,28,36,40,42]. Naspetti et al. [40] (p. 3) modified the technology acceptance model (TAM) in order to examine the relationship between attitude and dairy farmers' intention to adopt sustainable production strategies. Wu et al. [28] investigated on how consumers' attitude toward the website affects purchase intentions. Their results found a positive relationship. Liu et al. [21] investigated on the relationship between attitude and intention to use a credit card. Their findings supported the relationship. Stock and Hoyer [42] proved empirically that a salesperson's attitude affects customer behavior.

Attitudes can be toward objects or toward behavior [28,40,43]. The object in our case is online shopping. Since we intend to measure attitudes of consumers in Korea toward online shopping, we will focus on attitudes toward behaviors. Attitudes toward a behavior are the degree of a person's evaluation of behavior to be acted upon [7,44]. Attitudes measure the action a customer will take regarding online shopping. Attitudes take time to develop as customers gain experience with online shopping or receive knowledge about online shopping from other sources [45]. The attitudes that result stimulates actions or behaviors toward online shopping and, based on their attitudes, customers may perform positive or negative actions [45].

## 2.2. Perceived Website Quality (PWQ)

The overall effectiveness and excellence of a website with respect to its delivery of intended messages to its audience is referred to as website quality [8,9]. Website quality is a critical step that drives online business [46,47]. It plays a significant role in customer attraction and retention [8]. Perceived website quality is the quality and performance of online shopping websites and measures the extent to which the website design and processes are reliable, effective, simple, and smooth [7,27]. It also refers to the extent to which consumers perceive that the features of the websites meet their needs [48]. The functionality of a website can be measured by examining information locating characteristics, ordering, and browsing [30].

Customers visiting a website expect to find a channel with features that facilitate easy search, secure payment options, and favorable post-purchase actions [8,49]. Search facilities should be simple, effective, and speedy at collecting information about prices and other product attributes [7]. Website characteristics are important determinants of consumers' trust toward websites [33]. Security features of a website affect online shoppers' trust, which, in turn, influences behavioral intentions toward the website [8,50]. In order to be ready to do transactions, customers first explore online retailers' websites [20,51]. Website information that is correct, helpful, and informative to customers leads to higher levels of trust [33]. The technical functionality, quality content, and similarity with other websites help in eliminating customers' distrust [33].

## 2.3. Perceived Benefits (PB)

The theory of diffusion of innovations provides attributes that affect adoption decisions [16]. These attributes include compatibility, observability, relative advantage, trialability, and ease of use [52]. Relative advantage refers to the benefits an innovation brings to the organization [20,52]. Perceived website image is affected by the consumers' evaluation of the relative advantages they can get from a website [20] (p. 1357). Relative advantages can be in form of economic benefits, increased efficiency, and enhanced status [16]. In this study, perceived benefit is referred to as the relative advantage of using online shopping innovation. Perceived benefits motivate consumers to use online transactions as it brings them many benefits [53] (p. 40).

According to Wu [54], perceived benefits is the sum of advantages that meet customer's needs or wants, where consumers perceive relative advantages such as lower cost, convenience, and time saving, which are offered by online shopping as compared to traditional shopping methods, they are more likely to adopt online retailers' service [20] (p. 1356). When the expected benefits from a website are high, consumers' trust toward the website also increases [20] (p. 1357). Convenience and time saving are the most important reasons for using online shopping by consumers in Korea [5]. Therefore, this study looks at perceived benefits in terms of convenience and time-saving. Consumers' attitudes toward online shopping are more positive where the perceived advantages of using online shopping are clear.

## 2.4. Electronic Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is an important factor affecting the consumption before purchase and influences consumers' attitudes [25] (p. 4). The Internet extends consumers' ability to gather information about products and services from other consumers worldwide [55] (p. 4) and provides the consumers with an opportunity to offer consumption-related advice by posting online comments which results into electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) [25,56]. Any statement, negative or positive, made by actual, potential, or former customers about a company, its products, or services, which can be accessed on the Internet for anybody to read is referred to as the electronic word of mouth [56]. Generating positive eWOM is an important marketing instrument that greatly influences consumers' products and services choice [30].

The Internet is available everywhere in Korea, so eWOM can be accessed easily by consumers [24]. eWOM plays a big role in influencing online shoppers' attitudes [24]. Brand strength, third-party online

comments and user-friendliness were found to affect website trust [57]. eWOM can be in several ways like newsgroups, web-based opinions, discussion forums, and boycott websites [24,56]. On buying products online, consumers leave comments on websites and give a product score indicating the extent of liking the products [58] (p. 9). This study focuses on eWOM posted via websites in form of online comments about products and services.

### 2.5. Trust

Trust is the most precious asset any business has, the bedrock on which business is built [8,38,59]. Trust develops over time through repetition of actions [53]. Trust is important in relational exchange and acts as a cornerstone for a strategic partnership between sellers and buyers [8,60,61]. It provides buyers with confident expectations about the products and services of the sellers [8,60]. It refers to an attitude of confident expectation in online transactions that are risky with the hope that consumer's vulnerabilities will not be taken advantage of [8,20,46,53,62]. The global and open nature of the internet exposes online transactions to uncertainty, vulnerability, and insecurity [20,63]. As a result, online shopping transactions are vulnerable to fraud and security threats [63,64]. Consumers may not engage in online shopping transactions because of the lack of online trust [20,60,65,66].

Online trust can be looked at as a multi-dimensional construct [4,25,60]. Several scholars have supported the multifaceted nature of online trust [60,63,66]. Park et al. [60] researched on three attributes of customer online trust that includes; competence, benevolence, and integrity. Competence refers to the e-retailer's ability to supply the expected services or goods in the agreed-upon conditions, quantities, time, and price [60]. The willingness of an e-retailer to act on the consumer's behalf is referred to as benevolence [60]. Integrity includes fairness, responsibility, and honesty which are shown by the e-retailers' willingness to commit to agreements of the online transaction [60]. The online trust dimensions positively influence the consumers' willingness to rely on e-retailers, this creates a relationship between the online trust dimensions [60].

Reducing uncertainty and establishing trust through assessment of online shopping websites information makes consumers to be more willing to engage in online shopping transactions [4,8,22]. Building trust is therefore essential for growth prospects of online shopping [8]. Online retailers should adhere to ethical standards, keeping in mind that their products quality, brand integrity, and staff dedication builds trust and strengthen sustainable relationships with customers [29]. They should ensure that consumers enjoy their brands through excellent customer services, innovations, and respect for cultures and customs in the communities of their business jurisdiction [29].

## 3. Research Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature, a model with relationships among constructs was defined as shown in Figure 1. In our model, we considered five relevant factors that other researchers [3,4,7,8,20,51,60,63,67–69] have already studied: perceived website quality, trust, attitudes, perceived benefits, and electronic word of mouth. The study advocates that consumers' attitudes toward Gmarket online shopping in Korea are influenced by psychological, personal, and technological behavioral beliefs. This approach has been used by past studies to investigate consumers' online shopping attitudes in Jordan, a country with a less developed online shopping market [7]. We posit that the three behavioral beliefs, which include perceived trust (psychological), perceived benefits (personal), and perceived website quality (technological) influence the attitudes of consumers in Korea toward online shopping. Therefore, we expect our results to differ from past studies because Korea's online shopping market is at its maturity stage and online shoppers are well educated and technology savvy.



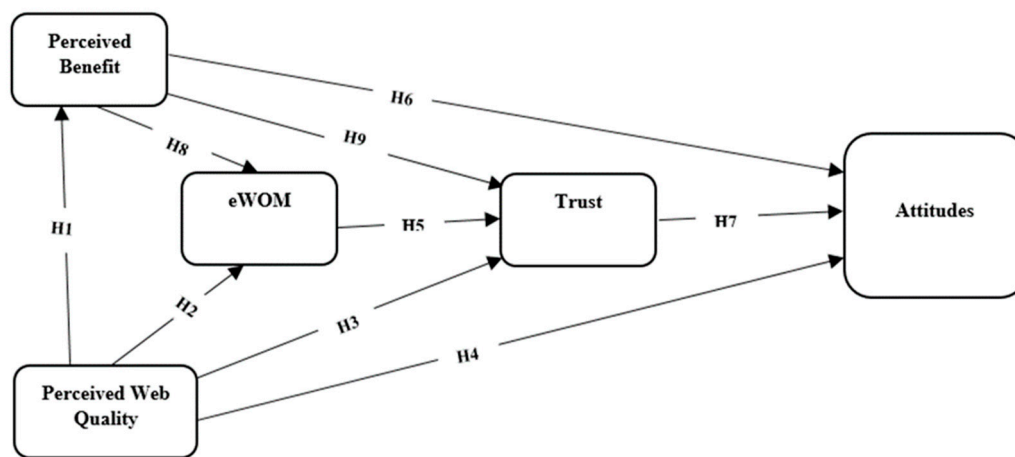


Figure 1. Research model.

### 3.1. Perceived Website Quality and Perceived Benefits

Where an online retailer's website is user-friendly and of high quality, consumers are more likely to perceive it as more useful and will be more willing to depend on that retailer [32]. Research shows that consumers' perceptions about the benefits of using a website improve with the online shopping website quality [7,8,30,32,47]. Ha et al. [8] investigated the relationship between perceived usefulness and perceived website quality in the context of online shopping in Korea. Their findings supported the relationship. O'Cass and Carlson [30] argued that in cases where customers make the judgement that the online retailer's website is innovative, they tend to evaluate the website to have delivered a quality online service. Therefore based on these findings, we posit that the perceptions of consumers toward online shopping benefits increase when the website can be easily searched, information about products and services can be easily located, loading of web pages is prompt, and ordering process can be securely done. We, therefore hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 1.** *Perceived website quality is positively related to perceived benefits.*

### 3.2. Perceived Website Quality and Electronic Word of Mouth

eWOM posted on shopping websites may result from the desire to help other consumers with their purchasing decisions, to avoid other consumers from negative experiences, or both [56]. Both positive and negative consumer experiences with the company, its products, or services may be included in this eWOM communication [56]. eWOM is a mechanism for shifting power from companies to consumers [56]. When consumers perceive online shopping website quality to be high, they are more likely to post positive online comments [7]. Previous studies have found website quality to be positively related to electronic word of mouth [7,30]. O'Cass and Carlson [30] argue that information from other customers in form of eWOM is important in evaluating e-services since consumers rely on their peers' opinions in forming expectations about the service. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 2.** *Perceived website quality is positively related to electronic word of mouth.*

### 3.3. Perceived Website Quality and Trust

Based on the available website information, initial trust is formed [32]. Where consumers perceive a website as user-friendly and of high quality, they are more likely to trust it [32,70]. A good website interface design and information quality enhance consumer trust and may help to predict consumer behavior indirectly [8,32]. The perceived trust associated with purchasing products from online retailers is assumed to be high where online retailers have high-quality websites [7,8]. Various scholars have highlighted the impact of perceived website quality on consumers' trust [8,30,70]. Ha et al. [8]

(p. 539) investigated the relationship between perceived website quality and trust in the context of online shopping in Korea. Their findings supported the relationship. O’Cass and Carlson [30] argued that if consumers evaluate an online retailer’s website to be innovative, they tend to form favorable online trust perception toward the retailer’s website. Perceived website quality was found to have the strongest effect on consumer trust in using the website for online shopping [48]. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 3.** *Perceived website quality is positively related to trust.*

#### 3.4. Perceived Website Quality and Consumer Attitudes

Website quality positively and directly impacts the customer satisfaction [49] (p. 125), and the customer satisfaction positively and directly impacts the purchase intentions [47]. The satisfaction that a customer derives from a purchase experience depends on the website’s ease of use [49] (p. 125). Website portals that offer customers a way to choose affordable products that are produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way are seen favorably by the customers [71]. Where shopping websites have high interactivity and usability elements, consumers are more likely to develop favorable attitudes [7]. Zhou [31] emphasized the relationship between perceived website quality and consumer online attitude. Attitude toward a website was proved as a predictor of behavioral intention [72]. Attitudes toward online shopping is a strong predictor of the actual use of online shopping technology [40,73]. Attitude is important on the web and has been considered as an index for assessing web effectiveness [74]. According to the TRA, a favorable attitude prompts individuals for behavior performance [37]. Perceived website reputation and perceived website image [20] enhance perceived website quality which significantly affects consumers’ attitudes toward online shopping [7]. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 4.** *Perceived website quality is positively related to consumer attitudes toward online shopping.*

#### 3.5. Electronic Word of Mouth and Trust

Retail consumers develop trust perceptions based on their website experience [20,55] or the experiences of their trusted peers [30,55]. Customers post online comments about their experiences with online retailers’ websites [55] (p. 4). When online retailers meet customers’ expectations, positive eWOM results [25] (p. 4). Because of fast Internet technology in Korea, there is a large number of consumers who use eWOM communication. Online comments are perceived as credible and Internet users trust information provided by their peers [7,25]. The information provided by similar shoppers is used to judge the product and services quality [30]. Positive online opinions reduce the risk perceived by Internet users when purchasing products or services [55]. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 5.** *Positive eWOM results into more trust in online shopping websites.*

#### 3.6. Perceived Benefits and Attitudes

Attitude toward an object is influenced by the belief about the object [21,43]. Belief-based models have been used to explain the formation of attitude since the 1970s [21]. Perceived benefits of an object play an important role that influences consumers’ attitudes [21]. Wu [54] found attitude toward online shopping to be significantly related to perceived benefits. Online shopping enables consumers to buy products and services anytime anywhere [20]. Through online shopping, consumers can easily seek information and compare various product prices conveniently [3]. In comparison to traditional shopping, the perceived benefit of online shopping is higher and is a significant factor affecting consumers’ attitudes [54]. The higher the perceived benefit of websites, the more favorable consumers’ attitudes are toward online shopping. Perceived benefits play a significant role in explaining consumer online shopping attitudes [21]. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 6.** *Perceived benefits are positively related to online shopping attitude.*

### 3.7. Trust and Attitudes

An essential element of successful online transactions is the trusting relationship between the organization and its customers [4]. Trust has been found to be a key predictor of customer retention [3] (p. 408). The cyberspace is uncertain and dynamic; therefore, trust is a significant determinant of consumers' attitudes [20,52,75]. Trust refers to the willingness to be in vulnerability based on another person's behavior to perform a certain action [38,76,77]. Trust also refers to the belief of individuals in others' trustworthiness which results from their perceived benevolence, competence, and integrity [20,38,52,66]. It is the expectation that others will not take advantage or behave opportunistically [20,76,78]. Customers' trust toward the websites positively effects their attitude toward online shopping [19,38]. Previous scholars have emphasized the importance of trust as a significant determinant of consumer attitude toward the purchasing intention [20,38,52,78]. Therefore, based on this, we hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 7.** *Trust is positively related to consumer attitudes toward online shopping.*

### 3.8. Perceived Benefits and Electronic Word of Mouth

Where consumers perceive relative advantages such as lower cost, convenience, and time saving, which are offered by online shopping, they are more likely to adopt online retailers' service [20] (p. 1356). Such consumers are more likely to make positive online comments on online retailers' websites based on their shopping experience. We thus hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 8.** *Perceived benefits are positively related to electronic word of mouth.*

### 3.9. Perceived Benefits and Trust

Where consumers perceive relative advantages of online shopping in the form of economic benefits, increased efficiency, and enhanced status [16], they are more likely to trust online shopping websites. Trust significantly affects the perceived benefits of using online shopping [53]. When the expected benefits from a website are high, consumers' trust toward the website also increases [20] (p. 1357). We thus hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 9.** *Perceived benefits are positively related to trust in online transactions.*

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1. Design of the Study

As mentioned before, online shopping in Korea has become a fast-expanding market (FEM). Consumers in Korea can now shop online from a variety of shopping websites such as Gmarket, ABC Mart, Auction, Danawa, Hyundai hmall, Interpark, Lotte imall, 11th Street, and others. For this study, we selected Gmarket website (<http://global.gmarket.co.kr>), because Gmarket is an early mover in the Korean online shopping market and the company is considered as one of the best websites with an international reach. The Gmarket website can be compared to international shopping websites like Taobao, Amazon, eBay, and Rakuten. It is referred to as Korea's number one shopping site.

We used a survey research methodology to examine the proposed model. The various constructs under study were measured by designing a questionnaire with a range of questions as shown in Table 1. A total of 600 students were contacted by means of convenience sampling. The questionnaire consisted of a section with demographic information and another with the measures of variables under study. A pre-test of the questionnaire involved professors and graduate students who are experienced in online shopping survey. This ensured content validity [3] (p. 415). They suggested little changes that



were performed. We included a filtering question at the start of the survey by asking respondents if they had a Gmarket online shopping experience. Only those respondents who said yes were allowed to complete the survey until the end.

An online survey was conducted by interviewing university students from June to October 2017. We used a cross-sectional survey because it is advantageous in ways such as the low demand placed on respondents as well as the low cost involved in implementation [76,79]. The data were collected by posting the survey link to the students' emails, social media channels such as Facebook, Kakao, and WhatsApp. This approach is acceptable and was used by Nduneseokwu et al. [80] and Hsiao et al. [48] for data collection. The use of university students is appropriate because, they have the basic computer and Internet skills, and in most cases, they are users of the latest technology [64]. Other scholars used student samples for similar studies [9,64,81,82].

We selected online survey as an effective way for gathering perception data from online shoppers who are experienced in using Gmarket online shopping website because we could easily reach a large number of respondents, collect their responses, and code responses immediately [48]. Also, because of the developed and fast Internet connection in Korea [5], the online survey was an effective way to reach respondents. To increase on response rate, we printed some paper surveys that were attempted by undergraduate students in class as part of their assignments. Explanations were done where the respondents required clarifications. It is acceptable to use both online and offline means for data collection [80] (p. 6).

#### *4.2. Measurement Development*

The instruments used in the study were based on previous research [7,51,67–69] and modified to suit Gmarket online shopping research context. This ensured valid and reliable measures [76]. We adopted the five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree in measuring all constructs under study. The resulting questionnaire items are as shown in Table 1. Demographic information of respondents collected includes; age, gender, the level of education, monthly income, and marital status.

#### *4.3. Survey Results*

Out of the 600 contacted respondents, 407 responses were collected for examination [83] (p. 48). Sixty-nine invalid responses were removed due to inconsistent answers, missing data, and outliers [83] (p. 50). This represents an invalid response rate of 16.95%. Of the 69 invalid responses, 18 had inconsistent answers, 38 had missing data, and 13 were outliers. The online survey yielded 220 valid responses while the paper survey yielded 118 valid responses. A total of 338 valid responses were obtained for further analysis. Table 2 shows the sample descriptive statistics. Of the 338 respondents: 44% were male and 56% were female; 152 were 18–26 years old, 131 were 27–34 years old, 43 were 35–43 years old, while 12 were over 44 years of age. From the analysis of respondents' level of education, we found that 4% had high school education, 41% had a bachelors' degree, 42% had a master's degree, and 13% had a PhD degree. Since educated people have the desire to adopt Internet-based technologies, the sample is good for testing the instruments [64,76,84].

**Table 1.** Questionnaire items.

Construct	Item	Survey Statement	Source
<b>Perceived Website Quality (PWQ)</b>	PWQ1	Gmarket website internal browsing meets my needs	[7,51,68]
	PWQ2	The ordering process used by Gmarket website is simple	
	PWQ3	Gmarket website web page content quickly loads	
	PWQ4	The Gmarket website internal search capabilities meets my needs	
	PWQ5	Little search effort is needed to find the needed products/information on the Gmarket retailer website	
	PWQ6	Overall, the Gmarket website is well-designed	
<b>Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)</b>	eWOM1	I often read online recommendations to buy products from Gmarket retailers	[7,69]
	eWOM2	I often post positive online comments about Gmarket retailers	
	eWOM3	I often read positive online reviews about the products of Gmarket retailers	
	eWOM4	My e-community frequently post online recommendations to buy from Gmarket retailers	
	eWOM5	When I buy a product from Gmarket retailers, consumers' online recommendations and reviews make me more confident in purchasing the product	
<b>Perceived Benefits (PB)</b>	PB1	By using Gmarket retailers, I can shop in privacy of home	[7,67]; self-developed
	PB2	I can buy from Gmarket retailers whenever I want	
	PB3	Buying from Gmarket retailers can save me the effort of buying what I want from offline/traditional stores	
	PB4	I find prices cheaper on Gmarket than offline retail stores	
	PB5	Gmarket retailers offer good after sales services and respond to my queries in time	
<b>Trust (TR)</b>	TR1	It is safe to pay money and perform a financial transaction on Gmarket retailer's website	[7,68]; self-developed
	TR2	The Gmarket retailers will protect my financial-related information from being leaked (hacked)	
	TR3	The Gmarket website is secured given that it uses digital certificates	
	TR4	The Gmarket retailer's website will not sell my personal information (e-mail, phone number, names) to others for commercial use	
	TR5	The Gmarket retailers deliver the exact quality of product as advertised	
<b>Online Shopping Attitudes (OSA)</b>	OSA1	The idea of buying from Gmarket retailer website is a good idea	[7]; self-developed
	OSA2	Buying from Gmarket retailer website is better than buying from a real store/shop	
	OSA3	Buying from Gmarket retailer website is a pleasant thing to do	
	OSA4	Gmarket retailers guarantee me to exchange any damaged items	

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics.

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	148	43.79
	Female	190	56.21
Marital Status	Married	73	21.6
	Single	265	78.4
Age	18–26	152	44.97
	27–34	131	38.76
	35–43	43	12.72
	44 and above	12	3.55
Shopping Frequency	Once	85	25.15
	Twice	78	23.08
	Three–four times	80	23.67
	More than five times	95	28.11
Monthly Income	Less than 1,000,000	190	56.21
	1,000,000–2,000,000	106	31.36
	2,000,001–3,000,000	17	5.03
	3,000,001–4,000,000	7	2.07
	More than 4,000,001	18	5.33
Level of Education	High school	15	4.44
	Bachelor’s degree	138	40.83
	Master’s degree	141	41.72
	PhD	44	13.02

## 5. Analysis of Results

Structural equation modelling (SEM)’s use has grown in the social sciences [85]. The method offers great potential for testing hypotheses and new theory development [85]. For data analysis, we adopted an approach which was recommended by Anderson and Gerbing [76,85], which involves two steps. First, we did a measurement model analysis, and second, we tested the structural relationships among the constructs [85]. We used SmartPLS 2.0M3 (SmartPLS GmbH, Bönningstedt, Germany) [76] (p. 9) for SEM, examination of the measurement model, structural model, and testing of hypotheses [3] because of the following reasons. Fewer restrictions are placed by the PLS method on the sample size, measurement scales, and residual distribution, the method is, therefore, suitable for this study [3,76,86]. Covariance-based SEM is bound by the normality assumption [87], which is not required for PLS [88]. PLS provides accurate estimates of mediation effects and accounts for measurement errors [89]. Henseler et al. [87] advocate that PLS provides an alternative approach for testing theory.

### 5.1. Measurement Model

#### 5.1.1. Reliability

To assess the measurement model, we used reliability, by evaluating the internal consistency reliability and indicator reliability [3,90]. Composite reliability (CR) values [64] (p. 457) and Cronbach’s alpha (CA) [55] (p. 7) were used to test the internal consistency reliability. In Table 3, the values in the third and fourth columns are all greater than 0.7 [55], which is the commonly acceptable requirement [91]. The individual indicators’ reliability depends on whether at least 50% of the indicators explain latent variable variance [90,92]. Manifest variables’ loadings should be 0.7 or more [93]. The magnitude of all indicators is 0.7 or more as shown in Table 4, which fulfils the requirement. Based on the two tests, we are in a position to conclude that all indicators are reliable [76].

**Table 3.** Inter-construct correlations and reliability.

Variables	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	OSA	PB	PWQ	TR	eWOM
<b>OSA</b>	0.6150	0.8637	0.7897	<b>0.7842</b>				
<b>PB</b>	0.6200	0.8667	0.7941	0.6463	<b>0.7874</b>			
<b>PWQ</b>	0.5689	0.8682	0.8102	0.5747	0.5869	<b>0.7543</b>		
<b>TR</b>	0.6072	0.8851	0.8377	0.6581	0.5089	0.5288	<b>0.7792</b>	
<b>eWOM</b>	0.5278	0.8162	0.7039	0.4451	0.4106	0.4676	0.3862	<b>0.7265</b>

Notes: The root square of the AVE of constructs are shown by values on the diagonal.

**Table 4.** The matrix of cross-loadings and loadings.

Indicators	OSA	PB	PWQ	TR	eWOM
<b>eWM1</b>	0.2513	0.2239	0.2871	0.2177	<b>0.6833</b>
<b>eWM3</b>	0.3620	0.3170	0.3858	0.2643	<b>0.7770</b>
<b>eWM4</b>	0.2692	0.1629	0.2727	0.2941	<b>0.6448</b>
<b>eWM5</b>	0.3844	0.4325	0.3913	0.3350	<b>0.7905</b>
<b>OSA1</b>	<b>0.8287</b>	0.6258	0.4987	0.5765	0.3737
<b>OSA2</b>	<b>0.7668</b>	0.4879	0.3980	0.4484	0.3354
<b>OSA3</b>	<b>0.8567</b>	0.5071	0.5235	0.5809	0.3834
<b>OSA4</b>	<b>0.6717</b>	0.3747	0.3599	0.4375	0.2956
<b>PB1</b>	0.5462	<b>0.8260</b>	0.5204	0.4622	0.3227
<b>PB2</b>	0.4407	<b>0.7871</b>	0.4727	0.3684	0.2799
<b>PB3</b>	0.5523	<b>0.8240</b>	0.4448	0.4195	0.3407
<b>PB4</b>	0.4877	<b>0.7065</b>	0.4052	0.3418	0.3498
<b>PWQ1</b>	0.4119	0.3998	<b>0.7398</b>	0.3090	0.3811
<b>PWQ2</b>	0.4314	0.4405	<b>0.7381</b>	0.4149	0.3195
<b>PWQ3</b>	0.4112	0.4632	<b>0.7314</b>	0.4417	0.3359
<b>PWQ4</b>	0.4300	0.4379	<b>0.7495</b>	0.3701	0.3769
<b>PWQ6</b>	0.4795	0.4679	<b>0.8098</b>	0.4482	0.3538
<b>TR1</b>	0.5385	0.5291	0.4924	<b>0.7727</b>	0.3307
<b>TR2</b>	0.4699	0.2937	0.3866	<b>0.8072</b>	0.2814
<b>TR3</b>	0.4310	0.3272	0.3480	<b>0.7943</b>	0.3157
<b>TR4</b>	0.5283	0.3678	0.4170	<b>0.8237</b>	0.2886
<b>TR5</b>	0.5629	0.4162	0.3857	<b>0.6916</b>	0.2790

### 5.1.2. Validity

Discriminant validity and convergent validity are used for examining the validity of reflective constructs [64,94]. The average variance extracted (AVE) values are used for evaluating and assessing convergent validity [83,94]. In Table 3, the second column shows that all the AVEs of constructs are 0.50 or higher which satisfies the acceptable threshold [92]. This indicates good convergent validity [3]. The root square of the AVE of every construct is superior to the correlation between other constructs in the model and the construct [76,86,95]. As seen in Table 3, our model has good convergent validity.

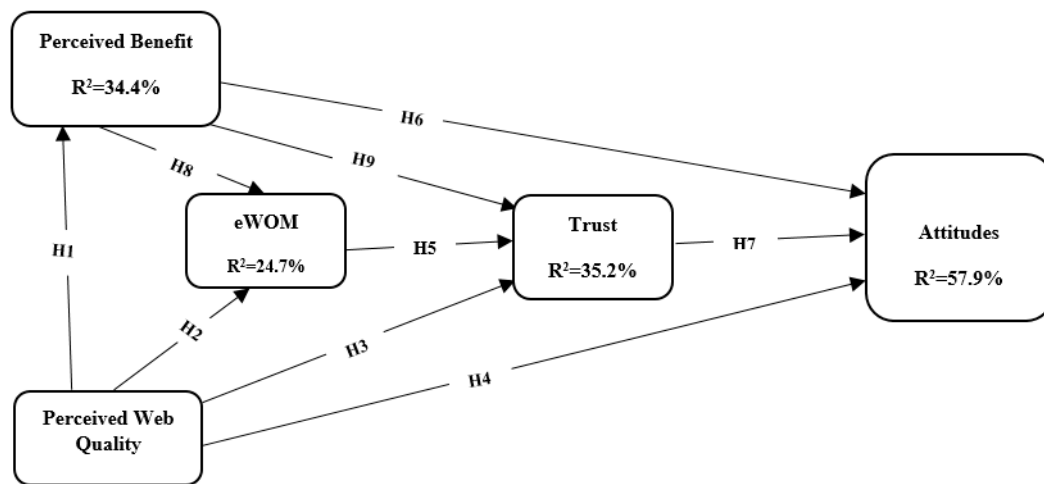
Discriminant validity is represented by the inter indicators' patterns of a construct with other constructs [90]. As shown in Table 4, the cross-factor loadings show that discriminant validity is appropriate, as the loading of each indicator on its assigned construct is more than its loading on other constructs [46,89].

### 5.2. Structural Model

PLS algorithm is run [76] to obtain the  $R^2$  values and the path coefficients which are used for assessing the structural model's predictive performance [94]. Bootstrapping procedure using PLS is strong in prediction specification [3,88].

Figure 2 shows the structural path analysis results, with insignificant relationships shown by the dotted lines while significant ones are represented by the bold lines. Table 5 shows the results of hypothesis testing.  $R^2$  values are shown within the oval of each construct in Figure 2. The model

explains 34.4% of perceived benefit (PB), 24.7% of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), 35.2% of trust (TR), and 57.9% of online shopping attitude (OSA).



**Figure 2.** Structural model results. Notes: Bold lines show path coefficients that are significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5.** Summary of hypotheses testing results.

Hypotheses	Path	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t Statistics	Conclusion
H1	PWQ $\rightarrow$ PB	0.5869	14.2958	Supported
H2	PWQ $\rightarrow$ eWOM	0.3458	5.3661	Supported
H3	PWQ $\rightarrow$ TR	0.3063	4.9776	Supported
H4	PWQ $\rightarrow$ OSA	0.1595	2.3494	Supported
H5	eWOM $\rightarrow$ TR	0.1297	2.4951	Supported
H6	PB $\rightarrow$ OSA	0.3519	5.9355	Supported
H7	TR $\rightarrow$ OSA	0.3947	8.7566	Supported
H8	PB $\rightarrow$ eWOM	0.2077	2.8787	Supported
H9	PB $\rightarrow$ TR	0.2758	4.4949	Supported

Because all the hypotheses are directional, we adopted a t-test [88]. The performed bootstrapping helped in computing t-statistics of all hypotheses (H1-H9) as indicated in Table 5. All of the hypothesized relationships were significant at ( $p < 0.05$ ). The structural findings indicate that hypotheses H1-H9 were all supported. Perceived website quality had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.5869$ ,  $t = 14.2958$ ) on perceived benefit, supporting H1. Perceived website quality had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.3458$ ,  $t = 5.3661$ ) on the electronic word of mouth, supporting H2. Perceived website quality had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.3063$ ,  $t = 4.9776$ ) on trust, supporting H3. Perceived website quality had a positive significant influence ( $\beta = 0.1595$ ,  $t = 2.3494$ ) on online shopping attitude, supporting H4. Electronic word of mouth had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.1297$ ,  $t = 2.4951$ ) on trust, supporting H5. Perceived benefits had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.3519$ ,  $t = 5.9355$ ) on online shopping attitude, supporting H6. Trust had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.3947$ ,  $t = 8.7566$ ) on online shopping attitude, supporting H7. Perceived benefits had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.2077$ ,  $t = 2.8787$ ) on the electronic word of mouth, supporting H8. Perceived benefits had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.2758$ ,  $t = 4.4949$ ) on trust, supporting H9.

## 6. Discussion

The validity and reliability of the research model are supported by the empirical findings. The study advocated that consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea are a function of psychological, technological, and personal characteristics. The three major behavioral beliefs which



include; perceived trust (psychological), perceived benefits (personal), and perceived website quality (technological) were found to significantly influence consumers' attitudes in Korea toward online shopping. Therefore, consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea are a function of perceived website quality, perceived benefits, and trust. As seen in the model, trust results from perceived website quality, perceived benefits, and eWOM. The eWOM results from perceived website quality and perceived benefits. Perceived website quality positively influences the perceived benefits and online shopping attitudes. All the hypotheses are supported. While Al-Debei et al.'s [7] model explained 28% of the variance in online shopping attitudes in Jordan, the extended model in this study explained 57.9% of the variance in consumer attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. The variance of the constructs was explained at the substantial level consistent with Chin's [89] criteria.  $R^2$  values of 0.67 are substantial, 0.33 are moderate, and 0.19 are weak for endogenous latent variables [89,90].

Trust ( $\beta = 0.3947$ ,  $t = 8.7566$ ) exerted the strongest effect on online shopping attitudes. This implies that trust is the most important predictor of consumer online shopping attitudes in Korea. This offers further support to other researchers that concluded the same [7,52,75,78]. Therefore, trust is a key predictor of consumers' online shopping attitudes in Korea [4]. Gefen and Straub [75] suggested that companies that build high levels of trust on online shopping websites have more chances of prospering. Wu and Yuan [61] also agree that trust is an important factor in helping consumers to make informed choices. Online retailers in Korea need to focus on trust to excel in the cyberspace market [4]. To improve online shoppers' trust, online retailers in Korea need to focus on reducing perceived risks by paying attention to customer's privacy and security concerning online transactions [27]. Privacy and security concerns have been found to be the major hindrances for the adoption of web based online shopping as they affect consumers' trust and attitudes [7,22]. Therefore, online shopping websites in Korea should have features that enable customers to manage their privacy. Security is a key factor that affects online shoppers' trust [6]. Online shopping websites with poor security are not trusted by online shoppers and are seen as socially irresponsible [29]. Therefore, online shopping websites should facilitate transactions in a secured environment by ensuring appropriate authorization and authentication. Ethical practices such as transaction safety and elimination of online frauds enhance the brand image of online retailers [29]. Strong encryption mechanisms should be set up to secure financial information. These facilitate sustainable online shopping.

Next, to trust, perceived benefit ( $\beta = 0.3519$ ,  $t = 5.9355$ ) exerted a strong effect on online shopping attitudes. This implies that perceived benefit is an important predictor of consumer online shopping attitude in Korea. This finding extends further support to [7,21,54] who concluded that the higher the consumers' perceived benefits, the more favorable their attitude is toward online shopping websites. Therefore, the attitude of consumers in Korea is affected by the benefits they expect from using online shopping websites. Benefits like convenience, ease of use of the service anytime anywhere, cost and time savings play a key role in influencing consumers' attitude. Online retailers in Korea need to improve on their delivery time and scope so as to improve on the expected benefits of online shopping. Consumers have an incentive to use online shopping where products are delivered promptly and in the right conditions as advertised on the websites. Perceived benefits can also be in terms of payment options. Instead of using online payments which are perceived by some customers as relatively risky, consumers can be given an option of cash payment on delivery [7]. Perceived benefits have strategic implications. They represent what motivates online shoppers toward online transactions, this can be used for designing e-marketing strategies [7]. They also represent strategic capabilities that can help in competing in the cyberspace market.

Perceived website quality exerted a positive significant ( $\beta = 0.1595$ ,  $t = 2.3494$ ) influence on online shopping attitudes. This finding differs from Al-Debei et al.'s [7] results that found perceived website quality to not significantly influence online shopping attitudes in Jordan. Perceived website quality had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.4315$ ,  $t = 8.7023$ ) on trust. This results offers more support to Ha et al. [8] whose results concluded the same in Korea. Perceived website quality also had a positive influence ( $\beta = 0.3458$ ,  $t = 5.3661$ ) on the electronic word of mouth. This implies that eWOM is a

mediator between perceived website quality and trust. Therefore, high perceived website quality for online shopping results into positive electronic word of mouth and high consumer trust levels. These findings give further support to Al-Debei et al.'s [7] results in Jordan. This implies that online shopping websites should enhance the quality of their websites by focusing on site design, improving user interfaces, navigation capabilities, and search facilities.

### *Implications*

This study contributes academic and practical implications which are relevant for online shopping consumer behavior research. Past research [7,20,70] has called for more investigations on the drivers of consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in other parts of the world. The empirical findings from our research are consistent with past findings and help in closing the gaps by analyzing online consumers' attitudes in a developed country like Korea. Therefore, this research makes a contribution by extending the roles played by trust, perceived benefits, perceived website quality, and eWOM in influencing consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. Practically, this study contributes findings that are beneficial to managers in designing e-marketing strategies. The three major behavioral beliefs which include; perceived trust, perceived benefits, and perceived website quality positively and significantly influence consumers' online shopping attitudes. This implies that the management of online shopping retailers may focus on the three behavioral beliefs. Given the intense competition in the fast-expanding online shopping market in Korea, website managers may ensure safe and user-friendly websites for sustainable online shopping. Privacy policies should be easy to understand, payment methods should be secure, and terms and conditions for online transactions should be clear. Online retailers may enhance customers' trust by encouraging the satisfied customers to post positive online comments. Our findings give more insight into international online retailers planning to expand operations to Korea. The findings may help them in designing appropriate strategies for achieving long-term success in the competitive market.

We contribute to the existing literature by examining attitudes of online shoppers in Korea. Consumers' attitudes are relevant in their purchase decision-making [21,36,37,42]. Online shopping in Korea can be improved by carrying out more innovations as it may have reached its maturity stage. The further innovations are considered by customers as new practices [16]. We recommend online retailers to adopt sustainability strategies for encouraging sustainable consumer behavior. Websites may offer customers affordable products that are produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Attitudes of consumers toward purchasing environmentally friendly products are high. Therefore, we are dealing with the adoption of innovations in sustainable online shopping. So it is logical to examine online shoppers' attitudes at this point in the context of Korea.

According to the TRA [43] and the TPB [35,36], attitude is a very important factor that predicts behavioral intentions [96]. Past research on e-commerce and online shopping found attitude as a key predictor of consumer purchase and repurchase intention [19,38,44,45]. Therefore, investigating consumers' attitudes contributes to sustainable and responsible consumer behavior in Korea.

### **7. Limitations and Future Research**

Despite the significance of our research, we encountered a number of short-comings that provide room for future research in the online shopping cyberspace market. First, responses were collected from students by using an online survey coupled with paper-based class interviews which are not fully representative of the entire population under study. This may have resulted in some bias toward the surveyed population. We recommend future research using field surveys to cover the perceptions of online shoppers who did not get access to the online survey.

Second, the research was conducted from June to October 2017 by means of a cross-sectional survey. We recommend a longitudinal analysis covering six months or more to help in improving the reliability of the study. This would help to capture various respondents' opinions and attitudes that keep changing from time to time.

The data for our research was gathered from respondents in Korea whose characteristics differ from other subjects elsewhere in the world. Replications of a similar topic is encouraged in future research by focusing on other parts of the world like Uganda (Jumia), China (Taobao), the United States of America (eBay), Kenya, Japan (Rakuten), Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and India. The validity of the proposed research model would be assessed across different countries.

The study focuses on one website which is Gmarket and therefore findings may not be similar to other online shopping websites. We encourage research to examine consumers' attitudes toward other shopping websites in Korea like ABC Mart, Auction, Danawa, Hyundai hmall, Interpark, Lotte imall, 11th Street, and others. This may help to see differences in results.

Other variables like the perceived ease of use, behavioral intentions, performance expectancy, perceived usefulness, relative advantage, perceived website reputation, social influence, perceived website image, and innovativeness, can be added into the research model and tested to see the variability in results. The explanatory power of the model may be improved.

## 8. Conclusions

In this study, we examined the consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea in the case of Gmarket, which is regarded as Korea's number one online shopping website. Results indicate that consumers' attitudes toward online shopping in Korea are influenced by perceived benefit, trust, and perceived website quality. Perceived website quality, perceived benefits, and electronic word of mouth were the major factors influencing consumers' trust. Perceived website quality was found to have a positive significant effect on both perceived benefits and online shopping attitudes. Electronic word of mouth mediated between perceived website quality and trust. Electronic word of mouth also mediated between perceived benefit and trust. Trust mediated between perceived website quality and consumer attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. Trust also mediated between perceived benefits and consumer attitudes toward online shopping in Korea. The Internet in Korea has become a marketplace for all consumers. The online shopping market in Korea has reached its maturity stage. Innovation strategies may help online retailers to operate as a going concern. Online retailers may adopt sustainability strategies for encouraging sustainable consumer behavior. Websites may offer customers affordable products that are produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Consumers' attitudes toward purchasing environmentally friendly products are high. We hope the model stimulates more research on sustainable consumer online shopping behavior in other parts of the world.

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