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**Breaking Barriers: Effective
Strategies for Emerging Chinese
Brands in the Global eCommerce
Market**



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Breaking Barriers: Effective Strategies for Emerging Chinese Brands in the Global eCommerce Market

Abstract

Consumer sector is a strategic sector to a country's economy as it is one of the largest segments represented by innovative small and medium-sized companies that keep the economy growing. Consumer brands, especially those in the personal consumption sector, are predominantly led by well-established global market leaders that benefit from economies of scale, strong brand recognition, and efficient supply chain capabilities. How can new brands penetrate the market and establish themselves in this competitive landscape? This question is particularly relevant for developing brands in China, which are looking to "Go Global" and targeting the international market through eCommerce. These brands strive to create a global identity amid a reputation primarily centred on manufacturing rather than branding strategies.

This study explores the strategies and approaches that young Chinese consumer brands can employ to successfully enter and compete against established global leaders in highly competitive consumer markets by leveraging eCommerce.

Keywords: *eCommerce, social media, direct-to-customer (DTC), economies of scale, young Chinese brands.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer sector is one of the largest industries contributing to each country's GDP and is generally considered a strategic sector that encourages innovations to drive economic growth momentum, particularly those from small and medium-sized companies that could introduce disruptive business models from time to time (Naradda Gamage *et al.*, 2020). Continue development in the sector is important for emerging countries, particularly China, which has been increasing its effort to elevate from being a manufacturing focus country into a more diversified servicing economy with stronger capabilities in offering innovative products (Li, 2023). Progress has been made over the years and we have witnessed China has been producing highly innovative products (eg. cell phones, toys, cosmetics, electric vehicles, consumer electronics, etc) (Rashidin *et al.*, 2020; Chozan, 2023). Not only these brands have excelled in producing innovative products, but most of them are managed to develop their own disruptive business models that even large-size traditional brands struggling to compete (Allison, 2021). They also possess strong expertise in the eCommerce spaces with innovative digital marketing strategies (such as Wechat min program, Tmall, Pingduoduo, Little Red Book, etc) to develop their own core competence thanks to the highly intensive market that forces them to evolve (EY China, 2024).

While the industry has witnessed increasingly more Chinese brands achieved significant success in the domestic market, many of them have now reached an important juncture to

consider expanding to the larger global market (Atherton, 2020). This potential expansion is especially crucial in the current context of slower domestic demand and heightened competition within an already saturated industry. Consequently, the "Going Global" strategy has emerged as an imperative pathway that all Chinese brands must consider (Wu and Yang, 2024). However, a pressing question arises regarding how these brands can establish competitiveness on a global scale amid facing challenges such as: (1) little global presence and track record, (2) stereotype impression of "Made in China" that positions China solely as a manufacturing hub rather than brand creation, (3) little brand recognition and trust among global consumers, and (4) insufficiently established sales distribution channels worldwide (Rua and Santos, 2022). Nevertheless, it is noted that the industry has witnessed increasingly more successful cases of young Chinese brands that have managed to disrupt traditional markets through innovative business models and expand into the international space, hence it is important to understand further assess their success factors (Chozan, 2023).

The rapid expansion of cross-border eCommerce presents a significant opportunity for young Chinese brands to establish a foothold in international markets. As these brands seek to navigate the complexities of global trade, understanding the key success factors that contribute to their competitiveness is important. This study aims to explore the strategic elements that enable young Chinese brands to excel in the cross-border eCommerce landscape, focusing on how they can leverage their strengths to tap into the international market and mitigate the usual challenges mentioned above. Also to highlight how they could leverage their inherent advantages, such as effective digital marketing, cost-effective production, agility in supply chain management, etc, allowing them to effectively engage with global consumers and differentiate themselves from established competitors.

For this study, three key theories will be employed to contemplate a comprehensive analytical framework for the research: the Theory of Planned Behavior ("TPB"), Consumer Engagement Theory ("CET"), and Diffusion of Innovations Theory ("DIT"). The Theory of Planned Behaviour will be the backbone of the research as it is instrumental in understanding how consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence purchasing decisions related to young Chinese brands in international markets. The purpose is to examine the motivations that drive consumers to engage with these emerging brands by examining these factors.

Consumer Engagement Theory will further enhance the analysis by exploring how young Chinese brands build consumer relationships through interactive and personalized marketing strategies. This theory emphasises the importance of fostering brand loyalty and community among consumers, which is particularly relevant in social media and digital platforms where engagement plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. The study aims to uncover effective practices that enhance brand visibility and consumer trust by investigating how these brands utilise engagement strategies to connect with international audiences.

Finally, Diffusion of Innovations Theory will provide insights into how young Chinese brands can successfully introduce innovative products and practices to global consumers. This

theory examines the processes through which new ideas and technologies spread, allowing for an exploration of how these brands can leverage innovation to gain competitive advantages in foreign markets. By understanding the adoption patterns of consumers in different cultural contexts, this research will highlight strategies that facilitate the successful entry and acceptance of young Chinese brands in cross-border eCommerce.

In summary, the Theory of Planned Behaviour will be the backbone of the research study, whereby CET and DIT will be used as references to supplement and enrich the study. Regarding the research objective, the study aims to guide young Chinese brands seeking “Go Global” expansion by exploring how they can mitigate the typical shortcomings of Chinese brands in the international market and transform them into competitive advantages that can, in turn, pose significant challenges back for well-established global brands. The objective is to enhance understanding of the academic concepts underpinning these strategies.

Regarding the research gap, Chinese brands “Go Global” via eCommerce is a relatively new topic, and the development is still preliminary. While existing literature has explored various aspects of eCommerce and consumer behaviour, they mainly focus on individual geographical markets or foreign companies entering China, which are not directly applicable to Chinese brands “Go Global”. This study aims to fill this gap by thoroughly examining the strategic elements that contribute to their success and contribute to the existing literature review. By identifying and analysing these key success factors, the research will offer valuable insights for academics and practitioners, including marketers, brand managers, and policymakers who seek to understand the dynamics of international eCommerce.

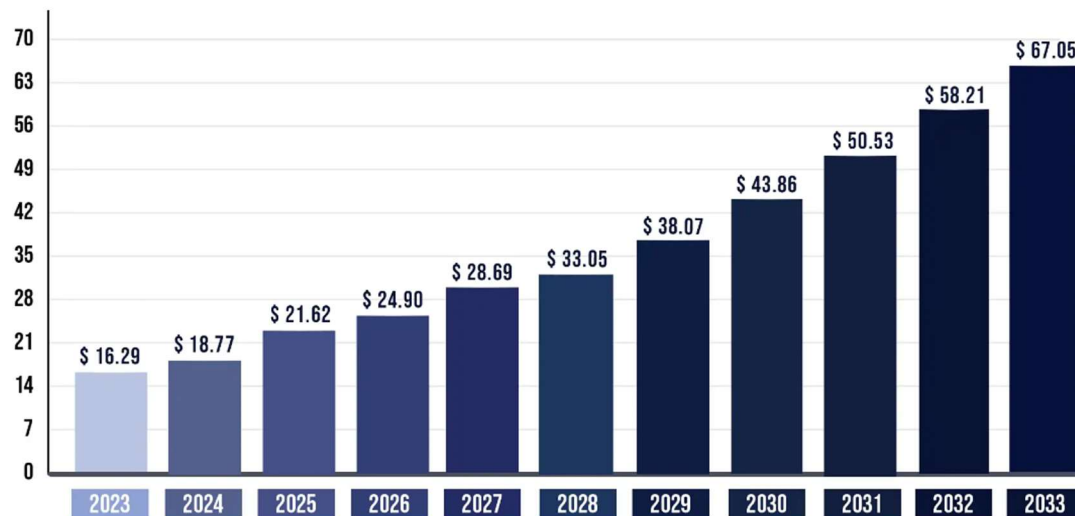
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background – why “Go Global”, why eCommerce?

Global expansion represents a strategic direction for Chinese brands. Young Chinese consumer brands have started pursuing opportunities to expand globally in order to broaden their addressable market and seek growth opportunities amid a slowing domestic economy and an increasingly competitive environment (Wu and Yang, 2024). When they embark on this journey, a critical question arises regarding the optimal starting point for global expansion, particularly given that young Chinese brands typically lack global recognition and do not possess established sales channels like their competitors overseas. Fortunately, the rising popularity of eCommerce activities (Snyder, 2023) has created a favourable entry point for them in the global market. This online channel presents several advantages: (1) it entails lower entry costs compared to traditional sales & distribution offline channels, (2) it leverages Chinese brands' unique experience from their domestic business, where online sales dominate, and (3) it capitalizes on their expertise in utilizing various online sales tools and marketplaces, including websites, social media platforms, and WeChat/Alipay (Wang, 2021).

The total addressable eCommerce market presents significant growth opportunities for developing young brands. In 2023, the industry size reached approximately US\$16.3 trillion and is projected to grow to US\$67.1 trillion by 2033 (Precedence Research, 2022). This anticipated growth has incentivised Chinese brands to enter the market, encouraging them to continue innovating and strengthening their positions in the global market by effectively developing their lessons learned from the domestic market into competitive advantages for overseas ventures.

Figure 1: Industry size of global eCommerce market 2023-2033.



Source: Precedence Research

The slowdown of the global economy has altered the purchasing behaviour of mainstream consumers, leading to an increased demand for cost effective, high quality products (Phan, 2023; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2023). This industry shift has been advantageous for young Chinese brands with strong capabilities in delivering highly differentiated yet affordable products by capitalizing on China's distinctive supply chain manufacturing capabilities. Furthermore, China's advanced manufacturing network enables these brands to achieve rapid production at competitive prices, even for small order quantities (ie. low minimum of quantity – MoQ), while also allowing them to respond to any new global trends promptly (Li, 2023).

In conclusion, although Chinese brands face common challenges in their efforts to "Go Global," they have numerous opportunities to excel and cultivate disruptive business models. This paper will focus specifically on some of the key successes and analyse them from multiple angles.

2.2 Typical challenges faced by young Chinese brands in expanding overseas via eCommerce

The entry stage is deemed challenging for young Chinese brands with little experience globally and do not possess the competitive advantage they have in their home market. Below sets forth some of the key challenges based on our literature review:

- **Brand value:** Startup brands with limited history and track record in the targeted market usually find it challenging to obtain consumer trust and awareness in a short period of time. Building brand value takes time and is a recurring process by improving consumer experience and making them feel comfortable using the product (Johnson, 2023). This is especially important for eCommerce transactions when physical touch and in-person interaction are not possible (Renner, 2022).
- **Pricing power:** Young Chinese brands usually lack the financial resources to target highly developed markets full of competitors. It is challenging for them to offer products at reasonable profit margins in the beginning stage as they will need to capture market share. They also lack the budget and local expertise to perform marketing promotions compared to the well-established traditional players who have been in the market for a long time with a higher economy of scale (Nambisan, Wright and Feldman, 2019).
- **Online presence:** A strong online presence is crucial for eCommerce business because it relies on reaching a broader audience that can drive sales, establish credibility and trust, and build a reputation for reliability and quality. Therefore, unless the young Chinese brands can have the ability to use innovative digital marketing tools effectively or have strong cooperations with the eCommerce marketing places (eg. Amazon, Rakuten, etc), it would be challenging for them to target a new market given their lack of presence in the international space (Yadav and Pavlou, 2020).
- **Economy of scale in production:** Young brands typically face challenges by getting less favourable terms from producing less quantity compared to well-established brands and would not be seen as the preferred customers (Kim and Chai, 2017). In addition, many of the manufacturers have their respective minimum order quantity (“MoQ”) standards for their customers. Hence, it will be challenging for young brands to be able to produce as many varieties as they want to introduce innovative products to the market (Cheng, 2000).

2.3 Key strategies / concepts that could enable young Chinese brands to be competitive in eCommerce

The study’s literature review covers the success factors in the eCommerce space that young Chinese brands could employ, with the possibility of developing them into competitive strengths that can, in return, challenge well-established traditional brands in the local markets.

2.3.1 Target niche market as entry strategy

Young Chinese brands aiming to “Go Global” via the global eCommerce market should consider targeting unique points of entry within niche sectors or emerging consumer trends that well-established global brands might not focus on. By leveraging “China advantage,” which includes a robust manufacturing network and infrastructure, a lower production cost base, and accumulated knowledge in eCommerce technology, these brands can create distinctive market positions and seize untapped opportunities. This strategic approach enables Chinese brands to differentiate themselves in the competitive landscape effectively (Odlin and Benson-Rea, 2021).

Focusing on specific markets allows young Chinese brands to initially avoid direct competition with well-established global players on common products, providing them with greater opportunities to introduce their product offerings and boost their online presence (Eddleston, Sarathy and Banalieva, 2019). With reduced competition, these brands can enhance their potential for profitability and foster creativity in their product offerings. This approach enables them to highlight their expertise and deliver distinctive products, which is crucial for standing out in the highly competitive global eCommerce landscape.

2.3.2 Focus on eCommerce digital platform and direct-to-customer business model

Leverage eCommerce digital platform as the battlefield

In the current digital landscape, young Chinese brands who seek to “Go Global” could utilise eCommerce digital platform as the key battlefield by applying effective digital marketing strategies that can differentiate them. These digital platforms offer unprecedented direct access to global customers at limited costs (Pereira *et al.*, 2023) and create opportunities for innovative online marketing strategies to be applied, allowing the chance to surpass those established brands that rely on traditional channels (Jung and Shegai, 2023). Furthermore, the eCommerce sales environment emphasizes direct customer interactions, contrasting with the traditional offline sales model, where products are typically distributed through multiple intermediaries. This shift enables young Chinese brands to craft marketing strategies that can disrupt conventional retail models.

- **Leverage successful experiences and insights gained from the domestic eCommerce model:** China is one of the most sophisticated eCommerce markets globally, and young Chinese brands who operate in the domestic China market typically possess strong expertise in eCommerce, particularly the usage of effective eCommerce tools (Liao and Yang, 2023). Many of them are sophisticated in embedding AI, customer behaviour data analysis, and other cutting-edge technologies in their day-to-day operations. For instance, companies such as SHEIN utilise large amounts of customer behaviour data analytics for

predicting market trends and deciding inventory management, enabling them to rapidly adapt to global fashion trends and enhance revenue growth (Liu, 2022). By amplifying this technological advantage, young brands can become highly competitive, even against well-established players who may not prioritize these innovations.

- **Utilise global eCommerce marketplaces:** Gaining low-cost access to international markets is essential for young Chinese brands aiming for global expansion. Historically, entering the global market through offline retail models posed significant barriers. However, the rise of online presence in global cross-border marketplaces such as Amazon, Shopee, and Rakuten has enabled companies to connect with international customers more affordably and swiftly without the need to establish their online stores or incur substantial maintenance costs (Liu *et al.*, 2022). For instance, the uprising online cookware brand Carote does not operate its online store; instead, it exclusively leverages these marketplaces to sell its products worldwide, adopting a collaborative approach that has led to considerable success (Carote, 2024).

Apply Direct-to-Customer business model

The rise of the Direct-to-Consumer (“DTC”) model presents a unique opportunity for young Chinese brands to enter the international eCommerce market effectively. Thanks to the continued development of the Internet and related technology tools making the DTC model possible even for small companies. The DTC model allows brands to engage directly with customers, eliminating intermediary middle parties such as layers of distributors typically found in the traditional retail model (Mu and Yi, 2024). Such direct interactions enable young brands to gather user feedback, gain insights into consumer preferences, and swiftly adapt to market trends on a real-time basis (Mu and Yi, 2024). For example, eCommerce fast fashion market leader SHEIN has invested heavily in big data analytics to track fashion trends on social media. This allows it to quickly launch new products and maintain a competitive advantage over well-established global brand leaders (Wu and Yang, 2024). Similarly, the uprising online kitchenware brand Carote processed more than 15 million customer interactions in 2023 (despite having less than 50 people in the customer service team members), providing valuable product feedback that helps the company continuously refine its offerings (Carote, 2024).

Effectively applying the DTC model improves efficiencies in marketing activities by minimising the number of intermediary middle parties, which often involve multiple layers of the traditional offline retail distribution model. This streamlining shortens the distance between product brands and retail consumers, potentially enabling young product brands to respond more swiftly to consumer demands and offer a broader range of product options than many well-established global brand competitors — an essential factor for today's online consumers (Mu and Yi, 2024). Successful eCommerce companies (eg. SHEIN and Carote) have demonstrated the advantages of operating without distributors, granting them greater pricing and inventory management flexibility. Furthermore, quickly reaching untapped consumers through online platforms and leveraging data for targeted market selection allows young brands to adopt a more

direct approach. In contrast, established brands may struggle to respond rapidly due to the rigidity of their business models.

Another advantage of DTC model is that it enhances the consumer experience by overcoming the time and space limitations of the traditional offline retail model. It enables young brands to provide a seamless online shopping experience, which can be especially appealing to younger age, technology-savvy consumers (Allison, 2021). A notable example is the cosmetics brand Perfect Diary, which has effectively leveraged the DTC model to engage directly with consumers, leading to rapid growth and international recognition (Chozan, 2023).

Moreover, the DTC model allows young Chinese brands to cultivate brand identities and foster trust. By interacting with consumers directly via online social media and other digital tools, these brands can more effectively communicate their values to target audiences already familiar with their products. This approach is also more cost effective than traditional marketing advertisements, which often lack direct consumer feedback (Mu and Yi, 2024). This also explains why young brands are so successful in maintaining their followers (aka potential consumers) via social media such as Tiktok and Little Red Book.

Based on the above observations, it is evidenced that the DTC model can equip young Chinese brands with strategic competitive advantages in the global eCommerce market. By fostering direct consumer interactions, streamlining supply chains, utilizing advanced consumer behaviour data analytics, and implementing innovative online marketing tools, these brands can effectively engage with global online marketplaces and establish a more substantial international presence like never before.

2.3.3 Enhance innovation in product offerings

The capability to introduce innovation to produce highly differentiated products at competitive prices is crucial for capturing consumer attention in the global eCommerce marketplace. China's success in the global eCommerce arena is primarily attributed to its ability to deliver such products at highly reasonable costs. This competitive advantage arises from the strong manufacturing networks in China, production technological advancements, and effective supply chains that are closely connected (Li, 2023).

For example, emerging young Chinese brands like Carote and SHEIN capitalise on China's production strengths to quickly manufacture high-quality trendy products at affordable prices. This flexibility in manufacturing and ability to respond to market trends enables these companies to maintain a competitive advantage over their competitors in the quickly evolving eCommerce landscape. Additionally, these brands harness big data analysis for trend forecasting and inventory management, allowing them to meet global consumer demands with innovative product offerings swiftly. The synergy between cost-effective production and data-driven product development has empowered Chinese brands to have the chance to disrupt the

traditional consumer product markets and capture market share in the global eCommerce arena (Wu and Yang, 2024).

2.3.4 Establish brand identity

Establishing a relevant and distinctive brand identity is essential for new brands targeting the international market. Young Chinese brands can create effective international eCommerce strategies by concentrating on selected crucial brand identity and positioning elements. Crafting a compelling brand image is vital for these brands as they aim to differentiate themselves from the traditional "Made in China" stereotype, which is often associated solely with manufacturing capabilities. To succeed, young Chinese brands must develop a unique brand entity that resonates with their target audiences while effectively communicating their values, heritage, and vision. Additionally, building customer loyalty and encouraging positive word-of-mouth is crucial. This can be achieved by providing exceptional customer experiences, maintaining agile operations, and offering customized localization. Utilising online platforms and apps to enhance user interactions will further strengthen their market presence (EY China, 2024). There have been increasingly more successful cases such as Popmart, a Chinese toy IP company listed in HK, who have successfully developed strong brand equity by introducing highly successful products such as "Labubu", "Crying Baby", and "Molly", which have gained strong recognition globally.

Moreover, the fast evolution of social media requires consumer brands to adopt new interactive marketing tools. The emergence of prominent platforms such as TikTok, Little Red Book, Instagram, Threads, etc, has created an environment for dynamic, real-time interactions between brands and consumers on a massive scale. Engaging with consumers is now more crucial than ever, as these exchanges have become a fundamental part of daily conversations on social media and offer valuable insights into changing consumer preferences (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2022).

- **Impact from Key Opinion Leader ("KOL") and social media:** KOL and social media marketing have emerged as important strategies to differentiate brands. Young Chinese brands can leverage these tools to localize their products by collaborating with the local KOLs to utilise their social influence on local consumers; this is a strategy that established brands may have less flexibility to match, given that they are more focused on traditional media and act relatively slower. For instance, brands like SHEIN effectively utilise social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to engage with young global consumers in a manner they perceive as authentic, fostering a sense of consumer community around the brand. Social media marketing activities combining activity interactions, extensive production information, consumer word-of-mouth ("WoM"), personalization, and trendiness massively impact relationship quality factors such as commitment, trust, and satisfaction. These elements can positively influence consumers' purchasing behaviour to perform repurchase behaviour. By enhancing consumer interactivity and providing

reliable information, brands can further cultivate trust and satisfaction among their customers. (Sohaib, Safeer and Majeed, 2022)

- **Cultural adaption and localization:** Cultural adaptation and localisation are crucial to succeed in connecting global markets. Brands with the ability to navigate new markets while adapting to local market conditions represent key competitive strengths for the brands (Wu *et al.*, 2020). This approach could enable Chinese brands to compete effectively, combining the support from a robust manufacturing and supply chain network in China. Their capability to understand consumer behaviours within target demographics and international markets would allow them to customize their campaigns, thereby enhancing customer loyalty and retention.

Based on the above observation, young Chinese brands can establish a unique brand identity that will allow them to compete in the international eCommerce market and mitigate challenges related to the traditional "Made in China" stereotype image.

2.3.5 Utilise the strong manufacturing network/ecosystem in China

China's manufacturing and supply chain advantages are essential for delivering differentiated yet cost effective products. Young Chinese brands can leverage the country's strong manufacturing network to produce small batches quickly, allowing them to respond rapidly to global trends. This flexibility has become a "game changer" advantage for young brands, enabling them to produce products at competitive costs even with lower production volumes. This advantage is particularly significant as China possesses strong supply capacities, even during global economic downturns (Fiducia Strategy Advisory, 2019). Key factors that contribute to the competitiveness of Chinese brands include:

- **Availability of lower Minimum Order Quantities (MoQs):** China has a strong manufacturer/supplier network that is famous for its capacity to handle smaller production runs. This flexibility enables young brands to produce at lower minimum quantities despite their size, which has been the advantage of well-established brands, which possess such strategic advantage by often placing more sizeable orders. For instance, online fast-fashion band SHEIN has effectively utilised its extensive manufacturing network in China, comprising a wide range of suppliers, allowing it to create as little as 100-500 pieces for each design style, in contrast to the thousands usually required by traditional apparel fashion brands. This advantage allows SHEIN to better test its product online with the initial launch of small quantities, and if such a new design obtained positive feedback, its intelligent management system could relay order demand requests in real-time through its internal system, facilitating more production runs for sales within just three days (Wang, 2022).

- **Agility in product prototyping:** The speed of young Chinese brands in developing product design and the agility of Chinese manufacturers in prototyping allow for quick turnaround times in production. In contrast to the traditional global brands, which could take months to complete the prototyping and make decisions for massive production, young Chinese brands can transition from design-to-production in as little as several days. This capability enables them to respond to current market trends and consumer preferences rapidly (Wang, 2022). Such speed provides a significant advantage over established global brands, which often struggle to keep pace due to the inflexibility of their legacy operating models.
- **Availability of diversified product suppliers:** China's vast supplier network enables Chinese brands to source diverse material inputs efficiently. This abundance of options allows brands to test new materials with different production processes without requiring large scale commitments or lengthy lead times (Kerkhoff *et al.*, 2017).
- **Mitigation to disadvantage in traditional economies of scale:** Production economies of scale typically provide well-established brands with a significant competitive edge due to their large volumes. However, China's flexible supplier and manufacturer network has helped smaller brands mitigate this competitive edge to some extent, as suppliers often possess excessive capacity and are able to offer reasonable terms to newer brands with smaller orders. As a result, young brands can have the ability to obtain competitive production costs even at lower volumes, levelling the playing field against larger brand competitors (Fiducia Strategy Advisory, 2019).
- **Embedded advanced technology design into production know-how:** Chinese manufacturers have developed strong capabilities over the years, establishing the country as a key player in global manufacturing. With location proximity, young Chinese brands can work closely with Chinese manufacturers to co-design products. Chinese manufacturers can also embed advanced technology design into production processes to help young Chinese brands improve production planning, inventory management and quality control, even for smaller runs (Li, 2023). For example, companies like Carote have leveraged their manufacturing expertise to design their own moulds and then collaborate closely with manufacturers to produce their products for mass production. This level of collaboration is made possible by their proximity to manufacturers and the strong relationships they have built.

By leveraging the above strengths of China's manufacturing network and fostering strong relationships between young Chinese brands and domestic suppliers, young Chinese brands can be firmly positioned to mitigate the traditional barriers to entry into global markets.

2.3.6 Opportunities to attract capital fundraising from a vast pool of investors

Fundraising capabilities are essential for young Chinese brands to compete against large scale global leaders with much stronger financial resources. In recent years, there has been a notable trend whereby emerging brands from China focusing on the eCommerce sector have successfully raised funds through initial public offers (“IPO”) or private capital markets. These companies often exhibit rapid growth rates surpassing well-established global firms, making them appealing to investors (Atherton, 2020). These companies also typically possess creative and disruptive business models that can garner strong attention from investors, further enhancing their ability to attract funding and obtain higher valuations compared to existing companies despite their smaller size (Matthews Asia, 2022). Recent successful cases include brands such as Popmart, SHEIN, Miniso, and Carote, which have attracted strong support from professional investors to support their international growth.

SHEIN, for example, has made significant strides in fundraising efforts and is being valued at an estimated valuation of \$64 billion, despite a decrease since its last funding round (CNBC, 2023). The company is currently exploring a potential IPO in London. Meanwhile, Carote, a prominent kitchenware lifestyle brand, was successfully listed on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong in 2024 and attracted a retail subscription of over 1,300 times. These reflect the growing interest from investors eager to support innovative young Chinese brands, even during challenging economic times.

In addition to IPO, private equity investors are also strong supporters for these rising Chinese brands and have also been a vital funding source for them. According to Bain & Company, private equity funds raised over USD 100 billion in 2023 in Asia Pacific despite being in a highly challenging market. Nevertheless, the report highlights that the online and technology sectors, including eCommerce, have attracted a significant share of private equity capital in the Asia Pacific over the past ten years regularly. This trend indicates ongoing interest and investment in the eCommerce sector, providing crucial funding support for young Chinese brands seeking to expand globally (Bain Capital, 2024).

The fact that these emerging Chinese brands can attract funding from private equity and IPOs is a relevant recognition of their unique uprising business model and an indication of the sector's positive outlook.

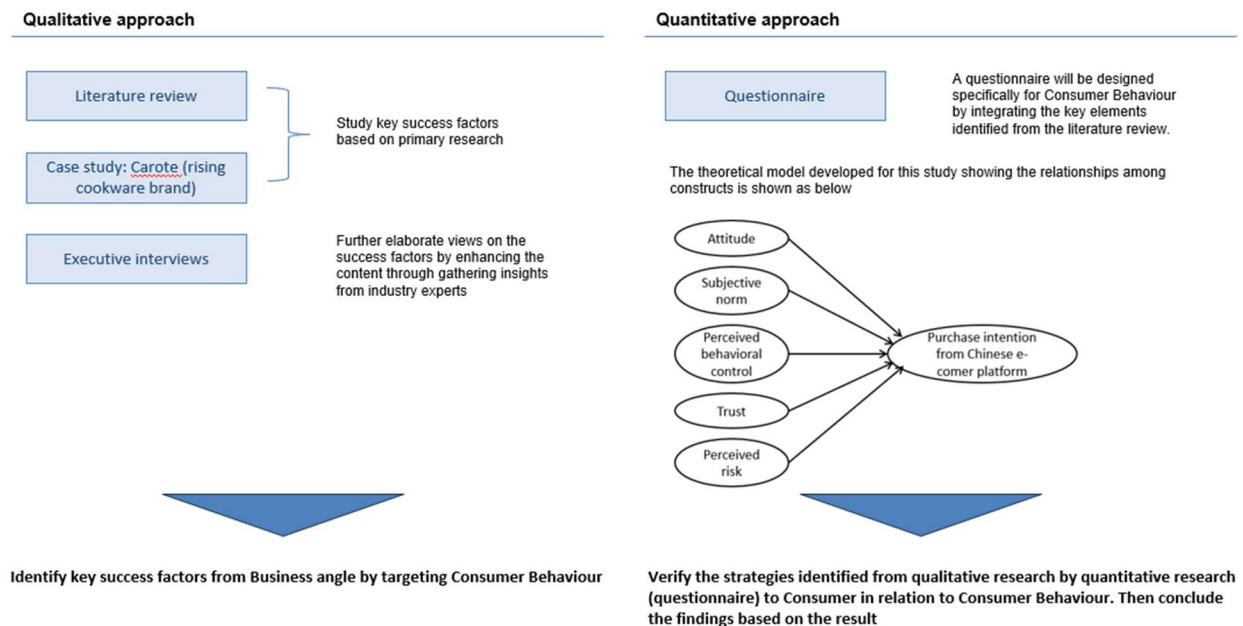
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Applying mixed method research methodology to the research

With the aim to conduct a thorough understanding of the key strategies that young Chinese brands should consider, a **mixed method research methodology** will be applied to combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The idea is to identify the practical strategies

employed in the industry from literature review, case studies and interviews with industry experts on how successful young brands target the market when considering Consumer Behaviour (from a Business point of view). Once the preliminary results are formed, quantitative research on consumers will be conducted to support further the findings (from a Consumer's point of view). The following sections will provide more details about the rationale behind the research approach.

Figure 2: Conceptual design for the mixed method research of this research.



3.2 Qualitative approach

The rationale for conducting comprehensive qualitative research is to enhance the findings from the literature review on what strategies would allow young Chinese brands to excel in the international space while targeting the global consumer from the Consumer Behaviour standpoint. This also allows a more thorough and direct understanding of the strategies and success factors from existing successful case and industry experts with strong insights. The qualitative approach will include (1) a detailed case study of a recent successful case and (2) expert interviews with key experts/professionals who are engaged in the industry.

3.2.1 Case study review

Studying successful case studies of uprising new brands from China, particularly those that have managed to compete with large-scale existing brands, would provide strong insights for companies when forming their strategies.

Carote, an uprising global kitchenware brand founded in China (with brand revenue of over 70% outside China) is selected for the case study. Carote is usually compared to global cookware leaders such as Groupe SEB and Supor, but Carote operates at a highly differentiated business model leveraging eCommerce and DTC, whereby it is also growing at a much faster speed, capturing marketing share from the industry leaders (CIC Research, 2024). Below is a snapshot of the competitive landscape.

Figure 3: Comparison between Carote and industry key comparable companies.

	Groupe SEB (ie. Tefal)	Supor	Carote
Description	Global top cookware conglomerate, owner of well-known brands such as brands such as Tefal	Leading cookware brand founded in China “Supor” with manufacturing capabilities	A rising star in the online cookware sector focuses on its own brand “Carote”
Key product categories	Cookware, kitchenware, small kitchen appliances	Cookware, kitchenware, small kitchen appliances	Cookware, kitchenware
Sales distribution model	Traditional offline distribution model focus	Traditional offline distribution model and also sells through eCommerce	Online “Direct-to-Customer” model
Revenue size (USD m, 2023)	8,384	3,009	224
Revenue CAGR trend (FY2021 - FY2023)	-4.7%	-5.2%	+46.3%
Profit margin (EBITDA, 2023)	12.1%	13.0%	16.8%

Source: Bloomberg, publicly available data.

Figure 4: Carote’s key product categories



Source: Company info and publicly available information

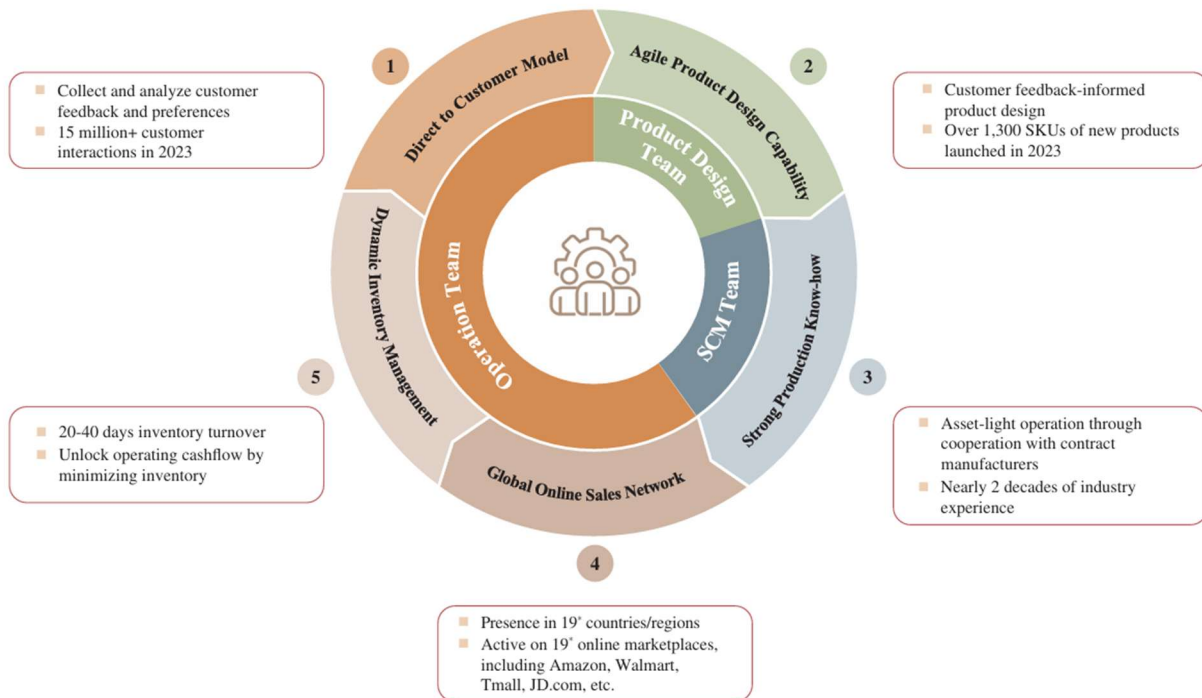
Figure 5: Market share of Carote’s key markets (2023).

	China	US	Japan	Western Europe	Southeast Asia
Ranking	No. 4	No. 2	No. 2	No. 3	No. 2
Market share	1.2%	13.1%	8.1%	1.3%	8.6%

Note: Market share in online cookware industry based on retail sales
Source: CIC, company data.

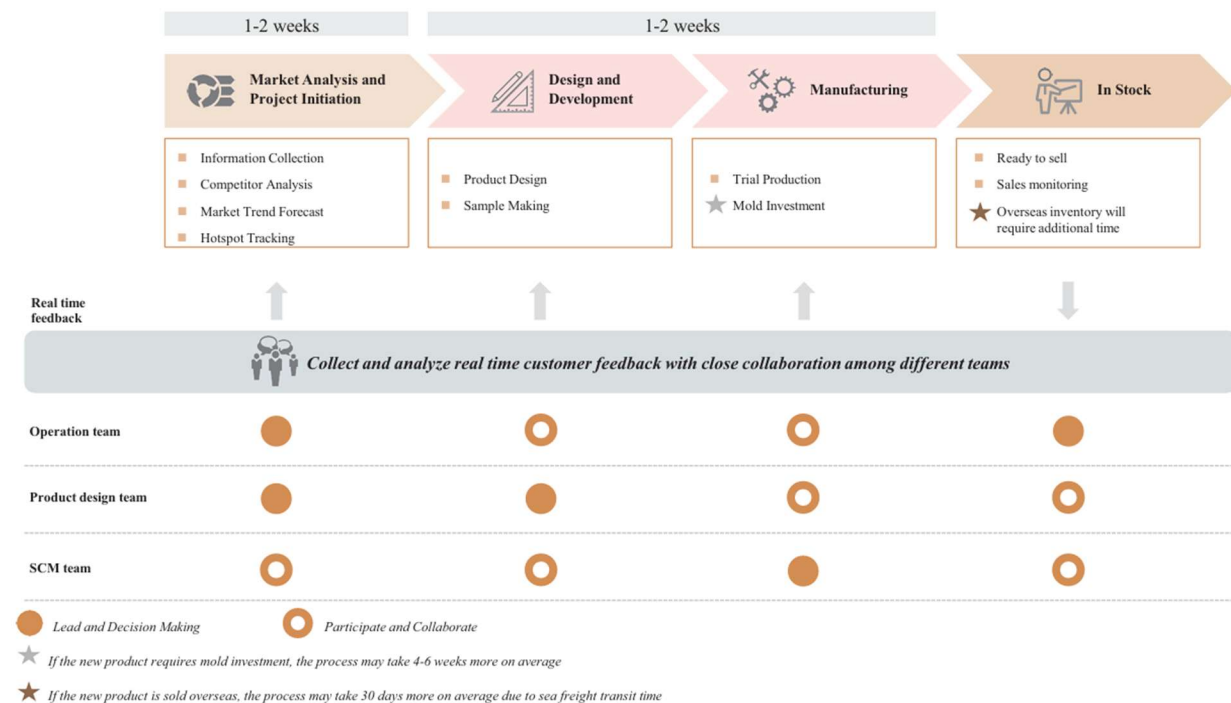
Basis of selection: With a short operating history since creating its own brand, “Carote”, just 9 years ago in 2016, the brand has achieved a strong international presence covering key online cookware markets in China, the US, Western Europe, and Asia, with strong market share in most of the regions. The brand’s product focuses on “Better for Use” and “Better for Value” by introducing a young and trendy cooking lifestyle, allowing its consumers to use trendy, high quality, and innovative products at highly reasonable price points. Its competitive advantage was built around its ability to deliver interesting new lifestyle products to consumers swiftly through an effective and scalable business model (Carote, 2024). The following diagram illustrates its key business model, which will also be used as the case study of this research:

Figure 6: Carote’s disruptive business model and how they engage in real-time continuous development.



Source: Company info and publicly available information

Figure 7: Carote’s operation model and how they involve all employees’ feedback to analyse customer feedback in real time.



Source: Company info and publicly available information

Execution plan: The case study will be conducted together with the literature review and will use operating and financial data from the last five years. Carote was recently listed on the Stock Exchange of HK ("HKEx"), where relevant information can be obtained from the IPO prospectus and subsequent annual reports.

Strengths and weaknesses: The data will be based on publicly available information and poised to be reliable. However, operating data may be difficult to obtain. Hence, the research will also be further supplemented by the findings of the proposed interview with Carote’s representative in the qualitative research discussion below.

3.2.2 Expert Interviews

A group of industry participants, industry consultants and professional parties will be selected for interview. The target participants will have strong experience in the crossborder eCommerce industry including but not limited to leaders from corporate (eg. CEO/CFO), industry consultants (eg. research analyst from key research institution), and/or professional parties (eg. bankers, lawyers, accountants) to gather their insights in the industry and share their experiences on the successful factors that they have come across, in order to summarise their views from the perspective of Business’ point of view.

Target sample size: About 10-15 highly qualified interviewers. Based on the literature review findings, a questionnaire will be designed for discussion with the interviewers in order to gather their insights and interpret the key success factors based on their perspectives.

Execution plan:

- Pilot study: An initial pilot study will be engaged to test the interview questionnaire. The plan is to test such a questionnaire with 3-5 interviewers before the official launch to test the initial feedback and whether the result could lead to the development of a clear pathway for a meaningful conclusion.
- Timeframe: 2-3 months subject to the pilot test.
- Approach: The target interview will involve transcribing audio recordings and creating a coding structure aligned with research objectives. The transcripts will be systematically coded to uncover patterns, insights, and relationships, followed by a thematic analysis to derive key findings and develop detailed case narratives. Additionally, visualisations such as network diagrams and mind maps will be employed to represent the relationships between concepts effectively.

Strengths and weaknesses: The current design will include highly relevant individuals who can provide significant insights and interesting observations that may not be addressed in the literature review. Their availability and the selection process will be crucial, as the choices could influence the results. Furthermore, since these individuals come from diverse backgrounds and industries, it may be challenging to establish a set of standardized interview questions that can guide the discussions toward a common conclusion.

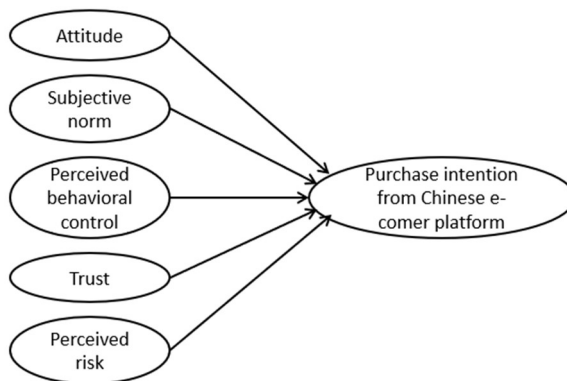
3.3 Quantitative approach

The rationale to use quantitative approach is to facilitate the collection of empirical data, which enables the testing of research hypotheses and the generalization of findings to a wider consumer population. Utilizing statistical analysis and modelling techniques will yield more robust insights into the competitive landscape, consumer behaviour, and the factors contributing to new brands' success.

Unlike the qualitative approach in the earlier section, a survey approach will be applied for consumers (rather than Business participants) to verify the key strategies from a consumer point of view. The survey-based approach involves designing and administering a comprehensive survey to a larger, representative sample of consumers. This method will facilitate the collection of data on brand preferences, purchasing behaviour, and the relative importance of various brand attributes in the decision-making process. The primary objective is to gain insights into consumer perceptions, preferences, and the decision-making processes involved in choosing between new and established brands, thereby uncovering the underlying motivations and factors that influence consumer behaviour. Additionally, this approach will allow for a comparison of results with qualitative findings obtained earlier.

The research questionnaire has referenced a few existing questionnaires from the literature review in relation to the topics of (1) predicting consumer purchase intentions (Kartikasari et al., 2023) (“First Reference”), (2) consumer trust (Rehman et al., 2019), and perceived risks (Amarullah, Handriana and Maharudin, 2022), with the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the backbone. Reference to other theories, such as Consumer Engagement Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory, are also considered to enrich the questionnaire. The questionnaire design is primarily based on the First Reference, as it aligns closely with the research focus on purchase intention despite its emphasis on purchasing foreign products rather than Chinese ones. Consequently, adjustments were made to tailor the questions appropriately, including removing those related to consumer ethnocentrism, which are not directly relevant to our study. Additionally, we enhanced the questionnaire by incorporating selected questions from the Second Sample regarding consumer trust and the Third Sample concerning perceived risks, as these constructs are significant for our research given that purchasing products from young Chinese brands is a relatively new trend. It is essential to assess the level of significance among these variables. Furthermore, utilising questions from these journal articles is advantageous because they have all undergone rigorous reliability and validity testing, ensuring comparability across research projects. The theoretical model developed for this study, illustrating the relationships among constructs, is presented in Figure 8 below. A sample questionnaire is also included in the appendix for reference which is subject to further finetuning.

Figure 8: Projected theoretical model.



Source: Adopted from (Rehman *et al.*, 2019; Amarullah, Handriana and Maharudin, 2022; Kartikasari *et al.*, 2023)

Target sample size: About 100-300, subject to change. The sample will consist of consumers representative of the target market for new brands, considering factors such as age, income, geographic location, and purchasing behaviour.

Execution plan:

- Pilot study: Target 10 users as pilot testing to check the questionnaire's applicability, collect initial feedback, and determine whether the result could lead to the development of a pathway for meaningful conclusions.
- Timeframe: 2-3 months subject to the pilot test.
- Approach: The process of analysing the survey data will begin with cleaning and preparing the dataset, which includes addressing any missing values and outliers. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, will be conducted to summarise the data effectively. Following this, factor analysis will be performed to uncover the underlying dimensions of brand preferences and purchasing behaviour. To model the relationships between brand attributes and consumer choices, regression analysis techniques, including multiple linear regression and logistic regression, will be employed. Additionally, cluster analysis will be applied to segment the consumer population based on their preferences and behaviours. To facilitate data collection, there are plans to collaborate with a reputable market research firm or utilise online survey platforms.

By combining the findings from both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, the study will compute a thorough understanding of the study's research problem, measure the findings, and formulate more actionable, evidence-based recommendations for young Chinese brands entering competitive global consumer markets.

3.4 Initial research timetable

The following execution play is designed to complete the research.

Duration	Particulars
Months 1-6	Further literature review will be conducted on the strategies employed by successful companies and can be good references for young Chinese consumer brands to compete in the global eCommerce landscape. This review will involve a deeper exploration of the articles mentioned previously, as well as research into new and relevant reports that can provide additional insights.
Months 10-11	Engage in case study analysis.
Months 12-14	Finalise the questionnaire design of the qualitative and quantitative approaches.
Months 15-18	Begin the interviews for both qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires.
Months 21-23	Thesis write-up.
Month 24	Adjustment and final submission.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explores the strategies and approaches that young Chinese brands could employ when considering "Going Global" and allows them to target an international market with little presence.

Throughout the research study, particularly after reviewing the literature and considering the overall research design, it has become evident that mixed method research combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies covering both the "Business" and "Consumer" views would be effective. The quantitative methodology is based on a positivist paradigm, while the qualitative methodology is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. The qualitative approach focuses on understanding the meaning of social phenomena, specifically examining why certain emerging brands (eg. the Carote case study) have succeeded quickly despite operating in a highly competitive market dominated by established brands (from the Business perspective). Conversely, the quantitative methodology aims to measure these social phenomena by collecting and analysing data to confirm that our observations are consistent (from the Consumer perspective). This study will employ a research framework that encompasses beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), the theory of knowledge guiding the research (epistemology), and the methods through which that knowledge can be acquired (methodology), thereby presenting the various research methodologies utilized in this investigation.

In conclusion, the study has also listed several key strategies that could enable young Chinese brands to be successful and the findings aim to add-on to the existing literature review. These factors could also be referenced by young Chinese brands who have the ambitions to expand internationally to "Go Global", which would guide them when considering how to mitigate some of the shortcomings they face in today's context.

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Appendix: Quantitative research questionnaire draft subject to finetune.

Construct / variable	Item	Wordings
Purchase Intention of Chinese Consumer Products (PIC) (Kartikasari et al., 2023)	PIC1	It is very likely that I will buy Chinese consumer products (eg. Fashion, home goods, etc) for my next online purchases on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
	PIC2	I predict that I will shop for Chinese consumer products (eg. Fashion, home goods, etc) on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) in the future
	PIC3	I intend to shop for Chinese consumer products (eg. Fashion, home goods, etc) on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
Attitudes (ATT) (Kartikasari et al., 2023)	ATT1	Regular buying of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) is a pleasure for me
	ATT2	Regular buying of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) is fun for me
	ATT3	Regular buying of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) evokes positive emotions in me
Subjective Norms (SUN) (Kartikasari et al., 2023)	SUN1	My family approves my regular purchase of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
	SUN2	My friends approve my regular purchase of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
	SUN3	People important to me are buying Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) (Kartikasari et al., 2023)	PBC1	I have enough money to buy Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
	PBC2	Buying Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) entirely depends on me

	PBC3	For me, regular purchase of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms is simple
	PBC4	Purchase of Chinese consumer products on cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) is time-saving
Consumer Trust (CT) (Rehman <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	CT1	Key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) are safe for online transactions
	CT2	Key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) will protect consumer personal data
	CT3	Key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) give <u>guarantee</u> against <u>misuses</u> of personal data for commercial purposes
	CT4	Key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) give <u>guarantee</u> to consumers that online shopping is secured
	CT5	Key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps) gives transparent guarantee policy
Perceived Risks (PR) (Amarullah, Handriana and Maharudin, 2022)	PR1	There is a high risk of loss if I make an online purchase through key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. Website or apps)
	PR2	There is a <u>major</u> risk involved in making purchases through key cross-border eCommerce platforms (eg. <u>Website</u> or apps):
	PR3	Making a product purchase via key cross-border eCommerce platforms (<u>eg.</u> Website or apps) is risky