



The Rise of Social Commerce: Redefining Consumer Behavior in the Digital Marketplace

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Abstract

Social commerce has evolved at a swift pace to change the way people buy products in the digital marketplace and merge social interaction, product discovery, online engagement and buying into a single consumer experience. Social commerce is, in essence, a type of ecommerce that allows consumers to make purchases in the socially-connected digital space where product and brand impressions are heavily influenced by user-generated content, peer-to-peer interaction, influencers and reviews. This study discusses the impact of social commerce on the behavior of consumers focusing on consumer trust, purchase intention, engagement, perceived value, impulse buying and post-purchase interaction. This study takes a conceptual and analytical perspective, which involves reviewing existing literature on social media marketing, digital consumer behavior, electronic word-of-mouth, influencer marketing and online shopping. The results show that social commerce had influenced consumers to act in a relatively less autonomous way but in a more socially oriented and interactive way in the purchasing process. Social proof, personalized recommendations, real-time communication, and influencer credibility can positively influence consumer confidence and drive consumer purchasing decisions, while consumer worry about privacy, misleading information, too much promotion, and platform credibility can have a negative impact on consumer confidence. It also notes that as consumers grow accustomed to an integrated experience with entertainment, social interaction, product information, and transactions, the lack of this seamless experience is a growing expectation. Social commerce is not just a part of e-commerce—it's a new kind of online space, where involvement, connectivity and community consumption are the rule. Based on the study results, the following strategies for strengthening consumer relationships in social commerce are recommended: creating transparent social commerce strategies, establishing interactivity, personalizing social commerce strategies, and building trust in social commerce strategies, all while maintaining the integrity of ethical data usage and digital communications.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Consumer Behavior, Digital Marketplace, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Purchase Intention, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Influencer Marketing, Consumer Trust, Online Shopping, User-Generated Content, Digital Consumerism, Social Shopping, Impulse Buying, E-Commerce.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have completely revolutionized consumers' discovery, assessment, and buying habits for products and services. Social interaction and business are becoming more and more indistinguishable as consumers spend more time on social networking, short video apps, online communities, and digital content ecosystems. In this evolving landscape social commerce has become an integral part of e-commerce by bringing together social interactions, user-generated content, electronic communication and buying on integrated online and social platforms. Social commerce also differs from traditional e-commerce, as users typically go to a specific website or application to make a purchase, whereas social commerce enables them to discover, recommend, evaluate, interact, and purchase a product or service in a socially-engaged online space.

Social commerce has had a huge impact on consumers' behaviors. Consumers are no longer passive recipients of information but active consumers, creators, sharers, evaluators and disseminators of information about products and brands. Today, the purchase decision is influenced by customer reviews, ratings, influencer recommendations, live-

stream shopping, user-generated videos, social recommendations, and peer discussions. What other users say and do can impact the consumers' impression of product quality, brand credibility, value and buying risk. In the social commerce space, therefore, consumer decisions are becoming more and more influenced by commerce and social relationships.

This new marketplace has put a premium on trust. Consumers are inundated with a lot of information from brands, influencers, content creators and other consumers, which makes it hard to identify what information is reliable and what is just permeating brands' messages and/or commercial motives. Social presence, perceived authenticity, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, and the interaction with other users may then affect consumer confidence in a product or a seller. At the same time, personalization algorithms and data-driven recommendations enable platforms to present consumers with products that correspond to their interests and previous online activities. There are some benefits to personalization that include making it even easier for consumers to enjoy more relevant experiences, but there are also drawbacks: increased impulse buying, increased amount of promotional messages, and shifting customer perceptions of need and value. A fundamental trend in social commerce is the increasing trend of entertainment and shopping. Livestream commerce, shoppable videos, creator-led product demonstrations, virtual communities, and interactive ads have turned shopping into more of a social experience, moving it beyond a simple transaction. Consumers are able to view products when they're viewing media content, when they're with their friends, when they are viewing influencers and when they are involved in an online community. Social interaction, entertainment and shopping has become intertwined, offering new avenues for businesses to connect with their audience and new psychological and behavioural shifts in business buying. Social commerce has great repercussions for marketers, too. Businesses must take the next step in marketing and establish meaningful, meaningful relationships with digitally connected customers. Today there are many aspects of social commerce that have become part and parcel of the strategies that include influencer marketing, UGC, community involvement, personalised communication and engagement with the brand. Social media is especially effective for small businesses and new brands that aren't just utilizing traditional distribution and advertising methods. But the retail industry needs to think more about consumer privacy, confusing information, over-promotion and bogus products and trust in sponsored recommendations.

Social commerce for the consumers is more accessible to information, more opportunities for social interaction, and more forms of behavioral influence. Social proof, customization, scarcity, influencer marketing, and immediate buying options can lessen the time a user spends on considering other options. These developments have led to some important questions about consumer information and empowerment or susceptibility to digitally mediated persuasion. It is important to understand these changes especially because psychological, social, technological, and cultural factors also come into play in social commerce consumption.

It is, therefore, useful to study the growth of social commerce as an understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital marketplace is to be gained from it. In the present study, the effects of social commerce on consumer information search, the construction of consumer trust, engagement, purchase intention, impulse buying, electronic word-of-mouth, and post-purchase behavior have been explored. The study aims to make a contribution to the broader understanding of how socially embedded digital marketplaces are driving the reconfiguration of consumer-brand-platform-community relations.

2. Background of the study

Digital technologies have radically changed how consumers find, review, buy and talk about products and services. Once, the traditional marketplace was the place where consumers engaged with brands most often -- through brick-and-mortar retail, websites, and traditional marketing -- but over time it's become a very interconnected digital landscape. Social media platforms have been instrumental in this shift and have become a digital nexus for communication, entertainment, product discovery, socialization, and commerce. This has given rise to social commerce, a new niche of e-commerce which leverages social media interactions and community based activities along with the buying/selling process. Social commerce represents an important change in the way that users and social networks interact with businesses and it's a relatively new phenomenon in the digital marketplace. Consumers are no longer just passive recipients of promotional information. They are involved in the development, sharing, reviewing, recommending and judging the product information. Customers are increasingly interacting with the buying experience via features like customer reviews, ratings and recommendations, live-stream shopping, influencer content, short-form videos, social ads, group discussions and the ability to purchase in-app. Thus, social relationships and digital experiences are as relevant as conventional ones such as price, quality, brand reputation in the purchase process. Social commerce has also changed the consumer decision journey as more people are adopting it into their buying process. Product awareness can be triggered through an influencer's recommendation or a friend's post or a short video or an algorithmically generated ad, and it doesn't have to be a result of someone looking for a product. Likewise, when making a purchase, consumers can consider alternatives based on comments, ratings, user-generated content, and social media communities, all within the social media space. The proliferation has led to a blurring of the lines between social interaction and business. The customer journey is now more seamless, personalized, social and tech-driven. Trust and social influence are two other

major aspects of social commerce. When evaluating products that they are not personally using, consumers tend to base their decision on what other consumers have experienced and how they feel about the products. Electronic word-of-mouth, credibility of influencers, perceived authenticity, social presence and participation in online communities can then influence consumers' product and brand perceptions. The same goes for consumers' shopping patterns, as they can be seen and can trigger the social proof that will make people think about the products that seem to be trending in their digital surroundings. In the interim, fake reviews, hidden promotion programs from bloggers, privacy, overly personalized purchases, and impulse buying pose new challenges to businesses and consumers. These are being expedited by technology. Businesses can offer increasingly personalised shopping experiences thanks to AI and machine learning, recommendation engines, AR, personalised ads, the use of chat commerce and live-streaming technologies. Social commerce sites can study their interactions and preferences with the consumers and suggest products which may be attractive to each and every consumer. This customization could make the consumer's experience more convenient and enjoyable, but at the same time, it can slightly influence consumer choices. The consumer's reaction to these technologies is therefore becoming more and more the focus of researchers and marketers. Social commerce also provides businesses with the opportunity to build new relationships with its customers, increase brand awareness, engage customers and leverage social activity into sales. Social platforms can be especially advantageous for small businesses and new entrepreneurs, as they have the ability to connect directly with their target market with no need to depend only on the costly traditional advertising medium. But with the competitive landscape of social commerce, businesses must also have a grasp on why customers are buying, when they're buying and what social and technological factors influence their buying habits and decisions. The phenomenon is especially important in the context of emerging digital economies, like India, where more and more people are using their smartphones, having affordable access to the internet, digital payment systems, and increasing social media participation, has increased opportunities for online commerce. Young people, elderly and all see a greater presence of recommendations, influencer marketing, social ads and UGC. However, there may be differences in their reactions to social commerce activities based on their digital literacy, income, confidence, awareness of privacy, familiarity with technology and purchasing preferences. It is important to understand how social commerce is developing to understand consumer behavior in the digital world in this context. What's becoming apparent is that the shift from web-based e-commerce to socially-embedded, social commerce requires a different approach to analysing consumer behaviour than was previously used in traditional e-commerce. Consumers' decisions are being increasingly shaped by social relationships, digital communities, custom technologies, and online experiences and constantly shifting platform environments. Hence, the current study targets consumer behavior change with respect to social commerce and attempts to gain insight into what factors affect consumers' engagement, trust, purchase intention, decision-making and purchasing behavior in today's digital marketplace.

3. Justification

Social media has become a formidable force, making the digital world an effective medium for customers to discover, evaluate, suggest and purchase products and services. Social commerce has now transformed the way business is done and introduced the social engagement into the ecommerce cycle. The use of UGC, influencer recommendations, customer reviews, live stream shopping, customised ads and social sharing is having a greater influence on consumer perception of the brand and their shopping decisions. It requires not only the traditional e-commerce knowledge, but also the new knowledge of the behavior of consumers in the social commerce. The study is justified because social commerce platforms and the way interactions in social media are turned into sales have become more important and, given the lack of knowledge of the factors that contribute to such a conversion, the study is necessary. Social commerce isn't merely composed of social trust, electronic word of mouth, entertainment, and community engagement, just as much as traditional online shopping websites, but also commercial details and peer impact. These properties can impact consumers' perceived product credibility, perceived value, purchase intent, brand engagement, and post-purchase actions. Knowing these relationships is crucial to determining why social commerce impacts customers differently than their ecommerce sites. The study is also relevant, as the dynamics of consumer decision making in social commerce is increasing.

Consumers have the chance to view a product in a shorter video, an influencer's endorsement, a consumer's comment, a live stream, or customised content and then make a purchase in the same digital platform. These shifts have made the boundaries between the different phases of product discovery, information search, evaluation and purchasing less distinct. It is hence relevant to explain the consumer behavior nowadays and recognise the processes by which social interactions contribute to consumer's decision making, and for this the consumer's changing journey must be understood. From the management side of the study, this research can prove beneficial for the marketers and businesses as the study can be used to understand how to develop the social commerce strategies in accordance with the changing demands of the consumers. The data on trust, social influence, engagement with content, personalisation, feedback on reviews, and communication with influencers can enable businesses to develop more effective digital marketing campaigns and improve interactions with customers. But small business and newer brands can have a special interest when it comes to social media visibility, engagement, and market opportunities outside of the brick-

and-mortar store. From another perspective, the study is warranted because of the issues that social commerce is experiencing such as information overload, misleading reviews, too many promotional posts, privacy issues, impulsive purchases and issues with the credibility of influencers and user-generated content.

Consequently, consumer reactions can be systematically analyzed that can be useful not only for the marketing profession to gain marketing knowledge, but also to gain a more responsible understanding of digital consumption. The aim of the study overall is to give a modern view on the relationship between social interaction and purchasing behaviour. The study can offer insights for practical application for companies which are attempting to maneuver a more social digital economy, and likewise can serve as a food for thought in the educational world in marketing and consumer behavior.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the development of social commerce and its new functions in shaping the modern digital commerce landscape.
2. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social commerce on consumers purchasing behavior mainly on product discovery, evaluation and purchase decision.
3. To measure the effect of social interaction, eWOM (electronic word of mouth) and user-generated content on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions.
4. To investigate how social media influencers or peers affect consumer trust, perceptions and purchase intentions in social commerce settings.
5. To explore the correlation on consumer engagement and purchasing intention in social commerce sites.

5. Literature Review

Electronic commerce has evolved from a transactional activity to a socially-embedded consumption process as social media has grown rapidly. Social commerce is a blend of social interaction and commerce, in which consumers can find products, share their views, compare options, and make purchases in digitally connected social communities. Social commerce is more than just e-commerce, where users typically transact with businesses and products; social commerce adds a layer of social interaction, recommendations, user-generated content, ratings, and reviews, and social relationships to the shopping journey. Research on consumer behavior in social commerce has evolved from different theoretical perspectives and an integrated perspective was suggested by Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) which was based on the stimulus-organism-response model and stages of consumer decision-making.

The changing dynamics of social commerce and consumer behaviour

Dynamic of social commerce and consumer behaviour, evolving with time. The initial studies on social commerce focused on how social networking sites were becoming platforms for business. Kim and Park (2013) emphasized the importance of social support, information quality, communication, economic feasibility, and reputation for the success of social-commerce. Their results indicate that consumers do not only rate social-commerce platforms based on their functional attributes but also judging on the social environment of the platform impacts their willingness to engage in commercial activity. This perspective puts emphasis on the need to consider the technological with social elements as a whole when analysing digital consumer behavior.

Hajli (2015) modeled the concept of social commerce along with the social commerce integration with the concept of recommendations and online communities. The findings of the research indicated that social interaction can increase the trust of consumers and willingness to purchase. The discovery is significant due to the fact that social commerce is changing the way consumers make their decisions, as it introduces interpersonal communication into the shopping experience.

Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) later gathered all the available scholarly work and found that the consumers in social commerce environments perform various activities ranging from information seeking to product evaluation, purchasing and even post-purchase interactions. Their study also showed that social commerce is not just another sales channel of electronics but a place where social relations and business transactions merge.

Trust and Social Commerce

Trust has proven to be one of the most influential factors that drive social commerce consumer behaviours. Uncertainty is part of the nature of online purchasing, often due to a lack of direct information about the sellers, product, and the results of the transaction. Social commerce tries to mitigate this uncertainty by offering access to peer-generated information, reviews, recommendations, and social cues.

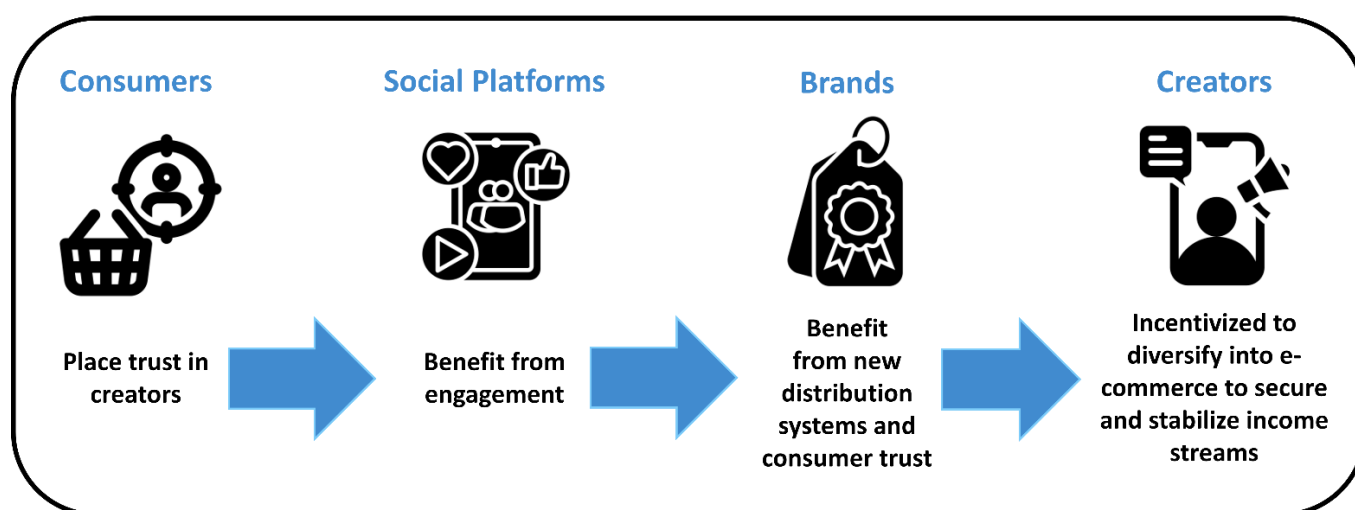
Hajli, Sims, Zadeh and Richard (2017) explored the impact of trust in social networking commerce and concluded that trust is closely related to social-commerce information seeking, familiarity, social presence and purchase intentions. They found that trust does not just happen because the seller or the platform is trustworthy, it can also be

created by other users' interactions with the consumers and their experience of the socially generated information. Kim and Park (2013) also found that the reputation and communication are important features to impact social-commerce performance. Community-based information may thus serve as a credibility mechanism, especially if the consumer believes the recommendations of other consumers to be more credible than traditional promotional messages. This is significant for businesses as they strive to build trustworthy online communities, which could be as crucial as offering competitive pricing or product functions.

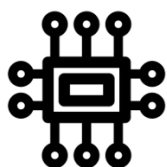
Social influences and peer recommendations

Interpersonal communication plays an important role in consumer decision-making in social commerce. Traditional consumer behaviour theories acknowledge the role of reference groups as a source of influence, but social platforms have increased the frequency, magnitude and velocity of influence. They can now be given recommendations by friends, influencers, online communities and even strangers whose reviews are deemed helpful and trustworthy. By examining social-commerce constructions, Hajli (2015) found that they could help to enhance trust and purchase intention, which suggests that interaction and user-generated information can have an impact on commercial decision making. Likewise, studies on social-network-based shopping have revealed that the purchasing decision may be part of the consumers' social network, and word of mouth and trust can affect the selection of sellers and products. Cao et al., 2021, studied instant-messaging (IM) social commerce and concluded that a user's acceptance of a said message might be influenced by their relationship with the recommender, their sense of identity and community norms. They conclude that social commerce can help to strengthen consumers' social and economic engagement more than ever before, and enhances the shopping experience beyond traditional online shopping.

The Social Commerce Stakeholder Ecosystem



Technology



Reduces friction



Source: <https://research.skift.com/reports/social-commerce-in-travel-opportunities-and-consumer-trends/>

User-Generated Content and Online Reviews

User generated content plays an important role in the social-commerce environment. Product reviews, ratings, photos, videos, comments, testimonials, and personal experiences offer consumers information to help them eliminate some uncertainty prior to buying. This content also shifts the informational power it has from firms to customers, making them contributors to the marketplace.

Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) pinpointed consumer-generated information and consumer interaction as being key factors in the decision process of social-commerce. Consumers have grown more interested in finding out not only from the information provided by sellers, but also from the information provided by other consumers.

The trustiness and usefulness of this information may make a difference in its impact. Positive reviews might help to reinforce the purchase decision, while negative reviews can give consumers reason to be skeptical about other options.

In this way, social commerce has established a setting in which the customer experience is seen as a part of the brand value. Firms need to, therefore, engage in the management of their own marketing communication, as well as the wider digital discourse that happens around their product.

Social Presence and Consumer Engagement

Social presence is defined as the feeling of consumers that other people are psychologically present in a digital environment. Social presence can enhance the sense of interaction and relationships in social commerce and online shopping. Hajli et al. (2017) added social presence to their study of trust level and purchase intentions, highlighting the role of social attributes in consumer responses.

Social presence can stimulate consumers to engage in a conversation, ask advice, share experiences and connect with brands. This engagement can lead to more engagement and/or emotion. The social aspect of social commerce is therefore different from the existing online shopping models in which the interactions between customers and the website and/or the salesperson are limited.

Building social support and engaging in community participation.

Another key aspect of social commerce is social support. Consumers can not only buy products online, they can also seek advice and emotional support, information on the product, and a sense of belonging. In exploring social-commerce communities, Hassan, Toland and Tate (2016) found virtual-community relationships to be a significant factor in social support and consumer trust.

This view implies that consumers are not simply shopping for the sake of shopping, but, may be, they are engaging in social commerce for other reasons. Involving community members can establish connections and familiarity which may have an impact on the commercial decisions. Social-commerce platforms, therefore, can be seen as social ecosystems in which the flow of information, the creation of relations, entertainment and commercial activity take place at the same time.

Impulse Buying and Experiential Consumption

The nature of social platforms can also impact consumers' spontaneous buying behavior. In general, consumers must actively seek out a retailer or look for a product to make a traditional online purchase. Social commerce, on the other hand, can reach consumers as they are having fun, communicating, sharing content and participating in communities. This integration can decrease the psychological gap between viewing and purchasing.

Having more personalized recommendations, social endorsements, end-of-the-day offers, influencer-generated material, and product visuals could lead to impulsive buying. Hence social commerce may change the customer's shopping pattern from need based search to discovery and experience-based consumption.

Influencer Marketing and Social Commerce

The boundaries between interpersonal communication and a commercial promotion have become even more blurred with the advent of the influencers. Content creators, opinion leaders, product reviewers, and brand advocates are all roles that can be played by influencers. These perceived authority, authenticity, appeal and connection with followers can influence product attitudes and decisions about purchasing a product. Product information in social commerce is not only part of a continuous social-media experience, but can also be particularly effective when provided by influencers. Users are able to directly comment on content, "like," it, share it, direct message it, or use the native purchase functionality.

This not only creates a greater interaction from product exposure to purchase but also offers a more dynamic pathway of interaction which increases the interest, engagement and memorability of the interaction.

But credibility is key to the success of influencer-to-consumer marketing. Over-promotion or insufficient disclosure might reduce the authenticity attributed by the consumers. Therefore, the research on social-commerce should not overlook the positive and negative persuasive power and credibility of the influencer marketing.

Analyse how technology is affecting the consumer decision making process. How the technology affects the consumer decision making process.

Social commerce has been rapidly evolving with the help of technologies. The division between social networking and shopping has been diminished by mobile apps, recommendation engines, artificial intelligence, customised advertising, livestreaming, social payment systems and in-built shopping tools. Baethge, Klier and Klier (2016) noted that social commerce is a "young and emerging field of study" that is "rapidly emerging at the intersection of electronic commerce and social media" and demanded further studies on this phenomenon.

As commerce becomes more intertwined with social platforms, companies can gather and study consumer behavior, provide tailored suggestions and promotions, and tailor their marketing methods to customer interests and activities. Consumer: personalization can be a good thing in terms of what it provides them with in terms of convenience and

relevance. Excessive personalization may lead to issues with privacy, surveillance, manipulation, and personal information.

Consumers' rights to empowerment and altering market relationships

Social commerce has also played a role in changing the dynamics of the business and consumer relationship. Traditional commerce saw a predominance of product information and communication management. Social commerce shares the informational power amongst the consumers, communities, influencers as well as platforms. Consumers have the ability to go public and rate products, compare products, question brand claims and share their experiences with others.

Hajli (2015) proposed that social-commerce mechanisms allow consumers to engage and produce content, and influence trust and purchase intention. This consumer empowerment can motivate organisations to be more transparent and responsive.

6. Material and Methodology

This study used descriptive and analytical research designs to analyse the emerging paradigm of social commerce in the digital marketplace and its impact on consumer behaviour. The study was centred on the changing nature of social media from a medium of communication and entertainment to a social marketplace for consumers to find products and compare alternatives, engage with sellers, read reviews, connect with influencers, and finalize a purchase. The study included social commerce as a unified digital space that combines social interactions, electronic word of mouth, user-generated content, influencers' recommendations, online reviews, product information, social trust, and platform ease of use. The consumer behaviour was explored using dimensions of product discovery, information search, product purchase intention, trust, consumer engagement, consumer impulse purchase and consumer interaction after purchase.

Designed to gather sufficient information to understand the research problem, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was gathered from consumers who are active in using social media as a product discovery, product evaluation or online shopping. A questionnaire was designed based on the study's objectives and divided into sections to measure the respondents' demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, social commerce activities, trust in social media, influence of reviews and recommendations, interaction with sellers and influencers, perceived convenience, purchase intent, and purchasing behaviour. The majority of attitudinal statements were rated from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" with a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data was gathered from credible academic journals, books, industry reports, government publications, and digital commerce and consumer-behaviour sources, to build the conceptual backdrop of the study and gain insight into the latest trends in social commerce.

The purposive sampling technique was used because the study did require respondents with experience in using social media for commercial purposes. The sample included social media users who have seen product promotions, recommendations, reviews, shopping features, or influencer content on social media platforms. Participants were chosen to be those who were familiar with social commerce activities, to ensure the responses gathered represented real-life experiences of consumers and not a simple perception of social media. The survey was emailed and all responses were optional. The questionnaire was checked for clarity, relevance and logical consistency before the main data collection and was tested with a small group of respondents prior to the main exercise. The results of the preliminary stage were used to make amendments to unclear statements and make the questions legible for the participants.

The collected data were arranged, coded and analyzed with proper statistical methods. Demographic profile of the respondents and their social commerce usage pattern was summarized using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The relationships between the elements of social commerce and the behavioural outcomes of consumers were analyzed using inferential statistical techniques. The strength and direction of the relationships between variables, such as social interaction, electronic word of mouth, influencer influence, trust, perceived convenience, and purchase intention, were found using a correlation analysis. Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine how much the selected social commerce characteristics explain consumer purchase intention and behavioural consequences. In some cases, differences between the responses of the various demographics and usage segments have been compared.

Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the measuring instrument by analyzing the internal consistency of the measurement items. Construct validity was supported by items in the questionnaire being developed based on existing social commerce, digital consumer behaviour, online trust, electronic word of mouth and purchase intention concepts. The study adhered to ethical standards during the research. The respondents were briefed on the academic objective of the study and their participation was voluntary with the provision that they may withdraw

at any point during the study. There was no unnecessary personally identifiable data collected and the responses were treated with confidentiality and only used for academic analysis. The method therefore presented a systematic framework for researching the effect of social commerce on consumers' buying process and their decision-making process in today's digital world.

7. Results and Discussion

The research shows that this new trend in social commerce has had a significant impact on how customers are discovering, evaluating, and purchasing products online. Social commerce isn't simply a means of shopping for merchandise via the web or a devoted buying app — it's a method to unearth merchandise through a social interaction, entertainment, recommendation suggestions, and user-generated content. The results suggest that customers are now engaging more with products through posts, short videos, live footage, suggestions from influencers, customers' feedback and customised advertisements. This is a transition from Search-driven purchasing towards a more Socially influenced and experience-oriented purchasing style of consumers. Access to and acquisition of products without the need to leave social media further enhances consumer engagement and minimises the effort required to do so. The results also demonstrate that among the factors affecting the purchase behavior of consumers by social commerce, the factor with the greatest influence is social influence. Recommendations from others like friends, family, online communities, influencers, and users are of great importance to consumers. Positive comments, demonstration of products, testimonials, ratings and experience sharing foster positive attitudes towards products and brands. This is a case study of the development of electronic word of mouth, and of the ability of consumer opinion to reach thousands of people in minutes. The authenticity of the recommendations appears particularly significant because it is easier to resonate with consumers than the typical promotional message to experience something they've experienced. This has shifted the way marketing messages are delivered from a system where the consumers produce, publish, check, and share messages about products to the point that social commerce is now the medium in which the messages are shared. The other major finding is that of how much influence trust has on purchase intention. Consumers are more inclined to consider a social commerce site that provides distinct product information, honest feedback from consumers, secure payment methods, easy return policies and a trustworthy seller.

Trust is even more important when they cannot see the product prior to purchase. The results indicate that the use of social proof can help decrease perceived uncertainty, especially in the case of buying a new product or from a new vendor. In the meantime, dishonest reviews, inaccurate information, excessive promotional material or questionable salesperson actions can impair consumer confidence. Therefore, the product should be visible and catchy, but, also the credibility and reliability of the platform where the sales process will take place is a factor. Another aspect that the study highlights is the increasing relevance of using visual and interactive information in consumer choice. Images, product demonstration, short videos and live stream activity and interaction posts seem to have a greater ability to attract the attention of consumers than traditional techniques of promotional communication. The interactive content is a tool for the consumer to see the features of the product, how they can be used, styling and even a demonstration of the product before deciding to buy. Live commerce, specifically, imparts a feeling of actuality, enabling customers to communicate with sellers, pose questions, get quick answers and watch products live. These features may increase affective engagement and increase impulse buying. Thus, the results indicate that social commerce is becoming more than just about transactions, but a more immersive digital experience where entertainment and shopping are deepening connected. The results revealed that personalization and algorithmic recommendations play a significant role in consumer engagement, as well. Social commerce websites track their visitors' behavior, interaction, browsing history, preferences and interests as well as their purchase history and offer products likely to appeal to individual consumers. There will be a reduction in the amount of time required to identify suitable products and the marketing messages will be more relevant. But the advantages do not only stop there – privacy issues are additionally involved as to how much consumer details is gathered, and over-personalization concerns. Networks can provide consumers with meaningful suggestions, but consumers can become uneasy when feeling their online activities are being closely watched. This is a huge challenge for companies: personalization should be of benefit to the customer and not violating their privacy and/or trust. Another noteworthy result was that there was a gap between engagement and intention to purchase between consumers.

Consumers that like, comment, share, save, review, and discuss/mention brands will be more likely to have positive associations with the brands, and to have greater intent to buy branded content. Social interaction provides consumers with an opportunity to participate in a brand community, voice opinions, ask questions and receive responses from businesses. This kind of interaction can enhance brand awareness and relationship. From the findings, it also is inferred that engagement can't be measured solely with numbers such as views or likes. Positive interaction, such as conversation, suggestions, feedback and repeated interactions, might be more powerful in influencing consumer relationships and customer decisions in the long run. The results also indicate that convenience is one of the prime benefits of social commerce. Everything related to product discovery, evaluation, communication and purchase is

integrated into one digital place and removes the steps in the purchase path. Product links - embedded, e-commerce payment options, custom product feeds, IM systems, and one-click purchasing systems contribute to a smooth shopping experience. This is particularly beneficial for the consumers, who typically access the internet on their smart phones and social networking websites. Users may end up purchasing a product as soon as no effort is needed to make the purchase in the product discovery phase. It will also make it simpler to indulge in the impulsive buying behavior that can be instigated by temporary offers, discounts, countdowns, influencer promotions or emotionally driven content. The results also confirm that consumer-generated content is a part of the social commerce. Reviews, unboxing videos, product comparison, photos, ratings and experiences provide information to future customers that is not typically available in marketing.

It is often used by consumers to judge the quality, usefulness, value for money and reliability of the seller of a product. While continued negative user experiences can have a devastating impact on brand reputation, positive user-generated content can bolster a brand's credibility. It reveals that the businesses are not as in control in social commerce place as they are in traditional commerce place because it's the actual consumers who is creating the meaning of the brand. In these instances, companies must expand listening to and responding to the feedback from consumers, and engage them positively and constructively with their negative feedback. One more element of this research indicates that social commerce is impacting the brand-consumer relationship. In the traditional marketing method the business was considered to give information, and the consumer was considered to receive information. When it comes to social commerce, there is a more dynamic relationship in which customers can interact directly with the brand, provide input, participate in online communities and influence fellow consumers. This change brings responsiveness, transparency, authenticity and relationship management to the fore. Consistent and timely communication with consumers will help build positive impressions with brands. But the negative reviews can be fast tracked online and impact the future customers through social media and delayed responses or wrong details and bad services can aggravate the issue. The results reveal some dangers associated with Social Commerce until now. Consumer purchase can be risky due to the ability of influencer campaigns, algorithmically-driven ads, scarcity-based promotions and personalized recommendation to convert consumers into purchasing decisions without a prior inspection. However, there is an issue that needs to be addressed: Impulsiveness, excess information, counterfeit, fake reviews, privacy issues and fraud. It is also difficult for consumers to distinguish recommendations from paid promotional content. However, the increasing digital literacy and awareness of consumers are critical to ensure responsible engagement in social commerce.

Further, companies and platforms should enhance disclosure policies, verification of sellers, data security and reporting false information policies. The overall findings suggest that social commerce is more than just a variation of e-commerce and represents a paradigm shift in consumer decision-making and the way digital marketplace is used. Consumer interaction, consumer trust, peers, visual content, personalization, convenience and consumer generated information all are influencing consumer purchasing decisions.

The lines are getting blurry as regards to social networking, entertainment, advertising and shopping. The results indicate that companies aiming to be successful in social commerce need to be consumer-focused, using interesting content, credible information, and responsive communication, clear promotional policies, and reliable post-purchase services. The consumer's point of view: There are more opportunities for consumer interaction, sources of information, and convenience with social commerce, but increased awareness is necessary when it comes to deceptive practices and data matters. In this context social commerce is changing consumer behavior by creating a new, more connected, more interactive, and more socially-influenced online shopping experience.

8. Limitations of the study

The study has some limitations, which restrict the interpretation of the results. Firstly, social commerce is an ever-evolving and rapidly expanding market, meaning social media platforms, algorithms, digital payment systems, influencer use, and consumer preferences are likely to affect consumer buying habits over time. The findings may not necessarily be indicative of the future social commerce adoption trends. Second, factors that influence consumers' behaviour in social commerce can be observed in a study like this, but there are other factors that may not be sufficiently addressed, such as age, income, digital literacy, trust, privacy concerns, cultural background, previous online shopping experience and familiarity with social media. Third, answers from consumers can be biased by self-reporting since consumers might give socially desirable answers, or they may not remember what it was like to buy online. Some limitations might also exist within the study in terms of sample size and geographical span, making the generalizability of the results questionable for consumers in other geographic areas and/or demographic groups. Further, there can be variations in the social commerce platform that can lead to variations in consumer experience, as each platform has its own interface, recommendation algorithms, advertisements, influencer network, and purchasing options. These differences across platforms may not be captured by the study completely. Moreover, the

rapidly changing digital environment indicates that future digital developments, such as AI-driven suggestions, AR, chatbots and conversational commerce will impact consumers' purchasing decisions beyond the scope of this research. Finally, the study does not necessarily include all the psychological and the emotional processes that occur during social commerce decisions, but rather the observable attitude and behavior of consumers. Larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal study designs, cross-cultural comparisons, platform-specific study designs, and the incorporation of behavioural data with consumer survey responses could be used in future studies to overcome these limitations.

9. Future Scope

Future studies in social commerce can go beyond the existing indicators of online purchasing behaviour and explore the impact that new technologies, consumer expectations, and new online platforms have on purchasing behaviour over time. The proliferation of AI, augmented reality, virtual try-ons, live shopping, conversational shopping and personalized recommendations to social platforms also provide researchers with the chance to examine their role in consumer confidence, value perception, impulse purchases, engagement and purchase intent. Longitudinal research would be able to give a better insight into whether behaviours like social browsing, influencer purchasing and peer-to-peer recommendations result in long-term shifts in consumer loyalty and brand relationships. Additional studies can also evaluate social commerce behavior by demographic, income, generation and geographic, and uncover differences in the adoption of the digital channel, purchase drivers, and more. The cross-Cultural comparison of emerging and developed markets might also give some clues regarding the implications of cultural values, social norms, digital literacy and economy in consumer reactions to social commerce. Also of interest is the study of ethical and privacy concerns surrounding customized advertising, algorithms, influencer marketing and the collection of consumer data. The study could also look at the increasing significance of social commerce in rural and semi-urban markets as it relates to the increased access to products and enhanced opportunities for small businesses and individual entrepreneurs. Behavioural analysis, experiments, social network analysis and real time digital data analysis research may yield greater insights into the effects of social interactions, which are becoming a significant factor in consumer decision-making. This can help guide the development of responsible, consumer-focused and sustainable social commerce strategies, and help businesses ride the waves of the ever-evolving digital world.

10. Conclusion

Social commerce has affected that process of discovery, evaluation and purchase of products online. Social commerce brings together the elements of social interaction, content creation, personalised recommendations, eWOM and ease of purchasing and takes the consumer shopping beyond the "ecommerce shopping experience. And consumers don't just take in marketing messages, they are actually having the experience of them, they are giving feedback on them, they are writing reviews, they are creating content, they are interacting with influencers, they are even affecting purchases. Some important factors in today's consumers' behavior are: trust, social presence, perceived authenticity, convenience, personalization and peer influence. With the incorporation of AI, recommendation systems, live-streaming, and personalized advertising, businesses can better grasp consumer preferences and provide more relevant experiences, further bolstering this shift. Meanwhile, social commerce has also been booming, with issues around privacy, potential misinformation, 'buy-to-own' and trust in online reviews and influencers growing increasingly prevalent. As such businesses are called into account not only to maximise sales but to ensure they develop clear, ethical and customer-centric digital relationships. Whether or not businesses can find the balance between technology and consumer trust and responsible marketing will be key to the future of social commerce. Social commerce is more than merely a new sales channel in the digital space, it's a new consumer ecosystem, in which social relationships, technology, information and commerce are continuously interacting. Understanding these dynamics enables businesses to craft strategies that are more effective, whilst assisting consumers to make more informed, and meaningful, purchases in the more connected marketplace of the digital age.

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