

Exploring Consumer Purchase Intentions in Social Commerce: A Qualitative Study Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores consumer purchase intentions in social commerce using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical framework. As social media platforms evolve into dynamic spaces for product discovery and purchasing, understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior in this context becomes crucial. The research objective was to explore how perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitudes toward social commerce platforms shape consumer engagement and purchase behaviors. Through in-depth interviews with eight key informants who were active social media users and online shoppers, and by employing content analysis to examine the data, the study identified several influential factors impacting consumer behavior. Perceived ease of use, characterized by user-friendly interfaces and straightforward navigation, emerged as a significant driver of engagement and positive attitudes. Perceived usefulness, manifested through efficient access to product information and integrated shopping functions, played a crucial role in fostering loyalty and encouraging repeat visits. The study also highlighted the importance of social features in cultivating trust and credibility, with peer recommendations and influencer endorsements significantly impacting purchase intentions. Beyond the core TAM constructs, additional factors such as social influence and trust were found to play vital roles in shaping consumer behavior. The findings underscore the need for social commerce platforms to prioritize usability, security, and trust-building features while fostering social interactions to create engaging, community-driven shopping experiences. The study concludes with recommendations for platform design and future research directions, emphasizing the potential of emerging technologies like AI-powered recommendations and augmented reality in enhancing the social commerce experience.

Keywords: Social Commerce; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); Consumer Behavior; Purchase Intentions; User Experience

Introduction

Over the years, social media has evolved from a platform primarily for connecting with friends, influencers, and public figures into a dynamic space where people discover and learn about new products and services. Social commerce, an emerging form of electronic commerce, leverages digital platforms and tools to facilitate the buying and selling of products and services. By merging elements of social media with electronic commerce (e-commerce), social commerce enables businesses to harness the reach and engagement of social platforms to drive

sales and revenue. Technically, social commerce integrates e-commerce functions directly into social media platforms, allowing purchases to occur within posts or dedicated online storefronts, and incorporates secure payment systems, customer data management, and order fulfillment processes. To enhance sales, electronic vendors increasingly incorporate social commerce features into traditional e-commerce sites, recognizing that consumers rely on these platforms for purchasing decisions. Beyond technical integration, social commerce heavily utilizes information and communication technologies (ICT) to foster engagement and interaction between businesses and customers. Social media provides a wealth of customer data, allowing businesses to gain insights into customer preferences and behaviors. Additionally, social platforms facilitate real-time customer service, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. In essence, social commerce exemplifies the transformative role of information technology in reshaping business operations and customer engagement. By effectively combining social media with e-commerce capabilities, businesses can expand their reach, strengthen customer relationships, and thrive in today's dynamic digital economy (Asanprakit & Kraiwanit, 2023; Asanprakit & Limna, 2023; Leong et al., 2024).

Consumer purchase intention denotes the likelihood or willingness of an individual to purchase a specific product or service within a designated time frame. This construct serves as a critical stage in the consumer decision-making process, marking the transition from initial awareness or interest toward a conscious intent to engage with a particular brand or product. A key aspect of purchase intention involves the consumer's subjective probability regarding their purchasing behavior, alongside their willingness to maintain a positive relationship with a shopping platform in the future. In marketing, purchase intention holds considerable importance, as it offers insights into anticipated consumer behavior. Understanding this intention allows businesses to forecast demand more accurately, gauge the impact of their marketing efforts, and strategically align their approaches to fulfill consumer expectations effectively (Lyu & Niyomsilp, 2021; Li et al., 2022; Sintia et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Yu, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

Consumer purchase intentions in social commerce reflect the growing influence of social media on buying behavior, where social networks and e-commerce intersect to create seamless and interactive shopping experiences. Social commerce provides users with features like direct purchasing through posts, real-time customer service, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements. These elements together contribute to the shaping of purchase intentions by fostering trust, ease of access, and convenience. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), widely used to study adoption behavior, provides a useful framework for examining how these factors influence consumers' intentions to purchase in social commerce (Shekhar & Jaidev, 2020; Yang, 2021; Ying et al., 2021).

The TAM is a theoretical framework initially developed to explain individual acceptance of information technology systems. Rooted in rational behavior theory, TAM posits that system usage is primarily determined by behavioral intentions, which in turn are influenced by one's attitude toward use, shaped by two core beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which an individual believes that utilizing a particular technology will enhance their performance and overall effectiveness. This belief reflects users' confidence that the technology will facilitate achieving desired outcomes more efficiently. A positive perception of usefulness is likely to foster a stronger intention to use the technology, as individuals tend to adopt systems they believe will benefit their goals. Perceived ease of use, the second fundamental construct, assesses the effort required to use the

technology. When users find a system intuitive and user-friendly, they are more inclined to view it favorably, enhancing their likelihood of adopting it. Thus, if individuals perceive technology as both beneficial and easy to use, their adoption intention is significantly strengthened, leading to greater technology acceptance and integration (Limna et al., 2023; Shaengchart, 2023; Shaengchart et al., 2023).

Given its significance, exploring consumer purchase intentions within social commerce is essential, as a deeper understanding of these intentions can yield valuable insights into user behaviors and inform effective platform design. A qualitative study utilizing the TAM may offer a systematic framework for investigating the factors that drive consumer engagement with social commerce platforms. By applying TAM, this research aims to elucidate how perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness influence consumer attitudes, thereby shaping their intention to make purchases within these digital environments. Such insights are crucial for enhancing user experience and optimizing strategies to foster consumer loyalty and satisfaction in the realm of social commerce.

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to explore the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions within social commerce platforms by utilizing the TAM, focusing on how perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitudes toward these platforms shape consumer engagement and purchase behaviors.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research is designed to uncover the underlying reasons behind specific phenomena by examining the contexts that shape the decision-making processes and behaviors of individuals or groups. This methodological approach emphasizes the importance of two-way communication during interviews, facilitating the collection of rich, nuanced data and providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The interactive nature of qualitative interviews enables researchers to comprehensively grasp the motivations and contextual factors that influence participants' perspectives and actions. Through in-depth interviews, researchers obtain detailed insights into specific topics, effectively addressing the research objectives. This method is particularly adept at exploring complex issues in depth, revealing nuanced perspectives and underlying motivations that contribute to a more profound comprehension of the research subject (Siripipatthanakul et al., 2022; Thetlek et al., 2024). This study employed a qualitative approach to investigate how perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitudes toward social commerce platforms shape consumer engagement and purchase behaviors. The methodology primarily relied on in-depth interviews, utilizing purposive sampling to select participants with recent experience interacting with social commerce. Additionally, in-depth interviews facilitated the collection of rich, nuanced data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of consumers' perceptions, experiences, and decision-making processes in the context of social commerce.

In line with recommendations from Jangjarat et al. (2023) and Nivornusit et al. (2024), which suggest that conducting a minimum of six to ten interviews is optimal for achieving data saturation in qualitative research, this study comprised a sample of eight key informants. These informants included social media users and online shoppers with a history of purchases through

social media platforms. Participants were selected based on their active engagement in social media for at least one year, ensuring exposure to social commerce and providing diverse perspectives. Furthermore, content analysis was employed as a qualitative research method to objectively describe and quantify phenomena by systematically examining verbal and written data (Kraiwanit et al., 2023; Limna, 2023; Limna et al., 2024; Phuangsuwan et al., 2024). This study utilized content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and categories within the collected data, facilitating the extraction of meaningful inferences regarding the relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and consumer attitudes toward social commerce platforms. This approach enriched the understanding of how these factors shape consumer engagement and purchase behaviors in the evolving landscape of social commerce.

Results

According to the interviews, the study's findings revealed several influential factors shaping consumer purchase intentions within social commerce platforms, grounded in the TAM. First, perceived ease of use emerged as a significant driver. Participants indicated that a user-friendly interface and straightforward navigation contributed positively to their engagement. Platforms that minimized cognitive effort in browsing and selecting products enhanced user confidence and encouraged repeat engagement. This ease of use served as a foundational element in forming positive attitudes toward the platform, ultimately influencing consumers' willingness to make purchases. Perceived usefulness also played a crucial role. Consumers valued platforms that enabled efficient access to relevant information, such as product details, peer reviews, and seller ratings, which facilitated informed decision-making. Integrated shopping functions, like in-app purchasing and direct payment options, further heightened this sense of usefulness. A platform's utility in meeting consumer needs not only encouraged engagement but also fostered loyalty, as consumers were more inclined to revisit platforms that streamlined their shopping experiences. Perceived usefulness thus emerged as a key factor in reinforcing purchase intentions, with consumers more likely to buy from platforms they deemed beneficial. Moreover, consumer attitudes toward social commerce platforms were strongly influenced by the combined effects of ease of use and usefulness. Favorable attitudes toward a platform were further strengthened by social features, such as the ability to interact with others through reviews, recommendations, or endorsements by influencers. These social elements cultivated trust and credibility, reinforcing positive attitudes and increasing the likelihood of consumers making purchases. A positive perception of the platform environment, bolstered by social validation, significantly contributed to consumers' purchase intentions. Beyond these core TAM constructs, additional factors like social influence and trust were also found to play an essential role. Social endorsements, whether from peers or influencers, created a sense of trust and authenticity, making consumers feel more connected and confident in their purchasing decisions. This social proof amplified consumers' initial intention to engage with the platform, fostering stronger loyalty and an inclination toward repeat purchases. Together, these insights reveal the nuanced interplay between technological features and social interactions within social commerce, highlighting critical areas for platform developers and marketers aiming to enhance user engagement and effectively drive purchase behaviors.

"The simpler the platform is to navigate, the more comfortable I feel exploring and buying products" (A respondent, personal communication).

The respondents emphasized that ease of navigation significantly impacted their overall shopping experience. A platform with a clean interface, logical layout, and intuitive features made it more enjoyable for them to browse products. The simplicity reduced frustration and encouraged them to explore more products, ultimately increasing their willingness to make purchases. Complicated interfaces, on the other hand, often led to abandoning the platform before completing any transactions.

"When I can quickly find reviews and product details, it makes deciding so much easier—I feel more informed and confident" (A respondent, personal communication).

Access to comprehensive product information was crucial for the respondents in their decision-making process. They appreciated platforms that displayed product specifications, user-generated reviews, and ratings upfront, as it saved time and made them feel better equipped to evaluate the product. Being able to easily compare products based on reviews contributed to a more confident purchase intention, as they felt they were making informed choices backed by the experiences of others.

"Seeing influencer recommendations or peer reviews really makes a difference; it's like getting advice from friends" (A respondent, personal communication).

Social validation through influencer endorsements or peer reviews was a significant factor for the respondents. They described how these recommendations made them more likely to trust the product, as it felt similar to receiving personal advice from friends or trusted individuals. This sense of social proof, especially when tied to familiar influencers or relatable user experiences, acted as a powerful motivator in shaping their purchase intentions.

"I trust platforms that have a solid reputation and verified reviews, especially if they are shared by people I follow" (A respondent, personal communication).

Trust was a recurring theme among the respondents, with many noting that they felt more secure shopping on platforms with verified reviews and a strong reputation. They placed particular value on platforms where reviews came from people they followed or trusted, including verified users or influencers. This sense of trust extended to the platform itself, as respondents were more willing to provide payment information and complete purchases if they felt assured of the platform's reliability.

"In-app purchase options are a big plus; it is convenient not having to leave the app to complete my purchase" (A respondent, personal communication).

Convenience was a key factor in shaping purchase behaviors, with the respondents expressing a strong preference for platforms that offered integrated shopping features. The ability to complete purchases within the app, without having to be redirected to external sites, was seen as a significant benefit. This seamless shopping experience was not only more

efficient but also enhanced their overall satisfaction, making them more likely to finalize purchases.

"Interacting with other users and sellers gives me a better feel for the product, making me more comfortable with the purchase" (A respondent, personal communication).

The respondents valued platforms that facilitated interaction with other users and sellers. The ability to ask questions, read discussions, or directly communicate with the seller gave them a clearer understanding of the product, reducing uncertainty. These interactions provided additional assurance, as they could clarify details or resolve concerns, making them feel more comfortable and confident about moving forward with their purchases.

"If I know the platform is easy to use, I am more likely to come back and shop here again" (A respondent, personal communication).

Repeat engagement was closely tied to the perceived ease of use. The respondents explained that once they had a positive experience navigating and using a platform, they were more likely to return for future purchases. The smoother and more efficient their experience, the greater their likelihood of developing loyalty to the platform. Conversely, a frustrating or cumbersome experience deterred them from returning, regardless of the product offerings.

"Social commerce lets me see what others think and buy, and that's powerful in helping me make up my mind" (A respondent, personal communication).

The social aspect of commerce platforms, where users could observe what others were purchasing or recommending, was highlighted as a powerful influence. The respondents described how seeing products trending or being endorsed by peers and influencers helped them feel part of a larger community, validating their choices. This visibility into other users' purchasing behaviors served as a strong motivator for making decisions, as it provided reassurance that they were making the right choice.

Discussions

This discussion offers a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing consumer purchase intentions within social commerce platforms, drawing on the TAM and reinforced by interview findings. A pivotal element is perceived ease of use, where user-friendly interfaces and straightforward navigation are essential. By minimizing cognitive effort, platforms can enhance user confidence and encourage repeated engagement, establishing a positive attitude towards the shopping experience. This ease of use forms a critical foundation for fostering loyalty and long-term interaction with the platform. Perceived usefulness is equally significant, as consumers highly value efficient access to relevant information, such as product details, reviews, and ratings. Integrated shopping functions, including in-app purchasing and direct payment options, enhance the perceived usefulness of these platforms, leading to streamlined shopping experiences that promote customer loyalty and repeat visits. When ease of use and usefulness converge, they strongly influence consumer attitudes toward social commerce platforms, with positive sentiments further amplified by social features, such as user

interactions, reviews, and recommendations. In alignment with Limna et al. (2023), online consumers' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use significantly influence their purchase intentions when engaging with Facebook Live streaming. The ability to leave comments and receive immediate responses from the host fosters a seamless and interactive shopping experience, which is crucial in the decision-making process. Additionally, the presence of informative content enhances customer engagement, positively impacting their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, the role of social features in cultivating trust and credibility cannot be overstated. The ability to interact with others on these platforms fosters a sense of community and social validation, which significantly contributes to purchase intentions. Endorsements from peers or influencers create a sense of authenticity and confidence, further encouraging consumers to engage with the platform. Beyond the core constructs of TAM, additional factors such as social influence and trust play vital roles. Social proof amplifies initial engagement intentions and fosters lasting loyalty, highlighting the intricate interplay between technology acceptance and the social dynamics that characterize consumer behavior in the realm of social commerce. The results corroborate the findings of Kumar et al. (2017), who identified that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence, and trust propensity are key factors underlying the behavioral intention to utilize mobile banking services. This alignment emphasizes the importance of these dimensions in shaping consumer engagement and decision-making processes within digital platforms. In addition, Li et al. (2023) conducted a study on customer confidence and acceptance of the Meituan application, highlighting the influence of trust and perceived risks on its credibility and adoption. The findings indicate that technology and customer demographics play a role in shaping trust levels and risk perceptions. Notably, male users in Kunming demonstrate a greater awareness of the risks and reliability associated with the Meituan app compared to their female counterparts. Furthermore, factors such as technology use, popularity, third-party endorsements, and user satisfaction significantly impact the application's overall reputation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study revealed the significant impact of perceived ease of use, usefulness, and user attitudes on consumer purchase intentions within social commerce platforms. Through the lens of the TAM, the findings showed that intuitive interfaces, accurate product information, and features that foster trust are crucial in building consumer engagement and encouraging purchases. Unlike traditional e-commerce, social commerce thrives on the social interactions embedded within these platforms, where feedback from communities and peer endorsements shape consumer decisions. The results indicated that consumers perceive shopping on social platforms not just as a transaction but as an experience enriched by social connections and validated information. Thus, to maintain competitive advantage and bolster user loyalty, social commerce platforms should prioritize usability, security, and trust, aligning with the nuanced needs of digital consumers.

Several recommendations emerge from these insights. First, platforms should prioritize user-friendly designs, particularly for mobile devices, ensuring easy navigation and simple layouts that cater to diverse user abilities. Detailed product information—alongside user reviews, ratings, and authentic endorsements—helps instill consumer confidence, with social proof playing a vital role in creating trust. Platforms should also ensure secure transactions and

transparency, with features that verify user feedback and strengthen credibility. Beyond usability and trust, enhancing social interactions is critical; platforms can enable direct communication between consumers, brands, and influencers to foster an engaging, community-driven shopping experience. Furthermore, emerging technologies like AI-powered personalized recommendations, augmented reality (AR) for virtual try-ons, and responsive chatbots for customer service could significantly enhance this experience by tailoring it to individual preferences.

Continually gathering user feedback is also essential. Platforms should incorporate regular usability testing and customer surveys to address evolving consumer needs effectively. Broadening research to include various demographic groups—different ages, locations, and cultural backgrounds—could further guide platform adjustments, making them more inclusive and tailored. This study underscores that a focus on ease of use, usefulness, trust, and social interactivity can drive social commerce's transformation into an experience-centric, community-oriented digital marketplace that fosters lasting consumer relationships.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to recognize its limitations, primarily the small sample size and focus on respondents with prior social commerce experience. Future research may benefit from larger, more diverse sample sizes to capture a broader range of consumer attitudes and behaviors across varying demographic groups. Additionally, quantitative studies, such as online questionnaires, could further validate these findings, allowing for a more generalizable understanding of purchase intentions within social commerce. Future studies might also explore the influence of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI)-driven recommendations and augmented reality shopping features, on consumer purchase intentions in social commerce.

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