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Factors Influencing Consumer's Buying Behaviour in Social Networking Sites

Menna Sallam⁽¹⁾, Hanan Guneid⁽²⁾, Hayat Badr⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ Assistant Lecturer at the Faculty of Communication and Mass Media- the British University in Egypt,

⁽²⁾ Professor of media at the Faculty of Mass Communication – Cairo University,

⁽³⁾ Associate Professor at the Faculty of Mass Communication – Cairo University

Abstract

Purpose. This research describes and analyzes factors influencing Egyptian consumers' buying behaviour in Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and social commerce. Factors are divided into (a) social commerce factors, (b) consumers' factors, (c) products' factors, (d) factors related to SNSs used (Facebook, Instagram), and (e) COVID-19 as an external factor.

Methodologies. To reach Egyptian social commerce buyers, a survey was published on Facebook and Instagram (the research's main platforms), and 603 respondents were collected using purposive sampling.

Findings. Social commerce factors like perceived enjoyment and usefulness positively influence Egyptian consumers' purchase behaviour in social media. Unexpectedly, trust and social support's effect on purchase behaviour was insignificant. Consumers' demographics and product-related factors influence online buying behaviour on social media. COVID-19 greatly impacts consumer behaviour and constrains trust's effect on purchases. Results revealed major differences between Facebook and Instagram as SNSs with commercial activities.

Keywords. Electronic commerce (e-commerce), Social commerce, Social Networking Sites (SNSs), social media, and Online buying behaviour.

Introduction

Social commerce, the latest version of electronic commerce, has significantly transformed online buying and consumer experiences. It enables online transactions within a supportive electronic environment where users share experiences, rate products, write reviews, and benefit from referrals. Social commerce is closely tied to Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as it leverages social interaction and user-generated content, fundamental aspects of SNSs (Liang et al., 2011). Scholars have described social commerce as a blend of “e-commerce” and “social media,” using social interactions on social media for commercial activities (Liang et al., 2011).

Despite extensive research on Social Networking Sites in Egypt, there is limited literature on e-commerce on these platforms. This study focuses on factors influencing Egyptian consumers’ behaviours in SNSs, examining social commerce factors (hedonic value, utilitarian value, social value, and trust), consumer-related factors (demographics and online shopping habits), product-related factors (type, price, and selection), social media platform factors (Facebook and Instagram), and the impact of COVID-19, which has significantly affected electronic and social commerce.

Facebook, with the largest user base in Egypt, and Instagram, favoured by younger generations with significant purchasing power, were chosen for this study (Degenhard, 2021; Tankovska, 2021).

Literature Review of Related Work

This paper categorizes social commerce literature into two main axes. The first axis focuses on consumer behaviours in social commerce, which includes (a) the purchase, and (b) the usage. The second axis examines the factors influencing consumer behaviour in a social commerce context. These factors are varied and complex, and they are detailed extensively in the second axis of the literature review

- Consumer Behaviors in Social Commerce

The Purchase

Among all behaviours a consumer may exhibit online, the purchase intention/behaviour has gained the most attention in the literature of social commerce (Friedrich, 2016).

Purchase intention. All behavioural theories, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behaviour, and the Technology Acceptance Model, assert that an individual’s actual behaviour can be predicted from their intention towards this behaviour. Therefore, most literature measures intention as a substitute for actual behaviour since measuring intention is often easier (Friedrich, 2016).

Influence of trust on purchase intention. Liu et al. (2018) found that trust, in both the website and its members, is crucial for stimulating purchase intentions. Al-Adwan & Kokash (2019), Hajli (2019), and Farivar et al. (2017) supported this, highlighting trust’s positive impact on purchase intentions.

Influence of flow experience on purchase intention. Zhou (2019) and Liu et al. (2016) suggested that flow experience, facilitated by social interactions, significantly impacts purchase intentions.

Influence of interpersonal interaction factors on purchase intention. Liu et al. (2018) identified perceived familiarity, similarity, and experience as influential factors, although Zhou (2019) found perceived similarity less significant.

Influence of other factors on purchase intention. Dilshan (n.d.) and Doha et al. (2019) found that perceived quality and social factors significantly drive purchase intentions. Yusuf et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of e-WOM in shaping purchase intentions.

Repurchase intention. Lim et al. (2019) and Ibrahim & Mishra (2016) emphasized customer engagement and satisfaction as key determinants of repurchase intentions.

Purchase behaviour. While measuring the intention of a behaviour can serve as a strong indicator of the actual behaviour, it is often easier to assess than the behaviour itself. However, some studies focus on examining the actual purchase behaviour to obtain a more accurate understanding of consumer actions.

Influence of different factors on consumer purchase behaviour. Al-Adwan (2019) and Wang et al. (2015) identified trust, referrals, and reviews as significant influencers. Maia et al. (2017) underscored the importance of transaction safety, product price, and delivery factors.

Impulsive buying behaviour. Xiang et al. (2016) identified information quality, visual appeal, perceived usefulness, and enjoyment as drivers of impulsive buying.

The Usage

According to Horng & Wu (2019), usage behaviour in social commerce involves giving and receiving information, measurable through eWOM.

Usage intention Horng & Wu (2019) found that behavioural intention reliably predicts actual behaviour in e-commerce. Abed (2018) identified social influence and trust as key predictors of social commerce intentions on Instagram in Saudi Arabia. Hajli (2014) noted that social support, trust, satisfaction, and commitment positively influence the intention to use social commerce on Facebook. Zhang et al. (2014) and Meymand et al. (2016) emphasized the impact of perceived interaction, personalization, and sociability on virtual experiences and social commerce intentions. Meymand et al. highlighted the roles of social support, participation, and network tracking in enhancing social commerce engagement. Chiang et al. (2019) found that functionality, enjoyment, reliability, presence, and identity on social commerce sites significantly affect user intentions. Bazi et al. (2019) linked brand co-creation and consumer engagement to increased social commerce intentions. Horng & Wu (2019) associated eWOM with social commerce intentions. Yang (2018) showed that social distance and mutual expectations positively influence eWOM participation. Mikalef et al. (2017) indicated that purchasing intentions and website features drive eWOM, while product selection does not. Shi & Chow (2015) highlighted institutional-based trust as a key predictor of eWOM intentions, unlike information-based trust.

Usage behaviour The studies of Sheikh et al. (2019), Shin (2013), and Akman & Mishra (2016) explored the link between social commerce intentions and actual behaviour. Sheikh et al. (2019) surveyed 348 Pakistani social commerce consumers, demonstrating that social commerce constructs and social support significantly impact intentions, leading to behaviour. Shin (2013) combined interviews, focus groups, and surveys of 329 shoppers, finding that perceived benefits and enjoyment don't automatically translate to actual behaviour without additional influences. Akman & Mishra (2016) surveyed Turkish consumers and highlighted trust and awareness as critical factors positively influencing actual purchasing behaviour, confirming that behavioural intention significantly impacts actual use.

Wu & Li (2017) studied consumer loyalty in social commerce, defining it as behavioural responses like recommendations, engagement, and increased shopping. Their survey of 599 Taiwanese consumers showed that social commerce value positively affects consumer loyalty, with hedonic value having the strongest impact, followed by social and utilitarian values.

-Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviours in Social Commerce

This axis explores factors influencing consumer behaviour in a social commerce context, selected based on the volume of literature available. These are not the only factors but are the most recognized in social commerce literature.

Trust

Friedrich (2016) identified trust as the most examined factor in social commerce, crucial for behaviours such as adoption, usage, purchase, repurchase, information sharing, and information seeking. The social commerce literature treats trust either as a unified term or as a classified term, reflecting its diverse impact on consumer behaviours within the social commerce context

Trust as a unified term. Friedrich (2016) recognizes trust as the most examined factor in social commerce. Studies like Maia et al. (2017), Al-Adwan & Kokash (2019), and Akman & Mishra (2016) confirm that trust in a social networking site positively affects purchase intention and social presence. Yang (2018) discusses trust's role in reducing consumer uncertainty and enhancing reciprocity. Hajli (2014) and Sheikh et al. (2019) link trust to relationship quality, influencing consumer loyalty and social commerce constructs.

Trust as a classified term. Liu et al. (2019) and Farivar et al. (2017) distinguish between trust towards websites and trust towards members, finding both crucial for stimulating buying intentions. Beyari & Abareshi (2018) note that trust dimensions correlate with consumer satisfaction. Shi & Chow (2015) and Hajli (2019) emphasize information-based and institutional-based trust, highlighting the importance of high-quality information and trust transfer from social networking sites to advertised content.

Social Commerce Value

Perceived value in social commerce is defined by the overall evaluation of a product/service based on what consumers give versus what they receive (Zeithaml, 1988). Utilitarian value, derived from consumer-generated content like product reviews and details, helps inform other

consumers (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). It's typically measured by ease of use and perceived usefulness. Hedonic value pertains to the enjoyment consumers feel from online interactions and is measured by perceived enjoyment (Zhang et al., 2014). Social value, considered the added value of social commerce, stems from participatory events and social communication, which drive the evolution from e-commerce to social commerce (Hajli, 2014; Aladwani, 2018). Consequently, social value is treated separately from utilitarian and hedonic values in the literature.

Utilitarian and hedonic value. Utilitarian value, measured by ease of use and perceived usefulness, and hedonic value, measured by perceived enjoyment, are crucial in social commerce. Bazi et al. (2019) and Nistah et al. (2019) link high social commerce value to consumer satisfaction. Akman & Mishra (2016) and Chiang et al. (2019) find positive influences of perceived enjoyment and ease of use on purchase intention. However, Shin (2013) and Chen et al. (2018) offer contrasting views on the sufficiency of perceived enjoyment alone to trigger consumer behaviour.

Social value. Social value, encompassing social support and social influence, adds to utilitarian and hedonic values, creating consumer value. Wu & Li (2017) highlight social value's impact on consumer loyalty. Social support, providing emotional and informational support, is critical for consumer interaction and trust in social commerce (Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011; Bazi et al., 2019). However, studies like Nistah et al. (2019) and Sheikh et al. (2019) question its necessity, suggesting trust challenges and information overload as potential drawbacks.

Product-related Factors

Mikalef et al. (2017) emphasize product selection as a strong predictor of buying intention, warning against information overload. Dilshan (n.d.) and Maia et al. (2017) highlight product diversity and pricing as key factors influencing online shopping. Chiang et al. (2019) discuss the importance of enjoyment and reliability for specific product types like electronics and footwear. Lam et al. (2019) note that product uncertainty affects reliance on social interactions and reviews. Finally, El Mohamady, S. (2015) and El Sheikh, K. M. (2017) discuss the impact of product price, credibility, and additional services on purchase decisions in the Egyptian context.

Consumer-related Factors

Consumer demographics such as age, gender, and income significantly influence social commerce behaviours. Chen et al. (2018) find that enjoyment affects perceived value more in males, while females are more influenced by flow experience. Dilshan (n.d.) and Wang et al. (2019) emphasize product variety and information sharing for women. Shin (2013) and Liu et al. (2016) highlight age-related differences in ease of use and flow experience, with younger consumers valuing social influence more. Hilal, A. A. (2018) underscores the importance of consumer demographics like age, income, and education in determining social commerce behavior.

An Overview of Social Commerce

From Electronic Commerce to Social Commerce

The Internet has transformed commercial activities since 1993, allowing global transactions

(Zwass, 1996). E-commerce, defined as transactions conducted over computerized networks, focuses on product information and competitive pricing but lacks social interaction (Wong & Lam, 1999; Alwi & Wook, 2015).

Evolution of E-commerce to Social Commerce

Web 2.0 technology integrated into e-commerce has enhanced social presence and interaction, evolving into social commerce. These technologies facilitate content sharing and user-generated content, improving credibility and trustworthiness in online transactions (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Social commerce emphasizes community and interactions, leveraging user relationships to create value (Baghdadi, 2013; Li & Ku, 2018).

E-commerce vs. Social Commerce

E-commerce focuses on one-way communication and product information, while social commerce emphasizes user-generated content and two-way communication. Social commerce integrates social media features, enabling customer interaction and engagement.

Table1.E-commerce Vs Social Commerce

Aspect	E-commerce	Social commerce
Interpersonal interaction	The main source of interpersonal interaction is online products reviews.	The interpersonal interaction is the key for social commerce as the user generated content can reshape all business activities .
Social media	Social media functions are limited in e-commerce websites.	All business and commercial activities are supported by social media features as social commerce initially is the combination of e-commerce and social media.
Business intention	Usually,e-commerce websites focuses on how the product information is presented and provide a competitive price. Enhancing the buying rate is the core of the business	Social interacton is the goal. Social commerce is all about user generated content and user interaction.
Flow of information	E-commerce is one way communication. It's rarely when there is a customer to enterprise communication or customer to customer communication.	Social commerce is more of customer to customer business, it emphasizes users interactions and encourages users generated content.
Website design	Search and navigation are the type of information technology found in e-commerce websites. It focuses only on well-presenting the products/sellers information found on the website.	Social commerce site focuses on the conversations among users. It supports commenting, reviewing, ratings and similar functions.

Note. Adapted from (Wang & Xie, 2020)

Social Commerce and Social Media

The growth of social media platforms has influenced online buying behaviours, leading to social commerce (Rachael & JennyXinyan, n.d.). Social media enhances enterprise-customer interactions, enabling users to share opinions and recommendations (Xu et al., 2012).

The Rise of Social Commerce

Social commerce emerged from early e-commerce features like ratings and reviews introduced by pioneers such as eBay and Amazon (Saundage & Lee, 2011). Social commerce leverages social media for information sharing and influencing purchase decisions (Jiang & Benbasat, 2007).

Social Commerce Definition

Social commerce blends e-commerce and social media, focusing on user interaction and community building (Wang & Zhang, 2012; Liang & Turban, 2011). It includes features like reviews, ratings, and user-generated content that influence online purchases.

Social Commerce vs. Online Shopping

Social commerce integrates social networking features, focusing on user participation and social interaction, unlike traditional online shopping, which focuses on purchase intention (Cho, 2017).

Social Commerce in Egypt

Egypt faces challenges in adopting online shopping, such as internet inaccessibility and computer illiteracy (Ahmar et al., 2016). However, increasing internet connectivity and mobile phone usage are driving e-commerce growth (Ramzy & ElDahan, 2016). Egypt has significant potential in the social commerce market due to its large population and internet penetration (Euromonitor International, 2016).

Social Commerce Constructs

Social commerce constructs (SCCs) include social media referrals, ratings, reviews, and online communities. These constructs enhance customer engagement and trust, facilitating information sharing and decision-making (Hajli, 2013; Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).

Ratings and Reviews

Ratings and reviews are crucial SCCs, providing personal and emotional insights that influence purchasing decisions (Davidson & Copulsky, 2006). They enrich the information diffusion process and impact brand reputation (Zhang et al., 2018).

Referrals and Recommendations

Referrals and recommendations play a vital role in social commerce, shaping buying decisions and building consumer confidence (Hajli, 2015; Kumar et al., 2010).

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

eWOM significantly impacts customer purchase intentions and reduces perceived risks by increasing trust (Beneke et al., 2016). It includes reviews, blogs, and social media interactions that inform and influence consumers (Chatterjee, 2001).

Stages of Social Commerce Development

Social commerce has evolved through stages driven by consumer behaviour and technological advancements.

- (a) Pre-tool Stage. Introduction of ratings and reviews.
- (b) Tool Stage. Introduction of referrals and recommendations.
- (c) Conceptual Stage. Development of social shopping with live chat and video shopping (Heinemann & Gaiser, 2014).

Social Commerce Sites

Social commerce sites enable consumer engagement in marketing and discount activities through online platforms (Stephan & Toubia, 2010). These sites are classified into indirect purchasing sites (promotional pages) and direct purchasing sites (online shopping with social interactions) (Farivar et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019).

Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

SNSs like Facebook and Instagram are fundamental to social commerce, enhancing seller-consumer relationships and providing credible product information (Liang & Turban, 2011). They support virtual communities where users share experiences and influence purchase decisions (Shin, 2010).

Facebook and Instagram in Social Commerce

- **Facebook.** With 2.8 billion users, Facebook is the leading platform for social commerce, facilitating brand promotion and eWOM (Jin, 2013). F-commerce encompasses marketing activities and direct sales through Facebook (Leong et al., 2018).

- **Instagram.** Known for its high growth rate, Instagram offers visual storytelling and influencer marketing, driving impulse buying behaviours (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Instagram commerce leverages visual content to engage users and promote products (Turban et al., 2016).

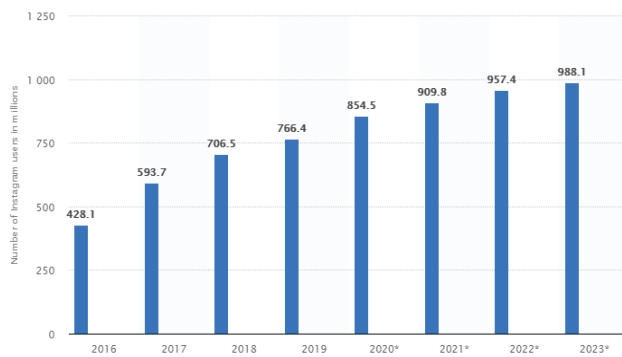


Figure 1. Number of Instagram users worldwide from 2016 to 2023(in millions)

Note. From Statista.com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183585/instagram-number-of-global-users/>. Copyright 2021 by Statista.

Online Consumer Behaviour with an integrated view of Online Purchasing

Traditional Consumer Behaviour

Traditional consumer behaviour involves the acts of using, gaining, and abandoning goods or services, as well as the decision processes that determine these acts (Engel et al., 1986).

Five-Stage Consumer Decision-Making Process

According to Engel et al. (1973) and Armstrong (1991), the consumer decision-making process includes. (1) Need Recognition. Awareness of a need for a product. (2) Search. Gathering information to form a set of choices. (3) Evaluation. Assessing alternatives to select the best option. (4) Purchase. Completing the buying transaction. (5) Post-Purchase. Engaging in activities such as recommending the product, rating it, and becoming loyal to a brand.

Impact of Technology

The use of technology has shifted focus to consumer technological behaviour and the advantages of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Shareef et al. (2016) highlighted four focal points. internal beliefs and attitudes, external influences from marketers, environmental surroundings in the marketplace, and changes due to exposure to technology.

Online Consumer Behaviour

Key Differences. Online consumers are more demanding, powerful, and utilitarian compared to offline consumers, leading to lower loyalty in an online environment (Morissette et al., 1999). Online consumer behaviour involves selecting, interacting, and buying products online, influenced by ICT and mobile technology (Darley et al., 2010).

Focal Points. (a) Offer Presented by Website. Consumers buy the offer presented, not the product itself. (b) Lack of Sensory Evaluation. Consumers cannot use their senses to evaluate an online product before purchase. (c) Technological Skills. Consumers' ability to seek information is controlled by their technological skills and experience. (d) Beliefs and Attitudes Towards Technology. These significantly affect trustworthiness and adoption behaviour.

Consumer Behaviour and Social Media

Social media platforms have significantly changed consumer behaviour and decision-making. Consumers use social media to get product information, make purchasing decisions, and share experiences with others (Miller & Lammas, 2010).

Five-Stage Consumer Decision-Making Process in Social Media.

(a) Need Recognition. Triggered by social identity and stimuli from social media content. (b) Information Search. Driven by reviews and opinions found on social media. (c) Evaluation. Informed by reading reviews and opinions of alternatives. (d) Purchasing. Influenced by emotional responses to social media content. (e) Post-Purchase. Actions include leaving reviews, messaging companies, and engaging with brand pages on social media.

Digital Groups

Digital groups, such as brand lover communities and consumer product groups, significantly influence consumer behaviour. These groups create a "crowd effect" and "wisdom of crowds," where individuals imitate others' behaviours and decisions (Surowiecki, 2005).

Consumer Behaviour in Social Commerce

Social commerce integrates social media features with e-commerce, enhancing behaviours like repurchase intention by increasing consumer trust. Consumers actively generate useful content and engage in commercial activities on social media platforms, contributing to business value (Hajli, 2015).

Six Consumer Behaviours in Social Commerce.

Friedrich (2016) studied the social commerce literature and has classified six different consumer behaviours. Use Intention/Behaviour, Buying Intention/Behaviour, Continuance Intention/Behaviour, Information Sharing Intention/Behaviour, Information Seeking Intention/Behaviour, Information Disclosure Intention/Behaviour

The Five-stage Consumer Decision-Making Process in Social Commerce

The five stages of the consumer decision-making process are influenced by social media features, shaping consumer responses to social commerce activities (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016).

Table2. Social commerce constructs associated with the five-stage decision-making process

Stage	Construct	Definition
Need Recognition	Attention Attraction	A social networking site succeeds in attracting consumer attention (Cox & Park, 2014).
Search	Information Seeking	Consumers search for information on social networking sites, such as eWOM (Kang et al., 2014).
Evaluation	Attitude	The response resulting from the consumer evaluation of a brand or product (Akar & Topçu, 2011).
Purchase	Purchase Behaviour	The willingness or actual purchasing behaviour of a consumer (Anderson et al., 2014).
Post-Purchase	Website Usage	The intention or actual behaviour of using a social networking site (De Vries & Carlson, 2014).
	Participation	Reading, forwarding, or replying to messages on a brand page (Zheng et al., 2015).
	Information Sharing	Willingness to share information on social networking sites (Zheng et al., 2015).
	Brand Loyalty	Willingness to repurchase and recommend the product to others (Zheng et al., 2015).

Note. Adapted from (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016).

Egyptian Consumer Behaviour in Social Commerce

Egyptian consumers’ online shopping decisions are more emotional than rational, and they are tech-savvy and risk-takers. Younger generations are more willing to try online shopping, and women represent a significant market for e-vendors due to impulsive buying tendencies (Abou-Elgheit, 2018). Egyptians prefer Facebook and WhatsApp for communication and rely on social media for product information and reviews (Alenezi et al., 2017). Friends and family opinions significantly impact their online behaviour, and the option of Cash-on-Delivery mitigates low credit card penetration (Aref & Okasha, 2020).

Online Purchasing

Online purchasing behaviour, the most studied online consumer behaviour, involves buying products or services via the Internet. It includes a two-step sequence. the ordering process (searching and comparing alternatives) and the fulfillment process (order tracking and customer support) (Cao et al., 2003).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Purchasing.

Advantages of online buying relies in the following points. convenience, greater product selection, lower prices, and easy comparison (Hansen, 2005). Whereas its disadvantages are. lack of sensory evaluation, concerns about return policies, and trust issues (Gustavsson & Johansson, 2006).

Online Purchasing Framework

The Model of Intention Adoption and Continuance (MIAC) links intention, adoption, and continuance with online consumer purchase behaviour. Satisfaction from adoption leads to continued purchase behaviour (Chan et al., 2003).

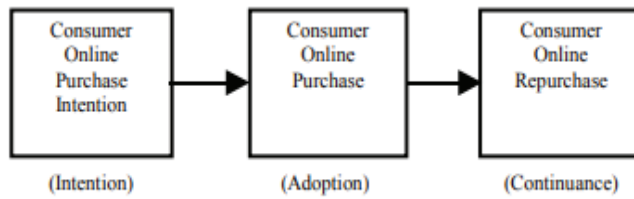


Figure 2. Model of Intention, Adoption, and Continuance (MIAC)

Note. From “Online Consumer Behaviour. A Review and Agenda for Future Research”, by G. Chan et al., 2003, *BLED proceedings*, 43, p.199. Copyright 2003 by AIS Electronic Library (AISeL).

Online Consumer Buying Behaviour During COVID-19 Outbreak

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to online shopping due to lockdowns and social distancing. E-commerce has surged, with significant increases in traffic and sales on platforms like Amazon (Ali, 2021). In the MENA region, online shopping frequency has increased, with Egypt ranking second with 47% of respondents using online platforms more frequently (Statista Research Department, 2020)

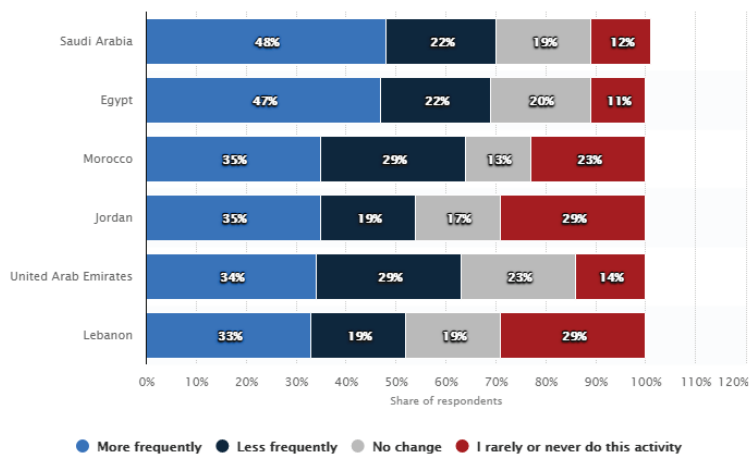


Figure 3. Online shopping frequency since COVID-19 outbreak in MENA 2020 by country

Note. From Statista.com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107602/mena-online-shopping-frequency-since-corona-outbreak-by-country/>. Copyright 2021 by Statista.

Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour in Social Commerce

Social commerce heavily depends on consumer interactions, making it crucial to understand how to motivate consumer participation. This section details the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour in social commerce, listed from most to least examined in literature.

Trust

Trust is crucial in social commerce, defined as the willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations of others (Mayer et al., 1995; Doney & Cannon, 1997). Online trust involves confidence in an online environment that vulnerabilities won't be misused (Beldad et al., 2010). Trust impacts purchase intentions by reducing uncertainty (Gefen et al., 2003). Bauman & Bachmann (2017) identified three research areas: trust models, technological factors (e.g., privacy, website design), and social factors (e.g., word-of-mouth, social presence).

Trust Dimensions

(a) Trust towards Website and Members. Trust in social commerce comes from both the website and its users. Trust in website members can transfer to trust in the site itself (Farivar et al., 2017). (b) Information-based and Identification-based Trust. Information-based trust derives from the quality of information, while identification-based trust stems from emotional connections between users (Leimeister et al., 2005).

Social Support

Social support includes informational and emotional support, enhancing user interactions and trust (Cobb, 1976; Laurenceau et al., 1998). Online social support is accessible, barrier-free, and promotes engagement without sociodemographic constraints (White & Dorman, 2001). In social commerce, social support positively influences user intentions to participate and buy (Hajli, 2014).

Perceived Consumer Value

Perceived value is the consumer's overall evaluation of a product's utility, balancing benefits against costs (Zeithaml, 1988). Online, consumers are more price-sensitive due to fewer tangible product cues and higher perceived risk (Chen et al., 2007).

Determinants of Perceived Consumer Value

(a) Utilitarian Value. Functional benefits and ease of use (Davis, 1989). Factors like usefulness and ease of use drive social commerce adoption (Venkatesh et al., 2003). (b) Hedonic Value. Emotional satisfaction from the shopping experience (Babin et al., 1994). Enjoyment significantly influences online shopping behaviour (Mikalef et al., 2012).

Flow

Flow is a holistic experience of total involvement (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). In social commerce, flow enhances enjoyment and increases the likelihood of unplanned purchases (Gao & Bai, 2014).

Social Interaction

Social interaction in social commerce involves human-computer (e.g., control, responsiveness, personalization) and human-human interactions (e.g., familiarity, similarity, expertise) (Wang & Yu, 2017). High social interaction levels boost engagement and trust (Meymand et al., 2016).

Perceived Risk

Perceived risk, a state of psychological uncertainty, negatively affects purchase intentions (Bauer, 1960). In online shopping, privacy and security concerns heighten perceived risk (Jarvenpaa et al., 2000). However, trust can mitigate these risks (Yin et al., 2019).

Social Presence

Social presence refers to the sense of human warmth and sociability in online interactions (Short et al., 1976). It enhances trust and reduces perceived distance between buyer and seller (Lu et al., 2016).

Website Quality

Website quality, encompassing system and service quality, is critical for successful social commerce. It influences user experience and purchase intentions (Al-Debei et al., 2015; Zeithaml et al., 2002). Social networking sites play a similar role in social commerce, affecting social sharing and shopping behaviours (DeLone & McLean, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

S-O-R Model

The S-O-R (Stimuli-Organism-Response) model, an enhancement of the Stimuli-Response theory, was developed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974) to include the “organism” between stimulus and response. This model explains how environmental stimuli affect consumer behaviour through internal states (organism), leading to a response such as purchasing behaviour.

Application of the SOR model in E-commerce

McKinney (2004) found that online shopping motives significantly impact satisfaction. Koo & Ju (2010) demonstrated that online environmental cues influence consumer emotions and intentions. Zhang & Benyoucef (2016) confirmed the model’s applicability in understanding consumer behaviour in online environments, showing how stimuli (external factors) influence internal cognition and emotions, leading to behavioural responses.

In social commerce, stimuli include content, network, and interaction characteristics. The organism refers to internal states like value perception, social cognition, and emotions. The response includes behaviours like searching, evaluating, and purchasing.

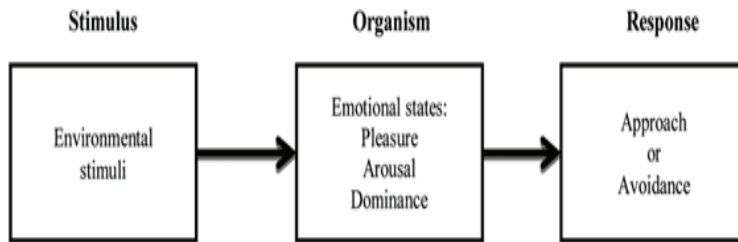


Figure 4. SOR (Stimuli-Organism-Response) model

Note. Reprinted from. An approach to environmental psychology by Mehrabian, & Russell., 1974.

The Proposed Model

This research's theoretical framework is based on the SOR model, with variables as follows.

Social Commerce Value as Stimuli (S)

Social commerce value consists of utilitarian, hedonic, and social value. Stimulus factors are divided into internal and external motives.

- **Utilitarian and Hedonic Value as Internal Motives.** Measured by perceived usefulness, ease of use (utilitarian value), and perceived enjoyment (hedonic value) (McKinney, 2004; Peng & Kim, 2014; O'Brien, 2010).
- **Social Value as External Motive.** Seen as the added value of social commerce, measured through social support (Hajli, 2014). Social support includes emotional and informational support, significantly influencing consumer behaviour.

Trust as Organism (O)

Trust in social commerce includes trust towards the website and its members. It influences both emotional and cognitive states, shaping consumer behaviour (Jiang et al., 2010; Bilgihan, 2016). Trust transfer theory suggests that trust can be transferred between members and the site, leading to a unified concept of trust towards social commerce pages.

Purchase Behaviour as Response (R)

Responses represent the outcomes of cognitive or emotional reactions, including approach or avoidance behaviour (Sherman et al., 1997). This research considers actual purchase behaviour as a response to evaluate the direct impact of various factors on purchasing decisions, beyond mere intention.

Moderating Variables

Moderator variables such as consumer demographics (gender, age, income level), product-related factors (type, price, selection), social platform type (Facebook, Instagram), and external factors like COVID-19, influence the relationship between social commerce factors and purchase behaviour.

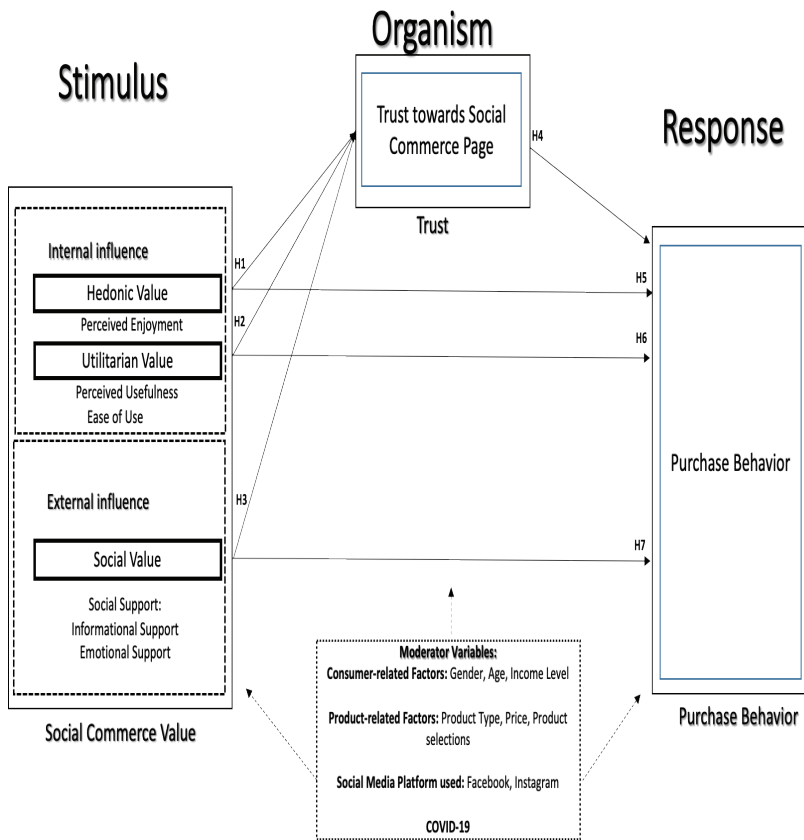


Figure 5. Proposed Model

Research Methodology

Research Type

This descriptive-analytical research focuses on factors affecting Egyptian consumer buying behaviour in social commerce. It describes the factors and explores correlations among them, aiming to derive useful insights and indications from the analysis (Saunders et al., 2016).

Research Significance

The significance lies in the growing reliance on electronic shopping in Egypt, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research identifies key factors influencing purchasing behaviour in social commerce.

Research Problem

The research problem involves describing and analyzing factors influencing Egyptian consumer behaviour in social commerce. It considers consumer state, their relationship with social media pages, and page-specific factors.

Research Objective

The objectives of this study are to identify social commerce factors influencing Egyptian consumers, analyze the impact of consumer-related factors, examine product-related factors, assess COVID-19's effect on online behaviour, and explore differences between Facebook and Instagram in social commerce.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following:

1. What social commerce factors influence Egyptian consumer behaviour in SNSs?
2. What consumer-related factors are most influential?
3. What product-related factors are most influential?
4. How has COVID-19 affected online consumer behaviour?
5. How do Facebook and Instagram differ as social commerce platforms?

Research Hypotheses

- H1. Hedonic value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page
- H2. Utilitarian value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page.
- H3. Social value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page.
- H4. Trust towards social commerce pages is positively related to purchase behaviour.
- H5. Hedonic Value is positively related to purchase behaviour.
- H6. Utilitarian Value is positively related to purchase behaviour.
- H7. Social Value is positively related to purchase behaviour.

Data Collection Methods and Sampling

This study uses quantitative method (surveys) to gather data from consumers providing a comprehensive analysis of factors influencing their buying behaviour on SNSs.

Survey and Data Sampling

Surveys, the most widely used methodology in social commerce literature (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016), were chosen to collect quantitative data. An electronic questionnaire was distributed to social commerce consumers, focusing on Facebook and Instagram due to their popularity among Egyptians.

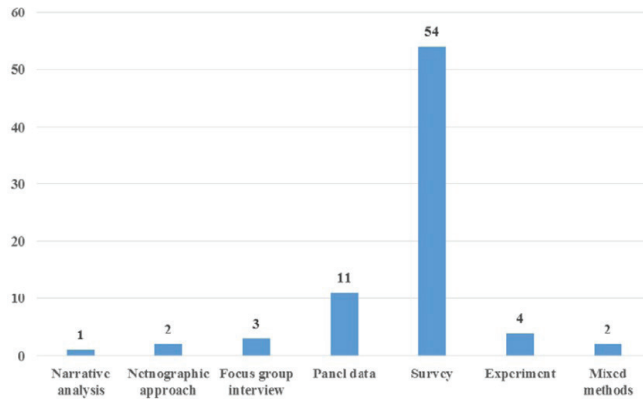


Figure.6.Methodologies used in Social Commerce Literature

Note. From “Consumer Behaviour in Social Commerce. Literature Review”, Kem Z.K Zhang & Morad Benyoucef 2016, Decision Support Systems, 86, p.96.

Survey Population The population includes Egyptians, aged 18-50+, who shop online and uses social commerce pages on Facebook or Instagram. Facebook and Instagram were chosen as the study platforms because Facebook, as shown in Figure 7, is the most popular social media platform in Egypt, with 73.8% of Egyptians having accounts as of July 2020, demonstrating its dominance in terms of user numbers.

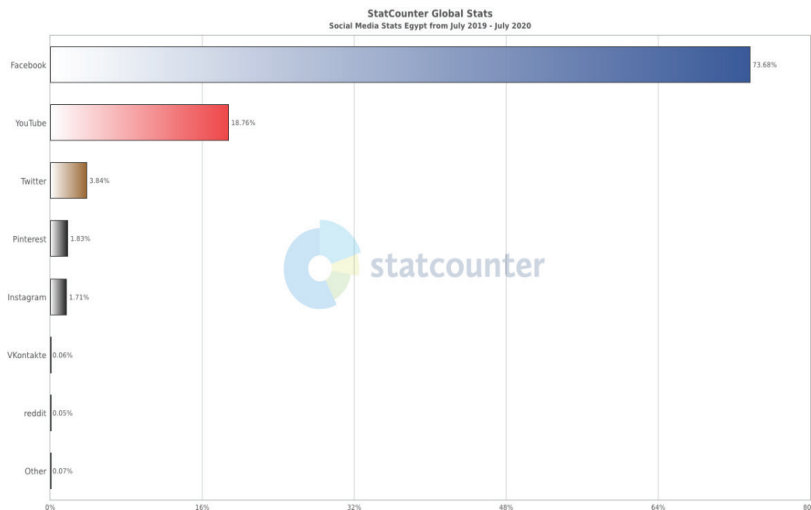


Figure 7.Social Media Users in Egypt

Note. From Statista.com. <https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/egypt/#monthly-201907-202007-bar>. Copyright 2021 by Statista.

Instagram is also a significant platform for this study, with the majority of its users in Egypt falling within the study’s target age group. As shown in Figure 8., 39.6% of users are aged 18-24 and 30.3% are aged 25-34, making Instagram a favourable choice for reaching the research audience

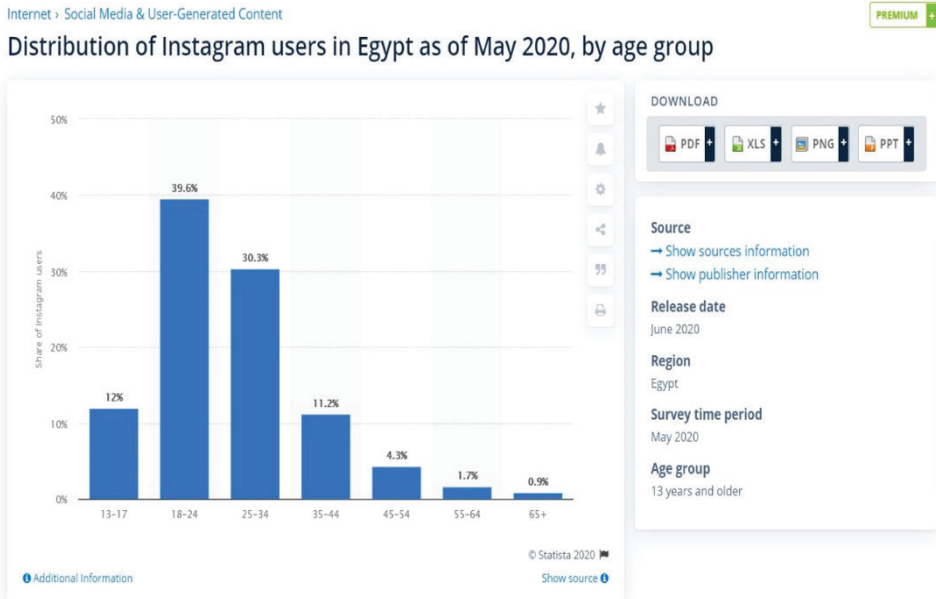


Figure 8. Distribution of Instagram Users in Egypt

Note. From Statista.com. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1028471/egypt-instagram-user-age-distribution/>
Copyright 2021 by Statista.

Survey Sampling Techniques and Sample Size Convenience sampling was used, reaching participants through social media. The sample size comprised 603 respondents who completed the electronic questionnaire.

Survey Design The online questionnaire, available in Arabic and English, consisted of five sections designed to filter respondents based on their social commerce experience, favorite platforms, and buying behaviours. It aimed to collect data on the study variables and provide insights for social commerce practitioners.

Survey Sampling Measurements Measurements included a five-point Likert Scale for independent variables and questions about buying behaviour frequency. Various statistical measures (Chi Square Test, Correlation Coefficients, T-Test, Partial Correlation Coefficients, Cranach’s Alpha Coefficient, Descriptive Measures) were used for data analysis.

Survey Validity Content validity was ensured by distributing the questionnaire to eight academic experts for review and incorporating their feedback.

Conceptual & Operational Definitions

Table3. Main Research Terminologies' Conceptual & Operational Definitions

Terminology	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Perceived Enjoyment	To what extent is the activity of using a particular system (for example, a commercial website) perceived as enjoyable (Davis, et al., 1992)	Measured by asking the survey respondents questions that tackle the following. -I feel happy spending my time on shopping pages on social media platforms. -I enjoy using social commerce pages.
Perceived Usefulness	The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system (for example, a commercial website) enhances his/her skills ((Davis, 1989	Measured by asking the survey respondents questions that tackle the following. -Shopping on a social commerce page is beneficial for me. - I can quickly find what I want to buy on social media. -The information available on the products on this social commerce website is valuable.
Ease of Use	The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system (for example, a commercial website) will (be effort-free (Davis, 1989	Measured by asking the survey respondents questions that tackle the following. - Learning how to use this social commerce site is easy. - Buying from social media is easy. - It is easy to become proficient at using a social commerce page.
Social Support	Social support refers to the social interaction with individuals within a group and their feelings of caring for, responding to, and being supported (Cobb, 1976).	To measure (a) informational support, survey respondents will answer questions that tackle the following. -Members of social commerce pages' provide me suggestions when I need help. - When I have a problem, social commerce site members provide me with information to overcome it To measure (b) emotional support, survey respondents will answer questions that tackle the following. -When I encounter difficulties, social commerce website members listen to me when I'm expressing my feeling. -When I have a problem, social commerce website members show interest in me.
Trust towards social commerce page	The desire of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of the other based on the expectation that the other party will perform a reliable act, regardless of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Mayer, et al., 1995).	Measured by asking the survey respondents questions that tackle the following. -The performance of social media shopping page always meets my expectations - Social media shopping pages are reliable. - Social media shopping pages are trustworthy.
Purchase Behaviour	The impulsive or planned consumer behaviour of buying from social commerce website (Friedrich, 2016).	Measured by asking the survey respondents questions that tackle the following. (a) Their past buying experience from a social media page. Have you ever purchased from a social media page. (b)Which social media platform do you usually buy from. Facebook , Instagram or both. (c) The frequency of their buying behaviour from a social media page. - I consider myself. (a) Heavy buyer (I buy weekly-monthly from a social media page). (b)Moderate buyer (I buy every few months from a social media page). (c) Light buyer (I buy once in a year from a social media page).

Survey Results

Sample's Social Media Habits and Analysis

The survey aimed to filter out respondents without social commerce experience while gathering useful preliminary information. Respondents were asked which social media platform they spent more time on. The results showed that 73.8% preferred Facebook, while 26.2% preferred Instagram.

Analysis of Social Media Habits and Demographics

(a) Gender and social media habits. Females are more likely to prefer Instagram compared to males, with a chi-square value of 9.320 (sig=0.002) and a correlation coefficient of -0.124. (b) Age and social media habits. Older respondents tend to spend more time on Facebook, while younger respondents prefer Instagram, with a chi-square value of 38.629 (sig=0.000) and a correlation coefficient of -0.243. (c) Income and social media habits. Higher-income respondents tend to spend more time on Instagram, while lower-income respondents prefer Facebook, with a chi-square value of 14.724 (sig=0.002) and a correlation coefficient of 0.153.

Characteristics of Online Buyers and Their Online Purchase Habits

Out of 603 respondents, 81.6% have purchased online, and 18.4% have never purchased online. Respondents were given three options for their preferred shopping platforms. Applications, social media pages, and websites. Applications were preferred by 43.4%, social media pages by 32.5%, and websites by 5.6%.

Analysis of Respondents' Online Behaviour Based on Demographics

(a) Gender and Online Purchase. Females are more likely to purchase online than males, with a chi-square value of 34.225 (sig=0.000) and a correlation coefficient of 0.238. (b) Age and Online Purchase. Younger respondents are more likely to shop online than older respondents, with a chi-square value of 36.26 (sig=0.000) and a correlation coefficient of 0.217. (c) Income Level and Online Purchase. Respondents with higher income levels are more likely to purchase online, with a chi-square value of 34.459 (sig=0.000) and a correlation coefficient of -0.216.

The Experience of Purchasing from a Social Media Page (Social Commerce Experience)

83.7% of respondents confirmed they had previously made purchases from a social media page, indicating significant engagement with social commerce. (a) Gender and Social Commerce Experience. Females are more likely than males to engage in social commerce, with a chi-square value of 23.050 (sig=0.000) and a correlation coefficient of 0.216. (b) Age and Social Commerce Experience. No significant relationship between age intervals and purchasing from social media pages was found, with a chi-square value of 5.407 (sig=0.248). (c) Income Level and Social Commerce Experience. The likelihood of engaging in social commerce does not depend on the income level of the buyer, with a chi-square value of 1.856 (sig=0.603).

Social Commerce Buying Behavior and Consumer Demographics

50.2% of respondents consider themselves moderate buyers, 30.6% light buyers, and 19.2% heavy buyers. (a) Gender and Social Commerce Buying behaviour. Females exhibit stronger purchase behaviours compared to males, with a chi-square value of 6.675 (sig=0.036) and a correlation coefficient of -0.104. (b) Income Level and Social Commerce Buying behaviour. Higher income levels are associated with more pronounced purchase behaviours, with a chi-square value of 15.468 (sig=0.017) and a correlation coefficient of 0.136.

Favorite Social Media Platform to Shop From

Facebook was the most favored platform (40%), followed by both Facebook and Instagram (37.4%), and Instagram alone (22.6%).

Products Frequently Purchased from Social Media Pages

Clothing was the top choice (71.8%), followed by footwear and bags (46.8%), and accessories (44.4%).

Product Price in Social Commerce Shopping Vs Traditional Shopping

42.2% disagreed that they shop online because it is cheaper, indicating that product price does not significantly affect online buying behaviour.

Product Selections in Social Commerce

47.3% of respondents agreed that online shopping offers more product variety compared to traditional shopping.

Product Selections and Purchase Behaviour in Social Commerce

There is a weak positive relationship between the belief that online pages offer more product variety and purchasing behaviour, with a chi-square value of 16.780 (sig=0.032) and a correlation coefficient of 0.097.

Social Commerce and COVID-19

64.1% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 lockdown made them more familiar with online shopping, 49.2% trusted social media pages faster, and 59.2% bought online more during the lockdown.

Description of Indexes

- (a) Hedonic Value. 61.9% of respondents enjoy shopping on social media.
- (b) Utilitarian Value. 62.4% find social commerce useful, and 76.7% agree it is easy to use.
- (c) Social Value. 49.7% received informational support, and 34.5% received emotional support while shopping on social media.
- (d) Trust towards Social Commerce Page. 40.3% find social media shopping pages trustworthy.

Testing Hypotheses

H1. Hedonic value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page, supported by a correlation coefficient of 0.480.

H2. Utilitarian value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page, supported by correlation coefficients of 0.590 and 0.458 for perceived usefulness and ease of use, respectively.

H3. Social value is positively related to trust towards the social commerce page, supported by correlation coefficients of 0.519 and 0.593 for informational and emotional support, respectively.

H4. Trust towards social commerce pages is not significantly related to purchase behaviour.

H5. Hedonic value is positively related to purchase behaviour, with a correlation coefficient of 0.201.

H6. Utilitarian value is partially supported, with perceived usefulness being positively related to purchase behaviour, but ease of use showing no significant correlation.

H7. Social value is not significantly related to purchase behaviour.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research explored the factors influencing Egyptian consumers' buying behaviour on social media platforms, focusing on perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, ease of use, social support, and trust towards social media pages. The study used the SOR model to examine how these factors, along with product-related and consumer-related aspects and the impact of COVID-19, affect buying behaviour.

Research Question 1. What social commerce factors influence Egyptian consumer behaviour in SNSs?

This research focused on identifying key social commerce factors impacting Egyptian consumers' buying behaviour on social media platforms. The main factors considered were hedonic value (perceived enjoyment), utilitarian value (perceived usefulness and ease of use), trust towards social media pages, and social support (informational and emotional support).

a) Hedonic Value and Purchase Behaviour. The research found a positive correlation between perceived enjoyment and purchase behaviour. This aligns with previous studies by Akman & Mishra (2016) and Chiang et al. (2019), confirming that the more enjoyable consumers find a social media page, the more likely they are to purchase from it.

b) Utilitarian Value and Purchase Behaviour. Perceived Usefulness. There is a significant positive relationship between perceived usefulness and purchase behaviour, indicating that consumers are more likely to buy from a social media page they find useful. This supports findings by Al-Adwan (2019) and Xiang et al. (2016). **Ease of Use.** Contrary to perceived usefulness, ease of use did not show a significant relationship with purchase behaviour. This suggests that ease of use might not be a distinguishing factor in social media shopping as these platforms are inherently user-friendly.

c) Trust towards Social Media Pages and Purchase Behaviour.

Surprisingly, trust towards social media pages did not show a significant direct relationship with purchase behaviour. However, trust was found to mediate the relationship between perceived enjoyment/usefulness and purchase behaviour. This result highlights the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trust dynamics in social commerce.

d) Social Support and Purchase Behaviour

Both informational and emotional support were found to be insignificant in influencing purchase behaviour. This finding suggests that the traditional definition of social support may not fully apply to social commerce on social media platforms where interactions are limited compared to groups or communities.

Research Question 2. What consumer-related factors are most influential?

Several demographic factors were analyzed to understand their influence on social media shopping behaviour. (a) Gender. Females exhibited a stronger buying behaviour compared to males. (b) Age. Younger consumers (18-39 years) showed a higher propensity to purchase from social media pages. (c) Income Level. Higher income levels were associated with stronger buying behaviour.

Research Question 3. What product-related factors are most influential?

Three main product-related factors were examined. (a) Product Type. Clothing, footwear, and accessories were the most frequently purchased items. (b) Product Price. Lower prices were associated with stronger buying behaviour, indicating that competitive pricing is crucial. (c) Product Selection. A large product selection positively influenced purchase behaviour, enhancing perceived enjoyment and usefulness.

Research Question 4. How has COVID-19 affected online consumer behaviour?

COVID-19 significantly altered consumer behaviour.

- Increased familiarity with online shopping during the lockdown period.
- Accelerated trust in social media shopping pages, leading to more impulsive purchases.
- The overall increase in online shopping activities during the pandemic, as supported by findings from the Statista Research Department (2020).

Research Question 5. How do Facebook and Instagram differ as social commerce platforms?

(a) Facebook. Preferred by older users, males, and lower-income groups. It offers detailed targeting and insights, though it can be complex to use for promotions. (b) Instagram. Favored by younger users, females, and higher-income groups. It is noted for its high-quality visuals and ease of use in promotions, particularly effective for industries like food, fashion, and blogging.

Findings and Conclusion

Perceived enjoyment and usefulness positively influence consumer buying behaviour on social media, making purchases more likely when users find a page enjoyable and useful. Ease of use was found to be an insignificant factor, as social media platforms are generally user-friendly, eliminating the need for distinctions among pages. Both informational and emotional social support were also insignificant in influencing buying behaviour, likely due to the lack of social interaction among followers on social media pages. While trust mediates the relationship between perceived enjoyment/usefulness and purchase behaviour, it does not directly influence it. The study suggests that COVID-19 has reduced the role of trust in social commerce, with consumers now more influenced by electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), including feedback, reviews, and ratings. Consumer and product-related factors significantly influence buying behaviour, with demographic distinctions showing Facebook is preferred by older, lower-income users and Instagram by younger, higher-income users. Product types and competitive pricing are crucial in driving purchasing decisions. The pandemic significantly altered consumer behaviour, increasing familiarity with online shopping, accelerating trust in social media pages, and leading to more impulsive buying behaviour.

In conclusion, this research highlights the multifaceted nature of consumer behaviour on social media platforms in Egypt. While hedonic and utilitarian values significantly influence buying behaviour, factors such as ease of use and social support require more nuanced understanding. The impact of COVID-19 has further complicated these dynamics, altering trust and shopping patterns. Understanding these elements can help businesses tailor their strategies to effectively engage with Egyptian consumers on social media.

Recommendations

Theoretical Recommendations

- a) **Ease of Use.** Future research should consider excluding ease of use as a construct of utilitarian value in social commerce within SNSs since its ease of use is inherent to the platforms.
- b) **Social Support Redefinition.** Redefine social support in the context of social commerce on SNSs to focus on support from page admins to consumers, rather than among group members.
- c) **Trust Reevaluation.** Reassess the influence of trust on online purchase behaviour in SNSs, considering the potential constraining effect of COVID-19.
- d) **Consumer Social Class.** Include consumer social class as a factor to strengthen consumer-related findings.
- e) **COVID-19 Impact.** Focus future research on the profound changes in online buying behaviour due to COVID-19.
- f) **Focus Groups.** Utilize focus groups for deeper insights and interpretations of consumer behaviour in social commerce.

Practical Recommendations

- a) **Perceived Enjoyment and Usefulness.** Ensure these factors are present to trigger consumer buying behaviour.
- b) **e-WOM Influence.** Recognize the significant impact of electronic word-of-mouth, as consumers rely on ratings, reviews, and feedback before purchasing.
- c) **Informational and Emotional Support.** Provide strong informational and emotional support to influence purchase and repurchase behaviours.
- d) **Consumer Demographics.** Understand that consumer demographics affect purchase behaviour, usage, engagement, and social interactions on social commerce pages.
- e) **Product-Related Factors.** Acknowledge the influence of product type, selection, and price on consumer buying behaviour.
- f) **Platform Selection.** Carefully choose between Facebook and Instagram based on their distinct features and user demographics to better serve the business.

Limitations

- a) **Scope.** Focus on social commerce within SNSs (Facebook and Instagram) limits generalizability to other platforms.
- b) **Selective Factors.** Only specific factors chosen by the researcher were examined.
- c) **Potential Bias.** Questionnaire distribution on Facebook might bias the data.
- d) **Generalizability.** Data collected from a specific Egyptian context may not be generalizable to other populations.
- e) **Sample Size.** While relatively large (603), future research should consider larger samples with probability sampling techniques.

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