

INVESTIGATING TRUST AND BUYING DECISIONS IN SOCIAL COMMERCE SALES CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT

Social commerce has revolutionized conventional e-commerce by integrating shopping experiences in social networking platforms. This study investigates the impact of trust for purchasing social networking sites and sharing of sales campaigns. It also analyses how social networking behavior influences purchase decisions following exposure to promotional content. Employing a descriptive research approach, data was collected from 380 active social media users with structured questionnaire. Linear regression was used to understand trust for purchasing in social networking sites with sharing of sales campaigns. Binary logistics was used to assess the influence of social networking sites on purchase decision. The results suggested that purchase intent is pivotal in campaign conversion. The research suggests that trust functions as a catalyst for sharing behavior and principal driver for consumer responses to social media promotions. Marketers are urged to prioritize trust building strategies and behavior based targeting to enhance engagement and conversion in social commerce environments.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Social Commerce, Social Media Campaigns, Social Networking Sites.

INTRODUCTION

The digital world has witnessed substantial transformation in the past decade, changing customer interactions with companies and influencing purchasing decisions. A significant development is the incorporation of e-commerce features in to social media platforms, familiarly known as social commerce. Social commerce, integrates social interaction with commercial transactions, allowing users to identify, assesses and purchase products within social networking platforms. Trust is the core of this transformation facilitating online transactions in the informal peer driven social media network. Sales campaigns in the social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram etc., seek to engage consumers through interactive content, exclusive offers and influencer endorsements. The effectiveness of the campaigns relies on the extent of trust on source of promotion and the social networking site in which it is shared (Hajli, 2015; Kim & Park, 2013). The study examines the role of trust across product categories impact in the buying decision and how sharing of promotional content on social networking sites results in purchase decisions.

Social Commerce & Trust

Social commerce is a sub-set of e-commerce using social media platforms to promote and facilitate online transactions. It integrates the interactive features of social networking with ease of use and functionality of online shopping (Liang & Turban, 2011). This business strategy enables

firms to sell directly via social platforms, integrating social interactions like likes, shares and comments in the shopping experience.

Social commerce differentiates itself from traditional e-commerce through distinct characteristics that augment user interaction and facilitate the purchasing process. Key capabilities includes incorporation of shopping functionalities directly in the social media platforms like Instagram Shopping and Facebook Marketplace, enabling users to shop and buy products inside the application. Moreover, social commerce utilizes influencer marketing and peer recommendations allowing consumers to base their purchasing decisions on trusted sources and social affirmation. There is also a strong focus on user generated content (UGC), such as reviews, testimonials, images shared by customer which further enhances trust and authenticity in the shopping experience. Real time interaction is facilitated by live videos and chat which significantly influences purchase decisions.

Consumer behavior in social commerce is significantly influenced by social cues, peer recommendation and community oriented interactions. In contrast to traditional e-commerce platforms where buying decisions are individualistic, social commerce promotes collective decision making. Consumers are influenced by peer recommendations, online reviews and experiences shared in their networks fostering trust and social cohesion. Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) states trust, interaction and social presence are significant elements that enhance user engagement and customer behavior in social commerce environments. These features reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, hence fostering consumer engagement and transactions on social media platforms.

The role of user generated content – such as comments, rating and reviews plays an important role in strengthening social proof and trust (Hajli, 2015). This content acts as a persuasive function in influencing perceptions of buyers and sellers. Liang and Turban (2011) sales campaigns triggers psychological responses such as fear of missing out (FOMO), resulting in impulsive buying behavior. The integration of social interaction, credibility and limited time sensitive promotions results in more dynamic and emotionally influenced consumer experience on social platforms.

Trust is crucial in consumer decision-making on social networking sites (SNS), especially with social commerce. It is intrinsically multifaceted, involving trust in the platform, the seller, and user-generated content. Trust in platforms like Facebook, Instagram pertains to expectations regarding privacy, payment security, and reliability of the system. Pavlou (2003) observes that in digital contexts characterized by uncertainty, trust reduces complexity and promotes collaboration. Moreover, confidence in the seller, be it a brand or influencer, substantially impacts buyer intention, particularly when physical product assessment is not possible. Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) emphasize that vendor trust significantly affects the willingness of consumers to engage in online transactions. Moreover, peer-generated content such as reviews and ratings serves as a critical social proof mechanism that reduces perceived risk. Chen, et al. (2011) emphasize the significance of this content in fostering consumer trust and influencing purchasing behavior.

Building trust in social commerce is a strategic process influenced by platform design, brand communication and authenticity. Kim and Park (2013) assert that reliability of the platform stability, brand reputation, and visual content substantially influence consumer trust. Brands with consistent and transparent communication, quick response to queries and authentic user experiences has higher trust levels. Hajli et al. (2014) state that elements of social commerce including user recommendations, promote the transference of trust from peers to products and

platforms. Trust is enhanced by transparent grievance response processes, including refunds and timely responses to complaints. Luo, et al. (2015) found that trust strengthens when organisations resolve service failures with empathy and accountability.

Trust acts not just as a supportive factor but also as a catalyst for online transaction. In socially influenced commerce, trust facilitates prompt and confident decision making. Hajli (2015) asserts that trust mediates the relationship between social intention and purchase intention, converting social influence into buying decision. Recommendations from friends or trustworthy influencers have greater significance than traditional advertisement. Erkan and Evans (2016) state that communications from reliable sources are regarded as more trusted and persuasive. Thus, Trust not only improves the perceived value of the product but also decreases cognitive barriers increasing the likelihood of consumer response to promotional communications. In a content-saturated online environment, trust is a vital currency that transforms visibility into engagement and engagement into conversions.

Sales Campaigns in Social Media

Social media sales campaigns increase awareness, customer interaction and ultimately conversions by means of visually appealing and interactive content on social networking sites (SNS). Often, these campaigns use promotional strategies including flash sales, time limited discounts, influencer shared promo codes, giveaways and interactive components such as contests, surveys and swipe-up links. Call to action elements like Shop Now, Limited Offer or Swipe Up – integrated into stories and posts facilitates discovery to purchase. These campaigns take advantage of the real-time immersive experience social media provides, hence helping companies create sense of urgency and desire for their goods or services.

The platform's visual-centric design and interaction make social media sales campaign very influential on consumer decision-making. Social media's capacity to provide dynamic content in novel ways increases consumer attention and improves memory recall. According to Yadav, et al. (2013), sales promotions on social media create a heightened sense of urgency and exclusivity, which may push consumers to make quicker and more emotionally motivated buying choices. Moreover, advanced algorithms enable these campaigns to be micro-targeted depending on user's browsing history, purchase behavior and demographic data, hence enhancing campaign accuracy and conversion rates. Tuten and Solomon (2018) claim that "the personalization capabilities of social platforms enable marketers to tailor messages that closely fit individual consumer preferences, so improving campaign relevance and effectiveness." These customized interactions not only minimize information overload but also match promotions with consumer intent, hence increasing involvement and purchase probability. The effectiveness of social media sales campaign depends on the immediacy, social influence and tailored content into a consistent, action-oriented user experience.

Sharing Sales Campaigns in Social Networking Sites

The effectiveness of social media sales strategies depends much on sharing activity in social networking sites. It includes acts such as reposting promotional content, tagging friends in sale notifications, commenting on give away and participating in referral based promotions. The user-driven promotion of content is more powerful as it has the endorsement of peers, usually seen as more reliable and relevant than direct brand communication. Users are more inclined to share branded content, as Chu and Kim (2011) state when it is perceived as entertaining, informative or

in line with their personal identity. Such sharing activity increases organic reach but also enhances credibility and influence through social validation.

Psychological and social factors foster content sharing via social networking sites. While social signaling let people improve their self-image as smart consumers or trendsetters, altruism motivates people to share promotions to let peers obtain great bargains. Reciprocity is also important since consumers sometimes want real rewards from brands including referral incentives or social recognition. These drives provide a self-reinforcing cycle of social validation in which shared content is validated by peers and subsequently propagated, therefore enhancing both the apparent trustworthiness and attractiveness of the product or service (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Sharing within personal networks changes impersonal ads into relational messaging with peer support. When promotional content is through a friend's post rather than a sponsored advertisement, it gets relational credibility and persuasive power. Hajli (2015) states that in social commerce settings, people are more likely to act on information shared by friends or influencers because of the interpersonal trust rooted in such communications. The promotional message not only speeds up consumer decision making but also lowers perceived risk via trusted social lens. Therefore, to strengthen campaign influence, foster trust and generate conversions is by sharing in social networking sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kim et al. (2008) formulated an extensive model that investigated the relationship among trust, perceived risk and customer decision making in e-commerce. The research identified vendor reputation, website quality and information accuracy as precursors to trust. The model illustrates that higher trust levels reduce perceived risk; thereby increase customer's buying intentions. This research emphasizes the importance for e-commerce platforms to build trust in order to reduce risk perceptions and promote online transactions.

Hajli (2015) examines the influence of social commerce constructs such as user reviews, ratings and recommendations on consumer trust and purchasing inclinations. The research highlights that these social attributes promote information sharing and community development which are significant for fostering trust in digital contexts. The findings indicate that trust serves as a mediator between social commerce constructs and customers purchasing intentions. It emphasizes the importance of social components into e-commerce platforms to build consumer trust and stimulate sales.

Chen, et al. (2010) used conjoint analysis to identify website features that substantially affect consumer purchase intentions. The study identified criteria like website reputation, security and user-friendly design important in establishing consumer trust. The results indicate that improving these characteristics can improve consumer confidence and augment the probability of purchase, highlighting the significance of website quality in e-commerce initiatives.

Zhour, et al. (2010) integrates Task – Technology Fit (TTF) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of technology to analyses user adoption in mobile banking, encompassing trust aspects. The study emphasizes that confidence in technology profoundly affects user adoption and utilization patterns. The results indicate that fostering trust in mobile platforms is essential for promoting user engagement and enabling transactions.

Shen and Eder (2011) investigate the factors influencing user acceptance of social commerce websites, emphasizing trust and perceived utility. The research indicates that confidence in the website and its community substantially influences user acceptance and purchasing intent. The study highlights the necessity of establishing trustworthy platforms that

provide accurate information and secure transactions to improve user engagement and stimulate sales in social commerce settings.

Liang and Turban (2011) proposed research framework for social commerce highlighting the significance of trust within online networks. The study outlines social support, user generated content and community engagement plays significant role in building consumer trust. The research indicates building trust through these elements is crucial for promoting consumer engagement and aids purchase decision in social commerce platforms.

Ng. C.S.P. (2013) carried out a cross-regional analysis to investigate cultural variances in trust and purchasing intentions on social commerce platforms. The study indicates that cultural influences substantially influence the relationship between trust and purchasing intention. The research underscores the necessity for customized approaches in social commerce culturally oriented to effectively establish trust and impact on consumer buying behavior in various countries.

Hajli (2014) investigates the impact of social media platforms on consumer trust and buying behavior. The research indicates that social interactions including sharing of experiences and recommendations strengthen trust among users. The research reveals trust built through social media engagement results in high buyer intentions emphasizing the significance of social media in building consumer relationships and stimulating sales.

Lu et al. (2016) investigated the mediating function of trust in the relationship between social presence and purchase intention with social commerce. The research indicates that social presence fosters trust, thereby increased purchase intentions. The study emphasizes the need of fostering a sense of social presence on e-commerce platforms to establish confidence and stimulate consumer purchases.

Hajli et al. (2017) examines the impact of trust in social networking sites on customer purchasing intentions. The research illustrates that confidence in the platform and endorsements from peers substantially influence purchasing choices. The results indicate that social commerce platforms ought to prioritize the establishment of reliable settings and the promotion of peer interactions to foster consumer trust and stimulate sales.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research approach to examine the effectiveness of social networking sites (SNS) in improving sales and promotional efforts. The study employs both primary and secondary data to ensure the comprehensiveness of the study. Primary data was collected through research instrument – structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had 4 sections – demographic details, usage behavior in social networking sites, influence of social networking sites and its trust on purchase decision and influence of sales promotion in social networking sites. The study uses convenience sampling, a non-probability method adopted due to time limitations and accessibility to all participants. The sample consists of 380 respondents, who regularly use social networking sites and purchases products in this platform. The survey results were gathered and used percentage method to calculate the proportion of responders in each group, facilitating data interpretation and enabling significant conclusions.

The study also has its own limitations confining the study to five most prominent social networking sites and excludes developing or niche platforms that could also affect consumer behavior. Time limitations and restricted geographic reach further confine the extent of the investigation. Nonetheless, the methodology utilized in this study offers a methodical framework

to evaluate the role of social networking sites as instruments for contemporary marketing and consumer involvement, especially for sales promotion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study uncovers trends in social media usage and its impact on consumer buying behavior. Of the 380 responses, a significant 60% are under age of 20 while 35% are between the 21-30 age group, indicating younger users predominate social networking site engagement. Merely 5% are beyond the age of 30 indicating a generational disparity in internet activity. In terms of gender, 60% of respondents identified as male and 40% as female, indicating marginal male predominance in social commerce engagement within this sample.

The data indicates significant multi-platform interaction among respondents, with 38% utilizing three platforms and 35% engaging with four or more. Merely 7% utilize a single platform. The duration of time allocated to social networking services revealed 40% of individuals engage for 2 to 3 hours, providing substantial visibility for marketers to direct marketing towards users. A crucial behavioural insight arises from purchasing decisions following exposure to promotional campaigns on social networking sites. A notable 73% affirmed that they have made purchases after finding sales via social media sites, establishing social networking sites as an influential marketing tool. This corroborates with the hypothesis that social media presence favorably affects consumer behavior when promotions and sales announcements are communicated properly.

The research indicates that youth oriented sites like Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat should be prioritized for campaign awareness. Brands that sustain an active presence and engage in trend oriented marketing are like to transform awareness in to actual purchases. Moreover, despite significant exposure and effort investment, the study reveals potential for enhancement in peer sharing behavior which might be realized through influencer endorsements and unique referral incentives.

A series of linear regression studies were carried out to assess the relationship between consumer's promotional sharing activity and their trust in purchasing on social networking sites across product categories. The dependent variable was likelihood of reposting or sharing sales campaign among users' network. The independent variable is trust levels for purchase in social networking sites across four product categories-clothing, electronics, accessories and daily needs.

H₁: *Trust for purchasing in social networking sites significantly influences reposting/sharing sales campaign.*

The regression analysis from Table 1 indicated that reposting behavior strongly indicates trust for all product categories. The model for clothes was significant

Table 1
INFLUENCE OF TRUST FOR PURCHASING IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO SHARE SALES CAMPAIGN IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Trust for purchase in social networking sites across product category	Unstandardised B	Std. Error	Standardised Beta	t-value	Sig5 (p-value)	R ²
Clothing	0.421	0.045	0.462	9.36	0.0	0.213
Electronics	0.395	0.048	0.389	8.23	0.0	0.158
Accessories	0.402	0.047	0.412	8.55	0.0	0.17
Daily needs	0.378	0.05	0.367	7.56	0.0	0.135

with $p < 0.001$, with R^2 of 0.213. The unstandardized coefficient ($B=0.421$, $SE=0.055$) and standardized ($\beta=0.462$) indicates moderate positive correlation between reposting and trust in purchasing at social networking sites.

The regression analysis for electronics indicates significant results with $p < 0.001$, with $B=0.395$ ($SE=0.048$), $\beta = 0.398$ and $R^2 = 0.158$. Likewise, accessories had a notable positive correlation, $p < 0.001$, with $B=0.402$ ($SE=0.047$), $\beta=0.412$ and $R^2=0.170$. The model for daily needs was also significant, $p < 0.001$ with $B=0.378$ ($SE=0.050$), $\beta=0.367$ and $R^2=0.135$.

The results implied that consumers are more inclined to endorse or share sales campaign they trust, specifically in categories characterized by significant visual or social allure. Establishing product trust not only initiates purchases but also fosters organic word of mouth marketing via social sharing.

This study examined the influence of social networking sites on consumer's purchase intention after seeing a sales promotion campaign on social media platform.

H₂: *There is significant influence of social networking behavior on the purchase intention after seeing a sales promotion campaign.*

A binary logistic regression was used, with the dependent variable observed as 1 for Purchased after viewing a promotion and 0 for Did not purchase after viewing in a promotion. The independent variables are time spent on social networking sites, purchasing preferences on social networking sites, perceived impact of brand presence on social media and engagement with promotional content on social networking sites.

Table 2 MODEL SUMMARY OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION FOR PREDICTING PURCHASE INTENTION WITH SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE OF SALES PROMOTION CONTENT IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	
Model Summary	Value
Cox & Snell R^2	0.395
Nagelkerke R^2	0.527
Model χ^2	18.532
df	4
p value	0.001

Table 3 BINARY LOGISTIC REGRESSION OUTPUT					
Predictor	B (Coeff.)	Std. Error	Wald	Sig. (p-value)	Exp (B)
Constant	-7.775	3.887	4.001	0.046	-
Time spent in social networking site	0.379	0.644	0.346	0.556	1.46
Buying preference in social networking site	1.898	0.717	7.021	0.008	6.675
Brand Social media influence	0.339	0.708	0.23	0.632	1.404
Following promotions in social networking sites	0.666	0.446	2.233	0.135	1.946

From Table 2 & Table 3, the regression model exhibited statistical significance, $\chi^2 = 18.532$, $P < 0.01$, indicating that the independent variables differentiated between consumers who made

purchases and those who did not. The model explained almost 52.8% of the variance in purchase decisions (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.527$), indicates the purchase intention to be moderately strong. Among the independent variables, buying preferences in social networking sites was identified to be statistically significant ($p=0.008$) as indicated in Table 3. Individuals with higher purchase preference via social networking sites were seven times more likely to purchase seeing a sales campaign in social media in contrast to those with lower purchase preference. Other factors such as time spent on social networking site, brand influence, following promotions on social networking site are not statistically significant. Although these factors influence digital engagement, they do not independently influence purchase intention.

These findings indicate that engagement in social networking site is prevalent, actual purchasing behavior is influenced by buying inclination than by passive exposure to the sales promotion content. The individuals with online shopping behavior habits are more inclined to respond to promotional incentives. Consequently, social media marketing tactics ought to emphasis personalized targeting and segmentation based on purchase intent rather than only focusing on enhancing visibility or engagement in the platform.

These finding affirm that social networking sites are crucial for brand visibility and have a significant role in influencing contemporary consumer purchasing decisions. A brand seeking to enhance conversion rates must prioritize platform specific strategies, compelling content and constant communication. The results affirm that the effectiveness of social commerce is augmented not alone by visibility or platform design but substantially by synchronizing promotions with audiences that have a predisposition for purchasing through social networking sites.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study is significant for marketers, brands and social commerce platforms; The significance of trust as a factor influencing consumer purchase behavior in social commerce contexts. The study indicate that trust is not solely a transactional element but rather a social catalyst from strategic marketing viewpoint. It encourages consumers to act as advocates by sharing sales promotion content within their person networks. This establishes trust emphasizing a dual role – indicator of purchase and catalyst for social engagement. In platform design and campaign planning, incorporating user generated trust icons into social commerce interfaces could further motivate promotional sharing behavior, thereby intensifying viral campaign and returns on investment. The binary logistics regression results demonstrate that exposure metrics, such as time spent on social networking sites or engagement with promotions, are effective for reach but do not substantially impact purchasing decisions unless accompanied by a strong buying preference. This requisite shift from extensive visibility campaigns to behaviorally focused marketing that targets people with high intent.

The findings indicate that brand should adopt a dynamic view of trust, recognizing it as a construct shaped by experience, responsiveness and social proof. Also, community engagement, prompt resolution of grievances and consistency in messaging are essential. The research emphasizes the significance of using analytics driven strategies - tracking repost rates, click through rates and purchase pathways to enhance campaigns for improved conversion rates. This research promotes a comprehensive, trust oriented and data driven strategy for social commerce that corresponds with changing customer expectation in the digital era.

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Received: 24-May-2025, Manuscript No. AMSJ-25-15954; **Editor assigned:** 25-May-2025, PreQC No. AMSJ-25-15954(PQ); **Reviewed:** 10-Jun-2025, QC No. AMSJ-25-15954; **Revised:** 26-Jun-2025, Manuscript No. AMSJ-25-15954(R); **Published:** 19-Jul-2025