



Exploring the Shift from Traditional E-commerce to Social Commerce: Trends, Drivers and Implications

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Abstract

Background: The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed online retail, resulting in the evolution of traditional e-commerce into social commerce. By integrating social media platforms with online shopping functionalities, social commerce has significantly changed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products while influencing business strategies and customer engagement.

Methods: This study employs a qualitative research approach based on a comprehensive literature review and analysis of relevant case studies to examine the transition from e-commerce to social commerce. It investigates the technological, social, and behavioural factors driving this transformation.

Results: The findings indicate that technological innovation, social influence, trust-building mechanisms, and evolving consumer behaviour are the primary drivers of social commerce adoption. The study further reveals that social commerce enhances customer engagement, reshapes marketing strategies, supports new business models, and influences consumer decision-making throughout the purchasing process.

Conclusion: Social commerce represents a significant evolution of digital retail by combining commercial activities with interactive social experiences. While it offers substantial opportunities for businesses and consumers, organisations must address challenges related to trust, privacy, and platform management to sustain long-term growth.

Novelty: This study provides a comprehensive overview of the transition from traditional e-commerce to social commerce by integrating technological, behavioural, and strategic



perspectives, offering insights into the key drivers, emerging trends, and future implications of this evolving digital commerce model.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Data Privacy, Digital Technology, Marketing, Social Media

1. Introduction

Digital retail is moving from standalone transaction environments toward platform ecosystems in which commerce, content and social interaction are intertwined. Recent scholarship treats this development as a substantive change in value creation and consumer participation rather than a simple extension of online retail ([Zhao et al., 2023](#); [Leong et al., 2024](#)).

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has reshaped how consumers discover, evaluate and purchase products online. Traditional e-commerce developed around retailer websites, digital marketplaces and search-led journeys, whereas social commerce integrates social interaction, content and transactions within the same platform environment ([Zhao et al., 2023](#); [Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#)).

In social commerce, consumers may encounter products through creator content, user-generated content, recommendations and livestreams before developing a purchase intention. This changes the customer journey from a predominantly search-led process into a nonlinear experience in which discovery, evaluation, interaction and purchase can occur together ([Jia, 2024](#); [Singh & Pandey, 2024](#); [Hu & Zhu, 2022](#)).

Problem Statement

Although the broad acceptance of social commerce as an innovative force in digital retail is well-established, several conceptual and practical challenges remain. This study notes that social commerce is often treated as a natural evolution or extension of traditional e-commerce, yet constitutes a distinct paradigm with different value logics, engagement mechanisms and risk profiles ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#); [Busalim et al., 2024](#)). Instead of redefining the entire customer journey around social engagement, content and influence, many firms continue to frame it narrowly as 'selling via social media' ([Dwivedi et al., 2023](#)).

This leads to multiple problems:

1. **Strategic ambiguity:** Businesses find it challenging to decide whether social commerce should be a key strategic pillar or an additional channel, which results in disconnected activities and inconsistent consumer experiences ([Shirazi et al., 2022](#)).
2. **Inadequate capability development:** Social commerce environments demand skills in content production, community management, influencer relations and real-time interactions; traditional e-commerce competencies such as SEO and catalogue management are insufficient on their own ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#)).
3. **Measurement challenges:** The outcomes of social commerce campaigns including engagement, social proof and network effects are more difficult to measure and attribute than traditional metrics such as page views ([Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#)).



4. **Consumer risk:** Consumers gain richer, more social shopping experiences but face concerns over impulse buying, data privacy, platform dependency and exposure to misleading or fraudulent content ([Jia, 2024](#)).

Comprehensive evaluations that systematically compare traditional e-commerce with social commerce, examine cross-platform tactics, and evaluate the implications for various stakeholders remain rare ([Busalim et al., 2024](#)). The main issue this paper attempts to address is therefore a lack of understanding of how and why traditional e-commerce provides a pathway to social commerce, as well as the strategic, behavioral and operational implications of this shift.

Aim and Research Objective

Overall Aim

The overall aim is to critically analyse the transition from traditional e-commerce to social commerce using secondary data, synthesizing insights from current literature and platform case studies and evaluating key trends, drivers and implications for consumers and businesses.

Specific Objectives

To operationalize this aim, the paper pursues the following objectives:

1. To clarify the conceptual distinctions and continuities between traditional e-commerce and social commerce, in terms of platforms, customer journeys, and value creation mechanisms ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#)).
2. To identify and synthesize emerging trends in social commerce, including integration of shopping and social media, influencer marketing, UGC, live commerce and AI-driven personalization ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#); [Sharma & Garg, 2023](#)).
3. To explore the main drivers of social commerce adoption, focusing on social influence, trust mechanisms, technological advancements, changing consumer behavior, convenience and economic incentives ([Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#); [Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al., 2022](#)).
4. To analyse platform-specific models through case studies of TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, highlighting their distinct strengths, consumer behavior patterns and strategic approaches ([Barta et al., 2023](#)).
5. To discuss the implications and challenges of social commerce for businesses, consumers and the broader digital ecosystem ([Jia, 2024](#); [Hu & Zhu, 2022](#)).
6. To formulate practical recommendations for businesses and policymakers seeking to navigate and leverage the shift towards social commerce responsibly and effectively ([Dwivedi et al., 2023](#)).

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to provide an integrated, critical account of the social commerce phenomenon, grounded in secondary evidence and aligned with current platforms and practices.



2. Literature Review

Conceptualising Traditional E-Commerce

Traditional e-commerce organizes product discovery, evaluation and purchase around retailer-controlled websites or marketplaces. Its principal mechanisms include searchable catalogues, product pages, shopping carts, payment gateways and transaction-oriented interfaces ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#); [Zhao et al., 2023](#)).

Although this model offers convenience, reach and transaction efficiency, it places less emphasis on peer interaction, creator influence and community participation. The growth of participatory platforms therefore exposes a structural difference between transaction-centred e-commerce and engagement-centred social commerce ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#); [Hu & Zhu, 2022](#)).

Defining Social Commerce

Social commerce refers to the use of social media platforms to enable online purchasing and selling, leveraging peer influence, user-generated content (UGC) and social interactions to enhance the shopping experience ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#)). Recent scholarship conceptualises it as an evolution of e-commerce in which social media, user participation and commercial transactions are integrated within a common digital environment ([Leong et al., 2024](#)). Social commerce incorporates purchasing directly into social contexts, including news feeds, posts, reels, live streaming and group discussions, rather than operating as a distinct online store ([Leong et al., 2024](#)).

The key features of social commerce include in-app purchasing and checkout; product tagging within posts, stories and videos; social recommendations via likes, comments, shares and reviews; influencer and creator collaborations; and live-stream shopping events ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#); [Busalim et al., 2024](#)). In social commerce, the consumer journey is frequently nonlinear, as social consumption and engagement are interwoven with discovery, evaluation and transaction ([Jia, 2024](#)). Content, rather than search, becomes the primary entry point into the shopping process ([Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#)).

Trends in Social Commerce

The literature identifies several major trends characterizing the rise of social commerce ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#); [Busalim et al., 2024](#)):

- Shopping and social media integration: Platforms increasingly combine social interaction, content and commercial features within the same digital environment. Online interaction can enhance shopping value and encourage continued platform use ([Qu et al., 2023](#)).
- The rise of influencer marketing: Influencers ranging from celebrities to micro-creators are central to product discovery and persuasion, frequently perceived as more relatable and authentic than traditional advertising ([Barta et al., 2023](#); [Koay & Lim, 2024](#)).
- User-generated content (UGC): Reviews, unboxing videos, tutorials and 'haul' content exert a significant influence on purchase intentions, as consumers trust peer material

more than brand communications ([Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al., 2022](#); [Hung et al., 2023](#)).

- Live commerce and short-form video: These formats combine demonstration, entertainment, interaction and urgency. Livestream environments can reduce uncertainty through real-time questions and social validation while also encouraging impulsive purchase behaviour ([Lo et al., 2022](#); [Barta et al., 2023](#)).
- Personalisation with AI and data analytics: Recommendation algorithms increase relevance and conversion potential by customising content and product suggestions to user preferences and behaviours ([Sharma & Garg, 2023](#); [Mariani et al., 2023](#)).

Together, these trends redefine shopping as a communal, engaging and continuous activity, bringing commerce closer to where customers spend their time online ([Busalim et al., 2024](#)).

Drivers of Social Commerce Adoption

Social commerce adoption is driven by a mix of psychological, technological and economic factors ([Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#); [Dwivedi et al., 2023](#)):

Social Influence and Trust: Social commerce heavily relies on social interaction and social proof. Trust indicators that reduce perceived risk and uncertainty include peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and visible engagement metrics such as likes, comments and shares ([Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al., 2022](#); [Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#)). Trust is consistently identified as a key antecedent of purchase intention in social commerce settings ([Hu & Zhu, 2022](#); [Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al., 2022](#)).

Technological Advancements: Developments in AI, augmented reality (AR) and mobile application development have made it technically possible to embed complex purchasing experiences into social platforms ([Sharma & Garg, 2023](#)). Virtual try-ons, personalized feeds and seamless in-app payment processes improve convenience and perceived utility, promoting adoption ([Mariani et al., 2023](#)).

Changing Consumer Behavior: Consumers, especially younger demographics, seek interactive, engaging and visually rich experiences rather than passive browsing ([Jia, 2024](#)). They favor mobile usage, snackable content and participatory culture liking, commenting, sharing and content creation all of which align naturally with social commerce formats ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#)).

Convenience and Seamless Experience: Social commerce compresses the traditional awareness-consideration-purchase funnel into a more fluid, often single-session sequence ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#)). Discovering, evaluating and buying without switching apps reduces friction and boosts conversion rates ([Busalim et al., 2024](#); [Herzallah et al., 2025](#)).

Economic Incentives: Discounts, exclusive platform-only deals, flash promotions and influence-linked offers provide financial incentives for social media shopping ([Koay & Lim, 2024](#)). Lower entry barriers and access to large, pre-existing audiences offer businesses attractive cost-benefit dynamics compared to building standalone e-commerce platforms ([Shirazi et al., 2022](#)).



3. Methods

Research design

The study uses a qualitative narrative literature review combined with comparative case analysis. A narrative approach was selected because the research questions require integration of technological, behavioural and strategic evidence rather than estimation of a single pooled effect. The review procedure follows the principles of transparent literature synthesis described by [Kraus et al., 2022](#).

Data extraction and coding

Each article was reviewed for publication year, research design, theoretical perspective, social-commerce mechanism, platform context, consumer outcome, business implication and reported limitation. Evidence was coded deductively against the six research objectives and then compared inductively to identify recurrent themes, contradictions and platform-specific patterns. The principal codes were transaction-to-engagement transition, social proof and trust, user-generated content, influencer credibility, livestream interaction, algorithmic personalisation, convenience, platform dependency, privacy and impulse buying.

Comparative case procedure

TikTok, Instagram and Facebook were treated as comparative platform cases. The comparison used a common analytic frame covering the core commercial model, dominant content format, purchase trigger, trust mechanism, consumer behaviour pattern and strategic implication. Claims were accepted as cross-platform findings only when they were supported by more than one article or when the analysis explicitly identified them as platform-specific.

Trustworthiness and limitations

Trustworthiness was strengthened through DOI verification, removal of uncited and non-eligible sources, objective-to-result mapping and triangulation across empirical, meta-analytic and review studies. The method remains limited by its reliance on English-language secondary research, rapidly changing platform features and the absence of primary consumer or firm-level data. The findings should therefore be interpreted as a structured qualitative synthesis rather than causal estimates.

Ethical considerations

The study analyses published secondary sources and does not involve human participants, personal data collection or intervention. Formal research ethics approval was therefore not required.

4. Comparative Case Analysis

The case analysis compares TikTok, Instagram and Facebook because they represent distinct social-commerce logics: entertainment-led discovery, visual influencer-led aspiration and community-based exchange. The cases are interpreted through evidence on engagement, platform stickiness and purchase behaviour ([Barta et al., 2023](#); [Qu et al., 2023](#); [Jia, 2024](#)).



TikTok Shop: entertainment-led discovery

TikTok combines short-form video, creator participation, livestreaming and algorithmic recommendation. Products are encountered within entertainment content, so purchase intention can emerge during platform use rather than before it. Humour, creator credibility and hedonic experience can strengthen engagement, while livestream demonstrations can accelerate impulsive decisions ([Barta et al., 2023](#); [Lo et al., 2022](#)).

Instagram Shopping: visual and influencer-led aspiration

Instagram integrates product tags, reels, stories and influencer partnerships into a highly visual environment. Product–influencer congruence and wishful identification can strengthen purchase intention, while the platform's curated presentation supports inspiration-led and aspirational shopping ([Koay & Lim, 2024](#); [Jia, 2024](#)).

Facebook Commerce: community and relationship-based exchange

Facebook combines marketplace listings, business pages, groups and messaging. Its social-commerce model depends more heavily on existing networks, community interaction and functional product needs than on entertainment-led discovery. Online interaction and perceived shopping value support continued engagement within this model ([Busalim et al., 2024](#); [Qu et al., 2023](#)).

Comparative platform context

Table 1: *Comparison of Major Social Commerce Platforms*

Feature	TikTok	Instagram	Facebook
Core model	Entertainment-led discovery	Visual and influencer-led	Community and relationship-led
Purchase trigger	Impulse and curiosity	Aspiration and identification	Functional need and social connection
Principal strength	Virality and engagement	Brand storytelling	Networks and local trust
Dominant content	Short video and livestreams	Reels, stories and images	Posts, groups and listings
Consumer pattern	Discovery-based	Inspiration-based	Need-based

Source: Synthesised from [Barta et al. \(2023\)](#); [Qu et al. \(2023\)](#); [Jia \(2024\)](#); and [Koay and Lim \(2024\)](#).

As shown in [Table 1](#), the platforms share integrated purchasing functions but differ in the content, trust and behavioural mechanisms that initiate purchase. These differences justify platform-specific strategies rather than a single social-selling model.

5. Results

Objective 1: Conceptual transition from e-commerce to social commerce

Table 2: *Transaction-Centred and Socially Embedded Commerce*

Dimension	Traditional e-commerce	Social commerce	Synthesised result
Discovery	Search, direct visit or marketplace	Feeds, creators, peers and livestreams	Purchase intent may emerge during platform use
Interaction	Retailer-to-consumer	Peer, creator, community and brand	Engagement becomes both input and outcome
Journey	Relatively linear	Nonlinear and embedded	Content, evaluation and purchase converge
Trust	Brand, security and transaction controls	Social proof, UGC and visible interaction	Trust shifts toward network signals

[Table 2](#) demonstrates that social commerce is not merely an additional sales channel; it reconfigures how purchase intention, trust and value are produced ([Wang, Wang, & Zhang, 2022](#); [Leong et al., 2024](#)).

Objective 2: Emerging social-commerce trends

Table 3: *Principal Trends Identified in the Literature*

Trend	Evidence pattern	Commercial implication
Embedded shopping	Product discovery and checkout occur within social content	Reduced journey friction
Influencer marketing	Creator credibility and identification affect evaluation	Persuasion becomes relational
User-generated content	Reviews, tutorials and unboxing content provide social evidence	Peer material shapes trust
Livestream and short video	Real-time demonstration, scarcity and interaction	Higher engagement and impulse potential
AI personalisation	Algorithms match content and products to behavioural signals	Greater relevance with privacy risk

The trends in [Table 3](#) show that content, creators and algorithmic personalisation increasingly operate as retail infrastructure rather than optional promotional additions ([Singh & Pandey, 2024](#); [Sharma & Garg, 2023](#); [Mariani et al., 2023](#)).

Objective 3: Drivers of social-commerce adoption

Table 4: *Drivers and Mechanisms of Adoption*

Driver	Mechanism	Observed effect
Social influence and trust	Recommendations, reviews, influencer credibility and visible engagement	Lower uncertainty and stronger purchase intention
Technological capability	Mobile interfaces, AI, livestreaming and integrated payment	Greater usefulness and immediacy
Changing consumer behaviour	Preference for participatory and visual experiences	Higher engagement with social shopping
Convenience	Discovery, evaluation and checkout within one environment	Reduced switching and transaction friction
Economic incentives	Discounts, exclusive offers and lower audience-acquisition barriers	Trial and adoption by consumers and firms

[Table 4](#) indicates that trust and convenience are mutually reinforcing: technology reduces procedural friction, while social evidence reduces psychological uncertainty ([Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al., 2022](#); [Wang & Shahzad, 2024](#); [Herzallah et al., 2025](#)).

Objective 4: Platform-specific models

Table 5: *Platform Models and Consumer Behaviour Patterns*

Platform	Dominant model	Consumer pattern	Strategic implication
TikTok	Entertainment and algorithmic discovery	Spontaneous, participatory and impulse-prone	Prioritise creator-led short video and livestreaming
Instagram	Visual curation and influencer identification	Aspirational and inspiration-led	Align creators, aesthetics and product identity
Facebook	Community, marketplace and messaging	Relationship- and need-led	Use groups, local trust and conversational service

The comparison in [Table 5](#) confirms that similar transaction functions do not produce identical consumer behaviour. Platform affordances and social norms shape how discovery, trust and purchase occur ([Barta et al., 2023](#); [Koay & Lim, 2024](#); [Qu et al., 2023](#)).

Objective 5: Stakeholder implications and risks

Table 6: Opportunities and Risks for Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Opportunity	Principal risk
Businesses	Engagement, creator reach, conversion and community insight	Platform dependency, content costs and attribution difficulty
Consumers	Convenient, interactive and personalised shopping	Impulse buying, deceptive content and privacy loss
Platforms	Transaction revenue and ecosystem growth	Trust erosion, fraud and governance obligations
Policymakers	Innovation and small-business participation	Opaque algorithms, unfair competition and weak consumer protection

[Table 6](#) shows that the mechanisms creating value can also generate harm. Personalisation improves relevance but increases data dependence, while reduced purchase friction improves convenience but can intensify impulsive behaviour ([Jia, 2024](#); [Lo et al., 2022](#); [Shirazi et al., 2022](#)).

Objective 6: Evidence-to-action priorities

Table 7: Evidence Base for Recommended Action

Evidence finding	Required response	Primary stakeholder
Platforms generate different purchase behaviours	Use platform-specific content and service strategies	Businesses
Trust depends on visible social evidence	Verify reviews, disclose sponsorship and strengthen protection	Businesses and platforms
Convenience can increase impulsive decisions	Introduce consumer prompts, controls and literacy support	Platforms, consumers and regulators
Algorithm and policy changes create dependency	Diversify channels and maintain owned commerce infrastructure	Businesses
Personalisation relies on behavioural data	Apply data minimisation, transparency and meaningful consent	Platforms and policymakers

The priorities in [Table 7](#) connect each recommendation to an identified result, ensuring that the proposed actions follow directly from the study objectives rather than from unrelated data.



6. Discussion

Relationship to previous studies

The transaction-to-engagement result extends the systems-oriented account of social commerce proposed by [Wang, Wang, and Zhang \(2022\)](#). The present synthesis shows that the distinction is not limited to technology: content and interaction alter the formation of purchase intention itself. This interpretation is consistent with [Jia \(2024\)](#), who demonstrates that behavioural visibility and social needs jointly shape decisions on social-commerce platforms. The central role of trust supports the meta-analytic evidence reported by [Wang, Shahzad, Ahmad, et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Wang and Shahzad \(2024\)](#). However, the current results add an important qualification: the same visible signals that reduce uncertainty can be strategically manipulated. Trust in social commerce is therefore relational and productive, but also vulnerable to fabricated reviews, undisclosed sponsorship and inflated engagement.

The platform comparison also agrees with research on influencer congruence, online interaction and livestream purchasing ([Koay & Lim, 2024](#); [Qu et al., 2023](#); [Lo et al., 2022](#)). These studies collectively indicate that platform design and content format influence both engagement and purchase, explaining why a uniform cross-platform strategy is unlikely to be effective.

Theoretical implications

First, the findings extend stimulus–organism–response reasoning by showing that social-commerce stimuli are simultaneously technological and social. Interface convenience, recommendation systems, creators, peer reviews and visible engagement affect internal states such as trust, enjoyment, urgency and identification, which then influence purchase and continued engagement. This interpretation complements the engagement and repurchase model examined by [Herzallah et al. \(2025\)](#).

Second, the results support a platform-affordance perspective. Commercial outcomes do not arise from shopping functions alone but from the interaction between those functions, platform algorithms, content conventions and user communities. The theoretical unit of analysis should therefore shift from an isolated buyer–seller transaction to a platform ecosystem in which consumers, creators, firms and algorithms jointly produce visibility, trust and value.

Unexpected findings and explanations

A first unexpected finding is that greater integration of shopping tools does not produce convergence in consumer behaviour. TikTok, Instagram and Facebook offer overlapping transaction functions, yet retain different purchase triggers. This occurs because technical features are interpreted through established platform cultures: entertainment and rapid discovery on TikTok, visual aspiration on Instagram and community relationships on Facebook.

A second unexpected finding is the dual role of social proof. Peer visibility and creator credibility strengthen trust, but the same mechanisms make manipulation more consequential. Electronic word-of-mouth therefore improves decision support only when its quality and authenticity are credible ([Hung et al., 2023](#); [Hu & Zhu, 2022](#)).



A third unexpected finding is that convenience is not an unqualified benefit. Embedded checkout and real-time demonstrations reduce effort and uncertainty, but they also shorten deliberation and amplify scarcity cues. This explains why the same design can improve customer experience while increasing impulsive buying ([Lo et al., 2022](#); [Sharma & Garg, 2023](#)).

Practical implications

Businesses should treat social commerce as an operating capability rather than a stand-alone campaign. Content production, creator governance, customer service, inventory visibility, analytics and consumer protection must be coordinated. Platform-specific execution is necessary, but it should be connected to an owned e-commerce presence to reduce dependency on a single algorithm or policy environment.

For consumers and policymakers, the findings demonstrate the need for clear sponsorship disclosure, reliable review verification, meaningful privacy controls, accessible dispute resolution and digital-literacy support. These safeguards should preserve the convenience and participatory value of social commerce without normalising deceptive persuasion or avoidable consumer harm.

7. Recommendations

The recommendations below follow directly from the evidence-to-action mapping in [Table 7](#).

Recommendations for businesses

- Select platform-specific strategies: use TikTok for creator-led discovery and livestreaming, Instagram for visual storytelling and congruent influencer partnerships, and Facebook for community, local and relationship-based commerce.
- Integrate social commerce with inventory, customer relationship management, analytics, fulfilment and customer service rather than operating it as an isolated promotional channel.
- Strengthen trust through verified reviews, clear sponsorship disclosure, visible returns and warranty information, and rapid dispute handling.
- Measure engagement, conversion, repeat purchase, customer service outcomes and platform dependency together rather than evaluating campaigns through sales alone.
- Diversify across platforms and maintain an owned e-commerce channel to reduce exposure to algorithm, fee and policy changes.

Recommendations for consumers

- Check sponsorship labels, seller history, review quality and return conditions before purchasing through social content.
- Use platform buyer-protection and dispute-resolution mechanisms and avoid payments outside the authorised platform environment.
- Reduce impulsive purchasing by using waiting periods, wish lists and personal spending limits when products are promoted through urgency or scarcity cues.



Recommendations for platforms and policymakers

- Require prominent disclosure of paid partnerships and apply consistent enforcement against misleading endorsements, counterfeit goods and fabricated reviews.
- Provide transparent explanations of recommendation and ranking practices, especially where commercial content is prioritised.
- Apply data minimisation, meaningful consent and accessible privacy controls to behavioural personalisation.
- Maintain clear refund, dispute-resolution and seller-accountability procedures while ensuring that small businesses can participate fairly in platform discovery systems.

8. Conclusion

This review demonstrates that social commerce is not simply traditional e-commerce conducted through social media. It is a distinct platform-mediated system in which content, social interaction, creators, algorithms and transactions jointly shape product discovery, trust and purchase. Across the 20 recent DOI-bearing research articles, the most consistent drivers are social proof, technological convenience, interactive content, personalisation and changing consumer expectations.

The study contributes an integrated explanation of how these mechanisms vary across TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. TikTok is primarily entertainment- and discovery-led, Instagram is visual and aspiration-led, and Facebook is more community- and relationship-led. The comparison shows that platform functions cannot be separated from platform culture when explaining consumer behaviour or designing business strategy.

The practical conclusion is that businesses should adopt platform-specific content strategies while integrating social commerce with core operations and owned channels. Platforms and policymakers should strengthen sponsorship disclosure, review verification, privacy, seller accountability and dispute resolution. Consumers should apply critical evaluation and deliberate-purchase practices. Future research should test these qualitative findings with cross-cultural primary data, longitudinal platform evidence and causal models of trust, engagement and impulsive buying.

Author contribution

Anjali Makane is the sole author and is responsible for the study conceptualisation, methodology, literature synthesis, comparative analysis, interpretation, original drafting and manuscript revision.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.



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