

Social commerce: Characteristic, Influencing factor, Problem and Solution

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ABSTRACT

With the continuous advancement of the internet and the rise of social media, social commerce has emerged as a new paradigm in modern business models. Its inherent social connectivity, user-friendly nature, and convenience have profoundly reshaped contemporary shopping behaviors. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of the current status of social commerce, its influencing factors, and the challenges it faces in development. It also proposes targeted solutions. Through a detailed examination of social commerce, this research identifies developmental issues and formulates practical recommendations. The findings aim to enhance the continuous improvement of social commerce models adopted by enterprises within Chinese existing market framework. They provide reliable solutions to current challenges and ultimately support businesses in achieving their objectives.

KEYWORDS

Social media; Social commerce; Sociality; Usability

1 Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an indispensable part of people's lives. It has not only transformed traditional communication patterns but also profoundly influenced modern business models. By allowing users to upload and share product experiences on social platforms, businesses leverage online communities where mutual trust exists to enhance product persuasiveness, effectively encouraging more purchases. Social commerce, as the integration of social media and e-commerce, has established a more convenient and efficient bridge between businesses and consumers, emerging as a key research focus in the e-commerce field ^[1]. However, with its rapid development, issues like fabricated user experiences and subpar after-sales service quality have gradually surfaced.

This study systematically analyzes the characteristics of social commerce—namely, usability, social engagement, and user-friendliness—while identifying key drivers of its development, with consumer trust being the primary factor. It addresses existing challenges in cybersecurity, user privacy protection, product procurement, and after-sales services, proposing practical solutions. The research aims to provide actionable recommendations for advancing social commerce, helping businesses achieve sustainable growth in transactions and establish a viable business model.

2 Characteristic

From a social-technological perspective, the platform demonstrates exceptional usability with multi-channel accessibility ^[2]. Users can seamlessly access the shopping interface anytime, anywhere via smartphones, tablets, or computers when connected to stable signals. Its comprehensive interface infrastructure integrates product display, search, purchasing, payment, review, and social sharing functions, delivering a one-stop user experience that showcases the platform's stability, smooth operation, and intuitive navigation. The social dimension is equally prominent. Through features like likes, comments, and shares, users form online communities where product and brand information spreads rapidly, fostering strong trust networks and information ecosystems. Moreover, the platform aggregates like-minded individuals to cultivate positive cultural dynamics, injecting unprecedented vitality into e-commerce platforms.

The driving force behind users' purchasing decisions lies in the tangible value of social commerce. User-friendly features include intuitive operations, clean interfaces, clear workflows, quick onboarding for new users, instant purchase options (one-click buying or password-free payments), and personalized product recommendations. These elements significantly reduce user barriers, time investment, and decision-making costs.

From a practical standpoint, this approach delivers dual benefits: First, it fulfills diverse shopping needs by offering a wide range of products and services. Second, through social networks, it provides social features like product reviews, shopping discounts, and group-buying deals to reduce costs. These benefits combine efficient information support with tangible rewards, ultimately delivering a superior shopping experience for users.

The key to social commerce surpassing traditional e-commerce lies in its powerful appeal. By integrating

entertainment elements like live interactions and prize draws, shopping becomes engaging. Users aren't just coming for basic purchases—they enjoy additional perks and discounts after buying desired items, or immerse themselves in the lively atmosphere of live streams. Within interest-based communities, they feel connected to others, experiencing strong sense of belonging and identity. This deepens user engagement with social e-commerce platforms, builds trust, enhances loyalty, and ultimately drives purchase decisions.

3 Influencing Factor

Analysis of social commerce characteristics reveals that all perspectives—whether social-technical, utilitarian, or experiential—are fundamentally consumer-centric. E-commerce platforms can only earn consumer trust, foster loyalty, and drive purchases when users recognize the platform's high usability, intuitive interface, and positive emotional engagement^[3]. As highlighted in , establishing orderly social networks, regulating sellers' operations, ensuring product/service commitments, providing comprehensive product knowledge, and offering transactional incentives are critical trust-building factors. Conversely, consumer trust significantly enhances these elements^[4]. Through actions like likes, favorites, shares, and positive reviews, users reinforce platform credibility, which in turn attracts more customers, increases orders, and boosts profits.

Source credibility determines the usefulness of transmitted information, while social interactions facilitate various activities between consumers and shopping platforms. These two elements collectively influence consumers' perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and social support in e-commerce. Source credibility refers to users' perception of an information provider's professionalism, reliability, and honesty, serving as a crucial prerequisite for consumers' sense of usefulness, enjoyment, and social support^[5]. It depends not only on the provider's professional authority but also on their trustworthy and sincere character. For instance, Jing Di, a female fashion brand livestreamer, has built strong credibility through long-term product analysis (such as ingredient explanations and upper garment experiences) and an honest persona that "stands in the user's shoes" (understanding what clothes suit different people and scenarios). Her product recommendations have triggered massive orders. When users perceive high source credibility, they significantly reduce doubts about product information and transaction risks, thereby laying a solid trust foundation for purchasing behavior. Interactions between individuals are key to transforming credibility into action. This relationship transcends simple following and being followed, deepening through continuous interactions like likes, comments, Q&A, and sharing. Returning to the example, by responding to consumer questions during live streams, detailing product features (fabric materials, washing methods, cutting designs, etc.), and even performing dance demonstrations with the products, Jing Di not only showcased the product's visual appeal but also created a lively atmosphere in the livestream, attracting more viewers and encouraging purchases. Finally, the interaction between source credibility and individuals constitutes the two wheels that drive the healthy development of social commerce.

4 Problem and Solution

Social commerce, a fusion of e-commerce and social media, primarily faces cybersecurity challenges stemming from human errors, technical vulnerabilities, and inadequate preparedness^[6]. These issues manifest through data breaches, phishing attacks, malware, and fraudulent apps. The consequences are far-reaching: consumers endure direct financial losses, face heightened risks of identity theft and telecom scams, and may lose trust in online shopping. Businesses suffer brand damage, account suspensions, and diminished fan loyalty, potentially leading to financial ruin or even livelihood loss. Platforms risk user attrition and brand credibility collapse at best, while at worst, they may face regulatory penalties and intense legal and reputational pressures.

To address cybersecurity threats, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) Companies should increase investment in employee training programs. Through comprehensive education and enhanced understanding of new technologies and organizational information systems, businesses can minimize human-related risks while strengthening access controls through the principle of least privilege. (2) Organizations must upgrade technical safeguards by regularly updating systems and software, encrypting sensitive user data, and establishing robust vulnerability detection and remediation mechanisms. (3) Consumers should enhance personal security awareness by exercising caution when scanning QR codes, carefully verifying application permissions, and rigorously verifying information authenticity. (4) Users can further strengthen account security by implementing strong passwords and enabling multi-factor authentication.

The lack of consumer trust remains one of the most critical and fatal challenges facing social commerce. Consumers' distrust in social commerce manifests in multiple concrete aspects: inconsistent product quality (buyer vs. seller reviews), concerns about merchant credibility (exaggerated product claims, sales fraud, evasive after-sales service), transaction security worries (payment vulnerabilities, personal data breaches, unauthorized charges), and privacy concerns. These

issues stem from inherent characteristics of the social commerce model: (1) Severe information asymmetry. In dynamic scenarios like live streaming, product information is unilaterally provided by merchants. While real-time responses to consumer inquiries are possible, product details and historical reviews remain hidden, leaving consumers with insufficient time and channels to verify information authenticity, resulting in absolute informational disadvantage. (2) Blurred social relationships and commercial objectives. Consumers often consult user reviews before purchasing, where some merchants manipulate high ratings from fake buyers to mislead consumers for increased sales and profits. (3) Fragmented and irregular transaction scenarios. Social commerce enables diverse transaction methods like live streams, WeChat groups, and Moments. While enhancing convenience, the absence of unified transaction records and standardized after-sales procedures creates unclear rights protection channels, leaving consumer rights unprotected. (4) Challenges in regulatory accountability. Social commerce involves many subjects (streamers, brands, platforms, etc.), and the definition of responsibilities is vague, which leads to difficulties in supervision and accountability, and the cost of illegal activities is relatively low.

Addressing trust issues requires collaborative efforts from platforms, merchants, regulators, and consumers. (1) Platforms must rigorously verify merchant qualifications and implement real-name authentication for both sellers and streamers. They should officially certify premium brands and establish transparent rating systems. Platforms should phase out comprehensive safeguards like "Authenticity Guarantee" and "7-Day No-Questions-Asked Returns" to reduce consumer decision barriers. Maintain transaction guarantees and prohibit private transfers. Clearly display merchants' business licenses, production details, and expiration dates. (2) Merchants must prioritize integrity by honestly showcasing products without exaggeration. Establish professional customer service teams with clear after-sales policies, actively addressing user inquiries. Proactively disclose transparent processes for production, warehousing, and transportation. (3) Regulatory authorities should clarify accountability and enforce strict penalties. Regulate marketing practices by cracking down on false advertising and other fraudulent activities, while increasing legal consequences. Improve complaint handling mechanisms and ensure efficient resolution. (4) Consumers should exercise rational purchasing decisions, avoid blind conformity, choose reputable merchants with comprehensive after-sales services, retain purchase evidence, and seek legal remedies when necessary.

5 Conclusion

This study systematically analyzes the characteristics of social commerce, identifying key attributes including usability, social engagement, user-friendliness, practicality, and enjoyment from multiple perspectives. From a socio-technical standpoint, usability and social connectivity form the technological foundation and developmental prerequisites for social commerce. The most decisive factors driving consumer purchasing decisions are user-friendly interfaces and practical functionality rooted in utilitarian considerations, while enjoyment serves as a crucial element for customer retention and sustaining transactional interactions. These insights reveal three primary drivers of consumer purchasing behavior: trust, credibility of information sources, and interpersonal relationships. Consumer trust is cultivated through four interconnected dimensions: foundational trust in social networks, seller credibility, seller competence, and buyer assistance. This trust mechanism creates a virtuous cycle where positive experiences reinforce trust across the ecosystem. Similarly, credibility of information sources and interpersonal connections further solidify trust. Ultimately, consumer trust remains the most critical influencing factor. Current challenges in social commerce primarily involve stakeholders across transaction processes: platforms, merchants, consumers, regulatory frameworks, and cybersecurity measures—all contributing to the core issues of trust deficit. To address these challenges, the study proposes targeted development recommendations to enhance social commerce ecosystems.

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