

## Social Commerce: The good, the bad and the ugly

**Gabrielle Peko**

University of Auckland  
[g.peko@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:g.peko@auckland.ac.nz)

**Valeria Sadovykh**

University of Auckland  
[ahlerka@hotmail.com](mailto:ahlerka@hotmail.com)

**David Sundaram**

University of Auckland  
[d.sundaram@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:d.sundaram@auckland.ac.nz)

**Ghazwan Hassna**

Hawai'i Pacific University  
[ghassna@hpu.edu](mailto:ghassna@hpu.edu)

The use of online social networks (OSN) is rapidly changing our e-commerce society from transaction-based to relationship-based. Global lockdowns, caused by COVID-19, has accelerated our dependence on digital shopping and online social networks to support this shopping. Global social commerce sales is expected to reach \$1.2 trillion by 2025. OSN are increasingly being used to obtain information, opinions, recommendations, and comparisons and to view discussions to make digital shopping decisions. Often consumers are faced with purchase dilemmas and there are many questions in one's mind that could potentially affect the outcome of the purchase decision.

With the ubiquity of recommender and comparison systems in digital social commerce engines and multi-sided platforms like Amazon, Alibaba, eBay, Buy.com, and Facebook, more studies are appearing with regard to online information search fueling the purchasing power of shoppers. Online social media such as blogs, wikis, forums, and social networks are significantly impacting the shopping behaviors in all demographics.

How shopping decisions are taken with the support of OSN and how these networks influence purchase behavior has not been explored sufficiently in research. Although the usage of OSN is growing rapidly, there is a poor understanding of how OSN can provide support and influence purchase decisions in general.

The objective of this mini-track is to obtain insights and develop theoretical and practical understanding on topics and issues related to the influence of OSN on consumption orientated shopping decisions.

The mini-track continues to attract submissions that delve into a diverse array of current and innovative topics in the research area. This year there are two papers of particular interest.

The first paper, titled *Turning Social Capital into Economic Capital: the Sales Effect of Friendship Group Participation in Social Commerce Websites*, acknowledges that friendship groups (FG) have been widely adopted in social commerce platforms because of the powerful and pervasive influence of groups on decision making while the sales effects of seller participation in FG have received limited research

attention. Using a quasi-experimental design with 373,964 products from 8,250 sellers on a leading social commerce platform, it was found that FG participation increase sellers' product sales performance through the formation of relational and cognitive capital. The findings also suggest that seller guarantee, product guarantee and product rating strengthen the sales effect of FG participation whereas the number of seller followers weakens the sales effect of such groups. These findings, apart from the academic contribution, may also provide guidance for sellers and platforms to use FG and group marketing to improve sales performance in social commerce.

The second paper of interest, *How Conversational Agents Influence Purchase Decisions of Online Fashion Shoppers toward Sustainable Consumption: Exploring Nudges for Green Decision-Making*, posits that with nudges, conversational agents (CAs) can be used to recommend environmentally sustainable products to individuals shopping online. Implying that CAs can influence individual purchase behaviors and have the potential to promote green decision-making. How CA nudges might influence the purchase decisions of individuals in the specific context of sustainable fashion consumption is explored with particular interest in customer perceptions of CAs trying to influence those decisions. An explorative survey of fashion shoppers was utilized to determine how they think about CAs nudging their product choices. Based on the data collected and theoretical background, three propositions were derived. The first proposition hypothesizes that ethical CA design is an antecedent for using CAs to guide product choices toward sustainable decision making of online fashion shoppers. The second, theorizes that the effectiveness of CA nudges to guide product choices toward sustainable decision making depends on the moral ideology of fashion shoppers. Finally, the third proposition suggests AI leverages the nudging potential of CAs' recommendations fostering sustainable consumption.