

Social Commerce: The good, the bad and the ugly

Gabrielle Peko

University of Auckland
g.peko@auckland.ac.nz

Valeria Sadovykh

University of Auckland
ahlerka@hotmail.com

David Sundaram

University of Auckland
d.sundaram@auckland.ac.nz

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 papers dealing with diverse and leading-edge topics in the research area. This year in particular there was a record number of submissions including several papers of note.

The first paper, *Consumers Risk Mitigation Strategies in E-Commerce: A Qualitative Study of High-Risk Transactions* tackles the issue of navigating the perceptions of amplified risks associated with e-commerce high-risk transactions, which have become increasingly mandatory for many due to the COVID-19 lockdowns. Insight into affective and cognitive risk mitigation strategies are garnered through interviews with consumers who recently performed a perceived, online high-risk transaction. Interestingly, the importance of user empowering online social networks and the recruiting of social media influencers to shape risk perceptions are revealed. Along with an improved understand of risk dimensions that affirms a hierarchical order and context-dependence on risk dimensions. All of which have compelling implications for business improvements for e-commerce platforms in a post COVID world.

The second paper, *Mobile Commerce - Analysis and Investigation of the Online Safety, Privacy, and Data Forensics of Amazon and Etsy Apps* acknowledges that although the benefits of mobile commerce are multi-fold, these benefits are sullied by privacy and information security concerns for users. User data and shopping activity artifacts from two popular mobile apps are analyzed in order to assess the reliability of the mobile apps default privacy measures. The findings indicate that a lack of encryption for certain user data poses a concern about m-consumer data privacy. Comparatively, privacy-preserving default settings in m-shopping apps not only improve user's security they also promote trust between consumers and companies.

The third contribution, *Detecting Fake Reviews: Just a Matter of Data* contributes to a burgeoning body of research by recommending the use of a spectrum of spam detection feature sets as an approach to detect fake reviews rather than the commonly used review-based features. Using a dataset containing reviews of apps in the iOS Apple App Store, a four step machine learning approach for classification, and different combinations of spam detection features the performance of detecting fake reviews is evaluated. Comparative results show that utilizing different feature sets (review, reviewer and product based) for the classification of fake reviews out performs a textual features only approach. The contribution of this paper is noteworthy because it provides a numerical assessment of the added value of utilizing the feature sets most commonly used in the literature for identifying fake reviews.

The fourth paper *One Goal, One Post, One Hit: COVID-19, Emotions and Buying Behavior in Sports Business. A Social Media Analysis From 2018 to 2021* argues that soccer is often described as a cross-section of society. Building on this contention and

the soccer theme, a sentiment analysis of social media and secondary data from one of the largest soccer clubs in the world is performed. With the purpose of investigating the impact of COVID-19 on the emotionality of soccer fans as well as the impact of inactivity within social media on the revenue streams of soccer clubs. Conclusions drawn from the analysis show that COVID-19 had no apparent impact on soccer fans' emotionality and insignificant impact on purchasing behavior. Leading to the inference of a decreasing impact of social media on sales, which contradicts the literature.

The fifth paper, *An Avatar a Day Keeps the Stress Away: The Implementation of Avatars as Technostress Relievers on Online Shopping* delves into technologically induced stress, also known as technostress, brought on by the challenges online shoppers face when confronted with the impersonality of online stores. The presence of an avatar as a technostress reliever is proposed to mitigate this stress and its flow on effects. The findings indicate that technostress has an impact on shoppers' purchase intentions and the perceived online store quality, which is moderated by the use of an avatar. These findings not only support the notion that technostress affects consumers' behavior in e-commerce but also highlights the implementation of avatars as a socializing component in the e-commerce context.

The final contribution, *Social Group Buying as a Marketing Strategy* draws on this popular marketing strategy for online sellers to acquire new customers. The study investigates whether and how social group buying affects the sales of sellers using a dataset from an e-commerce platform. Seemingly, enrolling a few products into social group buying has a positive spillover effect on the sales of the sellers' other products albeit the effect varies substantially

across different types of sellers. Also, the spillover effect exhibits similar heterogeneity at the brand level, except that it can be negative for large brands and non-diversified brands suggesting that sellers may gain from social group buying at the expense of large or non-diversified brands.