



Exploring Millennial Consumers' Behaviour in Social Commerce¹

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how ratings, forums, communities, reviews, recommendations, and referrals influence consumers who participate in social commerce using Facebook. The target population for this quantitative online study was young adults between the ages of 25-34 who are referred to as Millennials and comprise the largest group of users on Facebook. Convenience sampling, namely snowball sampling was used to target the participants. It was ascertained that social commerce constructs are associated with trust which leads to the consumers purchasing decisions. The implication for social commerce is that the information shared over social commerce constructs in cohesive networks is more likely to influence the consumers' decisions than in less cohesive networks. This, therefore, justifies recommending that businesses should monitor the quality and content of the engagements around their brands on social media since information sharing in social commerce influences the decisions of consumers.

Keywords: Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Social Media, Social Commerce, Social Commerce Constructs

JEL Classifications: M3, M31, M37

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1. INTRODUCTION

As more and more businesses shift their focus to online sales, it is crucial to understand the behaviors of the largest consumer demographic: Millennials. "Born between 1981 and 1996, this generation has grown up with technology at their fingertips and a new set of values that shape the way they approach shopping. In this article, we will explore the key characteristics of millennial consumers, the impact of technology on their shopping habits, their spending patterns and preferences, and how e-commerce businesses can attract and retain these valuable customers," (Ghostretail.com, 2024).

Millennials, also known as the Y Generation and the Net Generation, comprising those born between 1981 and 1996, were raised in a world surrounded by technology. They are referred to as

"digital natives" who are comfortable using technology to connect with others and access information. This has had a significant impact on their shopping behavior, as they are more likely to shop online and use social media to research products before making a purchase (Makudu and Thusi, 2023).

Social media is a powerful tool for influencing millennial shopping habits. According to a study by Shopify (Ghostretail.com, 2024), nearly 75% of millennials use social media to discover new products and brands. This is because social media provides a platform for brands to showcase their products and services, and for consumers to share their experiences and opinions about them. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have become important marketing channels, with influencers playing a significant role in promoting products and driving sales. Within the last decade, social media has grown and progressively infiltrated

the livelihood of consumers and marketers alike and a new category of e-commerce, identified as social commerce, has emerged due to the increased acceptance and use of social media (Al-tit et al., 2020; Chopdar et al., 2022; Mofokeng, 2023). Social commerce influences how businesses identify, engage and connect with their consumers and this affects their purchasing intentions, preferences and decisions (Hajli et al., 2017, Ghosretail.com, 2024). While there are numerous explanations of social commerce, the collective view is that social commerce is “an internet-based commercial application, leveraging Web 2.0 and social media technologies” (Huang, 2016, Sanapang and Ardyan, 2024.), encouraging social interaction and user-generated content, assisting consumers in their decision making and purchasing processes, for procuring products and services on “online” platforms.

Social commerce constructs are tools generated from social commerce such as ratings and reviews, recommendations and referrals and forums and communities (Dashti et al., 2016). Each of these tools has been responsible for altering consumer experiences and perceptions towards purchasing and embraces a unique feature of the multifaceted dimension of social media information sharing, which when integrated provides a more inclusive overview of social commerce (Hajli et al., 2017). Consumers use social commerce constructs to share information, and their experiences and to reveal sentiments regarding products and services thus having a significant impact on social commerce intentions (Sheikh et al., 2019). Consumers are increasingly turning to social commerce constructs to assist them with their purchasing decisions, hence influencing their purchase decisions (Lal, 2017; Al-Adwan and Kokash, 2019, Ramnarain and Govender, 2023). For example, findings from Li and Choudhury, (2021) and Sanapang and Ardyan, (2024). revealed that consumers considered reviews and comments as influential factors impacting their purchase decisions.

Kircova et al. (2018) assert that social media networks compete with each other, and they make an effort to increase their number of users while at the same time trying to create engagement, because a social media brand with high engagement creates high commitment and that leads to satisfying its business partners. This also increases social commerce through that social media brand. The new realities increased the interest in social commerce through social networks and made it valuable to explore both practical and academic environments.

Only a few studies have looked at social media explicitly concerning its ability to generate purchase intention, and even fewer have looked at Millennials, who are the most frequent users of social media (Jacobsen and Barnes, 2017). According to Falke et al. (2022), millennials are gradually transitioning from being educated to employed and therefore represent a significant market. Thus, this study aims to explore how ratings, forums, communities, reviews, recommendations and referrals influence Millennials who participate in social commerce using Facebook.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social commerce varies from e-commerce in various ways including consumer interaction, communication, system

connection, design, value creation, technology platforms and system interaction (Ramnarain and Govender, 2023). Social commerce, for example, is sustained by Web 2.0, a platform that aids social media and permits interactions whereas e-commerce is sustained by Web 1.0, a platform where communication is unilateral. In addition, with regard to the paradigm of marketing, the emphasis of e-commerce is on capitalising on shopping effectiveness by providing product collections, one-click buying, advanced searches and product commendations whereas with social commerce the emphasis is on socialising, collaborating, and networking with auxiliary emphasis on shopping (Ghosretail.com, 2024).

Chen and Shen (2015) assert that social commerce represents a shift in consumers thinking from individual decisions which is a characteristic of e-commerce to collaborative decisions which are present in social commerce, confirming that purchase decisions have become more collective and cooperative in nature in social commerce (Akman and Mishra, 2017). Social commerce constructs are “tools derived from social commerce and include ratings and reviews, recommendations, referrals, forums and communities” (Hettiarachchi, Wickramasinghe & Ranathunga, 2017). Social commerce constructs were defined by Al-Tit et al. (2020), as Web 2.0 platforms utilised in social media, that allow consumers to generate and share their content, including their opinions and experiences. Consumers are increasingly relying upon content generated by other consumers when making purchases. Dashti et al. (2016) stated that consumers highly value and depend upon social commerce constructs to make purchase decisions.

Several researchers have advocated the significance of social commerce constructs in enhancing social commerce intentions (Lal, 2017; Yadav et al., 2013 cited in Sheikh et al., 2019; Manzoor et al., 2020). Additionally, social commerce constructs are considered a key source of social support (At-tit et al., 2020). While social commerce constructs have similar purposes in supporting the distribution of information and establishing social support platforms, they vary in their practical competencies (Hajli et al., 2017).

According to Hajli (2015) cited in Lal (2017), social interactions provided through social commerce increase the level of consumer trust and reduce perceived risks, which increases the likelihood of consumer purchasing. Social commerce constructs enable unrestricted social interactions of consumers and these interactions lead to consumers becoming closer to each other, which increases trust and social support among consumers and results in an increased intention to use social commerce (Hajli, 2015 cited in Lal, 2017; Hajli et al., 2017; Al-tit et al., 2020).

It has been asserted by several researchers that consumer trust is one of the most significant aspects in determining purchase intention in an “online” environment (Hajli et al., 2017; Che et al., 2017; Manzoor et al., 2020). Trust is an imperative factor that affects the acceptance of e-commerce (Hajli, 2015) and social commerce (Basha and Lal, 2019). Consumers regard social commerce platforms as more trustworthy than traditional promotional features (Shukla et al., 2022), since they allow for

direct networking, immediate feedback, and more authentic material provided by consumers through social commerce frameworks (Manzoor et al., 2020). When it comes to buying intentions, trust is a key factor to consider (Basha and Lal, 2019), as trust is linked to a higher likelihood of making a purchase. Trust is increased by social commerce, as social commerce comprises consumers' social interactions, which increases trust (Hajli et al., 2017). Through interactions provided by the social commerce constructs, consumers are enabled to produce and share content, offer advice and utilise other consumers' information which is providing "online" social support. Hence, social commerce constructs have a significant impact on social support, which ultimately builds consumers' trust, thereby impacting purchase intentions.

According to Hidayatullah (2018), both informational and emotional support influence consumers' participation in "online" communities. In 2015, Hajli cited in Hidayatullah (2018) advocated that informational and emotional support meaningfully influenced consumers to continue participating in "online" communities, given the supportive environment established through the social interactions, sharing of experiences, knowledge, and information with peers. Emotional support exists in social commerce when consumers see themselves as being cared for or empathised with the information given by others.

According to Che et al. (2017), trust is essential for "online" purchasing since it makes consumers feel more at ease and decreases the dangers connected with purchasing from web-based sellers. According to studies, consumers are more inclined to exchange information, make purchases, and engage with others when they trust an "online" store (Lim et al., 2002 cited in Che et al., 2017). Trust in Facebook influences purchase intention and this is consistent with Hidayatulloh et al. (2018) who assert that consumer intentions to purchase "online" are affected by the trust in a website. Hajli et al. (2017) stated that consumers' trust in a network influences "online" purchases and enhances purchase intentions. Moreover, Wu et al. (2018) proposed that trust in the social milieu leverages electronic word of mouth which influences consumer purchase intentions.

In comparison to any other "online" media, retail sales generated from social media such as Facebook are the fastest growing. Facebook is deemed the most influential social network when it comes to buying habits since 35% of consumers stated that Facebook is a significant factor in deciding which retailers to patronise (Boyle, 2019). Facebook is the most dominant and influential social media platform, heightening the importance of understanding Facebook and its applications and related consumer activities. Despite the increasing usage of social commerce, insufficient academic research exists which examines how South African marketers could utilise social commerce to influence consumers and harness the power of their social networks to positively influence their purchase intentions. While some studies have examined the key reasons for consumers embracing and accepting social commerce, the collected works lack a comprehensive grasp of the factors that influence consumers' willingness to participate in social commerce, implying that new

studies are needed on this subject (Lal, 2017; Al-tit et al., 2020). In light of the above, this study will analyse the impact of social commerce on the purchase intentions of Millennials who are using Facebook for shopping purposes. Researchers in the field of social commerce have for years tried to understand the factors that drive the purchase intentions of "online" consumers. Thus, understanding these factors has positive implications for practice.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was used, and data was collected via an "online" survey, guided by its advantages as postulated by Hair et al. (2003). The target population was young adults between the ages of 25-34 years residing in KwaZulu-Natal, who are referred to as Millennials and comprise the largest group of users on Facebook (Jacobsen and Barnes, 2017). Since a greater percentage of Millennials in KwaZulu-Natal will have disposable income compared to those in other provinces (Stone, 2018), KwaZulu-Natal was selected as the location of the study as income impacts purchase intentions (Imelia and Ruswanti, 2017).

Non-probability sampling, particularly snowball sampling, where the sample increases as the study proceeds was adopted in this study. The initial participant was selected based on convenience, and this participant was requested to recommend individuals within similar demographics and "online" purchasing behaviour. Hence, through social networks, the researcher was able to reach participants who would otherwise be challenging to recognise. In addition to its effectiveness, snowball sampling is also efficient, as it assists the researcher in finding the right persons with a minimum amount of time, money, and effort (Saunders et al., 2016).

An "online" calculator (Raosoft, 2004) was utilised to ascertain the study's sample size based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendations. The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire. An "online" survey was selected as a data collection mechanism since it requires less time and effort to manage; it is cost-effective and has minimal risk for bias. The data was analysed primarily by using descriptive statistical techniques.

The questionnaire consisted of 57 questions, separated into six sections. The first two questions which formed section one were screening questions that asked respondents if they had an active Facebook account and what age group they belonged to. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of three questions about a respondent's social media usage patterns. Sections three, four, five and six were designed on a five-point Likert scale, with pre-coded responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The questions attempted to understand why a respondent made purchases using information obtained from social commerce constructs.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Although 386 respondents were targeted, 309 responses met the conditions for inclusion in the data analysis. This translated to an 80% response rate, which is generally satisfactory for web-administered questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2016). From

Figure 1, it is evident that respondents in the 29-32 year category were in the majority (39.5%), followed by those who were between the ages of 24 and 28 (30.4%) and 33 and 35 (30.1%).

Figure 2 reveals that a significant number of respondents had been on Facebook for between 3 and 9 h in the month before participating in the survey, accounting for 37.5% of the sample ($P < 0.001$). There was an equal representation of respondents who spent <3 h on Facebook (23.3%) and those who spent between 9 and 14 h (24.9%) ($P < 0.001$). A smaller proportion of the sample spent more than 14 h of their time on Facebook in the previous month (14.2%) ($P < 0.001$).

Table 1 reveals that more than half of the respondents indicated that they agreed (55.7%) or strongly agreed with the statement referred to as item 6.3 "I use ratings and reviews for acquiring product information over Facebook." The mean score for items on the social commerce construct of ratings and reviews ranged from 3.54 to 3.84, signifying a general agreement with the items on the social commerce construct of ratings and reviews. The highest mean was reported for item 6.4, "I browse through ratings and reviews before making any purchase decisions over Facebook." The lowest mean was reported for item 6.6 "I contribute to ratings and reviews" (mean = 3.54, $SD = 1.070$, $P < 0.001$). The results suggest that there is a significant agreement to all the items under the ratings and reviews construct.

For the referrals and recommendations construct, the highest mean was reported for item 7.1 "Using referrals and recommendations

has been a good experience for me" (mean = 3.84, $SD = 0.718$, $P < 0.001$) and item 7.2 "I recommend using referrals and recommendations on Facebook" (mean = 3.84, $SD = 0.749$, $P < 0.001$). The range of the mean scores for items on referrals and recommendations was between 3.58 and 3.83. This suggests that there was a significant agreement with each of the items on referrals and recommendations, indicating that the respondents interact with and use the information from referrals and recommendations on Facebook.

From the findings reported in Table 1, it may also be surmised that there was a significant agreement with each of the items on forums and communities, indicating that the respondents at least use information obtained from forums communities on Facebook during their purchasing journey.

Table 2 reflects that the mean score for items on structural capital ranged from 3.43 to 3.7, signifying a general agreement with the items on the social commerce construct of ratings and reviews. The highest mean was reported for item 9.1 "I have an ongoing relationship with individuals on Facebook" (mean = 3.7, $SD = 0.965$, $P < 0.001$). The lowest mean was reported for item 9.4 "I feel a strong connection with individuals on Facebook" (mean = 3.43, $SD = 1.047$, $P < 0.001$).

The T-test was applied to each social capital dimension to determine if there was a significant agreement or disagreement with each of the statements. As shown in Figure 3, the mean item scores are all >3 , suggesting a significant agreement to each of the statements across all three social capital constructs at 95% confidence.

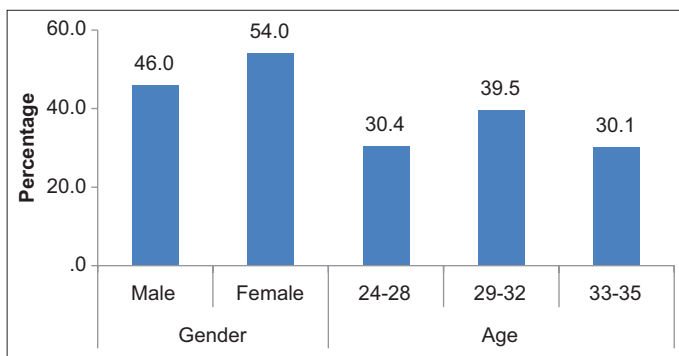
Table 3, which reflects the descriptive statistics for items pertaining to trust reveals the frequencies of the responses to each of the items, the means, standard deviations, and the t statistic for all the items.

Table 4 reveals that the mean scores for items on trust were between 3.35 and 3.67. The lowest mean was recorded for item 13.5 "If I need a product, I would like to purchase it from Facebook" (mean = 3.35, $SD = 1.168$, $P < 0.001$), and the highest mean was recorded for item 13.1 "I have a positive attitude with regards to purchasing products on Facebook" (mean = 3.76, $SD = 1.009$, $P < 0.001$). The results indicate that there is a significant agreement between each of the statements relating to purchase intentions.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

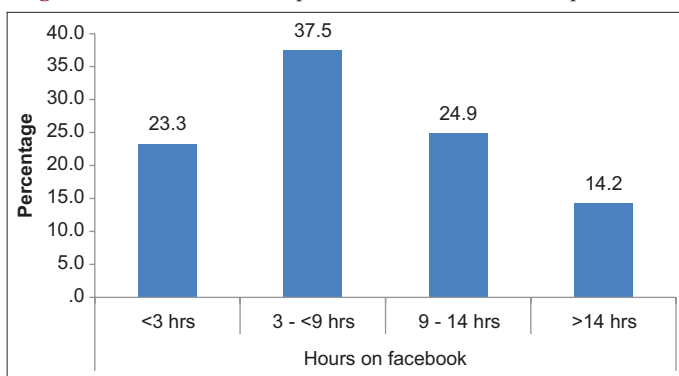
The influence of reviews on purchase intentions is explained in terms of the value of user-generated content to communicate effective information about products and services for the benefit of other potential consumers. On the other hand, ratings immediately communicate the perceived value of the standard of a product or service (Hettiarachchi, Wickramasinghe & Ranathunga, 2017). The influence of ratings and reviews has been recognised by some brands which are open to requesting consumers to share their reviews about their products and services on social media, to leverage the role of existing

Figure 1: Gender and ages of the respondents



Source: Primary data

Figure 2: Number of hours spent on facebook within the past month



Source: Primary data

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for social commerce constructs

Social commerce constructs	Responses as frequency (%)					Mean (SD)	T	Df	P-value
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree				
Using ratings and reviews has been a good experience for me.	4 (1.3)	5 (1.6)	75 (24.3)	190 (61.5)	35 (11.3)	3.80 (0.7)	19.9	308	<0.001*
I recommend using ratings and reviews on Facebook.	3 (1.0)	8 (2.6)	80 (25.9)	174 (56.3)	44 (14.2)	3.80 (0.7)	18.9	308	<0.001*
I use ratings and reviews to acquire product information over Facebook.	6 (1.9)	12 (3.9)	74 (23.9)	172 (55.7)	45 (14.6)	3.77 (0.8)	16.6	308	<0.001*
I browse through ratings and reviews before making any purchase decisions on Facebook.	5 (1.6)	13 (4.2)	67 (21.7)	166 (53.7)	58 (18.8)	3.84 (0.8)	17.6	308	<0.001*
I use ratings and reviews to make purchases on Facebook.	14 (4.5)	12 (3.9)	77 (24.9)	161 (52.1)	45 (14.6)	3.68 (0.9)	12.9	308	<0.001*
I contribute to ratings and reviews.	28 (9.1)	14 (4.5)	69 (22.3)	158 (51.1)	40 (12.9)	3.54 (1.0)	8.9	308	<0.001*
Using referrals and recommendations has been a good experience for me.	4 (1.3)	6 (1.9)	69 (22.3)	191 (61.8)	39 (12.6)	3.83 (0.7)	20.2	308	<0.001*
I recommend using referrals and recommendations on Facebook.	3 (1.0)	10 (3.2)	68 (22.0)	182 (58.9)	46 (14.9)	3.83 (0.7)	19.6	308	<0.001*
I use referrals and recommendations for acquiring product information over Facebook.	7 (2.3)	14 (4.5)	69 (22.3)	177 (57.3)	42 (13.6)	3.75 (0.8)	16.0	308	<0.001*
I browse through referrals and purchase decisions over Facebook.	11 (3.6)	16 (5.2)	64 (20.7)	163 (52.8)	55 (17.8)	3.76 (0.9)	14.4	308	<0.001*
I use referrals and recommendations to make purchases over Facebook.	15 (4.9)	13 (4.2)	76 (24.6)	154 (49.8)	51 (16.5)	3.69 (0.9)	12.6	308	<0.001*
I contribute to referrals and recommendations.	21 (6.8)	22 (7.1)	60 (19.4)	169 (54.7)	37 (12.0)	3.58 (1.0)	10.0	308	<0.001*
Using forums and communities has been a good experience for me.	3 (1.0)	7 (2.3)	65 (21.0)	176 (57.0)	58 (18.8)	3.90 (0.7)	21.0	308	<0.001*
I recommend using forums and communities on Facebook.	2 (0.6)	11 (3.6)	67 (21.7)	170 (55.0)	59 (19.1)	3.88 (0.7)	20.1	308	<0.001*
I use forums and communities to acquire product information over Facebook.	5 (1.6)	11 (3.6)	74 (23.9)	166 (53.7)	53 (17.2)	3.81 (0.8)	17.4	308	<0.001*
I browse through forums and communities before making any purchase decisions on Facebook.	9 (2.9)	15 (4.9)	67 (21.7)	165 (53.4)	53 (17.2)	3.77 (0.8)	15.1	308	<0.001*
I use forums and communities to make purchases over Facebook.	13 (4.2)	17 (5.5)	72 (23.3)	160 (51.8)	47 (15.2)	3.68 (0.9)	12.7	308	<0.001*
I contribute to forums and communities.	16 (5.2)	18 (5.8)	64 (20.7)	167 (54.0)	44 (14.2)	3.66 (0.9)	12.0	308	<0.001*

(* indicates significance at the 95% level)

Source: Primary data

consumers acting as active communicators and content creators who create, engage and contribute to product and service ratings and reviews (Onete et al., 2017). Increased engagement with ratings and reviews is recognised as being responsible for communicating more social cues to other actors on social networks to support their purchase intentions (Hajli et al., 2017).

Referrals and recommendations extend the role of consumers in accelerating information sharing in social commerce, allowing others to rely more on other consumer's experiences through their referrals and product recommendations (Hajli et al., 2017). Hettiarachci's (2017) assertion that recommendations are personalised product and service endorsements supports the notion that consumers are becoming more socially influenced when making decisions over social commerce.

Forums and communities allow participation in dedicated communities, groups, or forums on a social platform where

consumers can participate in group discussions and share social and commercial-related information (Goel et al., 2013 cited in Hajli et al., 2017). Forums and communities are significant resources for consumers searching for information about specific products, brands and services, and therefore play a significant role in supporting their purchase decisions (Hettiarachchi et al., 2017; Makhitha and Ngobeni, 2021).

Referrals and recommendations on Facebook provide social cues that appear as endorsements, therefore positively impacting trust in the recommended products and services. The trust generated will consequently have a positive influence on consumer purchase intentions in social commerce. The structure provided by forums and communities supports systems of common meanings among members of the "online" communities. The knowledge-sharing that ensues generates trust in the individuals sharing the information and provides informational support that allows consumers to trust their purchase decisions.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for social capital constructs

Social capital constructs	Responses as frequency (%)					Mean (SD)	T	Df	P-value
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree				
I have an ongoing relationship with individuals on Facebook.	12 (3.9)	23 (74)	63 (20.4)	159 (51.5)	52 (16.8)	3.7 (0.9)	12.7	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook and I spend a lot of time interacting.	17 (5.5)	33 (10.7)	95 (30.7)	122 (39.5)	42 (13.6)	3.45 (1.0)	7.6	308	<0.001*
Communicate frequently with individuals on Facebook.	15 (4.9)	33 (10.7)	78 (25.2)	147 (47.6)	36 (11.7)	3.5 (0.9)	8.9	308	<0.001*
I feel a strong connection with individuals on Facebook.	22 (7.1)	31 (10.0)	82 (26.5)	140 (45.3)	34 (11.0)	3.43 (1.0)	7.2	308	<0.001*
I feel a sense of belonging with individuals on Facebook.	25 (8.1)	31 (10.0)	72 (23.3)	149 (48.2)	32 (10.4)	3.46 (1.0)	7.0	308	<0.001*
I accept encouragement from individuals on Facebook in difficult situations.	16 (5.2)	18 (5.8)	73 (23.6)	170 (55.0)	32 (10.4)	3.6 (0.9)	11.1	308	<0.001*
I accept suggestions from individuals on Facebook when I need help.	14 (4.5)	21 (6.8)	77 (24.9)	169 (54.7)	28 (9.1)	3.57 (0.9)	10.9	308	<0.001*
I allow individuals on Facebook to care of me in difficult situations.	25 (8.1)	26 (8.4)	73 (23.6)	159 (51.5)	26 (8.4)	3.44 (1.0)	7.4	308	<0.001*
In difficult situations, individuals on Facebook have expressed their concern over my well-being.	26 (8.4)	21 (6.8)	79 (25.6)	145 (46.9)	38 (12.3)	3.48 (1.0)	7.8	308	<0.001*
I ask individuals on Facebook to provide me with their suggestions before making any purchases.	32 (10.4)	24 (7.8)	51 (16.5)	172 (55.7)	30 (9.7)	3.47 (1.1)	7.4	308	<0.001*
I am willing to give my suggestions when individuals on Facebook want my advice on purchasing a product.	14 (4.5)	15 (4.9)	55 (17.8)	185 (59.9)	40 (12.9)	3.72 (0.9)	13.8	308	<0.001*
I share a common vocabulary with individuals on Facebook.	10 (3.2)	18 (5.8)	57 (18.4)	186 (60.2)	38 (12.3)	3.72 (0.8)	14.6	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook and I use understandable narrative forms to post messages.	10 (3.2)	18 (5.8)	60 (19.4)	182 (58.9)	39 (12.6)	3.72 (0.8)	14.4	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook and I use understandable communication patterns during discussions.	8 (2.6)	16 (5.2)	61 (19.7)	189 (61.2)	34 (11.3)	3.73 (0.8)	15.5	308	<0.001*
I disclose my emotions to individuals on Facebook.	39 (12.6)	34 (11.0)	59 (19.1)	152 (49.2)	25 (8.1)	3.29 (1.1)	4.4	308	<0.001*
I disclose my personal facts to individuals on Facebook.	47 (15.2)	31 (10.0)	69 (22.3)	139 (45.0)	23 (7.4)	3.19 (1.1)	2.8	308	<0.001*
I am willing to share my own shopping experiences with individuals on Facebook.	16 (5.2)	20 (6.5)	56 (18.1)	177 (57.3)	40 (12.9)	3.66 (0.9)	12.1	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook are well acquainted with my personal interests.	40 (12.9)	23 (7.4)	65 (21.0)	158 (51.1)	23 (7.4)	3.33 (1.1)	5.0	308	<0.001*

(* indicates significance at the 95% level)

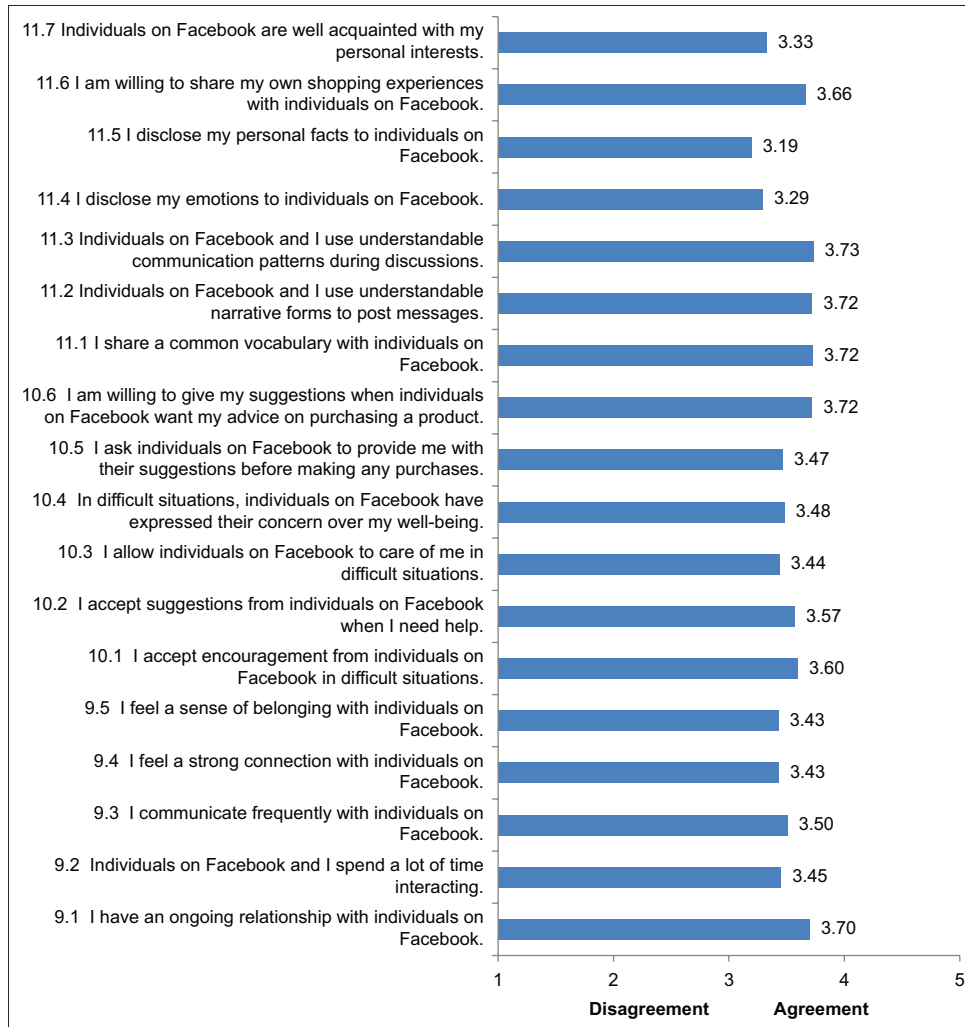
Source: Primary data

Lee's (2017) distinction of the two dimensions of structural capital expands the concept firstly to, referent ties which motivate the consumption of products and services used by social referents such as friends and family. It follows then that reviews by referent ties are likely to be held at high value by potential customers due to the intimate social relationships they possess. Secondly, majority ties motivate decisions that are supported by the pursuit of a sense of belonging to the mainstream, which can be achieved by consuming products and services that are enjoyed by the majority and getting involved in engagements and discussions taking place in the mainstream (Lee, 2017). Products and services with high ratings and generally positive reviews indicate endorsement by the mainstream consumer groups and are likely to be perceived as having high standards, thereby positively influencing consumer behaviour. Other studies have also shown that such referent

ties play a significant role in influencing behavioural intentions (Verkantesh and Bala, 2008 cited in Andiani and Alversia, 2017), whereas several researchers (Sheikh et al., 2019; Ghahtarani et al., 2020) confirm the role of majority ties on information sharing and engagement.

Relational capital incentivises consumers' behavioural intentions in relation to information sharing, due to the potential benefits that can be drawn from the expectations of a personal relationship that has developed through interactions with others (Andiani and Alversia, 2017). Social motives emanating from aspects such as trust, friendship, respect, warmth, honesty, and support are known to affect consumer behaviour which can be developed through social commerce constructs (Andiani and Alversia, 2017; Sheikh et al., 2017). Ghahtarani et al. (2020) consider these social motives

Figure 3: Social capital constructs



Source: Primary data

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for items pertaining to trust

Trust	Responses as frequency (%)					Mean (SD)	T	Df	P-value
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree				
Facebook is reliable.	9 (2.9)	24 (7.8)	77 (24.9)	121 (39.2)	77 (25.3)	3.76 (1.0)	13.1	308	<0.001*
I am prepared to give my credit card details to "online" stores on Facebook.	61 (19.7)	33 (10.7)	50 (16.2)	116 (37.5)	49 (15.9)	3.19 (1.3)	2.4	308	<0.001*
I am prepared to give my personal information to "online" stores on Facebook.	57 (18.4)	39 (12.6)	53 (17.8)	129 (41.7)	31 (10.0)	3.12 (1.2)	1.6	308	<0.096*
I believe Facebook keeps my data safe.	29 (9.4)	41 (13.3)	71 (23.0)	141 (45.6)	27 (8.7)	3.31 (1.1)	4.9	308	<0.001*
I believe Facebook is a trustworthy social commerce platform.	22 (7.1)	40 (12.9)	71 (23.0)	127 (41.1)	49 (15.9)	3.46 (1.1)	7.1	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook are truthful when dealing with each other.	36 (11.7)	39 (12.6)	86 (27.8)	128 (41.4)	20 (6.5)	3.18 (1.1)	2.9	308	<0.001*
Individuals on Facebook keep to their promises.	38 (12.3)	34 (11.0)	92 (29.8)	128 (41.4)	17 (5.5)	3.17 (1.1)	2.6	308	<0.001*
Ratings and reviews on Facebook are reliable.	9 (2.9)	32 (10.4)	89 (28.8)	154 (49.8)	25 (8.1)	3.50 (0.8)	9.8	308	<0.001*
Referrals and recommendations on Facebook are trustworthy.	9 (2.9)	27 (8.7)	87 (28.2)	163 (52.8)	23 (7.4)	3.53 (0.8)	10.7	308	<0.001*
Forums and communities on Facebook are dependable.	9 (2.9)	25 (8.1)	91 (29.4)	153 (49.5)	31 (10.0)	3.56 (0.8)	11.0	308	<0.001*

(* indicates significant at the 95% level)

Source: Primary data

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for purchase intentions

Purchase Intentions	Responses as frequency (%)					N	Mean (SD)	T	Df	P-value
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree					
I have a positive attitude concerning purchasing products on Facebook.	13 (4.2)	28 (9.1)	78 (25.2)	119 (38.5)	71 (23.0)	309	3.67 (1.0)	11.137	308	<0.001*
I am likely to make purchases on Facebook.	24 (7.8)	37 (12.0)	62 (20.1)	123 (39.8)	63 (20.4)	309	3.53 (1.1)	7.980	308	<0.001*
I intend to use Facebook soon (i.e. next 3 months) to make purchases.	28 (9.10)	34 (11.00)	72 (23.3)	132 (42.7)	43 (13.9)	309	3.41 (1.1)	6.414	308	<0.001*
I plan to use Facebook to make more purchases.	30 (9.7)	38 (12.3)	61 (19.7)	133 (43.0)	47 (15.2)	309	3.42 (1.1)	6.246	308	<0.001*
If I need a product, I would like to purchase it from Facebook.	33 (10.7)	39 (12.6)	61 (19.7)	139 (45)	37 (12.0)	309	3.35 (1.1)	5.260	308	<0.001*
I plan to purchase a product on Facebook if it is available from that platform	26 (8.4)	36 (11.7)	63 (20.4)	150 (48.5)	34 (11.0)	309	3.42 (1.0)	6.736	308	<0.001*

(* indicates significance at the 95% level)

Source: Primary data

as assets created and applied through social relationships, making it plausible to conclude that relational capital can positively affect consumer information and knowledge-sharing behaviour when making referrals and passing recommendations, due to the perceived benefit of the potential assets that can be drawn from such interactions.

It was postulated that cognitive capital positively influences consumer information and knowledge-sharing behaviour on forums and communities. Cognitive capital was considered in terms of knowledge-sharing behaviour on forums and communities because of its focus on self-disclosure, which is defined as the information, feelings, and thoughts people reveal or disclose (Shukla et al., 2022). Forums and communities are social commerce constructs that allow consumers to share information and perspectives, create content and engage with others. Cognitive capital, therefore, results in a structure that supports systems of common meanings among groups, incentivising knowledge-sharing over forums and communities, since individuals belonging to those groups share a common understanding among each other and share collective goals (Ghahtarani et al., 2020). As such, engagement in the group activities of the forums and communities will work towards achieving the group's common goals.

Melović et al. (2021) reported that the behavior of millennial consumers in online purchases significantly depends on their demographic characteristics. While the frequency of online shopping is the same for both genders, male consumers spend more money on it compared to women. Also, men to a greater extent prefer doing online shopping using more famous websites, than women do. The findings of the above researchers are confirmed by Bojanowska et al. (2023) as well as Hu et al. (2024), who concluded that age is not significant when it comes to the perception of purchasing risks when shopping online, while concerns about buying online are dependent on the respondents' sex. Furthermore, the amount spent on online shopping does not depend on the age of consumers, but younger Millennials make this type of purchase more often compared to older Millennials (Ventre

et al., 2021). Kırcova et al. (2021) reported that consumer brand engagement differs according to social media usage frequency and time spent using social media. Furthermore, social commerce purchase intention differs according to the social media networks. The above findings have important implications for managers for building the trust of consumers and increasing online sales.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sheds light on the role of social commerce constructs on the purchase intentions of Millennials using Facebook. Social media sites can be considered as platforms for creating networks, providing interconnectedness through social interactions between parties. In the context of social commerce, information sharing over social commerce constructs and consumption of information constitute the engagement and interconnectedness linking individuals in a network.

In contrast to traditional physical store environments, social commerce allows more open links among consumers as they can engage amongst themselves and share information through user-generated content. More connections can be made "online" than in physical retail spaces because "online" engagements and interconnectedness in "online" environments circumvent physical, geographical, and time restrictions limiting interactions in the physical world. In addition, open and reciprocal links also exist between consumers and brands who engage with consumers via social commerce constructs, contrasting the directional links prevalent with traditional marketing media such as television and print, where the communication is directional from the brand to the consumer. The creation of more open links amongst consumers and between consumers and brands result in more cohesive networks, where cohesion refers to the degree of interconnections amongst nodes in a network.

The implications for social commerce are that the information shared over social commerce constructs in more cohesive

networks is likely to have a stronger influence on the consumers' decisions than in less cohesive networks. Therefore, this justifies recommending that businesses should monitor the quality and content of the engagements around their brands on social media as information sharing in social commerce has a significant impact on influencing consumers' decisions, particularly purchase intentions. In addition, businesses should embrace social commerce constructs and encourage existing customers to post reviews, recommendations, and ratings and refer other consumers. User-generated content can help establish reciprocal interconnections with and amongst consumers in cohesive networks that can strongly influence customer behaviour and positively impact purchase intentions.

The Social Network Theory provides insights into the role of social media influencers in social commerce. The phenomenon of influencers has taken shape in recent years giving rise to influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that provides an avenue for brands to leverage the influence of individuals with large followings on social media to endorse products and services with their followers in a bid to influence their decision. Engagement with social commerce constructs and the interactions in social networks amongst consumers and influencers can thus provide social reinforcement that promotes the contagion process of information sharing.

Defining social capital as the potential to secure benefits by membership and participation in social structures enables a possible explanation for incentives that encourage information-sharing behaviour in social networks. The effect is evident with both influencers and ordinary consumers because information sharing is a way to generate social capital. Engagement with social commerce constructs generates informational and emotional support that can eventually influence purchase intentions. The implications for businesses are that participation and engagement with social commerce constructs can also generate new customers, trust and reinforce relationships with existing customers.

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