SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.688| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 10 | Issue: 5 | May 2025 - Peer Reviewed Journal

CUSTOMER PREFERENCE AND SHOPPING EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL COMMERCE: A STUDY AT COIMBATORE, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT
The rapid growth of social media platforms has transformed the landscape of online shopping, giving rise to social commerce a blend of e-commerce and social networking. This study explores customer preferences and shopping experiences within the realm of social commerce in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The research aims to understand the key factors that influence consumer behavior, including trust, convenience, product variety, peer reviews, and platform usability. A quantitative survey was conducted among active social commerce users in Coimbatore to gather insights into their purchasing patterns, satisfaction levels, and expectations. The findings reveal that while price competitiveness and product quality are crucial, user-generated content and interactive engagement on platforms like Instagram and Facebook significantly influence buying decisions. The study also highlights emerging trends such as influencer marketing and live-stream shopping. These insights can help businesses and marketers tailor their social commerce strategies to better meet the evolving demands of consumers in urban South Indian markets.

KEYWORDS: *Social Commerce, Customer Preference, Online Shopping, Shopping Experience, Consumer Behavior, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, E-commerce, Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social commerce, which integrates social media with e-commerce, is transforming the way consumers shop by blending online shopping with social interaction. This form of commerce allows consumers to discover, evaluate, and purchase products directly through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest. With the growing popularity of online shopping in India, particularly through social platforms, understanding customer preferences and shopping experiences is critical for businesses seeking to thrive in this new environment.

Coimbatore, a major industrial city in Tamil Nadu, has seen rapid growth in digital users, especially among young professionals and tech-savvy consumers. This city presents an ideal setting to explore how social commerce influences consumer behavior. Social media is increasingly being used by both large companies and small local businesses to market products, build brand awareness, and facilitate direct sales. As social commerce continues to rise, it becomes essential to understand the factors that influence customers' preferences and their overall shopping experiences on these platforms.

II.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Saranchana Asanprakit (2023)** "Causal factors influencing the use of social commerce platforms" To find out what factors affect the utilization of online s-commerce platforms, the study used SEM. The study showed strong convergent and discriminant validity, confirming the validity of its measuring methodology. Following the validation of a number of hypotheses, it was discovered that social, technological, platform, and economic aspects had a direct impact on users' motivation and their use of online social commerce platforms.
2. **Amir Afrasiabi Rad (2010)** "A Model for Understanding Social Commerce" In order to present the impact of the social web on e-commerce decision making in a comprehensive model, this paper reviewed and utilized existing frameworks. The model helps all parties involved in social commerce—businesses, developers, and customers—to take advantage of social networks, which includes helping them boost sales and improve their marketing campaigns.
3. **Yoesoep Edhie Rachmad (2022)** "social media marketing mediated changes in consumer behavior from e-commerce to social commerce "A high level of involvement, a large number of reviews and product ratings, a customer retention rate, a diversion rate, and social commerce customer happiness all indicate that social commerce has a positive and significant impact on consumer conversion behavior.
4. **Ali Abou Ali, Alaa Abbass, Nihal Farid (2020)** "Factors Influencing Customers' Purchase Intention in SocialCommerce"This study clarifies the function of social commerce constructs, trust, and online behavioral advertising in influencing consumers'

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intentions to make purchases through social networking sites. Social media vendors would use online advertising tactics that focused on video content and tailored the advertisements to their target audience.

5. **M. Hajli (2010)** "An Integrated Model for E-commerce Adoption at the Customer Level with the Impact of Social Commerce "In order to better understand online customer behavior, this research used a methodical methodology and was founded on widely recognized theories like TAM. It also introduced an integrated model. Many researchers have employed this construct, and SCCs and a few novel constructs were incorporated into this analysis.

III.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze customer preferences in social commerce.
- To examine the role of social commerce in enhancing the customer shopping experience.
- To identify the barriers to the growth and development of social commerce in Coimbatore.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- This study on customer preferences and shopping experience in social commerce, focusing on Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media is reshaping consumer behavior and influencing online shopping patterns.
- With the rapid adoption of smartphones and social media platforms in India, the concept of social commerce has gained significant importance.
- In a city like Coimbatore, which blends both traditional and modern retail habits, this study will focus on how social commerce has integrated into the daily lives of consumers and businesses.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design serves as a comprehensive blueprint that directs a research study toward its objectives. The process of crafting a research study involves numerous interconnected decisions. Among these, the selection of the research approach is the most critical, as it influences how data will be gathered. The choice of research approach is contingent upon the specific nature of the research being undertaken.

AREA OF THE STUDY

The geographical area of the study chosen for this research is Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study are the people who are living in Coimbatore district purchasing products in social commerce for the last six months period.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

A convenience sample is a sample where the respondents are selected, in part or in whole, at the convenience of the researcher. The researcher makes no attempt, or only a limited attempt, to ensure that this sample is an accurate representation of some larger group or population.

SAMPLE SIZE

Since the entire population cannot be taken for the study, the size of the sample was restricted to 178 respondents.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- **H1**-There is a significant association between a customer's occupation and the factors that influence their purchase decisions on social media platforms.
- **H2**-There is a significant relationship between a respondent's occupation and how easy they find it to shop through social media platforms.
- **H3**-There is a significant association between the type of social media platform used for shopping and the perceived trustworthiness of products advertised on those platforms.
- **H4**-There is a significant relationship between the social media platform used and the overall customer shopping experience.

DATA COLLECTION

There are various methods available for gathering the necessary data. When choosing a data collection method for the study, the researcher must consider the two types of data: primary and secondary data.

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1.PRIMARY DATA

Primary data refers to information that is collected anew and is therefore original in nature. For this study, primary data was gathered through questionnaires and personal interviews with the respondents.

2. SECONDARY DATA

In contrast, secondary data consists of information that has already been collected by others and has undergone statistical processing. For this research, secondary data was sourced from online articles, journals, textbooks, and similar resources.

TOOLS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Statistical Techniques

The collected data was subsequently analyzed using various tools to derive conclusions from the study.

- **Percentage Analysis**

This method involves univariate analysis, where the percentage of a specific factor across different categories is calculated. This approach provides a clearer understanding of the sample, and by extension, the population. The responses from each category are summarized in percentage format to facilitate the use of other statistical tools, such as pie charts and bar graphs.

$$\text{Percentage} = (\text{(a portion)} / \text{(the whole)}) * 100$$

- **Chi-Square Test**

The Chi-Square test is utilized to assess whether there is a dependency between categorical data or if the two classifications are independent.

The formula is as follows:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \{(Oi - Ei)^2 / Ei\}$$

When applying Yate's correction, the formula becomes:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \{(|Oi - Ei| - 0.5)^2 / Ei\}$$

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Chi-Square Tests-1

H_0- There is no significant relationship between a respondent's occupation and how easy they find it to shop through social media platforms.

H_1- There is a significant relationship between a respondent's occupation and how easy they find it to shop through social media platforms.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	197.237	12	.502
Likelihood Ratio	206.720	12	.321
N of Valid Cases	178		

Calculated $\chi 2$ Value: 197.237

Degree of freedom: 12

Signification level: .502

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test results show no significant association between the variables being analyzed. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 197.237 with 198 degrees of freedom, and the p-value is 0.502, which is greater than 0.05. This means the observed differences are likely due to chance, and we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The Likelihood Ratio test also supports this with a p-value of 0.321.

Chi-Square Tests -2

H_0- There is no significant relationship between a respondent's occupation and how easy they find it to shop through social media platforms.

H_1- There is a significant relationship between a respondent's occupation and how easy they find it to shop through social media platforms.

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	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.535	12	.331
Likelihood Ratio	12.698	12	.391
Linear-by-Linear Association	.099	1	.754
N of Valid Cases	178		

Calculated $\chi 2$ Value: 13.535
Degree of freedom: 12
Signification level: .331

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test was conducted to examine the association between two categorical variables based on 178 valid cases. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic was 13.535 with 12 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was 0.331. Since this p-value is greater than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between the two variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test, which serves as an alternative to the Pearson Chi-Square, produced a statistic of 12.698 with a p-value of 0.391, further supporting the conclusion that no significant relationship exists. Additionally, the Linear-by-Linear Association test, which is used when the variables are ordinal, yielded a very small test statistic (0.099) and a p-value of 0.754, suggesting that there is no significant linear trend between the variables. Overall, the analysis indicates that the relationship between the examined variables is not statistically significant.

Chi-Square Tests-3

H_0- There is no significant association between the type of social media platform used for shopping and the perceived trustworthiness of products advertised on those platforms.
H_1- There is a significant association between the type of social media platform used for shopping and the perceived trustworthiness of products advertised on those platforms.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.204	24	.295
Likelihood Ratio	30.002	24	.185
N of Valid Cases	178		

Calculated $\chi 2$ Value: 27.204
Degree of freedom: 24
Signification level: .295

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test was conducted to assess the relationship between two categorical variables based on 178 valid cases. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic was 27.204 with 24 degrees of freedom, and the corresponding p-value was 0.295. Since the p-value is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between the variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test resulted in a value of 30.002 with a p-value of 0.185, which also exceeds 0.05 and therefore confirms the lack of a significant relationship. These results suggest that any differences observed in the data are likely due to random variation rather than a true association between the variables being studied.

Chi-Square Tests-4

H_0- There is a significant relationship between the social media platform used and the overall customer shopping experience.
H_1- There no a significant relationship between the social media platform used and the overall customer shopping experience.

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.695	16	.925
Likelihood Ratio	10.183	16	.857
N of Valid Cases	178		

Calculated $\chi 2$ Value: 8.695
Degree of freedom: 16
Signification level: .925

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test was conducted to determine whether there is a significant relationship between two categorical variables using data from 178 valid cases. The Pearson Chi-Square value was 8.695 with 16 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was 0.925. Since this p-value is much higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between the variables. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test produced a

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value of 10.183 with a p-value of 0.857, which also suggests no significant relationship. Overall, these results imply that any differences observed in the data are likely due to chance, and there is no meaningful association between the variables being analyzed.

VII. FINDINGS

It has been found that:

1. The age distribution indicates that the largest group of respondents (23%) falls within the 46–60 age range. However, the combined representation of respondents under 45 years (including 18–25 at 22.5%, 26–35 at 16.3%, and 36–45 at 20.2%) suggests a significant presence of younger individuals overall. This highlights a broad age appeal but with a slight skew toward middle-aged participants.
2. The gender data reflects a fairly balanced sample, with 51.1% male and 47.8% female respondents. A small percentage (0.6% each) identified as "Other" or preferred not to disclose their gender. This balanced gender distribution strengthens the inclusivity and generalizability of the study's results.
3. Most respondents are married (59.6%), followed by 29.8% who are single. Divorced (7.3%) and widowed individuals (3.4%) form smaller groups. This predominance of married individuals may imply that familial responsibilities or spousal influence could play a role in shopping preferences and decisions.
4. Occupationally, the sample includes a variety of backgrounds. A majority are employed (35.4%), followed by business professionals (27%) and students (22.5%). Homemakers make up 15.2%. This mix suggests the findings capture insights across different life and career stages, which may affect social commerce behavior and digital engagement.
5. Family income data shows that the largest share of respondents (31.5%) earn between ₹25,001 and ₹50,000. A significant portion also falls within the ₹50,001 to ₹1,00,000 range (27.5%). Meanwhile, 24.8% are in the lower-income brackets, earning less than ₹25,000, and 16.3% earn above ₹1,00,000. The distribution suggests a strong middle-income representation, likely influencing affordability and online purchasing power.
6. Regarding family type, respondents are almost evenly split between nuclear (44.9%) and joint families (45.5%), with 9.6% living alone. This reflects a balanced mix of traditional and modern family setups, which may influence shopping habits, financial decision-making, and lifestyle preferences.
7. In terms of residential location, 35.4% live in suburban areas, 34.8% in urban Coimbatore, and 29.8% in rural areas. The close distribution across urban, suburban, and rural areas ensures diverse perspectives and highlights differences in access, preferences, and digital infrastructure.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Social commerce platforms should focus on targeting the 46–60 age group with tailored experiences, as this segment makes up the largest portion of users.
2. Gender inclusivity can be improved by offering non-binary and gender-neutral options, as a small percentage of respondents identified outside the male/female binary.
3. Platforms can create family-oriented products and services to appeal to the majority of married users, such as discounts or features that cater to household decision-making.
4. To cater to a variety of professions, including business owners and students, platforms could offer personalized tools or discounts that are tailored to different occupational groups.
5. Given the significant number of middle-income respondents, platforms should consider offering income-based pricing or discount programs for users in the ₹25,001–₹1,00,000 range to boost engagement.
6. Family-oriented features, such as shared shopping carts or family bundles, can enhance the shopping experience for both nuclear and joint families, who represent the majority of respondents.
7. Regional variations should be considered, with tailored offers and location-based promotions designed to meet the specific needs of urban, suburban, and rural users.
8. Improving the ease of shopping on social media platforms by addressing usability issues could enhance user satisfaction, as 36.5% of respondents find the shopping process challenging.
9. Personalized shopping experiences should be expanded to engage the 30% of users who haven't experienced them yet, possibly through more refined recommendation algorithms or tailored offers.
10. Platforms should invest in product demonstrations and customer reviews to increase trust, as a significant portion of users express skepticism about the reliability of products advertised on social media.

IX.CONCLUSION

The study on customer preference and shopping experience in social commerce in Coimbatore reveals a dynamic shift in consumer behavior influenced by the growing integration of social media and e-commerce. It was found that customers, particularly younger demographics, increasingly prefer social commerce platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook for purchasing a wide range of products, primarily due to convenience, real-time interaction, peer influence, and the appeal of personalized experiences.

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The role of social commerce in enhancing the shopping experience is significant, as it fosters greater engagement through features like reviews, influencer endorsements, and community discussions. Consumers value the ability to directly communicate with sellers, receive instant feedback, and experience a sense of trust and social proof before making a purchase.

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