



E-ISSN: 2789-1615
P-ISSN: 2789-1607
www.educationjournal.info
Impact Factor: RJIF 5.7
IJLE 2024; 4(2): 261-264
Received: 12-11-2024
Accepted: 13-12-2024

M Manikandan
Assistant Professor, Sri Sairam
Institute of Management
Studies, Sri Sairam
Engineering College, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

MSA Danica Joe
Scholar, Sri Sairam Institute of
Management Studies, Sri
Sairam Engineering College,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Correspondence Author;
M Manikandan
Assistant Professor, Sri Sairam
Institute of Management
Studies, Sri Sairam
Engineering College, Chennai,
Tamil Nadu, India

Bridging the digital divide: Examining the pros and cons of social commerce adoption in rural areas

M Manikandan and MSA Danica Joe

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.22271/27891607.2024.v4.i2d.235>

Abstract

This study analyse the pros and cons associated with the adoption of social commerce in rural areas. While social commerce holds immense potential for rural businesses to reach broader markets and enhance economic opportunities, several barriers hinder its effective implementation. Limited internet infrastructure, low digital literacy rates, and lack of access to online payment systems pose significant challenges for rural communities. However, by investing in infrastructure, providing digital literacy programs, and fostering community partnerships, rural areas can overcome these obstacles and leverage social commerce for inclusive economic development. This research offers simple yet effective strategies to bridge the digital divide and unlock the full potential of social commerce in rural regions.

Keywords: E-commerce, social media, technology, rural consumer, rural area

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid growth of social commerce platforms has revolutionized the way businesses engage with customers and conduct transactions. These platforms seamlessly integrate social media features with e-commerce functionalities, creating a dynamic environment where users can discover, interact with, and purchase products or services within their social networks. While the benefits of social commerce are evident in urban areas with robust digital infrastructures, its adoption and impact in rural regions remain a subject of considerable debate and exploration.

Rural areas, characterized by dispersed populations and often limited access to traditional retail outlets, present unique challenges and opportunities for social commerce adoption. On one hand, the digital divide the disparity between those who have access to and can effectively utilize information and communication technologies (ICT) and those who cannot looms large in rural communities, posing barriers to internet connectivity, technological literacy, and online payment systems. On the other hand, the potential of social commerce to transcend geographical limitations and connect rural entrepreneurs with global markets offers a promising avenue for economic empowerment and community development.

This article delves into the nuances of social commerce adoption in rural regions, examining the pros and cons from both business and technological perspectives. By analyzing the challenges faced by rural businesses in embracing social commerce, as well as the transformative opportunities it presents, we aim to shed light on the complexities of bridging the digital divide in the context of e-commerce. Through this exploration, we seek to provide insights that can inform strategies for fostering inclusive economic growth and technological empowerment in rural communities.

Review of Literature

Music *et al.*, (2022) ^[1] highlights that social commerce can aid business in developing countries by facilitating formalization and growth through financial services like online and mobile payments. Additionally, it can enable organizations to more easily participate in value chains and access markets, such as through virtual marketplaces.

Integrates theory from information systems and social psychology to examine ethical concerns in social commerce, offering valuable theoretical insights.

Kurt *et al.*, (2021) [3] emphasize that trust plays a crucial role in reducing behavioural uncertainty when consumers purchase products on sellers’ websites. Increased trust in sellers helps overcome psychological barriers, thereby enhancing consumers intention to buy through social commerce.

Statement of the problem

Despite the rapid growth of social commerce platforms worldwide, the adoption and integration of these technologies in rural regions present a multifaceted challenge. Rural communities often face significant barriers to accessing and leveraging digital technologies, including limited internet infrastructure, lower levels of technological literacy, and insufficient support for online payment systems. As a result, rural businesses and entrepreneurs encounter difficulties in harnessing the potential benefits of social commerce to expand their customer base, increase sales, and compete in the global marketplace. Questions arise regarding the suitability of social commerce models for rural businesses, the effectiveness of marketing and outreach strategies in reaching rural consumers, and the potential impacts on local economies and community dynamics. In light of these challenges, it is essential to examine the factors influencing the adoption & implementation of social commerce in rural regions, as well as the potential benefits and drawbacks for businesses, consumers, and communities. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can develop targeted interventions and policies to bridge the digital divide, foster inclusive economic development, and unlock the full potential of social

commerce in rural areas.

Objectives

- To uncover who participates in social commerce by analyzing their demographic profile.
- To analyze the pros and cons of social commerce among rural areas.

Research design

This study investigates the impact of social media commerce on rural communities with reference to Kalkulam Taluk. We employed a mixed-method approach, using both primary and secondary data collection.

- **Primary Data:** We conducted interviews with 120 participants from Kalkulam Taluk using a structured interview schedule. While convenient sampling was used for practicality, we acknowledge this may limit the generalizability of the findings.
- **Secondary Data:** We reviewed existing literature on social commerce in rural settings, including books, journals, research reports, and other published materials. This data provides a broader context for our primary research and helps us compare our findings with existing knowledge.

This combined approach allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how social commerce is affecting people in Kalkulam Taluk and contribute to the ongoing research on social commerce's role in rural development.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Social Commerce Users: A Profile

Demographic		Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	48	40
	Female	72	60
Total		120	100
Age	Below 20	24	20
	20-40	36	30
	40-60	36	30
	Above 60	24	20
Total		120	100
Educational qualification	Non-literate	10	8
	Hr. Sec	17	14
	Graduate	38	32
	Professional	48	40
	Miscellaneous	7	6
Total		120	100

Source: Primary data

The above Table shows that among 120 respondents 40 percent of male respondents are satisfied with social commerce and 60 percent of female respondents were satisfied with social commerce. The satisfaction level of rural consumer in social commerce where analyzed based on age and education. Among respondents 20 percent were below 20 years old, 30 percent were aged 20-40 years another 30 percent were aged 40-60 years, and 20 percent were over 60 years old. Regarding educational background, the majority 40 percent held educational degrees, followed by graduates at 32 percent, high school graduate at 14 percent, and individuals with no formal education at 8 percent. An additional 6 percent fell into miscellaneous

category.

From the above Table 2 it was revealed that the important problem faced by rural consumers in social commerce, the respondents chose waiting to receive product, lack of trust worthiness of vendors and difficulty in returning items has high weighted average mean score of 3.6083,3.591 and3.508 respectively. Complex technology, risk of credit card transactions and risk of losing privacy had a mid-range mean score of 3.3667, 3.175 and 3.125 respectively. Risk of not getting what I paid for, more expensive and not skillful with internet had lowest weighted average mean score of 3.008, 2.625 and 2.575 respectively.

Table 2: Problems faced by rural consumers in social commerce

SL.No	Factors	HA	A	N	D	HD	Total	Average mean score	Rank
1	Waiting to receive product	52(260)	21(84)	13(39)	16(32)	18(18)	433	3.6083	I
2	Risk of credit card transactions	30(150)	28(112)	17(51)	23(46)	22(22)	381	3.175	V
3	Difficulty in returning items	35(175)	27(108)	29(87)	22(44)	7(7)	421	3.508	III
4	Risk of not getting what I paid for	22(110)	30(120)	23(69)	17(34)	28(28)	361	3.008	VII
5	Risk of losing privacy	20(100)	24(96)	38(114)	27(54)	11(11)	375	3.125	VI
6	Not skillful with internet	17(85)	12(48)	29(87)	27(54)	35(35)	309	2.575	IX
7	Lack of trust worthiness of vendors	37(185)	31(124)	26(78)	18(36)	8(8)	431	3.591	II
8	Complex technology	30(150)	22(88)	42(126)	14(28)	12(12)	404	3.3667	IV
9	More expensive	16(80)	28(112)	12(36)	23(46)	41(41)	315	2.625	VIII

Source: Primary Data

Table 3: Benefits of social commerce

SL.No	Benefits	Mean Score				F-Statistics	P-Value
		Below 20	20-40	40-60	Above 60		
1	Ability to shop 24/7	3.3750	3.5000	3.3611	2.5833	2.450	.067
2	Ability to compare price	2.9583	2.9444	3.5833	3.4167	1.908	.132
3	Save time	3.2500	3.3611	3.2500	2.8750	.617	.605
4	Greater variety	2.9583	2.9444	3.5833	3.4167	1.908	.132
5	Avoid crowds	2.8333	2.8056	3.4722	3.7083	3.509*	.018
6	Free shipping offer	3.5000	3.4444	3.4167	2.5833	2.813*	.042
7	Customized products	2.9583	3.0833	3.8056	3.2500	3.093*	.030
8	Discount	3.4583	3.4167	3.5278	2.6667	2.419	.070
	Total	3.1614	3.4586	3.5000	3.0625		

Source: Primary Data

*Significant level at five percent level

From the above table 3 it was revealed that the benefits of social commerce chosen by the respondents falls under the age group below 20 is high for the variable ‘free shipping offer’, ‘discount’, ‘ability to compare price 24/7’ and ‘save time’ since they have the highest mean score of 3.5000, 3.4583, 3.3750 and 3.2500 respectively. The lowest benefits are ‘ability to compare price’, ‘greater variety’, ‘avoid crowd’ and ‘customized products’ with the mean score of 2.9583, 2.9583, 2.8333 and 2.9583 respectively.

The benefits of social commerce chosen by the respondents falls under the age group of 20-40 is high for the variable ‘ability to shop 24/7’, ‘save time’ ‘free shipping offer’ and ‘discount’ since they have the highest mean score of 3.5000, 3.3611, 3.4444 and 3.4167 respectively. The lowest benefits are ‘ability to compare price’, ‘greater variety’, ‘avoid crowd’ and ‘customized products’ since they have the lowest mean score of 2.9444, 2.9444, 2.8056 and 3.0833.

The benefits of social commerce chosen by the respondents falls under the age group of 40-60 is high for the variable ‘ability to compare price’, ‘greater variety’, customized product’ and ‘discount’ since they have the highest mean score of 3.5833, 3.5833, 3.8056 and 3.5278 respectively. The lowest benefits are ‘ability to shop 24/7’, ‘save time’, ‘avoid crowds’, ‘free shipping offer’ since they have the lowest mean score of 3.3611, 3.2500, 3.4722 and 3.4167 respectively.

The benefits of social commerce chosen by the respondents falls under the age group above 60 is high for the variables ‘ability to compare price’, ‘greater variety’, ‘avoid crowd’, and ‘customized products’ since they have the highest mean score of 3.416, 3.416, 3.7083 and 3.2500 respectively. low for the variables ‘ability to shop 24/7’, ‘save time’, ‘free shipping offer’ and ‘discount’ since their mean score is 2.5833, 2.8750, 2.5833 and 2.6667 respectively.

All around benefits of social commerce chosen by respondents among different age groups, below 20 age group mean score 3.1614, 20-40 age group mean score

3.4586, 40-60 age group mean score 3.5000 and above 60 age group mean score 3.0625.

Regarding the benefits of social commerce chosen by the respondents significant difference has been found in the case of variables ‘Avoid crowds’, ‘Free shipping offer’ and ‘Customized products’ This is based on an F-test where the results were significant at a 5% level.

Suggestions

- To provide affordable internet access in rural areas to facilitate social commerce.
- To offer digital literacy workshop tailored to rural residents to increase their comfort with social commerce platform.
- To create user friendly mobile application for social commerce.
- To establish rural-specific marketing campaigns to raise awareness about social commerce.

Conclusion

Social commerce presents a significant opportunity for rural communities to access a wider range of products and services. This study suggests that while there is initial resistance, fostering digital literacy, prioritizing local relevance, and ensuring a seamless mobile experience can significantly increase adoption. For e-commerce companies, focusing on high-quality products, transparent return policies, and responsive customer service can build trust and encourage long-term engagement with rural consumers. By working together, researchers, e-commerce companies, and local communities can unlock the full potential of social commerce for rural development

References

1. Music J, Charlebois S, Toole V, Large C. Telecommuting and food e-commerce: socially

- sustainable practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. *Transp Res Interdiscip Perspect.* 2022;13:100513. DOI: 10.1016/j.trip.2021.100513.
2. Tseng HT. Shaping path of trust: the role of information credibility, social support, information sharing and perceived privacy risk in social commerce. *Inf Technol People.* 2023;36(2):683-700. DOI: 10.1108/ITP-07-2021-0564.
 3. Kurt G, Ilkkursun Z, Javanbakht A, Uygun E, Kahilogullari KA, Acarturk C. The psychological impacts of COVID-19 related stressors on Syrian refugees in Turkey: The role of resource loss, discrimination, and social support. *Int J Intercult Relat.* 2021;85:130-140. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.09.009.
 4. Cao K, Xu Y, Wu Q, Wang J, Liu C. Optimal channel and logistics service selection strategies in the e-commerce context. *Electron Commer Res Appl.* 2021;48:101070. DOI: 10.1016/j.elerap.2021.101070.
 5. Wongkitrungrueng A, Assarut N. The role of live streaming in building consumer trust and engagement with social commerce sellers. *J Bus Res.* 2020;117:543-556. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.08.032.
 6. Ko HC. Social desire or commercial desire? The factors driving social sharing and shopping intentions on social commerce platforms. *Electron Commer Res Appl.* 2018;30:1-15. DOI: 10.1016/j.elerap.2017.12.011.
 7. Alhulail H, Dick M, Abareshi A. The influence of social presence and trust on customers' loyalty to social commerce websites. In: Springer, editors. 2019:1013-1024. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-99007-1_94.
 8. Murugan K, *et al.* A comprehensive investigation to examine the preferences and satisfaction levels of outpatients in relation to the quality of services provided by hospitals in the Vellore District. In: IEEE, 2023.
 9. Kumar SD, Kumar VH. Mediation of attitude toward advertisements in the relationship between advertisements and purchase intention. *Indian J Public Health Res Dev.* 2018;9(2):411-417.
 10. Suresh V, Prabhakar K, Santhanalakshmi K, Maran K. Applying technology acceptance (TAM) model to determine the factors of acceptance in outpatient information systems in private hospital sectors in Chennai city. *J Pharm Sci Res.* 2016;8(12):1373.
 11. Manikandan M, Venkatesh P, Illakya T, Krishnamoorthi M, Senthilnathan C, Maran K. The significance of big data analytics in the global healthcare market. In: 2022 International Conference on Communication, Computing, and Internet of Things (IC3IoT), 2024. DOI: 10.1109/ic3iot60841.2024.10550417.
 12. Suresh V, Maran K, Shanmuga Priya AR. A study on the impact of affiliate marketing in e-business for consumers' perspective. *SP AR-Int J Eng Technol.* 2018;10(2):471-475.
 13. Venkatesh P, Murugan K, Ramu M, Manikandan M, Senthilnathan C, Krishnamoorthi M. A comprehensive investigation to examine the preferences and satisfaction levels of outpatients in relation to the quality of services provided by hospitals in the Vellore District. IEEE, 2023. DOI: 10.1109/iccebs58601.2023.10448975.
 14. Murugan K, Selvakumar V, Venkatesh P, Manikandan M, Ramu M, Krishnamoorthi M. The big data analytics and its effectiveness on bank financial risk management. *IEEE.* 2023;13:313-316. DOI: 10.1109/icrtac59277.2023.10480831.
 15. Sankar S, Maran K, Director SIMS. Market trading in India-customer perception. *Int J Eng Manag Res.* 2013;3(2):1-13.