

A Review of Social Commerce Adoption Factors in SMES

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Abstract

Social commerce (SC) has emerged as a significant aspect of e-commerce, integrating social media (SM) and networking functionalities. Many studies have been conducted on SC, most of which focused on consumer adoption. Until now, there hasn't been much research done on the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) adoption of SC. In fact, the way of adopting SC between consumers and SMEs is not the same. Therefore, this systematic review aims to investigate the factors that influence SMEs' adoption of SC. Utilizing the PRISMA guidelines, the study analyses literature from selected databases, identifying key determinants. Findings indicate that technological factors (ease of use, perceived usefulness, compatibility), organizational factors (management support, resources, CEO IT knowledge), environmental factors (competitive pressure, customer demand), social factors (SM influence, subjective norms), and trust factors (security, privacy, reliability) play crucial roles in SC adoption. These insights extend existing theoretical models such as TAM, TRA, and TOE. For practical implications, SMEs are advised to invest in user-friendly technologies, strengthen SM engagement, and build trust with customers. Policy recommendations include providing supportive infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, capacity building, and fostering innovation to facilitate SC adoption. This review enhances understanding of SC adoption in SMEs and offers actionable strategies for businesses and policymakers to harness the benefits of SC, promoting competitiveness and growth in the digital marketplace. Future research could further explore the interplay of these factors to develop comprehensive predictive models for SC adoption in various contexts.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Adoption, Factors, SMEs, Systematic Literature Review

Introduction

Social commerce (SC) has emerged as a result of the rapid expansion of electronic commerce and the current popularity of social media (SM) and social networking (SN) sites (Omar &

Sulaiman, 2023). It was first offered by Yahoo in 2005, and it quickly became a way for big web companies like Amazon, Groupon, and eBay to add value to commercial services through the utilization of user involvement (Han et al., 2018; Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). The first academic study to use the phrase "social commerce" was published in 2006. In addition, Flowers.com created the first Facebook store in 2009, marking the official start of SC (Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). Furthermore, Hussain and Merigo (2023), highlighted that; By 2027, SC revenues are projected to reach 184 billion USD globally. Consumer spending has been shown to move noticeably away from traditional physical retailers toward online merchants due to the ongoing e-commerce development. This significant expansion is partly attributable to SC, which combines SN, SM, and e-commerce (Omar & Sulaiman, 2013; Zhao et al., 2023). Additionally, SC offers the chance to make use of already-existing social resources and relationships within the company value chain for a number of objectives, such as product idea generation, marketing, and service and support (Mamonov & Benbunan-Fich, 2017).

In recent years, a wide range of online businesses have emerged that make use of the interactions between SM and e-commerce. Online commerce, which is roughly described as a type of commerce mediated by SM has emerged as a result of this (Grange et al., 2020). This phenomenon has been sparked by the inclusion of SN features into the conventional digital settings that consumers use to learn, select, and discuss items (e.g., creating an online profile and connecting with friends). Websites where users may connect with one another and interact with brands and products (like Goodreads), or businesses and services (like Yelp) are more examples of practical implementations of SC (Grange et al., 2020). A number of internet vendors (like Netflix) have SN elements built into their platforms, and other SN sites let businesses connect and communicate with customers and other businesses (e.g., Facebook). In conclusion, everyone who wants to market themselves or engage customers can use the services of SC (Grange et al., 2020). This includes consumers, businesses, brands, and individuals.

The reviewer is currently conducting research on the SC adoption model in SMEs in Nigeria; therefore, this review will help not only in identifying the factors but also to have a better understanding of the element of the model and their functions. Furthermore, it is very important to identify the factors that influence SC adoption in other developing and even some developed countries so as to have a wider understanding of the factors. In addition, the main construct of the adoption model depends on these factors so also the model. The remainder of the paper is in the following manner: A review of the previous literature, a highlight of the method used, findings and discussion of results, and conclusion.

Literature Review

Small and Medium Enterprises

SMEs are seen as the engine of economic growth and sustainability in both emerged and emerging countries around the world. SMEs are something to be proud of in every country or state. Because of how important they are to the growth and development of different economies; They have been referred to as "the catalysts for the socio-economic transformation of any country" and "the powerhouse of growth." (Afolabi, 2013). According to World Bank reports, Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) are under a lot of pressure to increase employment and improve their performance in order to fulfil the growing need for both jobs and economic growth (Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). One problem

that SME owners have is that the government mostly does not give them a chance or think about them when making policies. This means that financing and other Government support are the main things that keep SMEs from growing, which limits their ability to help the economy of developing countries, such as Nigeria (Afolabi, 2013).

SMEs now face new challenges courtesy of contemporary competitive environment, that is seriously marked with rising variety and unreliability in customer need as well as a challenge put in as a result of the influence of global processes and post COVID-19 effect (Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). Additionally, SMEs are also trying to get access to external resources that they don't directly control in order to develop new products, technologies, and markets. However, through the efficient use of shared information and communication technology resources, the capacity to obtain resources through relationships and networks appears to be helpful, enabling certain SMEs to maintain or enhance their competitive position by fortifying client relationships, and also positively affecting sales and overall performance (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Omar & Sulaiman, 2023).

Social Commerce

The fast growth of Web 2.0 SM has made it possible for e-commerce to change from being focused on products to being more social and customer-centered (Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). Essentially, SN technology is an internet-oriented program powered by the Web 2.0 capabilities. On the other hand, Web 2.0 is both a platform and a concept for using collective intelligence (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). In this setting, users are at liberty to get information and ideas from other users that will affect their understanding of why they want to buy something online and make a more accurate decision about what to buy. Online businesses, on the other hand, can track their customers' actions, which gives them information about them in terms of their online activities and needs thereby guiding their decision to come up with good business plans (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). Since business organizations have noticed these mutual benefits, e-commerce is going through a new phase which is employing different characteristics, functionalities, as well as web 2.0 capabilities to improve user engagement, enhance customer relationships, and make more money. This change in e-commerce is often seen as the start of SC. In addition, using SM platforms to share, advertise, and sell goods and services from the company to consumer and consumer to consumer, contributes to the expansion of e-commerce globally (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). Furthermore, with the rise of Web 2.0 tools, there are now new, creative ways to use e-commerce by making it social (Abed, 2020).

SC is the combination of e-commerce and social activity through technologies that make it easier to decide what to buy (Li et al., 2023). While e-commerce focuses on saving money for both sellers and buyers, SC is more about sharing information. SC has changed because of the rapid growth of social computing platforms (Li et al., 2023). In general, SC relates to performing e-commerce activities on SM platforms, particularly key elements like user-generated content, content sharing, buying, and selling in the online marketplace (Zhao et al., 2023). The effects of SM technologies on electronic commerce are noticeable both in how businesses operate and in how customers interact with each other (Busalim & Hussin, 2016). More specifically, Web 2.0 has a big effect on how businesses do business and how reliable the integrity of their systems is. It can also help businesses build stronger relationships with their customers, get more people to visit their websites, find new business opportunities, and

support the development of products and brands. It could also help businesses make better products, make it easier for them to predict market trends, and make their marketing campaigns work better (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). Social platforms are used to accomplish business functions through the smooth integration of social and commercial elements inside a unified domain known as SC (Li et al., 2023).

Social Commerce Adoption

In order to raise the level of adoption of IS among emerging countries, SMEs, it is crucial to concentrate on improving the internal infrastructure of these businesses. Due to a variety of factors, mainly cost and skills, SMEs are reluctant to adopt these channels (Ali et al., 2019). Contrarily, SM channels are simple to use and are accessed by billions of people worldwide as a result, hence, enabling SMEs to quickly access sizable markets. There are 3.6 billion active social media users globally and is expected to reach 4.41 billion in 2025 (Omar & Sulaiman, 2023). SMEs have favorable perspectives toward using digital marketing platforms and methods (Solangi et al., 2022). The data presented suggests that they appear to be continuously enhancing their online skills. Due to global competition, affordable technology infrastructure, and information accessibility, SMEs themselves have the opportunity to create a good understanding and measures of marketing strategy (Zhang & Erturk, 2022). Businesses are making considerable use of SM to expand their online and offline commercial potential (Solangi et al., 2022). Even though businesses like Alibaba, Amazon, eBay, Qunar, Ctrip, Taobao, and others are expanding their use of social platforms for e-commerce, many other websites utilize a method which blends the growth of the integration of social networks and online forums (Zhang & Erturk, 2022). By incorporating new technological and social components, these websites have become well-known as social and commercial platforms introducing the idea of SC (Zhang & Erturk, 2022).

Research Methodology

According to Kitchenham and Charters, (2007), doing a multi-system review has 3 important steps: designing the study, carrying out the study, and writing up the study. There are certain things to do at each stage, which are: (1) coming up with questions that need to be answered, making a study plan. (2) coming up with a search techniques and processes of choosing the study. (3) Developing exclusion and inclusion criteria, execute the standard evaluation activities, then extract and analyze the data. The details of all the above steps are given below.

Research Process

The systematic review adhered to the PRISMA guidelines to ensure transparency and accuracy in reporting the findings. PRISMA, an established evidence-based reporting framework, was utilized for this systematic review. The data collection process followed the PRISMA flow diagram, as illustrated in Figure 1. An initial literature search was conducted using five selected online repositories: ScienceDirect, Scopus, IEEE, Springer, and ACM Digital Library, chosen for their relevance and utility in the field of Information Systems. A variety of keywords with Boolean operators AND/OR were used to maximize the search results. The search terms and structures used within the abstracts, titles, and keywords of the publications included: "Social Commerce" OR "S-Commerce" OR "SC" AND "Enterprises" OR "SMEs" OR "MSMEs" AND "Factors" OR "Predictors" OR "Antecedents."

The initial automated search process, using these specified keywords, yielded a total of 1243 articles: ScienceDirect (403), Scopus (589), IEEE (123), Springer (75), and ACM Digital Library (53). Filtering tools were then applied to narrow down the results based on source and document type, publication stage, publication year, and article language. This process eliminated 1197 articles, leaving 46 articles for further evaluation. These remaining articles were then subjected to a manual review process, focusing on titles, keywords, and abstracts to ensure their relevance to the research. Articles meeting the inclusion criteria were fully read to extract relevant information on the study's topic. To ensure the inclusion of valuable articles, quality assessment criteria were applied to evaluate their eligibility. A set of questions covering various aspects of the research was prepared for this purpose. Based on these quality assessment criteria, 18 articles were selected for final analysis, resulting in the exclusion of 28 articles.

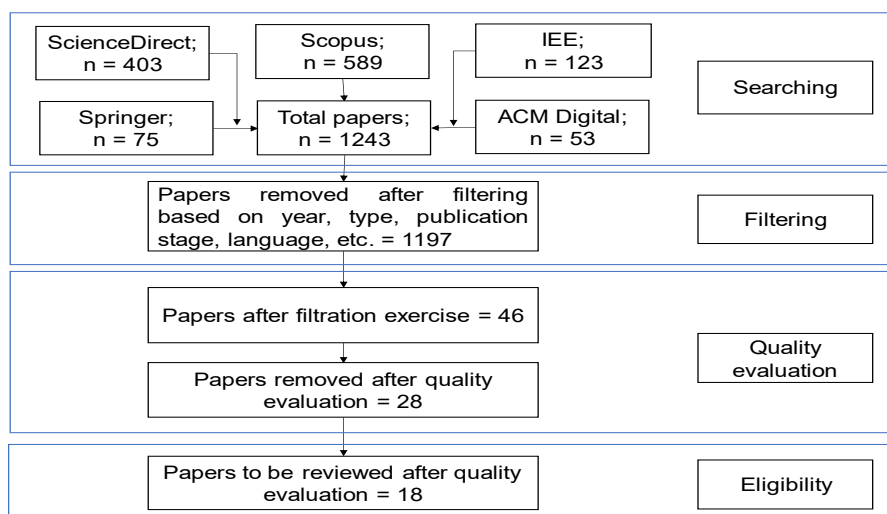


Figure 1. Flow Chart for the Selection Exercise

Selection Procedure

Exclusion and inclusion methods were used in order to know what to include and what to leave out to make sure the papers chosen are important and related to the research field (Kitchenham & Charters 2007).

Table 1

Selection Exercise

Included item	Excluded item
Papers that are written in English	Papers not in English
Papers related SC	Not related SC
In the selected databases	Duplicate
Full text	Abstract only
Article/Conference paper	Not Article/Conference paper
Directly or indirectly answers the study question (s)	Not related to the study question (s)

Quality Evaluation

The standard evaluation was done to find out how good and useful the primary study was. It also tells how strong the inferences are, adds to the credibility of the chosen papers, and provides a guide for further research (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). During the standard evaluation exercise that is carried out to determine how eligible a particular paper is, all of the research documents gathered after the selection procedure are grouped into one of three categories: high, medium, or low (Nidhra et al 2013; Busalim, and Hussin, 2016). To divide the papers into levels, those that meet all the criteria for the research topic will get a score of "2", those that meet some of the criteria but not all will get a score of "1", and those that don't meet any of the criteria for the research topic will get a score of "0" (Bahari et al., 2019). So, for this paper, three measures of quality were thought to be important for judging the quality of the papers. The queries used in measuring the quality are:

- (QA1): Do the paper title and keywords related to "SC" in SMEs?
- (QA2): Do the paper title and/or keywords address SC adoption factors?
- (QA3): Does the paper discuss SC adoption factors in SMEs in a clear way?

For QA1, this research only looks at papers with the keywords and title "SC". In SC study, the objective is to find a vast series of factors that lead to adoption. For QA2, papers that discussed SC adoption factors in a clear way are chosen. While, for QA3, papers that discussed SC adoption factors in SMEs in a clear way were considered. After completing the screening process on the selected papers, 18 studies were chosen (a paper with a total score of 5, 4, and 3 are eligible, while papers with a score of 0, 1, and 2 are not eligible) (Bahari et al., 2019). See Appendix A and B for details on the selection result. The following section presents the results of the analysis.

Results

Most of the previous studies on SC have much attention on user or consumer adoption. Nevertheless, there is little research conducted on SC adoption from an organizational perspective. For instance, a study by Huang and Benyoucef (2017), empirically investigated SC adoption in SMEs. Furthermore, factors influencing belief formation toward the adoption of SC in SMEs have been investigated Dalvi-Esfahani et al., (2018). Moreover, Ali et al. (2019), Validate the factors influencing SC adoption in SMEs. While Sangi et al., (2020), conducted a study on the managerial role and internet in SC adoption by SMEs, and Solangi et al. (2022), conducted an empirical analysis of factors that influence SC adoption in SMEs. Furthermore, Zamrudi and Wicaksono (2018) investigated SC adoption in SMEs and Vongsraluang and Bhatiasevi (2017), conducted a study on the determinants of SC system success. Previous studies used a few IS theories as a foundation for their studies such as the TOE framework, Abed, (2020), TAM and TRA, Dalvi-Esfahani (2018), Ali et al. (2019), Solangi et al. (2022), and TAM, Sangi et al. (2020) while Zamrudi and Wicaksono (2018), utilized UTAUT and Vongsraluang and Bhatiasevi (2017), used ISS model. Table 2 provides detail on the factors that influence SC adoption in SMEs based on the reviewed literature.

Table 2
SC Adoption Factors Identified from The Reviewed Literature

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Theories</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Role of factors</i>
Omar & Sulaiman, (2023).	TAM & TOE	Social Commerce Among Micro and Small Medium Enterprises Before and during the COVID19: A Systematic Literature Review.	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, organizational readiness, trust, security, and e-WoM.	All factors positively influence SC adoption in SMEs.
Hussain & Merigo (2023).	TOE	Offsite/Onsite adoption of SC in SMEs through complex framework using fuzzy linguistic decision making.	Trading partner pressure, consumer pressure, organizational readiness, top management support, security concern, and perceived usefulness.	All factors have positive influence on SMEs decision.
Abed, (2020).	TOE	SC adoption: An empirical study of SMEs in Saudi Arabian using TOE framework.	Trading partner pressure, consumer pressure, organizational readiness, top management support, security concern, and perceived usefulness.	Except for security concern which has a negative influence on intention to use, the remaining factors positively influence SMEs' SC intention.
Dalvi-Esfahani et al., (2018).	TAM & TRA	Factors influencing beliefs formation towards the adoption of social commerce in SMEs travel agencies.	CEO innovativeness, CEO IT attitude, CEO IT knowledge, subjective norm, firm size, and organizational resources.	All three factors positively influence SMEs' SC intention.

The current study has filtered and selected some factors by considering only the organizational, technological, environmental, social, and trust factors. The rationale behind this selection is the fact that all factors identified or mentioned in the previous studies can be summed up under these five classifications. Furthermore, some factors appeared in two or more different studies; in this case, all repeated factors have been removed (Table 3).

Table 3

Determinants of SC Adoption in SMEs from Previous Studies

<i>Division of factors</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Description</i>
Organizational	1. Top management support	Top management support is the level of backing for implementing cutting-edge technology for company use that is provided by the top management.
	2. Organizational readiness	Organizational preparedness is the degree to which an organization has the financial and technical capabilities to implement new, cutting-edge technology.
	3. CEO knowledge	IT CEOs' level of IT know-how
	4. Financial support	The presence of financial support either from Govt. or NGOs.
	5. Training	The level of training given to the personnel, particularly on IT perspective.
	6. IT readiness	Availability of IT infrastructure and connectivity.
Technological	1. Perceived usefulness	It refers to how much a customer thinks internet buying will improve their transaction performance.
	2. Security concerns	How secure, confidential, and safe it is to engage.
	3. Information quality	Is the information available, current, reliable, and useful?
	4. Compatibility	Is the new system consistent with our culture and will it favor our business?
	5. Perceived ease of use	It relates to the extent that a buyer believes that accessing the social networking website to purchase items and services would be effortless.
Environmental	1. Consumer pressure	A number of relationship attributes that exist between companies and their clients has been determined as having a crucial effect on adoption of new innovations by company, the amount of pressure exerted by customers, and the level of trust that exists between a company and its customers are also important determinants.
	2. Trading partner pressure	It has been discovered that the amount of pressure exerted by business partners is a crucial determinant in the acceptance of new technology.
Social	1. Social media influence (Subjective norms)	The perceived social pressure to engage or not to engage in a behavior." which may include family, friends, colleagues, or friends of friends.

Discussions and Findings

Key Findings

1. **Technological Factors:** Ease of use, perceived usefulness, compatibility with existing systems, and technological infrastructure significantly influence SMEs' adoption of social commerce (SC).
2. **Organizational Factors:** Internal characteristics such as firm size, management support, availability of financial and human resources, and organizational readiness are crucial for SC adoption.
3. **Environmental Factors:** External conditions like competitive pressure, customer demand, regulatory environment, and influence of business partners impact the adoption decision.
4. **Social Factors:** Social interactions, networks, and the role of social media in business operations encourage SC adoption. Recognizing the potential of SN to enhance customer engagement is key.
5. **Trust:** Perceived security, privacy, and reliability of SC platforms are critical. Trust in the platforms significantly affects SMEs' willingness to adopt SC.

Implications

Contribution to Existing Body of Knowledge

- **Enhanced Understanding:** This study broadens the understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing SC adoption among SMEs, emphasizing the importance of technological, organizational, environmental, social, and trust factors.
- **Theoretical Models:** The findings align with and extend existing theoretical models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and the Technology-Organizational-Environmental (TOE) framework, offering a more comprehensive view of SC adoption in SMEs.

Practical Implications for SMEs

1. **Technological Readiness:** SMEs should invest in user-friendly and compatible SC technologies to enhance adoption. Understanding and leveraging technological infrastructure can streamline operations.
2. **Management and Resources:** Strong management support and allocation of sufficient financial and human resources are critical. SMEs need to foster a culture of innovation and readiness for technological adoption.
3. **Market Awareness:** Understanding and responding to competitive pressures, customer demands, and regulatory environments can drive SC adoption. Building strong relationships with business partners can also facilitate this process.
4. **Social Media Utilization:** SMEs should recognize the potential of social media to enhance customer engagement and business visibility. Effective use of social networks can significantly boost SC adoption.
5. **Building Trust:** Ensuring the security, privacy, and reliability of SC platforms is paramount. SMEs should focus on building trust with their customers to encourage online transactions.

Policy Recommendations

1. Supportive Infrastructure: Governments should provide supportive infrastructure and incentives for SMEs to adopt SC, including subsidies for technology investments and training programs.
2. Regulatory Framework: Developing a regulatory framework that ensures the security and privacy of online transactions can build trust and encourage SC adoption among SMEs.
3. Capacity Building: Initiatives to enhance the digital literacy and technological capabilities of SMEs can facilitate SC adoption. Providing training and resources on the benefits and implementation of SC is essential.
4. Access to Resources: Policies to improve SMEs' access to financial resources and skilled personnel can support the adoption of SC. Grants, low-interest loans, and partnerships with educational institutions can be beneficial.
5. Fostering Innovation: Encouraging a culture of innovation within SMEs through awards, recognition programs, and innovation hubs can stimulate interest in adopting new technologies like SC.

These factors are interconnected and can have both direct and indirect effects on the adoption of SC in SMEs.

Conclusions

The systematic review identifies key determinants influencing SMEs' adoption of SC, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors at play. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by extending theoretical models and offering practical insights for SMEs. For policymakers, the study highlights the need for supportive infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, capacity building, access to resources, and fostering innovation to enhance SC adoption. These practical implications and policy recommendations can help SMEs leverage SC for improved business performance and competitiveness in the digital marketplace. Future research could explore the interplay between these factors and develop comprehensive models to predict SC adoption in various contexts.

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