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Analyzing determinants influencing an individual's intention to use social commerce website

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Abstract

The evolution of social media has changed the landscape of online commerce for both organizations as well as customers. Introduction of social commerce websites has brought shift in consumers' buying decision, i.e. from individual to social shopping. This study aims to identify factors that influence an individual's decision to use social commerce websites in an Indian Context. A conceptual model was developed based on extensive literature review. Wherein total six factors that influence an individual's intention to use social commerce were identified and were divided into three broad categories: social factors (informational support and community commitment), trust (towards members and community) and website quality (ease of use and service quality). Research model was empirically examined using structural equation modeling. The findings of this study demonstrated positive relationship between all six factors and an individual's intention to use social commerce website. Additionally, study identified informational support as the most significant factor that influences an individual's intention to use social commerce website followed by trust towards members, service equality, trust towards community, ease of navigation, and community commitment. © 2017 Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, Future University. Production and Hosting by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Keywords: Social Commerce; Informational support; Community commitment; Trust; Service quality

Introduction

Social commerce is the latest addition in advancement of information and communication technology innovation in online business. Popularity of social media technologies has primarily contributed in this advancement, which attracts individuals to be a part of an online social community and encourages interaction among peers (Liang & Turban, 2011). This has created a new opportunity for organizations to use social networking platforms for doing business, called as social commerce. Social commerce encourages online transactions aided by the members of social networking websites who communicate, give opinions or recommendations in addition to sharing as well as rating their experience of using various products or services (Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang & Turban, 2011; Wang & Zhang, 2012).

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The use of “Buy” button by social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter primarily echoes social media's vital role for organizations in online environment. Though social commerce has been around in India for past few years, but recently, it has been catching up fast with Indian e-commerce titans Flipkart and Myntra introducing social commerce features within their respective applications (Singh, 2015).

Social media is growing with a rapid pace in India, and it is expected that by 2017 the number of social media users will be around 197 million, up from 86.7 million in 2013 (Statista, n.d.). One of the significant factor in the increase in these numbers is the growth of smartphone market in India. The smartphone market of India is the second largest in the world and it is expected that it will hit the 520-million mark by 2020 (Ericsson, n.d.). This huge increase in internet users in combination with social media users provides an opportunity for Indian organizations to explore new business models using social commerce websites and increases their customer base. This is reflected in current Indian market that comprises many independent e-commerce websites having social commerce as the core of their business model such as Voonik, Ownnow, Limeroad, Wooplr, Klip, Stylecracker, Allmemoirs, Roposo, etc.

Objective

Though social commerce is growing in India, but still there are concerns over using the social media platform for doing online business. Social commerce environment is a combination of various characteristics of social as well as commerce components where issues related to trust, information sharing, online payments are considered vital by individuals and have a huge impact on an individual's intention to use social commerce websites (Ba, 2001; Gefen, Karahanna & Straub, 2003b; Lu, Zhao & Wang, 2010; Wu & Tsang, 2008). Since the success of social commerce depends on its usage by individuals thus it is important for organizations to understand what factors influence an individual's intention to use these websites. The review of literature provides evidence of studies conducted to understand these factors (e.g., Hajli, 2012, 2013; Hajli, 2015; Huang & Benyoucef, 2015; Kim & Park, 2012) but none of them have studied the social commerce environment in Indian context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate factors that influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website in Indian context.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section introduces the concept of social commerce and presents the review of literature for the same. This is followed by discussion on the building of conceptual model for this study and hypothesis development. Subsequent sections elaborate the research methodology used in this study followed by data analysis. The final section of this paper discusses key findings, research implications, limitations, and future scope of this study.

Social commerce

Introduction of Web 2.0 technologies and massive adoption of social networking websites has created new opportunities for online commerce. Social commerce is a new advancement in e-commerce that utilizes Web 2.0 technologies that help interactions among customers and let them be an active content creator (i.e. reviews, recommendations, experience, etc.) that can help others in making decisions regarding the acquisition of products or services (Hajli, 2015, Liang & Turban, 2011). Social commerce differs from e-commerce primarily in two ways, first it is built on the social technology platform and second it encourages social media supported commercial activities as opposed to e-commerce that depends on online system characteristics related to user interface, shopping cart, search engine or preference-based recommender systems that are used to influence online purchase behaviour (Chen & Shen, 2015). In case of social commerce, organizations leverage social media technologies for designing customer oriented business via creating online communities and encouraging customers to share their experience, opinions regarding their products or services (Füller, Bartl, Ernst, & Mühlbacher, 2006; Hajli, 2015). On the other hand, organizations may also choose to join popular social networking websites such as Facebook or Twitter and encourage customers to share their experiences regarding their products or services through organizational Facebook pages or Twitter handles.

The growth of social commerce has gained attention of researchers recently, which is visible in a number of studies conducted in understanding various aspects of social commerce both from organization as well as from customers' point of view. The review of the literature provides evidence of studies conducted to understand the relationship between social commerce and customer purchase intention (e.g., Chen & Shen, 2015; Hajli, 2012, 2013; Hajli, 2015; Kim & Park, 2012; Ng, 2013; Zhang, Lu, Gupta & Zhao, 2014). Erdoğmuş and Tatar (2015) studied the impact of social commerce stimuli on consumer's cognition, affection and activation engagement with a brand on its

social media account, which may result in trust in brand as well as intention to purchase. While Zhang, Benyoucef, and Zhao (2016) explored the role of social commerce in building brand loyalty. These studies have been conducted in different geographies such as UK (Hajli, 2015), China (Bai, Yao, & Dou, 2015; Chen & Shen, 2015), Taiwan & USA (Ng, 2013). In social commerce, however, there has been hardly any research that studied the factors influencing an individual's intention to use social commerce website for purchasing products and services in Indian context. Thus, this study tries to bridge the gap in knowledge and provide Indian customers' perspective of social commerce website adoption.

Conceptual model building

The conceptual model for this study is built on the theoretical grounding of Social Network theory, Trust Transfer theory, and Task-Technology Fit theory. Extensive review of the literature resulted in the identification of six constructs i.e. *informational support*, *community commitment*, *trust towards members*, *trust towards community*, *ease of navigation*, and *website service quality* that influences an individual's intention to use social commerce website. These six constructs were further grouped into three broad categories namely, *social factors*, *trust* and *quality* of a social commerce website created based on Social Support theory, Trust Transfer theory, Task-Technology Fit theory.

Social Network Theory forms the basis of studying the exchange of resources between actors and its impact on their beliefs or behaviour. The actors may be individuals, groups, organizations, or societies (Katz, Lazer, Arrow, & Contractor, 2004; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). These resources can be tangible as well as intangible. In case of online environment intangible resources such as information, social support, or influence play a critical role where each relationship among actors refers to a particular type of resource exchange. Analysis of the patterns of relationships and type of information exchange occurring in an online social network may help in understanding their attitude towards certain events or issues. In case of social commerce websites, it can help in understanding an individual's behaviour regarding sharing information resource with fellow members and its impact on their usage of a website. Thus, Social Network theory is used as a foundation to group two constructs, i.e. *informational support* and *community commitment* to understand the impact of social factors in influencing an individual to use social commerce websites.

Trust Transfer theory suggests that an individual's perceptions regarding an object is influenced either from the insights of other reference objects that are associated with the target object or from diverse sources (Stewart & Zhang, 2003; Ogbanufe & Kim, 2015). According to Stewart (2003) trust transfer can be defined as “when a person (the trustor) bases initial trust in an entity (a person, group, or organization referred to as the target) on trust in some other related entity, or on [sic] a context other than the one in which the target is encountered (e.g. a different place)” (p. 111). Trust among two parties can build up directly or indirectly i.e. either by evaluating an individual's past experiences or by relying on the recommendation provided by an individual (Abdul-Rahman & Hailes, 2000). Based on Trust Transfer theory in this study two constructs i.e. *trust towards members* and *trust towards community* were grouped under trust category to understand the impact of trust on an individual's intention to use social commerce website.

Task-Technology Fit theory explores the “degree to which a technology assists an individual in performing his or her portfolio of tasks” (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995, p. 216). It can be measured using factors such as: quality, locatability, authorization, compatibility, ease of use/training, production timeliness, systems reliability, and relationship with users (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). Number of studies have been conducted to understand the connection between task and technology fit and have found significant relationship between them in continued use of technology by individuals (Fuller & Dennis, 2009; Goodhue & Thompson, 1995). In case of websites the quality is determined by both system functions as well as service. On one hand, easy navigation or use of website helps users in performing their task easily and in less time. On the other hand, good service quality of the website can always lead to the satisfaction and ensures the continued use by an individual (Chiu, Chiu, & Chang, 2007; DeLone & McLean, 2003; Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011). Task-Technology Fit theory forms the basis of third category i.e. Website quality. In this study, the quality of social commerce website is represented by two constructs *ease of navigation* and *service quality*.

Each of these categories and constructs are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Social factors

Social commerce is grounded upon the concept of using social networks for doing online transactions. Thus, individual's behaviour is influenced by the social factors such as support and commitment that encourage the communication and collaboration among members. The existence of social support lead to sharing of information and experiences among members. Further, it also helps individuals in building a strong relationship with members of the network which may result in commitment to the community an individual is part of (Liang *et al.* 2011). Thus, in this study, *informational support* and *community commitment* have been identified as factors that influence an individual's decision to use social commerce.

Informational support

Components of social factors influencing the behaviour of individuals may differ from context to context. In social setting, individuals seek four types of support from environment namely: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal (House, 1981). In context of social commerce, this study adopts informational support as a significant factor influencing the decision to use social commerce.

Informational support denotes views provided by individuals, which can be in any form such as an advice, recommendation or simply an experience of using any product or service. This informational support could be helpful for others in solving problems or making decisions. Savolainen (2015), in his study of online discussion groups identified three types of informational support in an online environment namely, providing factual information, providing advice and providing a personal opinion. In the context of social commerce, individuals may share their experiences or opinions related to purchasing of product, delivery timing, packaging of product while delivering, time taken to deliver product, features of product, as well as experience of using the product, etc. This information is very important for others who are planning to purchase same products as they get a first-hand information from people who have actually bought it rather than reviews provided by organizations. Thus, information support in case of using social commerce impacts an individual's intention to use it as it helps them in making informative decisions (Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang *et al.* 2011). Therefore, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Informational support will positively impact the intention of an individual to use social commerce website.*

Community commitment

Commitment has been, by and large, defined as a psychological bond that “*stabilizes individual behavior under circumstances where the individual would otherwise be tempted to change that behavior*” (Brickman 1987, p. 2). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), organizational commitment is a psychological bond that describes an individual's relationship with an organization. This is also significant in case of any community an individual is part of. In the context of social commerce, this study identifies individual's commitment to online communities as one of the significant factors that influences their intention to use social commerce.

Online communities are basically voluntary structures wherein individuals decide their role and participation (Moon & Sproull, 2008). Not only that, but the success and sustainability of these online communities also count on individuals' commitment for continued association (Wasko and Faraj, 2000). Prior studies have demonstrated that the higher level of commitment towards an online community will lead to more participation by individuals within that community (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2011; Wu, Chen, & Chung, 2010). Not only, this but an individual also create strong emotional connection with the community (e.g., Greer 2000) and identifies with it (Blanchard & Markus 2004). This is also reflected in an individual's intention to keep track of the conversations and activities happening in an online community as well as staying updated regarding how an online community is growing and evolving. In the social commerce context, social networking websites provide a platform to the individuals to share their experiences related to shopping any product or using any service. In addition to that they can also browse through the recommendations of others using the social platform and having a similar interest. Thus, if individuals find an online community that shares their interest and feels that their recommendation or opinion is being considered valuable by other community members, then they feel a sense of belonging. This results in influencing their intention to put an

extra effort to be a part of that community and continue membership for a long time. Thus, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *Commitment to online communities will positively impact the intention of an individual to use social commerce website.*

Trust

The key to any successful and long-term relationship is trust and in case of online context, it becomes even more critical due to a lot of uncertainty of digital environment (Pavlou, 2003). Trust has been studied intensively by researchers to understand its impact on an individual's intention to use online platform for purchases (e.g. Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003b; Hoffman, Novak, & Peralta, 1999; Kim, 2012; Mcknight & Chervany, 2001). In case of social commerce, individuals have a tendency to seek advice from online communities and members who they can trust to provide correct information regarding their experience of purchasing a product or using any online service (Chen & Shen, 2015). This study aims to investigate the impact of trust, specifically towards both members as well as community on an individual's intention to use social commerce.

Trust towards members

Trust towards members is identified as an individual's willingness to count on the suggestions, opinions, and views of other members of a social commerce community (Chen & Shen, 2015). In context of social commerce, success depends on how much an individual can trust the views posted by other members of a social commerce community. Review of literature provides evidence of influence of trust towards online community members on an individual's intention to involve in online transactions (e.g. Lu, Zhao, & Wang, 2010; Mcknight & Chervany, 2001; Wu & Tsang, 2008). In the case of social commerce trust towards members is visible in the way members communicate and are ready to help each other in case any issue arises or any problem is faced by an individual in making decision. In addition to that, members are also trusted when information provided by them is considered relevant by others for making decisions. This will lead an individual's intention to use social commerce. Thus, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Trust towards social commerce community members will positively influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website.*

Trust towards community

Trust towards community refers to an individual's perception of online community as a reliable and capable online platform for providing quality services for social interaction as well as online commerce (Chen & Shen, 2015; Lu et al., 2010). The relationship between trust in the community and an individual's intention to be the part of that community is well established in the literature (Ba, 2001; Hung, Li, & Tse, 2011; Matsuo, 2009; Sun, 2010). In case of social commerce trust in the community is basically assessed for the brand of the provider of the online social commerce platform as well as its ability to meet individual's expectations from an online community because these factors affect an individual's trust in an online community (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003a; Gefen et al., 2003b). Thus, if an individual has a positive perception towards social commerce community, then he or she will be influenced to use social commerce. Therefore, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. *Trust in social commerce community will positively influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website.*

Website quality

Social commerce basically uses social networking websites for commercial activities (Liang et al., 2011). The importance of the quality for website for doing an online business has been proved significant number of times by various studies in the context of online retail (Bai, Law, & Wen, 2008; Lee & Kozar, 2006), online government services (Sørum, Andersen, & Clemmensen, 2013), online education (Lin, 2010), and online ticket booking (Sam &

Tahir, 2009). In the context of social commerce, this study focuses on two aspects of website quality namely, ease of navigation and service quality.

Ease of navigation

In the context of social commerce, social interaction is the key as it plays a critical role in an individual's intention to use social commerce website. This is where navigation of website plays key role as it impacts on an individual's effort to use a website (Ye, Fu, & Law, 2016). Being able to easily navigate various functions and features of the website encourages individuals to use the website for fulfilling their objective be it gathering information, communication or collaboration. Thus, it is important that social commerce website should be designed in such a way that users are able to post their views, respond to the other member's queries as well as communicate with each other with ease as well as be able to use various functions and features without any technical hiccup. In addition to that, response time is also critical in social commerce as users will tend to return to the website second time if they had a good experience of quick response from the members of website regarding their queries or opinions. Thus, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5. *Ease of navigation of social commerce website will positively influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website.*

Service quality

Liang, Ho, Li, and Turban (2011, p73) define service quality as “the degree to which a user evaluates supports and services delivered by the service provider via the Web site.” In context of social commerce, website service quality is evaluated by the users in terms of how quickly their queries are resolved as well as how they are handled by the customer care executive. This becomes significant when a user who is not tech savvy faces a technical glitch and customer service provider is able to help him resolve the issue without making him or her uncomfortable regarding technical jargons and complex processes. Moreover, since a social commerce website will be used for online transactions, users need to be ensured that website is reliable enough to share their personal as well as payment details as they will be protected. Thus, if a social commerce website provides a good service quality, then it will positively impact an individual's intention to use the website for online transactions. Therefore, this study proposes following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6. *Service quality of social commerce website will positively influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website.*

Finally, in this study an individual's intention to use social commerce is assessed by understanding how much an individual is willing to share their experiences and give suggestions when members of the social commerce website

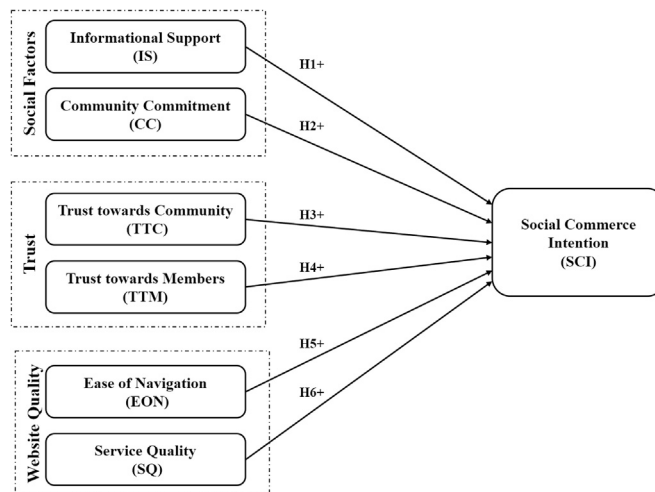


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

Table 1
Constructs and items.

Construct	Item code	Item description	Reference
Informational Support (IS)	IS1	On the XX, some people would offer suggestions when I needed help.	Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang et al., 2011
	IS2	When I encountered a problem, some people on the XX would give me information to help me overcome the problem.	
	IS3	When faced with difficulties, some people on the XX would help me discover the cause and provide me with suggestions.	
Community Commitment (CC)	CC1	I have a real emotional attachment to XX.	Bateman et al., 2011; Chen & Shen, 2015
	CC2	I feel a strong connection to XX.	
	CC3	I feel a sense of belonging toward the XX.	
	CC4	I feel like a part of the group at XX.	
Trust toward Community (TTC)	TTC1	The performance of XX always meets my expectations.	Chen & Shen, 2015; Liang et al., 2011
	TTC2	XX can be counted on as a good social networking site.	
	TTC3	XX is a reliable social networking site.	
Trust toward Members (TTM)	TTM1	Members in XX will always try and help me out if I get into difficulties.	Chang & Chuang, 2011; Chen & Shen, 2015; Chow & Chan, 2008
	TTM2	Members in XX always keep the promises they make to one another.	
	TTM3	Members in XX are truthful in dealing with one another.	
Ease of Navigation (EON)	EON1	XX has a function that allows users to provide quick responses and feedback.	Liang et al., 2011
	EON2	XX provides a friendly user interface.	
	EON3	XX makes it easy to contact my friends.	
	EON4	XX makes it easy to provide information to my friends.	
Service Quality (SVQ)	SVQ1	XX provides a dependable service.	Liang et al., 2011
	SVQ2	XX gives prompt service to users.	
	SVQ3	XX is always willing to help users to apply its services.	
	SVQ4	I feel safe when I use XX.	
	SVQ5	XX pays attention to the user's individual needs.	
	SVQ6	XX understands the specific needs of its users.	
Social Commerce Intention (SCI)	SCI1	I am willing to provide my experiences and suggestions when my friends in XX want my advice on buying something	Chen & Shen, 2015; Zhang et al., 2014
	SCI2	I am willing to share my own shopping experiences with my friends in XX.	
	SCI3	I am willing to recommend a product that is worth buying to my friends in XX.	
	SCI4	I will consider the shopping experiences of my friends in XX when I want to shop	
	SCI5	I will ask my friends in XX to provide me with their suggestions before I go for shopping	
	SCI6	I am willing to buy the products recommended by my friends in XX.	

request for advice on buying something. In addition to that, impacts of member's suggestions and reviews are also visible in an individual's intention to purchase products using social commerce website based on a member's recommendations. In sum, Fig. 1 represents conceptual model of this study that contains six constructs representing social factors, trust and website quality of social commerce that is proposed to influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website. Details of each construct and their items are represented in Table 1.

Table 2
Demographic attributes of the respondents.

Demographic categories	Range	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	186	58.86%
	Female	130	41.14%
Age	Less than 20	48	15.19%
	20–29	74	23.42%
	30–39	112	35.44%
	40–49	58	18.35%
	Over 50	24	7.59%
Education level	12 th Standard	55	17.41%
	Bachelor Degree	155	49.05%
	Masters or higher degree	71	22.47%
	others	35	11.08%
Monthly family income (INR)	Less than 50,000	45	14.24%
	50,001–1,00,000	88	27.85%
	1,00,001–1,50,000	95	30.06%
	1,50,001–2,00,000	56	17.72%
	Above 2,00,000	32	10.13%
Social Commerce websites used (multiple responses)	wooplr.com	45	10.39%
	klip.in	65	15.01%
	limeroad.com	84	19.40%
	ownow.com	62	14.32%
	etailone.com	44	10.16%
	promon.in	57	13.16%
	others	76	17.55%
Length of Social Commerce website usage	Less than 3 months	95	30.06%
	Between 3 and 6 months	119	37.66%
	Between 6 and 12 months	64	20.25%
	More than 12 months	38	12.03%

Research methodology

This empirical study was conducted using a questionnaire survey method to understand the relationship between the six constructs: informational support (IS), community commitment (CC), trust towards members (TTM), trust towards community (TTC), ease of navigation (EON), website service quality (SQ) and an individual's intention to use social commerce website (SCI) as specified in the conceptual model. Questionnaire was developed to measure these constructs through 29 items as specified in Table 1. and six-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, ..., 6=strongly agree) was used to measure each item. An even numbered scale is used to encourage respondents to

choose one of the values, which is more representative of their opinion rather than selecting a neutral response from odd numbered scale, which may lead to results that may not be true representation of study. Survey was conducted online during January 2016 - March 2016 wherein the survey link was mailed to around 950 individuals who are using the social commerce website in India. A total of 325 responses were received. Preliminary analysis of data was done and 9 responses were dropped as they were incomplete. This resulted in total 316 usable responses. Further structured equation modeling (SEM) was used to validate the model and test the hypothesized relationships between various constructs as specified in the conceptual model of this study.

The Table 2 represents demographic details of the respondents. Age of respondents ranged from 18 to 56 years, and a majority were male (58.86%). All the respondents have been using social commerce and majority of them have been using it for last 3–6 months (37.66%). Respondents of this study has been using Indian social commerce websites like limeroad.com (19.40%), klip.in (15.01%), ownow.com (14.32%), etc. for various online transactions ranging from buying apparels, home furnishing, electronics, to buying great deals of restaurants, movie tickets, etc.

Data analysis and results

Structural equation modeling is selected for this study because it gives an ability to the researcher to examine interrelationships among multiple dependent and independent variables simultaneously as well as investigating the causal relationships between latent constructs and multiple measurement items (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). In this study, AMOS version 24 was used to perform structural equation modeling on the data. Two-step approach was adopted to perform SEM analysis as suggested by Gerbing and Anderson (1992). First step involved identifying the fit of the measurement model through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the second step, hypothesized relationships among constructs were tested using the structural model. Detailed analysis and results of these steps are presented in the following sections.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Prior to testing the proposed structural model, the measurement model was tested via a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Initially, measurement model was developed consisting of seven latent constructs, namely: informational support (IS), community commitment (CC), trust towards community (TTC), trust towards members (TTM), ease of navigation (EON), website service quality (SQ), and intention to use social commerce (SCI). These seven constructs were measured through 29 items. In this study, Maximum Likelihood estimation technique was used for estimating the parameters. The first step involved testing the fit of the measurement model, which was followed by examining convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs.

Measurement model fit was assessed, and results reveal that the measurement model fit the data well as its fit indices met all their threshold values. As shown in Table 3, the proposed measurement model exhibited good fit in terms of SRMR and the RMSEA with values equal to 0.043 and 0.023 respectively. The obtained values of incremental fit index (IFI) was equal to 0.988; comparative fit index (CFI) was equal to 0.988, and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) is equal to 0.986. Thus, values of all measures of model fit exceeded the minimum suggested values. Additionally, the ratio of χ^2/df was found within the acceptable threshold level with the value equal to 1.165. Thus, results of the goodness of fit indices confirmed that the model sufficiently fitted the data.

As suggested by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), convergent validity was established by examining the factor loadings, composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct. Convergent validity can be

Table 3
Goodness-of-fit indices for measurement model.

	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Measurement model	1.165	0.988	0.986	0.988	0.023	0.043
Recommended values	$1.0 < \chi^2/df < 3.0$	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.06	< 0.08

Note: χ^2/df =chi-square/df ratio; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; TLI=Tucker Lewis Index; IFI=Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Residual.

Table 4
Convergent validity of the constructs.

Construct	Items	SFL	Critical Ratio	CR	AVE
Informational Support (IS)				0.805	0.554
	IS1	0.788	10.726		
	IS2	0.731	10.305		
	IS3	0.785	— ^a		
Community Commitment (CC)				0.869	0.627
	CC1	0.818	17.009		
	CC2	0.826	16.719		
	CC3	0.798	17.327		
	CC4	0.836	— ^a		
Trust toward Community (TTC)				0.838	0.642
	TTC1	0.850	14.560		
	TTC2	0.809	14.902		
	TTC3	0.831	— ^a		
Trust toward Members (TTM)				0.825	0.647
	TTM1	0.845	15.110		
	TTM2	0.858	14.576		
	TTM3	0.837	— ^a		
Ease of Navigation (EON)				0.864	0.554
	EON1	0.779	13.693		
	EON2	0.832	14.696		
	EON3	0.795	13.552		
	EON4	0.799	— ^a		
Service Quality (SVQ)				0.880	0.554
	SVQ1	0.680	11.791		
	SVQ2	0.739	12.506		
	SVQ3	0.784	14.818		
	SVQ4	0.774	13.964		
	SVQ5	0.828	15.412		
	SVQ6	0.806	— ^a		
Social Commerce Intention (SCI)				0.908	0.619
	SCI1	0.801	— ^a		
	SCI2	0.826	16.315		
	SCI3	0.810	16.530		
	SCI4	0.807	15.284		
	SCI5	0.793	14.714		
	SCI6	0.775	14.827		

Note. All items loaded on significantly to their respective constructs at $p < 0.001$.

SFL=standardized factor loading. CR=composite reliability. AVE=average variance extracted.

^aRegression weight = 1.

Table 5
Discriminant validity of the constructs.

Items	IS	CC	TTC	TTM	EON	SVQ	SCI
IS	0.715						
CC	0.219	0.792					
TTC	0.231	0.437	0.801				
TTM	0.379	0.275	0.304	0.804			
EON	0.454	0.156	0.126	0.192	0.758		
SVQ	0.303	0.267	0.175	0.234	0.166	0.744	
SCI	0.368	0.279	0.361	0.176	0.180	0.347	0.787
Mean	4.62	4.59	4.51	4.61	4.53	4.61	4.60
Standard Deviation	0.862	0.917	0.802	0.905	0.812	0.919	0.756
Skewness	−1.052	−1.136	−1.036	−1.064	−1.112	−1.042	−0.268
Kurtosis	1.235	1.105	0.852	0.915	1.035	0.968	0.901

Note. The values of the square root of the average variance extracted are on the diagonal; all other entries are the correlations.

evaluated by investigating the factor loadings and their significance through critical ratio (C.R.). As presented in Table 4 all the value of the critical ratio is greater than 1.96 denoting that items are significantly different from zero at the $p < 0.05$ level (Byrne, 2009). On the other hand, at the level of latent construct AVE is used to measure the overall amount of variance that is attributed to the construct in relation to the amount of variance attributable to measurement error. As specified in Table 4 composite reliability of all latent constructs was observed well within the defined value of > 0.7 (Hair et al. 2009) and ranged between 0.805 and 0.908. Further, the values of AVEs were found greater than the suggested value of 0.50 (Bagozzi & Baumgartner, 1994) for each construct. Thus, analysis of data confirms convergent validity.

Discriminant validity evaluates the variance shared between a construct and any other construct in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As suggested by Farrell and Rudd (2009), “Discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the shared variance (squared correlation) between each pair of constructs against the average of the AVEs for these two constructs” (p. 5). In this case, greater values of square roots of the AVEs than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and column's advocates that the given latent construct is more strongly correlated with its measurement items than with the other constructs in the model, thus achieving discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2009). Table 5 presents the results and confirms that the absolute values of correlations between the pairs of latent constructs were found less than the square of the AVEs. This validates strong evidence of discriminant validity among the latent constructs.

Hence, results of confirmatory factor analysis indicated that measurement items used in the measurement model possessed adequate reliability as well as sufficient convergent and discriminant validity. Further data was analysed for linearity and multicollinearity. Linearity was tested using curve estimation for all the relationships specified in the model, and all relationships were found sufficiently linear. Data was also analysed for multicollinearity and VIF for each latent construct was calculated and none of these exceeded 3, indicating that multicollinearity of the data set fell within an acceptable range (Montgomery, 2001). This is followed by testing of the structural model, which is discussed in the next section.

Table 6
Goodness-of-fit indices for structural model.

	χ^2 / df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Structural Model	1.172	0.967	0.975	0.967	0.025	0.045
Recommended values	$1.0 < \chi^2 / df < 3.0$	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.06	< 0.08

Note: χ^2 / df =chi-square/df ratio; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; TLI=Tucker Lewis Index; IFI=Incremental Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Residual.

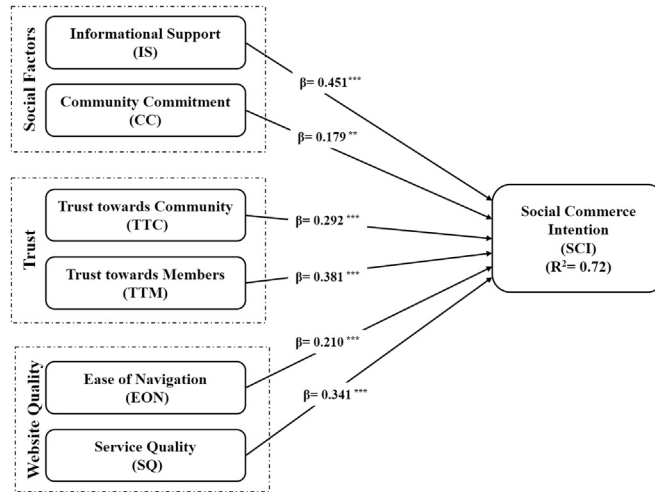


Fig. 2. Hypothesis Testing results.

Structural model

The structural model Fit indices are presented in Table 6. Review of these results suggests that hypothesized structural model appears to fit the data well. The structural model exhibited good fit in terms of SRMR with a value equal to 0.045 and RMSEA with value 0.025. The obtained values of incremental fit index (IFI) was equal to 0.967; comparative fit index (CFI) was equal to 0.967, and TLI is equal to 0.975. Thus, values of all measures of model fit exceeded the minimum suggested values. Additionally, the ratio of χ^2/df was found with the acceptable threshold level with the value equal to 1.172. Next step involved testing the hypothesis.

The output of the overall structural model with hypothesized relationships is represented in Fig. 2. The model was defined by twenty-nine measurement items that identified the seven latent constructs. Total six causal paths as described in Table 7 were examined using path estimates and critical ratio (C.R.). Hair et al. (2009) suggest that when the critical ratio (C.R.) is higher than 1.96 for an estimate (regression weight), then the parameter coefficient value is considered statistically significant at the 0.05 levels. Parameter estimates are presented in Table 7 and demonstrates that C.R. values were above 1.96 for six causal paths, i.e. H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 confirming positive and statistically significant paths with $\beta=0.451, 0.179, 0.292, 0.381, 0.210,$ and 0.341 respectively.

All the nine hypothesis i.e. H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6 were found statistically significant. Further, the output of revised structural model in Fig. 2 indicates that all the independent variables i.e. informational support (IS), community commitment (CC), trust towards community (TTC), trust towards members (TTM), ease of navigation (EON), and website service quality (SQ), accounted for 72% of the total variance in explaining the intention to use social commerce website ($R^2 = 0.72$). Thus, results indicate adequate model fit between the proposed research model and empirical data.

Table 7
Hypothesis testing results.

Path	Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	p	β	Hypothesis testing result
H1. IS → SCI	0.260	0.042	8.049	***	0.451	Accepted
H2. CC → SCI	0.138	0.035	2.281	**	0.179	Accepted
H3. TTC → SCI	0.168	0.031	4.329	***	0.292	Accepted
H4. TTM → SCI	0.241	0.041	6.657	***	0.381	Accepted
H5. EON → SCI	0.185	0.039	3.469	***	0.210	Accepted
H6. SVQ → SCI	0.284	0.041	6.384	***	0.341	Accepted

S.E.=standardized error; C.R.=critical ratio (> [1.96]); β =standardized regression weights.
ns=not significant; *p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Discussion

This study investigated various factors that influence an individual's intention to use social commerce website in Indian Context by developing a conceptual model. In the proposed conceptual model six factors were identified which were grouped into three broad categories i.e. social factors (i.e. IS, CC), trust (i.e. TTM, TTC), and website quality (EON, SQ). The model was empirically tested through a questionnaire survey method. Findings of the study show a positive and statistically significant relationship between the six identified factors and an individual's intention to use social commerce website.

This study identified two social factors that impact an individual's decision to use social commerce website namely: informational support (IS) and community commitment (CC). Though both factors were found statistically significant but the impact of IS was statistically found the strongest among all the six factors identified in influencing an individual's decision to use social commerce website in this study. The reason for this may respondents felt that the information an individual gets from online communities is easy to access and share through social commerce website unlike identifying the users in real world and finding out their experience of using any product or service without any constraint of time or location. This finding is in line with the prior research conducted by other researchers who found a strong association between IS and intention to use social commerce website (e.g., [Chen & Shen, 2015](#)). On the other hand, in this study the impact of community commitment (CC) was identified the least. The reason may be that this study only focused on analysing the factors that influence the decision to use social commerce website rather than identify factors that impact continuous usage and loyalty of social commerce website. In such case an individual will not only use the information submitted by others but also provide and share his or her experience making him or her more involved and committed to the online community.

Trust towards members (TTM) as well as community (TTC) were hypothesized to have positive relation with an individual's intention to use social commerce website. Findings of this study revealed that the impact of TTM is second highest among all the six factors identified in this study. This is in line with the prior studies conducted by [Chen and Shen \(2015\)](#) and [Ng \(2013\)](#), where trust was identified significant in influencing customers purchase intention through social commerce websites. The reason that the impact of TTC was identified less than TTM may be the members and their credibility is considered more important than the community. The impact of reviews, opinions, and recommendations is more on individuals when they know that members of online community posting these provide valuable insights rather than vague comments. In addition to that TTC was also identified important as respondents felt that credibility of social commerce website will attract more customers if they have an image of providing online platform for real customers and their reviews rather than fake or paid reviews by fake customers.

Finally, quality of website was studied through two factors ease of navigation (EON) and service quality (SQ). EON was considered important by respondents because they felt that social commerce website with easy navigations allows them to search and share information quickly without any technical help thus making it more convenient to use social commerce websites. This result is in sync with studies conducted by [Ye et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Zhang et al. \(2016\)](#) where interactivity of website was found statistically significant in adoption of online services. On the other hand, SQ was found to have very strong influence on the decision to use social commerce website. In this study individuals assessed the service quality in terms of reliability, promptness in response, safety of personal information, and understanding as well as customising services according to user's preferences. This result is also strongly supported by studies conducted by [Liang and Turban \(2011\)](#).

In sum, this study conducted in an Indian environment identified that information support (IS) has the strongest influence on an individual's intention to use social commerce website followed by trust towards members (TTM), website service quality (SC), ease of use (EON), trust towards community (TTC) and community commitment (CC).

Research implications

This study investigates the role of various factors representing social, trust and quality of social commerce website in influencing an individual's intention to use these sites for purchasing products or services. Finding of this study has both theoretical as well as practical implications. The practical contribution of this study is that the findings of these studies can be utilized by Indian organizations which are already using or planning to use social networking websites for commercial purpose in understanding individual's preferences in selecting social commerce website such as informational support, website service quality, etc. and designing strategies accordingly to improve their user base. In

addition to that trust of social commerce website and community was identified important in this study which recommends to organizations that just creating an online social community is not enough but it is also important to ensure authenticity of members and their credibility which will attract new customers. In terms of theoretical implications, this study proposes a new model which incorporates three dimensions of social commerce websites i.e. social, trust, and website quality having total six factors and presents an individual's perspective regarding adoption of these websites.

Limitations and future scope

There are few limitations of this study which may provide interesting opportunities for researchers for further research. First of all, it was a cross-sectional study identifying factors influencing the intention of individuals to use social commerce website. Further studies can expand this research model by including the relationship between various factors identified in this study and continued intention of a member of social commerce website which may also lead to member loyalty. Second limitation of the study is that it has considered two factors for each aspect i.e. social, trust, and website quality of social commerce website. Future studies can analyze impact of other factors related to social commerce website such as consumer impulsiveness, social sharing intention, risk, convenience, etc.

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