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Paper:

Hajli, N. (2019). Social commerce and the future of e-commerce. *Computers in Human Behavior*
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.009>

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Special Issue: Social Commerce and the Future of e-Commerce

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Individuals often socially interact with their peers through online communities which support their decision-making behaviour. These social interactions are mostly due to the rise of social networking sites through the recent development in Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies. One area in which we see this is social commerce. Social commerce is a new stream in e-commerce, in which consumers use social media in their purchasing journey (M. N. Hajli, 2014; X. Wang, Tajvidi, Lin, & Hajli, 2019). In social commerce, consumers provide social support for each other by not only persuading other consumers to establish more interconnectivity with their peers, but also by giving a number of unique opportunities to firms to co-create social value with customers building trust in e-commerce platforms (N. Hajli, 2014).

Social commerce is a product of social media in e-commerce and is progressively drawing more attention from scholars and practitioners (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). It is also a productive tool for marketing, for example, for branding (Hew, Lee, Ooi, & Lin, 2016; Y.

Wang & Hajli, 2014) and driving sales (Turban et al., 2010); as well as improving shopping experience by enhancing interpersonal interactions (Liu, Chu, Huang, & Chen, 2016). The emergence of social commerce has resulted in the empowerment of users, as the Internet and specifically Web 2.0 has transferred power from sellers to buyers (Gu, Park, & Konana, 2012; Wei, Straub, & Poddar, 2011). This new stream in e-commerce has emerged by the popularity of social media and social networking sites (SNS). The growing popularity and SNS usage has led to the integration of social media technologies on to the e-commerce platform in order to attract and engage more consumers. Use of these technologies further led to the new ways of shopping such as sharing commerce. Sharing commerce is based on a sharing economy where people share their ideas, opinions, information, products and services with the society (Nisar, Hajli, Prabhakar, & Dwivedi, 2019). The study of social commerce and sharing commerce can increase our understanding in this new area of research. Firms reach the point that value is not only produced within the firms themselves, but where firms need to develop strategies to co-create value along with the social entities (consumers, businesses) in the external environment. Social value is the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives. Some, but not all of this value is captured in market prices. It is important to consider and measure this social value from the perspective of those affected by an organisation's work (Di Domenico et al., 2010). Examples of social value might be the value we experience from increasing our confidence, or from living next to a community park. These things are important to us, but are not commonly expressed or measured in the same way that financial value is. To this end, scholars and businesses are investigating sites using social networking as tools, to find ways how they can generate value. We believe that social commerce is one of the foundations for social value co-creation.

Towards these ends, this topic has interest not only for marketers to develop their social media strategies, but also for academics to develop the theoretical foundation for social commerce.

Social commerce is also linked to big data analytics. For example, Social commerce information sharing can fuel market agility understanding, which can empower firms for product innovation process through big data analytics (Hajli & Tajvidi, 2019). As such, the future research on social commerce, should emphasise social commerce constructs, which include reviews, ratings, forums, communities, referrals etc. (Hajli, 2015; Tajvidi, Richard, Wang, & Hajli, 2018) which produce big data. Big data can be complemented with data analytics to understand customer agility for new product success. For example, using data analytics to analyse the data (reviews or feedback) can identify various aspects such as consumers expectations, satisfaction etc., according to which the new products can be further modified and marketed.

In this special issue, we present articles, both theoretical and empirical. The first article entitled “A Network-Based Conceptualization of Social Commerce and Social Commerce Value” focuses on social commerce networks (SCNs) where digital network ties are created and leveraged by consumers and business entities as they connect and interact among and between each other. Based on this definition, it develops a typology of key SCN structures, and it proposes a framework depicting the value that consumers and businesses can gain from creating and exploiting them. The authors explain how the proposed SCN concept, typology, and framework can guide future conversations on the topic of social commerce, and how they can provide researchers and practitioners with a better understanding of social commerce and its considerable value potential.

The second article entitled “In Sharing Economy We Trust: Examining the Effect of Social and Technical Enablers on Millennials Trust in Sharing Commerce” defines sharing commerce as an e-commerce business model where service providers (who possess goods) and customers (who acquire temporary ownership for a fee) are connected through commercial networking systems tailored by service enablers. The authors argue that sharing commerce to date

investigate key drivers of consumer engagement in sharing commerce platforms, but relatively little attention has been given to the role of trust, and trust formation. Drawing on socio-technical theory, this article examines the effect of social and technical enablers on consumer trust and whether trust influences users' continued use and positive word of-mouth (WOM) in the context of sharing commerce. Results of an empirical study (N=211 active Airbnb millennial users) indicate that social referrals, information quality and transaction safety positively affect users' trust, which in turn facilitate their continued intention to use the sharing commerce platform and share positive word-of-mouth testimonials and postings thus sharing positive consumption experiences with other consumers.

The third article entitled "Analyzing the Effect of Social Support and Community Factors on Customer Engagement and its Impact on Loyalty Behaviors towards Social Commerce Websites" explores the influence of social support and community factors on customer engagement and the subsequent effects on customer loyalty toward social commerce websites. In this article, the authors propose a model to investigate the differences between the influence of social support and three community factors (community drivenness, community identification and community trust) on customer engagement, and the impact of customer engagement on four customer loyalty dimensions, one transactional (repurchase intention) and three non-transactional (willingness to co-create, stickiness intention and positive eWOM intention). Through a survey, they collected data from 437 users of Facebook social commerce websites. The findings show that customer engagement is a key predictor of the four dimensions of customer loyalty towards social commerce websites. In addition, the results indicate that social support and two community factors significantly affect customer engagement.

The fourth article entitled "Towards Building a Value Co-Creation Circle in Social Commerce" with a marketing perspective proposes a value co-creation circle and explores the key factors

for developing a successful value co-creation circle on social commerce platforms. In this research, the authors collected information from face-to-face interviews with the managers and analysed using Google Analytics. The authors argue that the proposed value co-creation circle not only creates benefits from network externality by the growth in membership, but also enhances service quality in the social commerce platform. This study explores a new perspective of the value co-creation circle in the social commerce environment that allows practitioners to develop a value circulation by network externality and co-create value with customers.

Finally, the last article entitled “The impact of atmospheric cues on consumer’s approach and avoidance behavioural intentions in social commerce websites” draws on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework. It investigates the effects of atmospheric cues (i.e., task, aesthetic and social cues) on consumer approach and avoidance intentions in social commerce environments. The authors elucidate the interaction mechanisms between atmospheric cues and consumers’ evaluations through the lens of perceived affordances. Then they investigate how three types of perceived affordances (i.e., utilitarian, hedonic and connective) influence consumers’ approach and avoidance behavioral intentions. The authors’ three-way factorial experiment provides strong evidence where task cues, aesthetic cues and social cues elicit perceived utilitarian, hedonic and connective affordances, respectively. The results of this article show the approach behavioural intentions were affected by all three types of perceived affordances, yet avoidance intentions were only affected by perceived utilitarian and hedonic affordances.

The above mentioned submissions made good contribution to social commerce stream and link social commerce to marketing, information systems, and sociology.

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