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Factors influencing the adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel by SA consumers.

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Factors influencing the adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel by SA consumers.

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A research proposal submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

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KEYWORDS/CONCEPTS

The following keywords apply to this study:

- Social commerce (S-commerce), eCommerce, Instagram, social media, Theory of planned behavior, online shopping

Abstract

The increasing popularity of social media has led to the rise of social commerce in South Africa. Consumers are welcoming these new modes of shopping as they offer more convenience than traditional electronic commerce methods. This research will seek to identify the factors which influence consumers to use Instagram social commerce. These insights are key to small businesses to attract and retain consumers on Instagram.

This research is composed of fifteen qualitative interviews with purposely selected participants who have had experience using Instagram social commerce. The effect of Experience Quality, Perceived Easiness, Social Influence and Privacy Concerns were explored on consumers' trust and use of Instagram social commerce. Trust theory, Trust theory for social commerce and the Theory of Planned Behavior were used as foundations for this research.

The results revealed that Experience Quality, Perceived Easiness, Social Influence and Privacy Concerns affected consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce. This research allowed us to probe into the details around these factors and identify relevant recommendations for businesses to succeed with Instagram social commerce.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
1. App/s	Application/s
2. eCommerce	Electronic commerce
3. S-commerce	Social commerce
4. CAGR	Compound annual growth rate
5. TPB	Theory of planned behavior

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Purpose

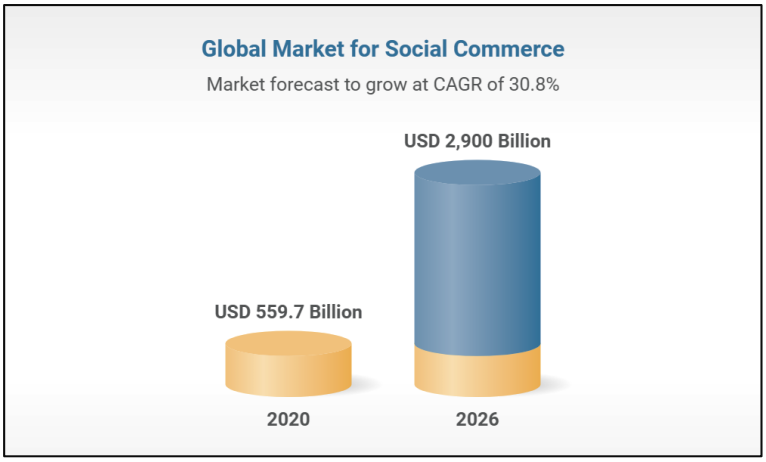
This qualitative study explores South African (SA) consumers' perceptions of adopting the social media application Instagram as a commerce channel.

1.2 Background of the Study

The rise of social media has led to many innovations for businesses & entrepreneurs, allowing them to reach vast audiences at a fraction of the cost (Romanowski et al., 2019). Social media is currently used by over 4.6 billion people globally, and this number is predicted to increase to 5.8 billion users by 2027 (Statista, 2022d). The immense popularity of social media has led to the growth of a phenomenon called social commerce or S-commerce, a concept derived from electronic commerce (eCommerce) (Huang et al., 2012). The core strategy around social commerce is to provide a user-centred experience instead of eCommerce's traditional product/service-focused approach (Huang et al., 2012).

The concept of social commerce was first introduced in 2005 by Yahoo, and despite being around for over a decade, there has been no agreed-upon definition for social commerce among researchers (Wang & Xie, 2020). Prior research indicates there are two types of social commerce. The first type allows social media applications to integrate eCommerce features into their applications, while the second type involves adding social media features to traditional eCommerce websites (Li, 2019). This study will focus on the first type of social commerce that allows consumers to seamlessly shop from their social media applications, focusing on Instagram.

As depicted in *Figure 1* below, from Quarles (2022), the global social commerce market is expected to reach a staggering 2.9 trillion United States Dollars (USD) by 2026 with a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 30.8 percent.



Note: From Social Commerce Global Market Report 2022: Social media platforms critical for brands to ensure consistent audience, by Quarles (2022)*. In the public domain.*

Figure 1: Global Market for Social Commerce

The South African social commerce market is valued at 833 million USD. This value is predicted to reach 9568 million USD by 2028, with a projected CAGR of 51.9 percent (*2022 Insights on the Social Commerce Market*, 2022). The projected rapid growth of the social commerce market is attributed to consumers' increasing preference for mobile solutions (Quarles, 2022), ease of purchase, and discount offers on social commerce apps (Statista, 2021).

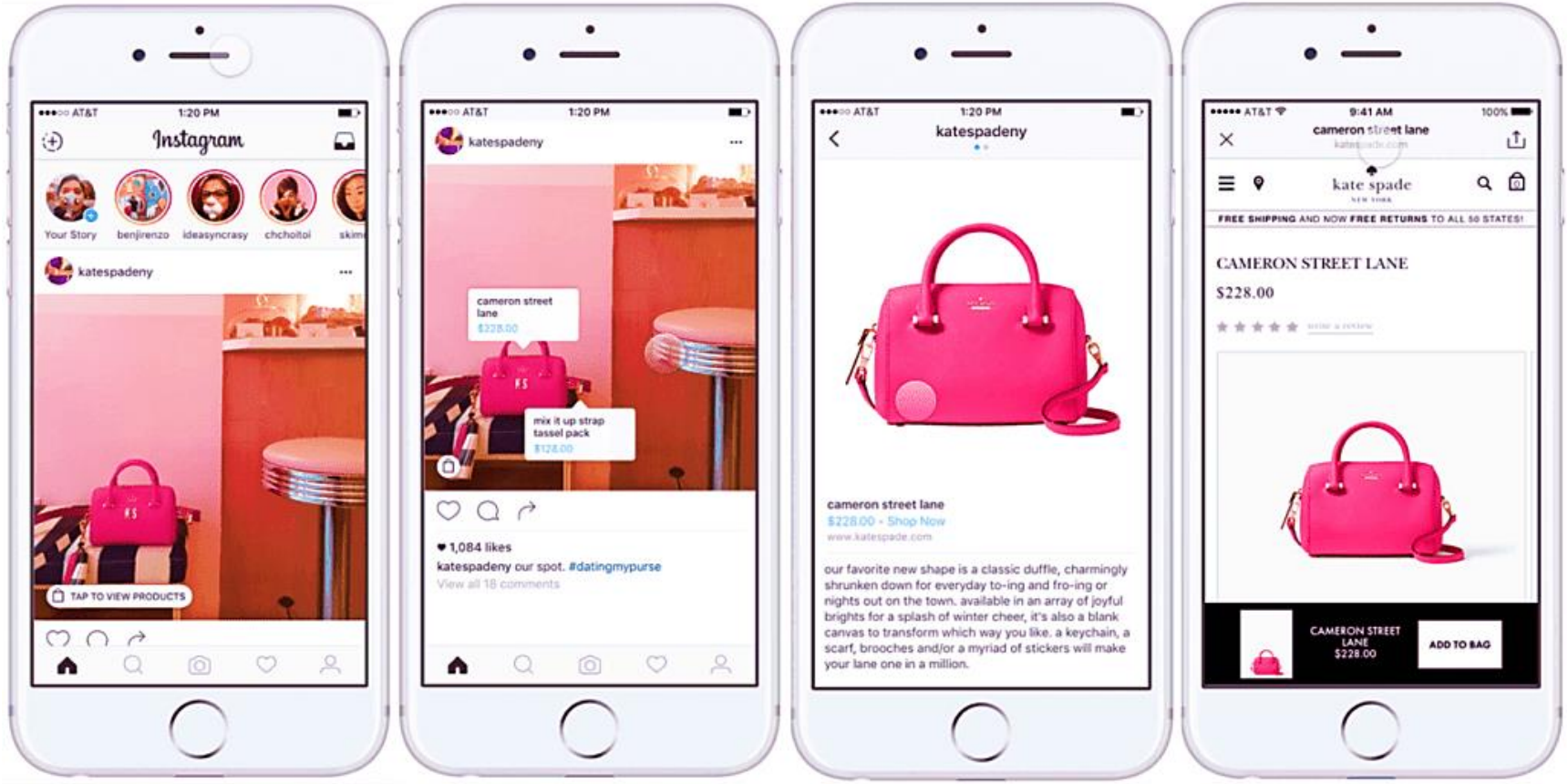
Instagram is a photo-sharing application that was launched in 2010 & is currently owned by Facebook (Romanowski et al., 2019). This popular social media application had over 1.2 billion active users globally in 2021, expected to increase to 1.44 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2022c). According to Statista (2022b), the number of Instagram users in SA has risen from 5.66 million in 2021 to 6.81 million as of March 2022. Instagram can attribute its massive following to its easy-to-use interface and the visual richness of the content displayed on the app (Abed, 2018).

Traditionally marketers and businesses have harnessed the power of Instagram to build their brand image, create client relationships and display their products on their pages (Romanowski et al., 2019). Social media was used predominantly in the product discovery phase of the sales journey (Wang & Xie, 2020).

Instagram then introduced social commerce features in 2016, which allowed businesses to make their posts shoppable with features such as a digital shop, digital product tags, the view-on-website option & most recently, checkout within the Instagram application (Romanowski et al., 2019). The Instagram checkout feature is being trialled in the United States of America (USA) for a select group of brands (Romanowski et al., 2019); however, our research will still include this aspect and get SA users' perceptions on having this feature available in future. According to Campbell (2022), more than 130 million people are using Instagram social commerce globally. These social commerce features on Instagram are explained in the images below.

In *Figure 2* below, the user will click on the '*Tap to view products*' option, making the product tags with the price and product name visible. The user can click on the tag of the desired product to view more details about the product. Users who want to continue purchasing are taken to the brands' website to complete the transaction.

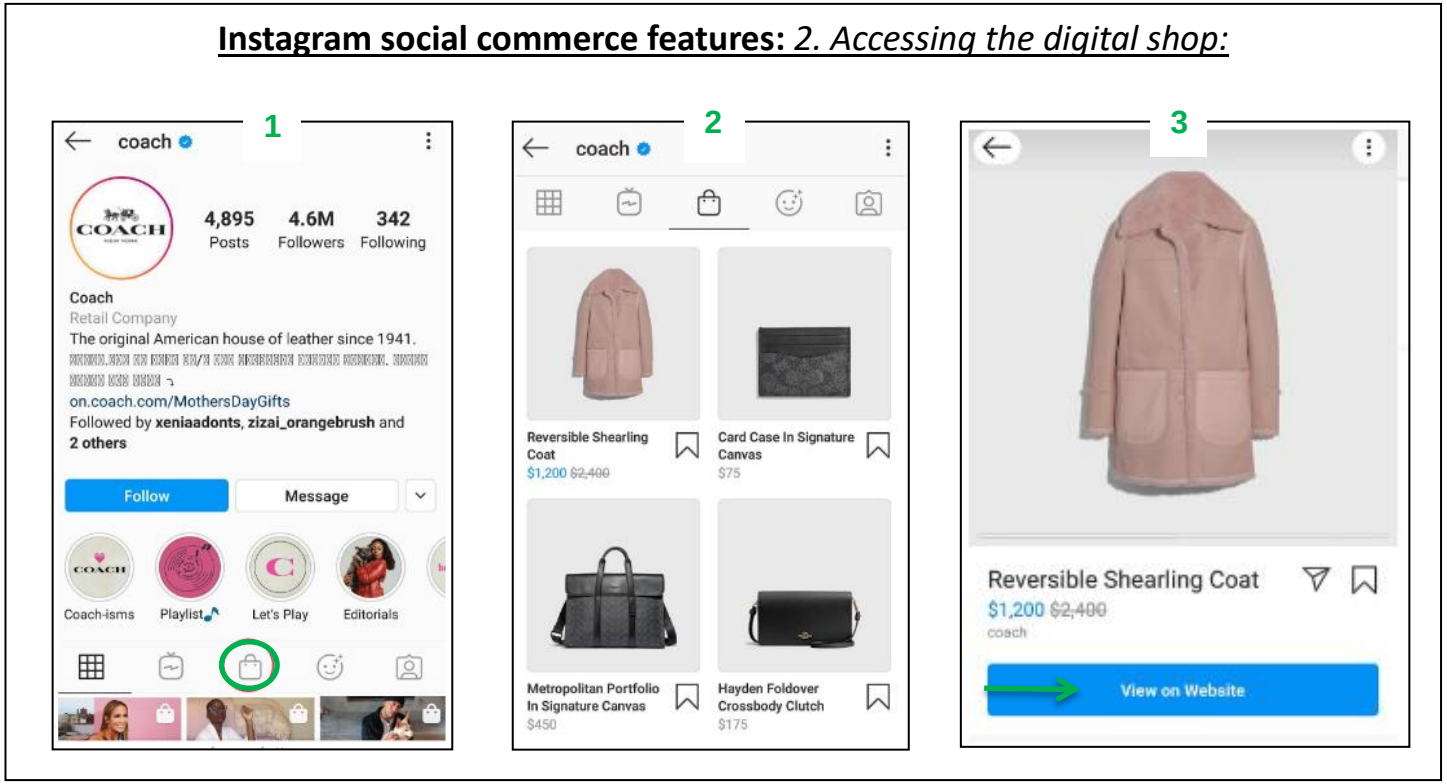
Instagram social commerce features: 1. *Complete purchase on the seller's website:*



Note: From 3 ways you can make social commerce work for your business, by Priest (2018)*. In the public domain.*

Figure 2: Instagram social commerce features: Complete a purchase on the seller's website

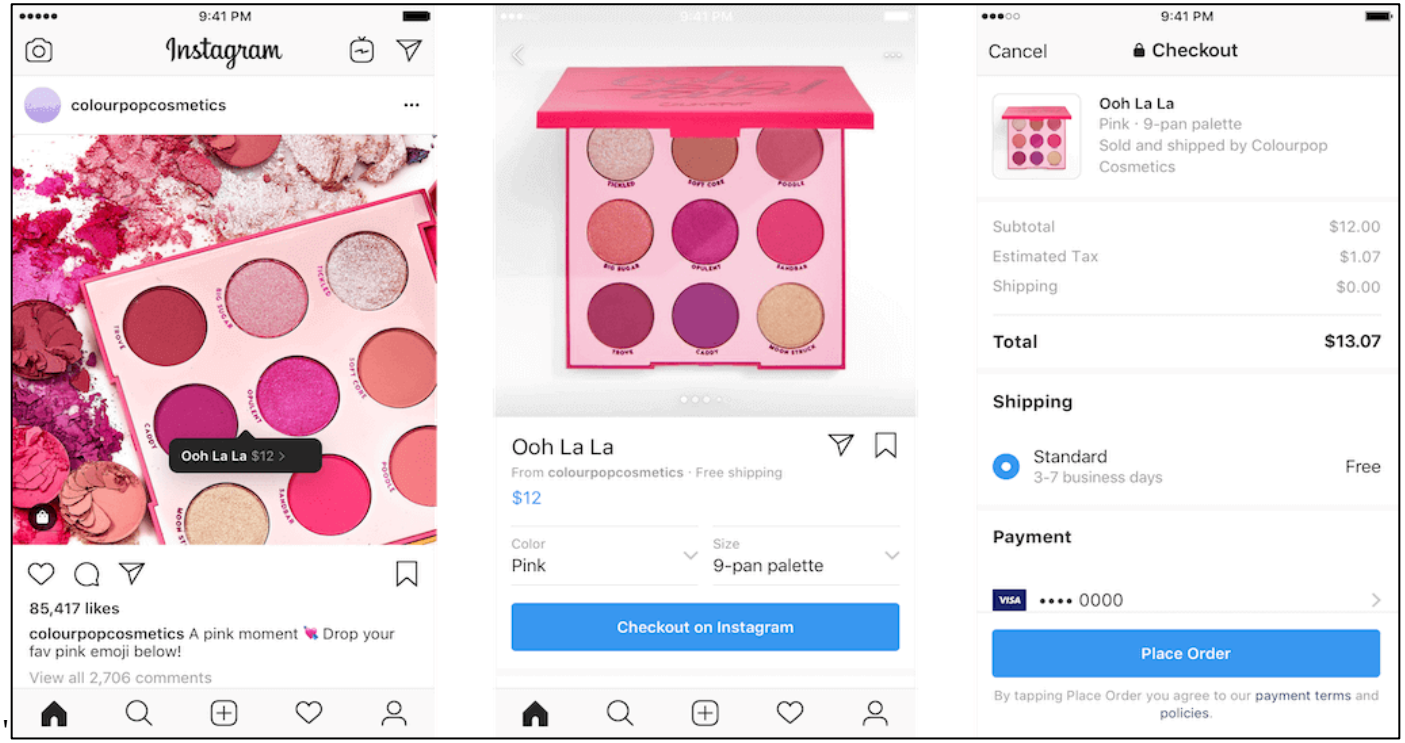
As seen in *Figure 3* below, the digital shop can be accessed from the brand's profile page (image 1). Once an item is clicked, the user can view the details (image 2) and continue purchasing by clicking the '*View-on-website*' button (image 3).



Note: From How Anyone Can Get The SHOP NOW Button On Instagram? by Sharifi (2020) *& How social commerce is changing shopping habits, by* Ekholm (2021). *In the public domain.*

Figure 3: Instagram social commerce features: Accessing the digital shop.

Instagram social commerce features: *3. Checkout on Instagram:*



Note: From a Social Network to a Social Commerce Platform: How Instagram will take Control of the Fashion and Beauty Industry, by Owadenko (2020). *In the public domain.*

Figure 4: Instagram social commerce features: Checkout on Instagram

The checkout feature, displayed in *Figure 4* above, allows users to seamlessly complete a purchase on the Instagram application by clicking the '*Checkout on Instagram*' button, entering payment and shipping information on the app, and clicking '*Place Order*'.

Businesses that use social commerce do not have to rely on consumers searching for their products or websites online. They can present consumers with the advertisement on a social media app and drive the sales process from there (Wiese, 2021). According to Lowes (2022), there has been a rise in the use of social commerce in SA, as consumers prefer to use their social media applications for shopping. This increase in social commerce is due to the high social media usage in SA, with the average daily use being 3.5 hours, exceeding the global average of 2.2 hours (Chaffey, 2022).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of research regarding social commerce in developing countries such as SA, which can assist marketers & businesses in understanding consumer perceptions (Wiese, 2021). This research will focus on the SA consumers' perceptions of social commerce on Instagram and contribute to the existing research for developing countries. The study will focus on Instagram as it is fast becoming the app of choice for commerce, with the highest engagement rate and over fifty-four percent of people indicating they initiated a purchase after seeing a product on Instagram (Romanowski et al., 2019). According to Romanowski et al. (2019), customers consume product information more effortlessly in images, as Instagram depicts.

This research will assist marketers & businesses in understanding consumer perceptions of the commerce features on Instagram, the factors influencing the use of social commerce and consumer concerns regarding the use of social commerce on Instagram. The Instagram checkout feature, being trialled in the USA, will be assessed to determine if its implementation will encourage or discourage participation in Instagram S-commerce in SA. This research will also provide insights for Instagram into improvements that could make social commerce more appealing to consumers.

This research will provide valuable insight into consumer experiences & assist businesses in creating relevant social commerce strategies. Additionally, this research can be applied in other developing countries that have seen an increase in S-commerce use despite low eCommerce penetration.

1.3 Research Problem

According to Lowes (2022), eCommerce penetration in SA remained low at thirty-seven percent in 2022 and is expected to reach forty-nine percent in 2023 (Statista, 2022a). High data costs and internet speed contribute to this low penetration rate (Mthembu et al., 2018). Despite the growing eCommerce sector, online shopping accounts for only two percent of SA's total retail spending, with research indicating that more than fifty percent of consumers still prefer to shop in-store (GWI, 2020). Mthembu et al. (2018) indicate that to overcome internet issues and the high cost of data, companies should invest more in their mobile application strategy, which uses innovative mobile technologies.

The most used eCommerce sites in SA are Takealot and Clicks (Statista, 2023) but despite their popularity, consumers still show a preference to visit physical stores (Liphosa, 2020). Takealot has experienced immense success from being a purely online retailer and gained revenue of eight hundred and twenty-seven million dollars from 2019 to 2022 (Statista, 2023). A huge driver of this growth has been the increased internet usage, with close to eighty percent of the SA population having access to the internet in 2022 (Statista, 2023).

In addition, a lack of trust in secure payment methods (Lowes, 2022) and changing consumer needs (Huang et al., 2012) also contribute to the low eCommerce penetration rate. Consumers are showing an increasing preference for using alternate payment methods that are more flexible via social media apps (Lowes, 2022). According to Huang et al. (2012), consumers expect more interactive experiences from brands & brands are constantly looking for ways to build and strengthen their customer relationships to meet this need. The solution to this can be S-commerce, which brings the buyer and seller closer together and strengthens their relationships (Xiang et al., 2022).

Social commerce is on the rise in SA as it offers consumers a seamless, interactive shopping experience and provides businesses with an innovative way to engage with their consumers (Lowes, 2022). South Africans spend an average of three and a half hours daily on social media, so SA consumers have welcomed

the introduction of convenient social commerce features and embraced social media apps for shopping (Monzon, 2021).

While there are several success stories of S-commerce implementation, many brands have yet to understand their consumers' social commerce needs and succeed with their social commerce strategies (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Implementing the social commerce features themselves does not guarantee the success of S-commerce (Wiese, 2021). A successful social commerce strategy requires insights into the target audience's needs, interests, and demographics (Lowes, 2022).

Further research on S-commerce in developing countries like SA is required to guide marketers' and businesses' S-commerce strategies (Wiese, 2021). Research indicates that businesses that did not embrace social commerce and sold their products solely via eCommerce channels saw a decline in revenue (Monzon, 2021). In contrast, businesses that used social commerce noted increased sales (Monzon, 2021).

According to Wiese (2021), marketers need a clearer idea of consumer perception regarding S-commerce as the concept is relatively new. As proposed here, this qualitative study will contribute to this knowledge gap. According to Wang & Xie (2020), there is a lack of qualitative research on social commerce, with most existing research focusing on quantitative methods. A qualitative research approach would allow researchers to gain insight into people's perceptions, motivations & understanding of a concept (Schindler, 2019).

There has been a noticeable increase in the use of Instagram as an S-commerce channel and a decrease in the use of other apps like Twitter & Pinterest (Abed, 2018). According to Abed (2018), Instagram will be the preferred social media application for marketers & businesses in the future. Therefore, the need for more research focusing on Instagram as an S-commerce channel must be addressed. Lastly, there needs to be more research on the actual S-commerce features presented to users on Instagram, as consumer perception regarding these features can shape their purchase decisions (Jyosthna, 2022).

Problem statement:

eCommerce penetration in SA remains low, and consumers increasingly turn to S-commerce to fulfil their online shopping needs. Businesses that do not embrace social commerce will risk losing revenue in the future as more consumers show a preference for social commerce. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on S-commerce in developing countries like SA and a lack of qualitative research on S-commerce. With S-commerce poised to be the next" eCommerce wave" (Wiese, 2021) and Instagram use rising globally & in SA, we need to understand consumer perception and attitudes towards adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel. These insights will allow for the development of S-commerce strategies and policies that will ensure the success of S-commerce for businesses, marketers, and Instagram and enhance the consumer social commerce experience in SA.

1.4 Rationale

Over the past decade, we have seen a growing global obsession with social media (Bright et al., 2015). People have bought into the idea of sharing their lives online and spend many hours daily doing so. According to (Statista, 2022e), SA has over thirty-two million social media users, which is expected to rise to forty million by 2026. This immense growth of social media has led to the rise of social commerce (Xiang et al., 2022). Research by Wiese (2021) indicates that consumers are open to shopping via social media websites, as statistics show that consumers are increasingly accessing store websites via their social media applications. Social media apps like Instagram can provide the desired reach and contextual offerings, which make them vital for driving social commerce in SA (*2022 Insights on the Social Commerce Market*, 2022).

Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) state that social commerce is the biggest threat to eCommerce as more users prefer to shop via their social media applications. Huang et al. (2012) argue that social media applications present the next opportunity for eCommerce evolution and can provide benefits for both

businesses & consumers. Integrating commerce features into social media allows avid social media users to shop conveniently from the comfort of their apps.

According to Alshibly (2014), social commerce has increased consumer expectations in retail and is an essential contributor to business revenue. The use of social commerce can assist brands in building stronger relationships with consumers (Xiang et al., 2022). Previous studies on social commerce have shown that it can significantly influence consumer purchasing journeys (Wiese, 2021).

Businesses that understand consumer perceptions of social commerce can leverage this to their advantage in their social commerce strategy, thereby increasing their revenue (Xiang et al., 2022). According to Wiese (2021), if S-commerce can be adequately leveraged, it can be an alternate retail channel in SA & other developing countries where social media usage is high, and eCommerce penetration is low. It allows small businesses to compete in the market as they do not require expensive resources to participate in social commerce. Research by ConferWith (2022) indicates that new brands can compete with and overtake well-known brands by leveraging social commerce. It has now become imperative for businesses to adapt their strategies to include social commerce, which will increase sales and consumer engagement (Lloyd, 2020).

Instagram was chosen for this research as it is the second most popular social media application in SA (Abed, 2018). More research must be done on this social media app as a platform for social commerce (Abed, 2018). According to Rensburg (2020), Instagram is one of the most loved social media apps in SA, and brands need to start leveraging it to connect with their target audience.

Previous researchers have focused their social commerce studies on Facebook as it is the most popular social media application globally (Ventre et al., 2021). Therefore, more research is needed to understand user behaviour on other social media applications such as Instagram (Ventre et al., 2021). According to Guo & Li (2022), there needs to be more research on the perception of actual S-

commerce features, and this study will contribute to understanding this aspect of social commerce.

Instagram has overtaken Facebook regarding order value, indicating that it is fast becoming the application of choice for social commerce (Che et al., 2017). With social commerce features like the digital shop, product tags, view-on-website & checkout, Instagram is poised to assist companies with improving consumer engagement and increasing revenue (Arlia, 2021). This research can assist social media app creators in understanding where improvements are needed to attract more consumers to shop on Instagram.

Wiese (2021) cites that the need for more social commerce research in South Africa must be addressed. This study will contribute to the research in SA surrounding social commerce and give businesses, marketers, and Instagram an understanding of consumer perceptions on using Instagram as a social commerce channel. Furthermore, we will highlight opportunities for future research to guide other SA & international studies.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

- This study is limited to the following social commerce elements present on Instagram:
    - Digital product tags
    - Digital shop
    - View-on-website option
    - Instagram checkout
- This study is aimed at individuals who are avid Instagram users.
- This study focuses on the type of social commerce that allows eCommerce features to be integrated into the social media application.
- The use of social media on eCommerce websites is out of the scope of this study.

1.6 Research Questions

This study will answer the following research questions:

1. What factors influence consumer shopping on social media platforms and Instagram in particular?
2. How do consumers perceive Instagram's social commerce features?
3. What are some of the concerns experienced by consumers when shopping on Instagram, and what can be done to improve their shopping experience?
4. How will the introduction of the checkout feature impact consumers' impression of S-commerce on Instagram?

1.7 Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
1. Social commerce/S-commerce	The integration of commerce features into social media applications (Wang & Xie, 2020).
2. Social media	A group of applications built on Web 2.0 technologies that allow the exchange of information between users and support user-generated content (Bright et al., 2015).
3. View-on-website	A social commerce feature on Instagram that, once clicked, directs the user to the company's website to view a selected product (Romanowski et al., 2019).
4. Instagram checkout	A commerce feature on Instagram which allows users to enter billing, shipping, and payment information to complete a purchase on the app (Romanowski et al., 2019).
5. Digital product tags	A commerce feature on Instagram which allows businesses to create a digital tag on a product displaying the product name and price (Romanowski et al., 2019).
6. Web 2.0 technologies	Technologies that have enabled social interactions over the internet (Baghdadi, 2016).

7. Digital shop	A commerce feature on Instagram which acts as a digital store for a brand's products (Romanowski et al., 2019).
8. Electronic word of mouth(eWOM)	The exchange of information between customers online (Madzunya et al., 2021).

Table 1: List of definitions

1.8 Assumptions

The following assumptions apply to this study:

- Respondents will answer questions truthfully.
- The Instagram checkout feature will be launched in SA after successful trials in the USA.

1.9 Chapter Outline

The concept of social commerce, specifically social commerce on Instagram, has been explained in detail with relevant statistics to show its popularity and relevance for this research. The research problem, along with the rationale, has been detailed, and the research questions of this study have been identified.

Chapter Two will review the relevant literature for social commerce and Instagram as a social commerce channel. The theoretical grounding will be discussed, followed by the conceptual framework appropriate for the research. In Chapter Three, the research methodology will be explained, accompanied by the relevant research instruments for this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the existing literature on social commerce and Instagram social commerce. This analysis will provide insights into the findings of similar studies and their implications. The theories underpinning this research and the conceptual framework will be discussed.

2.2 Social Commerce

2.2.1 *The inception & definition of social commerce*

The introduction of Web 2.0 technologies has played an integral role in the development of the concept of S-commerce (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Social media applications are built on Web 2.0 technologies allowing users to share their experiences with friends and followers (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). As social media applications matured, they began to introduce eCommerce features into their apps. These features allow for user interactions, user-generated content, and seamless shopping experiences, which now play a crucial role in the consumer purchasing journey (Liang & Turban, 2011). The increased popularity of social media applications has ensured their viability for integration with eCommerce features (Hajli & Sims, 2015), as research indicates that most eCommerce websites are being accessed via social media applications (Wiese, 2021).

E-commerce has proven successful in many countries, but research indicates that the uptake in developing countries has been slow (Wiese, 2021). The eCommerce penetration rate remains low in SA at an estimated forty-five percent in 2022 (Statista, 2022a). Social commerce could be a game changer for developing countries as social media is immensely popular in these countries (Bianchi et al., 2017). Additionally, social commerce provides users with a social

experience with engaging content and human interactions, which eCommerce lacks (Al-Adwan, 2019).

Yahoo introduced the concept of social commerce seventeen years ago (Hajli & Sims, 2015). Since then, researchers have suggested two types of social commerce and have yet to agree on a definition for the concept. The first type of social commerce explored in this study allows users to seamlessly shop from their social media applications such as Facebook and Instagram. Social media applications are no longer just marketing tools; they are integral to the sales process. The second type of social commerce involves adding links to social media accounts on the company websites, forums and even reviews that allow consumers to socialise and confer with each other before making a purchase decision. According to Bianchi et al. (2017), most current research is based on websites with social commerce features. Further research is needed on social commerce features on social media applications (Bianchi et al., 2017).

According to Liang & Turban (2011), social commerce uses Web 2.0 technology to allow user interactions to assist in purchasing decisions. Huang & Benyoucef (2013) define *social commerce* as "an Internet-based commercial application, leveraging social media and Web 2.0 technologies which support social interaction and user-generated content to assist consumers in their decision-making and acquisition of products and services within online marketplaces and communities". Liang et al. (2011) state that social commerce provides a new platform for selling products/services to consumers, while Ventre et al. (2021) refer to social commerce as a new stream of eCommerce. For this research, we will define *social commerce* as integrating commerce features on social media applications to provide a seamless shopping experience to consumers.

Researchers such as Kim & Park (2013), Xiang et al. (2022) & Liang & Turban (2011) refer to S-commerce as a subset of eCommerce. However, Wang et al. (2022) argue that S-commerce should be considered a new form of online business separate from eCommerce, focusing on consumer relationship building instead of brand management. Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) refer to social commerce as one of the biggest challenges for the future of eCommerce.

2.2.2 *The benefits of social commerce*

Social commerce holds immense potential for businesses as it allows them to reach large consumer bases (Wiese, 2021), present products using the rich features of social media and trigger a sales process (Liao et al., 2022). Businesses do not need to rely on consumers visiting their websites; they can sell directly to them on social media applications (Wiese, 2021). According to Huang & Benyoucef (2013), S-commerce can assist with increasing economic value and consumer engagement level for a business. Businesses, therefore, need to be strategic in their implementation of S-commerce to reap the benefits (Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021).

Research by Bianchi et al. (2017) & Wiese (2021) indicates that consumers are eager and willing to adopt this mode of shopping as the use of social commerce provides frictionless transactions (Bianchi et al., 2017) and allows personalisation of communications via the social media application (Kim & Park, 2013). Consumers are increasingly engaging in social commerce as it allows them to share recommendations, comment on product posts and easily find product information (Lin et al., 2019).

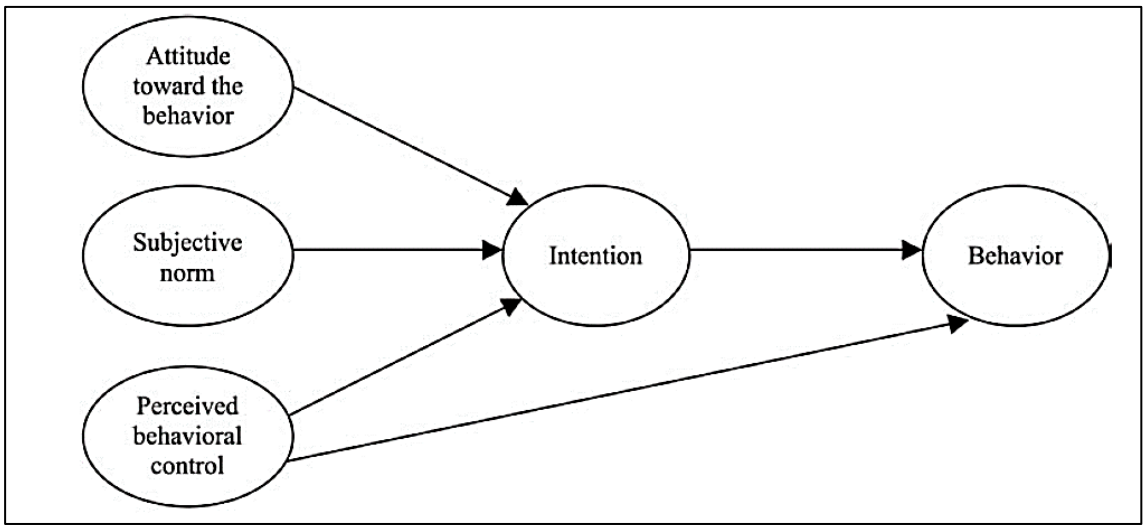
The most popular social commerce applications globally are Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, with others like TikTok, Snapchat and Pinterest building up their capabilities (Williamson, 2021). The most popular social commerce applications in SA are Facebook, Instagram & TikTok (Lowes, 2022). Research by Wiese (2021) & Romanowski et al. (2019) indicates that social media already plays an integral role in consumer purchasing journeys, which makes it the ideal platform for commerce activities.

2.3 Theoretical Background

Adopting new technology has been the focus of various studies and led to several adoption theories. The main theories grounding this research are the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Trust Theory and the Trust framework for Social Commerce.

2.3.1 *Theory of Planned Behavior*

The TPB was developed as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Actioned (TRA) by Ajzen (1991), and both models were frequently used to predict consumer e-commerce adoption (Friedrich, 2015). The model is displayed below:



Note: From The Theory of planned behavior and Internet Purchasing, by George (2004)*. In the public domain.*

Figure 5: The Theory of Planned Behavior

According to TPB, an individual's attitude toward a behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control influence their intention to perform a behavior (George, 2004). The stronger an individual intends to perform a behavior, the more likely they are to engage in the behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB has been used in various sectors and is the leading Theory in Information Systems to research consumer intentions to engage in behaviours (Ying et al., 2022). The *attitude toward the behavior* refers to the positive or negative assessment a person has about performing a particular behavior, the *subjective norm* refers to the influences being experienced by the individual from their social circle to perform the behavior or not and lastly, *perceived behavioural control* refers to how easy or complicated the behavior is perceived and how likely the individual will succeed at performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Where users have a positive attitude, the social influence is positive, and there is no obstacle

present to perform the behavior, users will have a greater intention to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The TPB model has been used in other studies that aim to understand factors influencing consumer use, such as understanding internet purchasing behavior conducted by George (2004). This study revealed that beliefs about trustworthiness and self-efficacy positively influenced consumers to purchase online.

According to Ying et al. (2022), TPB was introduced before the introduction of social media and may have room for improvement to accommodate new factors affecting user intention, especially in social commerce contexts. This study integrated social support, which is seen as a crucial element of social commerce, to form a TPB2 model. The results showed that this TPB2 model outperformed the original TPB model concerning predicting user intention on social commerce (Ying et al., 2022).

Pavlou & Chai (2002) conducted a study in China and the USA to understand what drives online shopping adoption. Using the TPB model, they found Trust to be a key driver of e-commerce as it influences intentions through attitude and perceived behavioural control (Pavlou & Chai, 2002). They suggested that Trust must be integrated into the TPB model to understand further its effect on online shopping (Pavlou & Chai, 2002).

This research intends to understand the factors influencing consumer use of social commerce on Instagram. Consumer attitude can be affected by their experience on the platform with the vendor, advertisements, and their concerns about online shopping. Social influences can affect their subjective norms, and the features presented on social commerce can affect their perceived behavioural control. TPB is chosen for this study over popular models like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as it includes an essential factor for technology adoption, subjective norms, that examine the role of social influences on consumers (Lai, 2017).

2.3.2 *Trust Frameworks and Trust Theory for Social Commerce*

Due to the nature of social commerce risks and the increasing relevance of social commerce, researchers have sought to propose trust frameworks to explain the adoption of social commerce. Trust has been specifically focused on as it is a critical component for adopting social commerce and other online shopping methods due to the lack of human interactions and service delivery guarantees.

2.5.3.1 Trust Theory

Trust has been researched for many decades, and much like social commerce, there is no universal definition for it (Guo, 2022). Interest in trust research was first garnered when Deutsch (1986) published a paper on Trust and Suspicion. Trust has been emphasised in online and physical shopping interactions (Wang et al., 2016).

Previous research refers to trust as confidence in allied partners or willingness to depend on partners once there is confidence in their abilities (Guo, 2022). The concept of trust transfer has been explored, and the premise is that individuals are likely to trust an unfamiliar process or organisation if someone they trust recommends it to them (Kimery & McCord, 2002). Research from Deutsch (1986) highlights the importance of communication in trust building, and findings prove that good communication can result in mutual trust between parties.

There has also been a focus on trusting beliefs and trusting attitudes. Trusting beliefs focus on the kindness, integrity, and capability of partners to build trust, and trusting attitudes focus on confidence and emotional trust as crucial factors for building trust (Guo, 2022). Trust intentions are also a factor; as trust increases, an individual's intentions to take risks with a partner will increase (Guo, 2022).

Research from Isaeva et al. (2020) reveals that trust can be referred to as the confidence consumers have in the vendor's capability to honour the transaction between them. Deutsch (1986) states that people anticipate negative consequences if trust goes unfulfilled.

Cheng et al. (2019), in their paper on social commerce and trust, focused on system and particularised trust. System trust refers to individuals' trust in the social commerce application used to complete the transaction (Cheng et al., 2019). These factors are pertinent to our research as we also focus on the features and user experience of the Instagram app. Particularised trust refers to the trust built in a social context, and for social commerce, it would be the trust built through interactions with others in the environment (Cheng et al., 2019). These factors are pertinent to our research as we focus on social influences' effect on the propensity to trust. Cheng et al. (2019) results proved that particularised and system trust both influenced social commerce intentions.

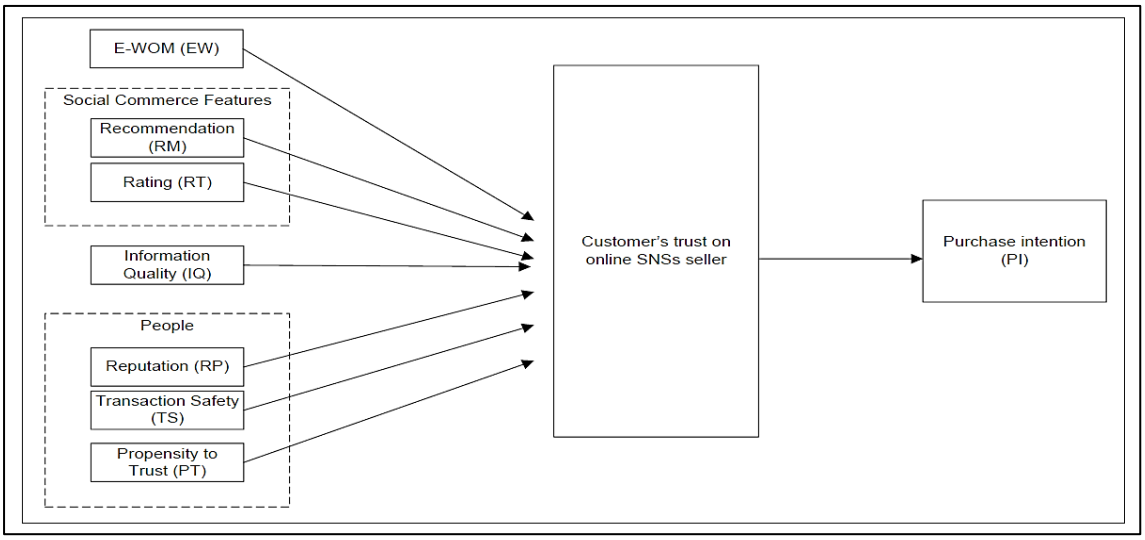
From Trust theory, we can deduce that people are more willing to engage in positive behavioural intentions where trust exists. However, due to the complex nature of online shopping, predicting the antecedents of trust is crucial.

2.5.3.2 Trust Framework for Social Commerce

Studies from Herzallah et al. (2022), Asma & Afreen (2022), Din et al. (2020), Abed (2018) and Che et al. (2017) have proven the effect of trust on purchase intention on Instagram social commerce. From this, we can ascertain the importance of trust for Instagram social commerce to succeed.

We have briefly discussed the Trust framework for Instagram proposed by Din et al. (2018), which explored the trust factors affecting purchase intention on Instagram. Their framework worked on the premise that technology, people, and information components were vital to building consumer trust and positively impacted their Instagram purchase intentions. They later updated their framework

to be more generalised to social commerce; this updated framework can be seen below:



Note: From Developing And Validating An Instrument To Measure The Trust Effect Towards Online Seller In Social Commerce, by Din et al. (2020)*. In the public domain.*

Figure 6: Conceptual Model of factors affecting trust in social commerce.

Based on their extensive research, Din et al. (2020) proposed that e-WOM, Social Commerce Features, Information Quality, People Factors, and Propensity to Trust would affect Consumer Trust in Online Social Network Sellers and, in turn, impact Purchase Intention. Their study's results revealed that all factors influenced consumer trust in online social network sellers (SNS), and their framework is valid for use in research. According to Din et al. (2020), the people factors ranked highest in their results, followed by social commerce constructs, e-WOM and information quality.

According to this framework, the following factors are essential for building consumer trust in social commerce:

- Consumers are more likely to purchase if they believe their information is protected by the seller (Din et al., 2020). Therefore, sellers must ensure the safety of the sales transaction and the consumer's personal information.
- Consumers are likelier to trust sellers with a good reputation for delivering (Din et al., 2020). Therefore, sellers must build trust with consumers by honouring their delivery promises.

- Consumers must rely on the product information presented online as they cannot access physical products (Din et al., 2020). The seller must ensure that the information presented to the consumer is relevant, accurate, believable, and easy to understand, and they do not have to search extensively for it.
- Consumers are more likely to trust the experiences of others when it comes to social commerce (Din et al., 2020). The product must have good ratings from customers. A previous customer or a friend recommending the seller or product will increase consumer trust.
- The study revealed that negative reviews impacted trust more than positive reviews (Din et al., 2020). Sellers must address consumer concerns and get more positive than negative reviews.
- The volume and quality of the e-WOM content surrounding the seller or product influence consumer trust (Din et al., 2020). Consumers are likelier to trust sellers with high-volume and positive consumer-generated e-WOM content.

Businesses must focus on these elements to ensure consumers trust them enough to continue their social commerce purchases.

Our research aims to understand factors influencing consumer adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel. The research has revealed trust to be a dominating factor in social commerce. If we can understand what influences consumer trust in social commerce, it will become crucial to businesses' social commerce strategies. Our social commerce research, TPB, Trust Theory and the Trust Framework for Social Commerce have given us the foundation for our conceptual framework, which will be discussed next.

2.4 Instagram as a Leading Social Commerce Channel

Instagram is the second most popular social media application globally, positioning it as a powerful platform for social commerce (Ventre et al., 2021). With over a billion active users globally (Statista, 2022b) and over six million users in SA (Statista, 2022a), Instagram has massive potential for enhancing consumer

experience and providing financial gains for businesses. Instagram can attribute its success to its interface's ease of use, which has encouraged immense user buy-in (Liao et al., 2022).

Instagram was launched in 2010 and has since been labelled the most engaging social media app (Ventre et al., 2021). The model is based on the non-reciprocal following, and research indicates users trust experiences or products based on other users' reviews (Ventre et al., 2021). Initially, businesses would use Instagram as a marketing tool, and they could tailor their advertisements to specific users on the app. As Instagram expanded its capabilities, consumers could learn more about products and click on links on the brand's Instagram page to the website to start their shopping (Romanowski et al., 2019). Instagram then launched swipe-up links to websites, making accessing websites easier (Romanowski et al., 2019). According to Lim et al. (2020), S-commerce providing this seamless navigation could ensure less drop-off in the consumer purchasing journey.

Instagram then introduced commerce features such as digital product tags, a digital shop, the view-on-website option, and the shopping tab on the home page. Digital product tags contain the price and name of the product, and when clicked, it will direct the user to the virtual shop where the desired product or other products can be viewed. According to Che et al. (2017), digital shops have become immensely popular on Instagram and have been proven to encourage consumers to shop on the app. A link on the digital shop allows users to view the product on the brand's website and continue their purchasing journey off Instagram.

In the USA, consumers can complete the purchase on Instagram due to the checkout feature, which is being piloted (Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021). This feature includes saving payment information for future use and ensures seamless purchasing journeys for consumers (Binns, 2019).

Research by Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) states that eighty percent of users on Instagram make a purchase decision based on the product information presented to them. Consumers generally are open to purchasing directly from the social

media app (Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021). Romanowski et al. (2019) propose Instagram as a new sales channel due to the willingness of consumers to engage with brands on the app, the ability of brands to create lasting consumer relationships using the app, the capability it possesses for contextual selling and the influence it has prompting consumer purchases.

2.5 Factors Influencing the Use of Online Shopping, Social Commerce, and Instagram

2.5.1 *Social Commerce Appeal*

Research by Liao et al. (2022) on social commerce in Taiwan indicates that high-quality images and contextual advertising are essential to attract users to participate in Instagram S-commerce. Additionally, users were keen on having a search with a picture option on the app (Liao et al., 2022). Similarly, a study in India by Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) revealed that Instagram is the social media application of choice for commerce, specifically for consumers who enjoy the visual appeal of product advertisements and targeted offerings. The study also revealed that consumers enjoyed having personal interactions with sellers and the discounts offered on Instagram (Bohra & Bishnoi, 2016).

Studies by Hu et al. (2019), Rahman et al. (2020) and Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) indicate that social influences from peers, family or other social connections play a significant role in consumer intention and use of social commerce. Hu et al. (2019) state that the effect of social influence is so significant in social commerce that it may cause users to buy products they initially did not intend to purchase. The study conducted by Hu et al. (2019) analyses social influence from a normative and informational stance. The results indicate that social users are open to accepting information from trustworthy sources and changing their opinions or behaviours based on the information received (Hu et al., 2019). This finding is further corroborated by Abed (2018), whose study confirmed social influence to be a significant determinant of social commerce use as users are influenced by peers they trust. According to Leong et al. (2020), the social

presence of others using social commerce can build trust in consumers as they are influenced by the experiences of the people they trust.

Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) conducted research in Greece, using a combination of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) models, on the acceptance of the newly introduced checkout function on Instagram. Results indicate that having sufficient product information is vital to purchasing decisions, and consumers are willing to purchase directly from the app once the checkout feature is launched. This finding is supported by Binns (2019), who states that the new checkout functionality has simplified the purchasing process for consumers, and Lowes (2022), who states that the new checkout feature will significantly impact the South African market.

The study by Guo & Li (2022) also indicated that consumers are impressed by features that assist them in completing their shopping faster as it increases their perceived value of using the features. Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) confirmed this with their study, where participants indicated that they are particularly looking forward to the checkout function to speed up the purchasing process and make payment easier with the Instagram app.

A study by Akman & Mishra (2017) found that perceived easiness influenced social commerce adoption. Users are drawn to features that are easy to engage with, making their experience more enjoyable (Akman & Mishra, 2017). This finding was similar to Al-Adwan (2019), whose study using Structure Equation Modelling (SEM) revealed that perceived ease of use was a key driver for social commerce use and positively affected trust. According to Liao et al. (2022), Instagram users are drawn to the app because of its user-friendliness, which makes it ideal for social commerce activities.

2.5.2 *Consumer Concerns and the Role of Trust in Online Shopping*

The importance of trust in online shopping is a crucial factor for consumers considering the lack of rules and regulations in place regarding unscrupulous vendors (Lu et al., 2016). The role of trust in online shopping has been extensively researched to find its antecedents so we can understand how to build trust in the

online shopping sector (Lu et al., 2016). According to Lee & Turban (2001), the success of online shopping is determined ultimately by the amount of trust a consumer can place in a vendor, the products being sold, and the system facilitating the transaction. According to Ramli et al. (2016), trust between a seller and consumer is vital to successful transactions in the virtual or online world. Morgan & Hunt (1994) have defined *trust* as "existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." A study by Lu et al. (2016) confirms that trust is critical for social commerce to be a success.

Lack of trust is cited as one of the primary reasons consumers are reluctant to purchase online (Lee & Turban, 2001). Consumers cannot interact with the products or vendors in person and cannot ensure the safety of their personal and financial information when purchasing online (Lee & Turban, 2001). This finding is corroborated by Mukherjee & Nath (2007), who state that the absence of physical interactions combined with the perceived security issues of online shopping poses a challenge to vendors and makes it difficult to create and maintain relationships with their target consumers. While there has been tremendous investment into technology to increase online security, consumers still have concerns which affect their confidence in online shopping (Klang, 2001).

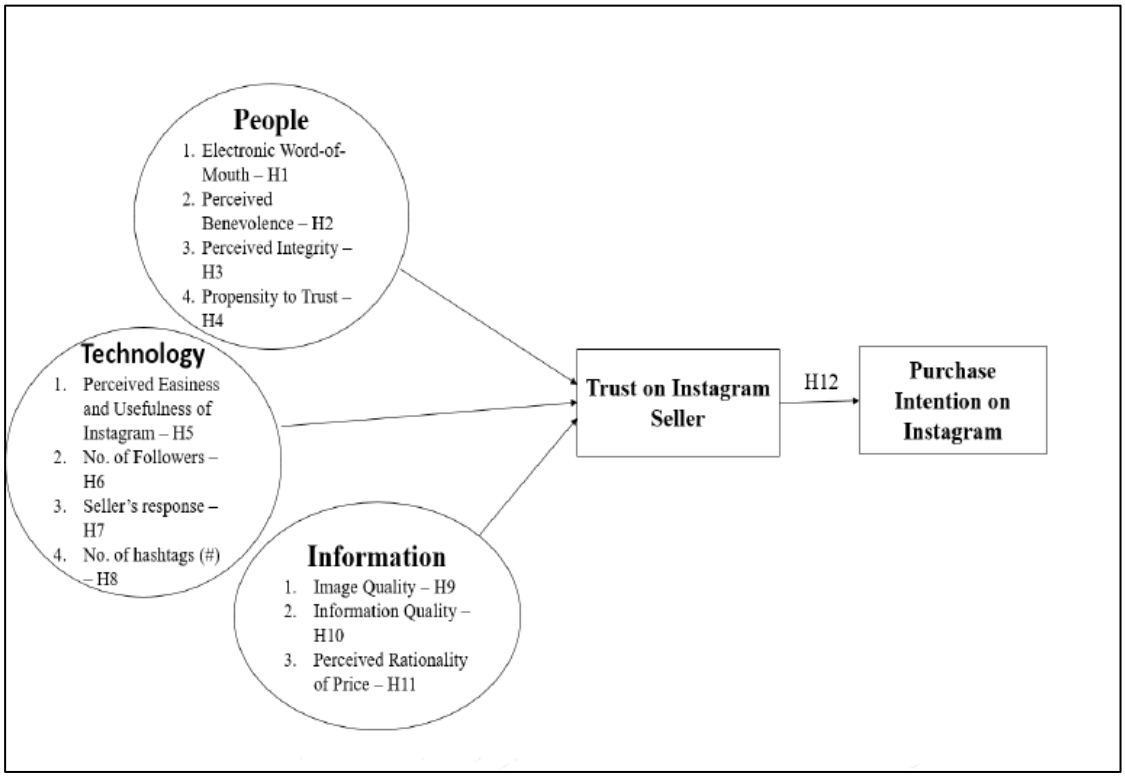
Consumer concerns about Instagram shopping can be attributed to free commerce activities, as businesses do not have to register to sell products which may open up opportunities for fake business profiles or scams (Din et al., 2018). According to Probasco (2022), an astonishing seven hundred and seventy million dollars worth of social media fraud was reported in 2021, with Instagram and Facebook having the most complaints for undelivered products bought on the platform. Research shows that consumers are more concerned about security and privacy issues on online channels than other well-known shopping modes (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007).

Consumer trust in social commerce has decreased due to fraudulent accounts, distortion of product information, low-quality customer service and delivery concerns (Ramli et al., 2016). Consumers increasingly report receiving low-quality products, late delivery and incorrect products (Din et al., 2020). Additionally, there has been an increase in online fraud like hacking and phishing,

leading to a host of security & privacy concerns, such as the leaking of personal and credit card information (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). These concerns, combined with a lack of guarantees for payments, cause an increase in the uncertainty around online shopping (Din et al., 2020).

Trust can ensure consumers feel comfortable transacting on social commerce platforms by addressing their concerns about social commerce risks (Lin et al., 2019). Che et al. (2017) refer to trust as critical to consumer purchasing decisions on Instagram, as consumers are still familiarising themselves with this way of shopping. Building trust with consumers is critical to alleviating any concerns they may have about purchasing from the seller (Che et al., 2017). Trust in social commerce is built by interactions with the information provided by the seller and other social media users like peers, influencers and reviewers (Ramli et al., 2016). Providing consumers with helpful product information and building trust can assist in making the purchasing decision easier for consumers (Che et al., 2017).

Din et al. (2018) proposed the following proposed conceptual trust framework for Instagram based on their research:



Note: From A Review on Trust Factors Affecting Purchase Intention on Instagram, by Din et al. (2018). *In the public domain.*

Figure 7: Conceptual trust framework for Instagram

According to Din et al. (2018), people, technology, and information play an integral role in gaining consumer confidence to use Instagram social commerce. The people portion refers to relationships between buyers & sellers, the benevolence of sellers and the use of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Din et al., 2018). The technology component is crucial to adopting social commerce and includes factors such as how easy the components are to learn and use, the rate of seller response and the use of hashtags (Din et al., 2018). Lastly, the information component is vital in the purchasing decision journey; therefore, image, information quality, and perceived price fairness play a crucial role in the trust and use of social commerce (Din et al., 2018). Once trust is attained, several studies have proven it positively affects purchase intentions (Lin et al., 2019).

Research by Abed (2018) using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model found trust and social influence to affect users' behavioural intention on using Instagram as a social commerce channel. Businesses must cater to this by implementing privacy and security policies, encouraging user-generated content, and focusing on building a good reputation (Abed, 2018).

Research by Al-Adwan (2019) reveals that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness positively affect trust in S-commerce adoption. Furthermore, the post-purchase experience significantly influences trust and re-purchase intention (Al-Adwan, 2019).

Lin et al. (2019) conducted a study using the Social-technical Theory, which revealed that trust in other consumers and social commerce features had the most significant effect on consumer trust in social commerce, which has a positive effect on consumer purchasing behaviour.

Lubis et al. (2019) used the Theory of Planned Behaviour for their research, and they discovered that trust, attitude, and subjective norms significantly affected consumers' behavioural intention to shop on Instagram. Consumers ultimately

were fond of shopping on Instagram and viewed the app as transparent and trustworthy (Lubis et al., 2019).

A study conducted by Che et al. (2017) focusing on the trust aspect of shopping on Instagram revealed that consumers are more likely to trust benevolent sellers that show integrity and use key opinion leaders (KOL) to endorse their products. Their study confirmed that these aspects affect trust, which impacts consumer intentions to purchase from the seller. According to Leong et al. (2020), when consumers can interact with and feel the social presence of the seller, it increases their trust in the seller. In situations where the seller is not responsive, consumers will doubt their integrity and ability to fulfil their promises leading to a decrease in trust (Leong et al., 2020).

Akman & Mishra (2017) conducted a study on the factors affecting the adoption of S-commerce and found that perceived trust, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, perceived social pressure, perceived satisfaction and perceived awareness all had signification effects on consumers' intentions. Perceived ethicalness, however, was found not to affect consumer intentions to engage in S-commerce.

A qualitative study by Rafinda et al. (2018) has shown that consumers consider account image quality, seller response, number of followers and price rationality to determine if they trust the seller. Consumers associate good quality images and quick responses from the seller with the seller being serious about their business (Rafinda et al., 2018). Consumers associate a fair price that compares well with similar products as a good indicator of the seller's intention (Rafinda et al., 2018). Lastly, consumers associate a high social media account following with trust, believing many people have dealt with this business before (Rafinda et al., 2018).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

2.6.1 *Proposition & Research Model Development*

Trust has been identified as one of the critical predictors of purchase intention in various studies and, more recently, in S-commerce studies (Herzallah et al., 2022). According to Herzallah et al. (2022), trust is crucial in the s-commerce context due to the high level of uncertainty. Once trust is established between the seller and buyer, consumers will be confident to purchase (Herzallah et al., 2022). According to Lin et al. (2019), consumers' subjective beliefs ultimately drive them to trust a system or organisation. Based on our research and the theoretical groundings, we propose four factors influencing consumer trust on Instagram: Social Influence, Experience Quality, Perceived Easiness, and Privacy/Security Concerns.

According to Lu et al. (2016), social interactions are one of the critical factors in building trust in online shopping and need to be focused on by more researchers. Consumers may find it difficult to trust online vendors at first, but cues from their peers who have used a vendor can assist in building their trust (Lu et al., 2016). According to Din et al. (2020), social interactions and learning about the experiences of others can assist in building consumer trust in products and sellers, increasing their confidence to use social commerce. This finding is further proven in a study by Rahman et al. (2020) which found that social influence decreases the risk consumers associate with online shopping and increases their confidence to buy products online.

- *Proposition 1: Social influence will positively influence consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce.*

Experience quality will encompass Service Quality, Information Quality, and Image/Video Quality, which are proven to be key determinants in the use of social commerce on Instagram and directly affect Trust (Din et al., 2018).

Service quality is a crucial factor for consumer trust. As noted by Din et al. (2019), Rafinda et al. (2018) and Mukherjee & Nath (2007), the rate and quality of the

responses from sellers are critical to building trust. According to Lu et al. (2016), friendly communications from sellers can give consumers a sense of the seller's integrity, thereby building trust. Che et al. (2017) and Alshibly (2014) found service quality, including the benevolence of sellers, to play a significant role in social commerce adoption.

Liao et al. (2022) and Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) found that visual appeal and content quality are drivers of social commerce use on Instagram. The results from Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) revealed that the quality of the images was crucial for decision-making. The study by Liao et al. (2022) revealed that high-quality images are vital to attracting consumers on Instagram. Furthermore, research by Rafinda et al. (2018) revealed that consumers' trust levels increase when presented with high-quality content from sellers. According to Rafinda et al. (2018), consumers stated that high-quality images indicate a trustworthy seller and low-quality images indicate that a seller is not serious about their product.

According to Din et al. (2018) and Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021), users are also aware of the quality of information presented to them on Instagram, which also influences their behaviour. Therefore it is essential to pay attention to the quality of the information presented to consumers on Instagram (Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021). A study by Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) revealed that consumers prefer to have detailed information presented at the initial stages of the purchasing process.

- *Proposition 2: The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram* social commerce.

Research shows that consumers gravitate to Instagram due to its easy-to-use interface. Therefore, Instagram's social commerce features need to be evaluated in terms of Perceived easiness per the conceptual trust framework by Din et al. (2018). Furthermore, as cited by Guo & Li (2022), users are impressed by and willing to use features that can simplify their shopping experience.

Research by Al-Adwan (2019) and Akman & Mishra (2017) indicate that perceived easiness is a major driving factor for social commerce. Social commerce features allow consumers to fulfil their shopping tasks on social media

platforms. Therefore their trust in these features will contribute to their use of social commerce (Lin et al., 2019).

- *Proposition 3: Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*

Researchers Abed (2018), Che et al. (2017) and Lubis et al. (2019) cite trust as a crucial component affecting the adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel. This finding is corroborated by Al-Adwan (2019), whose research reveals trust as an integral component of social commerce adoption.

Trust plays an integral role in the adoption and use of technologies. *Trust* is the consumers' expectation of the seller/vendor to behave ethically in the relationship and fulfil their agreed-upon commitments (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2022). Privacy Concern is related to Trust; when consumers doubt the privacy aspect of their information or transactions, it decreases trust (Rahman et al., 2020).

Privacy Concerns can affect trust, and research by Zhou (2020), Tajvidi et al. (2020) and Rahman et al. (2020) has shown it has a significant effect on social commerce use. Rahman et al. (2020) used the UTAUT2 model for their research on factors that influenced the use of social commerce and adapted it to include Privacy concerns which they consider a crucial factor for social commerce use.

A study by Mukherjee & Nath (2007) identified privacy and security concerns as critical factors in building Trust due to their pertinent role in online shopping. They added these factors to their research model based on the Commitment-Trust theory.

Privacy & security concerns pose one of the biggest challenges for online shopping, which includes social commerce. Consumer concerns include fraud, hacking and leaking of information. These concerns decrease consumer trust and prevent them from purchasing online (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). As cited by Hajli (2013), the effect of other factors on Trust must be investigated, and this research chooses to assess the effect of Privacy/Security concerns on Trust.

- *Proposition 4: Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.*

Trust's role in social commerce has been researched extensively, and according to Shoheib & Abu-Shanab (2022) and Din et al. (2018), an increase in Trust significantly affects BI. A study by Alotaibi et al. (2019) confirms that an increase in Trust significantly affects purchase intention as consumers rely on Trust in their decision-making process. An increase in Trust can decrease uncertainty by easing consumer doubts and lead to positive behavioural intentions (Lu et al., 2016). The effect of trust on purchase intentions has also been validated in studies by Herzallah et al. (2022), Abed (2018) and Lin et al. (2019)

Venkatesh et al. (2003) state that BI has a significant effect on predicting UB. This finding was confirmed in a study by Sheikh et al. (2017) using the UTAUT2 model, which found BI positively associated with UB. BI is the most significant predictor of user behaviour, and when consumers trust the seller, they are more likely to have positive behavioural intentions and complete a purchase (Lu et al., 2016).

- *Proposition 5:*
    a) *An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*
    b) *Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.*

This research proposes the following research framework for evaluating the factors influencing the adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel:

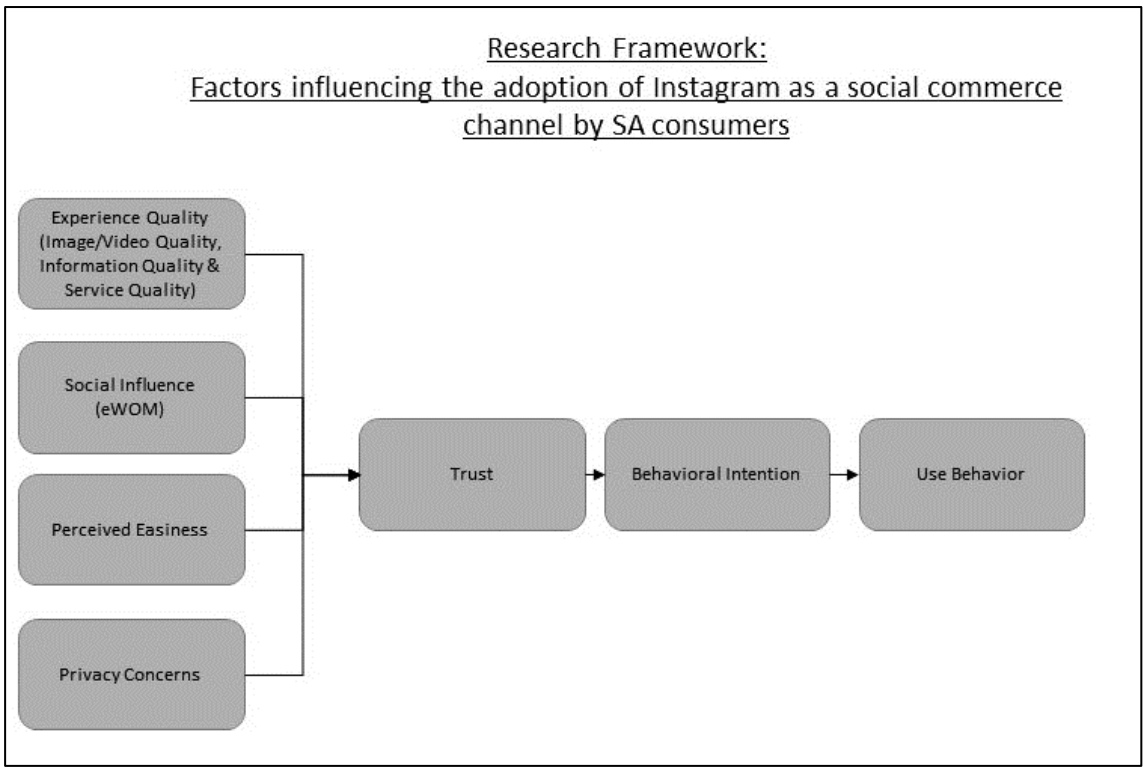


Figure 8: ***A research framework for Factors influencing the adoption of Instagram as a Social Commerce channel by SA consumers.***

2.7 Conclusion of the Literature Review

Social commerce adoption is on the rise. Businesses capitalising on this trend will reap the rewards of stronger consumer relationships and increased revenue. Instagram use is at an all-time high, and the app has been recognised as the social media app of choice for commerce by both consumers and sellers. Instagram's popularity can be attributed to its easy-to-use interface and visual appeal. Businesses must understand consumer perceptions regarding Instagram as a social commerce channel and create appropriate strategies to meet consumer needs.

The following propositions are proposed for this study:

- *Proposition 1: Social influence will positively influence consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce.*
- *Proposition 2: The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram* social commerce.

- *Proposition 3: Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*
- *Proposition 4: Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.*
- *Proposition 5:*
    a) *An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*
    b) *Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.*

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research will follow the qualitative research approach. As discussed previously, most of the research conducted regarding S-commerce has used quantitative methods to gather information on the subject (Wang & Xie, 2020). While this type of research has contributed immensely to the field, the need for a more in-depth understanding of consumer perceptions is required by marketers and businesses to construct an appropriate S-commerce strategy (Wiese, 2021).

Using qualitative methods will assist in eliciting the required consumer perceptions (Simion, 2016). Quantitative methods cannot achieve this as the data collected will not possess the required depth and may lack precision in understanding consumer behaviour (House, 2018).

A qualitative study will allow us the flexibility to understand consumer feelings and delve deeper into what drives their decisions on S-commerce (Simion, 2016). The opportunity for rich, descriptive consumer feedback that a qualitative study provides can be invaluable to businesses and academics (House, 2018). According to Jyosthna (2022), understanding consumer perceptions can be vital in enhancing consumer experience and driving purchases leading to increased customer satisfaction and business revenue.

In SA, there is a lack of research on social commerce, and a qualitative study such as this will provide a detailed understanding of the factors influencing consumers' social commerce usage. As opposed to a quantitative study that will provide high-level answers, the researcher will be able to delve deeper and get meaningful responses for the creation of a social commerce strategy.

3.2 Research Design

A general or basic qualitative design will be adopted for this study as the aim is to gain the perceptions of the participants on social commerce on Instagram (Merriam, 2002). This approach will allow us to collect descriptive interview data

using open-ended, exploratory questions (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). We can use thematic analysis to induct themes and categories from this data to understand our findings.

Using this research design provides the flexibility required for the proposed research, but one of the disadvantages can be unintentional researcher bias that can present itself in the findings. Researchers also argue that generic qualitative methods do not produce quality findings due to a lack of theoretical foundations (Kahlke, 2014). However, counterarguments suggest that generic approaches challenge the researcher to think in a broader context and assist them in overcoming the restrictions of other methodologies (Kahlke & Hon, 2014).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

This research will be conducted using semi-structured individual in-depth interviews, either face-to-face or via video call, to gain the required level of detail from participants. This data collection method will allow the researcher to ask open-ended questions to ascertain consumer perception (Schindler, 2019). Additionally, the questions can be adjusted as the interview progresses if the researcher needs to elicit more information from the participant to get a satisfactory answer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This method has certain disadvantages, such as respondents needing to articulate their responses, which can lead to them not answering the questions correctly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is also very time-consuming as the researcher must set up a time with each interviewee and manually sort the data afterwards. Lastly, Creswell & Creswell (2018) indicate that the researcher's presence may cause bias in the interviewees' responses.

Interviews are still the best method to gain the required descriptive, detailed information, so steps will be taken to alleviate the mentioned concerns. The interview questions will be straightforward, time will be allocated in advance, and data sorting can start immediately after the first interview. Lastly, there will be no leading questions in the interview guide to prevent the researcher from influencing the respondent.

3.4 Population and Sample

3.4.1 *Population*

The target population for the study is Instagram users in South Africa. Face-to-face and video call interviews will be conducted to gather data from people in different provinces in South Africa.

3.4.1 *Sample*

The sample will consist of avid Instagram users who have used social commerce features on Instagram previously. Purposive sampling will help ensure that the correct sample of respondents is interviewed.

There will be fifteen interviews conducted with Instagram social commerce users for this study. Respondents will be requested to consent before the interviews to ensure the data collected can be used ethically. According to Guest et al. (2006), a qualitative study using sixty in-depth interviews showed that data saturation occurred in the first twelve interviews and elements for basic themes were evident in the first six interviews. Using this as a guide, we are confident that fifteen interviews will yield significant results considering the scope of the study and the allocated time.

3.4.2 *Sampling Method*

The sampling method chosen for this study is purposive sampling, as it allows us to gather the required information from a specific group of people who are experienced with using Instagram and have used the social commerce features on the app (Palinkas et al., 2015). We will select participants that indicate their Instagram usage is 5 to 7 days a week. To ensure the research questions can be viably answered, we will only include people who have used the social commerce features on Instagram at least once previously.

According to Palinkas et al. (2015), this method is the most effective in ensuring the researcher does not waste time or effort in their data-gathering attempt by interviewing people who cannot provide sufficient responses.

3.5 The Research Instrument

An interview guide will be used to conduct the research and elicit the answers to the research questions proposed in chapter one.

The interview guide has been structured according to the research questions to ensure sufficient responses. Using open-ended questions will ensure sufficient detail is elicited from participants to understand their experiences and perceptions.

A summary of the research objectives will be on the interview guide and read to the participants before the interview. This information will be provided to the participant in the participant information sheet before the interview. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B, and the participant information sheet is contained in Appendix A.

3.6 Procedure for Data Collection

Once we have identified the participants via the pre-screening questionnaire, the participant information and consent form will be emailed to them to read and sign. This document will outline the participant's role in the study, provide detailed information on the research procedure, obtain their interview preferences, and gain consent. Once consent is received, the interviews will be arranged on Microsoft Teams or face-to-face at a location convenient for the participant.

At the interview, we will explain the purpose of the study, and then the interview will commence. The researcher will take notes to supplement the recordings. After the interview, the recordings and notes will be sorted into folders per respondent to ensure convenient retrieval when needed and stored in an encrypted folder.

A pilot study will be conducted to ensure the interview guide fits the purpose. According to van Teijlingen & Hundley (2002), a pilot study can be used to evaluate the research instrument and ensure it is appropriate for the study. The results from the pilot study can be used in the main study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). Due to time constraints, one interview will be done as the pilot to assess the following:

- The questions are appropriate for the research.
- Sufficient time is allocated for the interview.
- To get feedback from the participants to identify ambiguous questions.

Once the pilot interview is complete, the interview guide will be reviewed, and any problematic or ambiguous questions will be refined or removed. Based on the responses, we can identify if the questions sufficiently cover the research questions and propositions and amend the interview guide accordingly.

3.7 Data Analysis Strategies and Interpretation

The thematic analysis method will be used to analyse, organise, and identify the themes in the participant data. The thematic analysis allows for intuitive and in-depth analysis of the data as opposed to other methods, such as Content analysis, which is more practical and its application more widespread as it can be used in quantitative studies (Humble & Mozelius, 2021). Thematic analysis is a popular method in qualitative studies that is easy to comprehend, flexible and provides detailed insights into the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis will allow for an inductive summary of themes present in the data, which we can use in our final report (Brough, 2019).

ATLAS.ti software will be used to manage and analyse the data effectively. This software is apt as it will support importing interview notes, transcripts & audio recordings. Participant demographic data will be uploaded into ATLAS.ti to gather more in-depth insights.

The notes will be revised to gain familiarity with the data, and we will document any initial thoughts or potential themes on the memo function of ATLAS.ti. We will

organise the data per question & each answer will be listed and evaluated to explore similarities and differences in responses. We can then identify the codes & categories that emerge from the data. Once we have organised the data into categories, the information will be summarised to indicate patterns and themes in the data. Once themes have emerged, we can look back at the raw data to validate them.

With the use of ATLAS.ti, links between themes will be identified, and models can be created to show the relationships and interpretations of the data. The models can then be used in our report to explain the findings. Key findings will be acknowledged, and the results of this study will be compared to similar studies.

3.8 Possible Limitations and Challenges of the Study

- The study is not generalizable due to the purposive sampling method (Etikan, 2016).
- There will be a degree of variability in the questions due to semi-structured interviews (Schindler, 2019).

3.9 Quality Assurance

3.9.1 *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the extent to which a study can be transferred or used in other settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The following information will be provided or has been provided in the sections above to ensure future researchers can make informed decisions about the transferability of this study:

- We have provided a detailed description of the criteria used to choose the participants for the sample.
- The sample size and participants' demographics will be included in the data.
- The problem statement and rationale provide context about eCommerce & S-commerce in SA, which warrants this research. Using this information,

other researchers can ascertain if this research is appropriate for use in their setting.

- A copy of the interview guide has been provided in the appendix of this document.
- The delimitations outline the scope of the study in detail to ensure future researchers have a clear view of what was studied.

3.9.2 *Credibility*

Credibility is to ensure that the findings presented correlate with the data collected from participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure credibility in this study, the following will apply:

- Interviews will be recorded so the researcher can access their notes and the recording in case clarity is needed on any response.
- The data collected will be thoroughly analysed several times to ensure correct deductions.
- Using data analysing software like ATLAS.ti will ensure that the validity of the results is increased and provides a good audit trail.

3.9.3 *Dependability*

Dependability refers to the consistency of the study's results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure the dependability of the study, the following measures will be in place:

- An audit trail will be maintained on the procedures and processes followed during the interview set-up, interview stage and data analysis.
- The recordings and notes of the interviews will be organised & available for review on request.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The actions below will be taken to ensure this study maintains ethical boundaries:

- Informed consent will be obtained from all participants via email before the interview is conducted.
- Permission to record the interviews will be obtained from all participants before the start of the interview. This consent will be recorded in a video interview or via email if the interview is in person.
- Ethical clearance will be obtained from the university before data collection can begin.
- Participants will have the option to remain anonymous. Once the data is collected, their names will not be saved with the recordings and notes.

3.11 Consistency Table

RQ	Research Question	Proposition	Proposition Statement	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
RQ1	What factors influence consumer shopping on social media platforms and Instagram in particular?	1	• *Social influence will positively influence consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce.*	Interview guide questions: 3 to 13	Thematic analysis
		2	• *The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram* social commerce.		
RQ2	How do consumers perceive Instagram's social commerce features?	3	• *Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*	Interview guide questions: 14 to 22	Thematic analysis

RQ	Research Question	Proposition	Proposition Statement	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
RQ3	What are some of the concerns experienced by consumers when shopping on Instagram, and what can be done to improve their shopping experience?	4	• *Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.*	Interview guide questions: 23 to 27	Thematic analysis
		5a	• *An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*		
RQ4	How will the introduction of the checkout feature impact consumers' impression of S-commerce on Instagram?	3	• *Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*	Interview guide questions: 28 to 31	Thematic analysis
		5a	• *An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*		

RQ	Research Question	Proposition	Proposition Statement	Data collection detail	Data analysis method
		5b	*Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.*		

Table 2: Consistency matrix

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS / FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The results from the qualitative interviews conducted with fifteen participants will now be discussed. Seven percent of the participants were male, and ninety-three percent were female.

The results are presented per proposition. Where applicable, excerpts from participant interviews will be used to validate the research further. The participants were given identifying numbers during the data analysis, which will be used to identify them instead of their names.

4.2 Results of Proposition 1: *Social influence will positively influence consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce.*

We will now look at the results of the influence of peers and influencers on the participants' trust and usage of social commerce.

4.2.1 *Influence of Peers*

Our results indicate that eighty percent of participants have purchased from Instagram social commerce based on recommendations and experiences of their peers whom they trust. Peers in this context are friends, family, or other people they know personally.

Participants have used recommendations from their peers as they trust their experiences with the brand. If their peer has had a positive experience and received their products, then participants are assured they will also receive their products.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 1:

- *Oh yes, definitely. So, for example, one of the companies I discovered was due to a friend of mine from CrossFit. So, she purchased a lot from them and mentioned that they were similar to a brand I already purchased from. So, I purchased it because of her recommendation, and it was great. The quality was great.*

Participant 3:

- *I have purchased based on recommendation. I don't know if this qualifies as social commerce, but there's my neighbour; for example, she bought this waist trainer from this lady on Instagram and then told me about it, and this particular lady was running a special. She had her number on her Instagram profile. Then I contacted her via WhatsApp, and I made the purchase on WhatsApp, and I only did that because my neighbour recommended it.*
- *I only started shopping when someone told me they had received the goods they had purchased. Only then, at least, were my trust issues alleviated.*

Participant 10:

- *I've never had a haircut in Johannesburg before, so I asked for recommendations on Instagram, and one of my peers suggested one, and I actually went to that hair salon. So that was one of the recommendations that somebody, one of my peers, had recommended to me on Instagram from my posting that I was looking for recommendations.*

Participant 12:

- *Yes, I have, and funny enough, I'm the one always telling everyone to check this page and check that page to buy stuff. The recommendation was a website called Ziba, and they do*

everything on Instagram. It's jewellery and a friend told me about them, and I love Ziba.

4.2.2 *Influence of Influencers*

Participants were requested to provide details of instances where social media influencers have encouraged them to use social commerce. Our results show that only seven percent of respondents were not influenced by influencers to use social commerce. The other ninety-three percent have all used social commerce based on recommendations from influencers they follow and trust. They enjoyed watching the influencers use the product, explaining how it should be used, and seeing how it looked. Participants liked that influencers tagged the products used so they could be easily found.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 2:

- *I would go with the active wear one, which I often purchase. Local athletes I follow would post about a product they have tried and tested, and then I have also purchased that product.*

Participant 4:

- *There was a fixing spray from Smudge. So, someone was explaining how good the quality is. They recommended this spray, and I bought it.*

Participant 8:

- *There is a beauty influencer or makeup artist. She is based in Johannesburg. She loves makeup, so she does a lot of tutorials on different brands of makeup. I would watch them and find something I like. She also advises what to buy, and I would go and make a purchase based on her review.*

Participant 10:

- *Yes, I have so, Sanesh makeup. I follow her. She promotes a lot of nice girl things, you know? So, she actually posted about jewellery which I purchased.*

As seen in the responses, participants are more likely to use social commerce when someone they know, or trust makes a recommendation to them. It eases any doubts they have, knowing that someone else was able to successfully purchase from a company which allows them to build trust from the experiences of others.

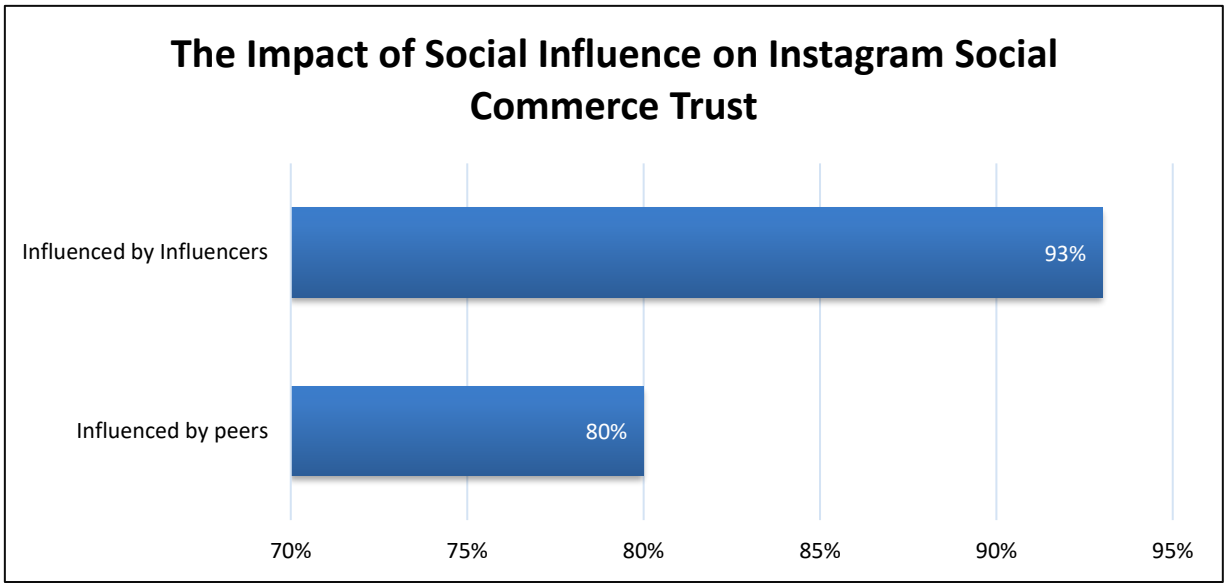


Figure 9: The impact of Social Influence on Instagram Social Commerce Trust

As seen in the graph above, our respondents were more influenced by influencers than their peers to trust a brand or product. Fourteen of the fifteen respondents (93%) indicated that they would be influenced by influencers while twelve of the fifteen respondents (80%) indicated that people they know have influenced them to use social commerce.

4.3 Results of Proposition 2: *The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram social commerce.*

As Instagram is predominantly a media-sharing application, participants gave their opinion on the importance of the quality of the user experience and whether it affected their social commerce experience. Experience Quality will encompass Service Quality, Information Quality, and Image/Video (media content) Quality, which are proven to be key determinants for using social commerce on Instagram and directly affect Trust (Din et al., 2018).

4.3.1 *Image/Video (media content) Quality*

Ninety-three percent of respondents agree that the quality of the media content will impact their purchasing decision. Participants indicated that the Image/Video Quality influenced their image of the brand and product. Participants are more likely to trust that the product is of good quality if the image or video used to advertise is high-quality.

Forty-seven percent of participants indicated that low-quality media deters them from looking at the advertisement further as it comes across as unprofessional or does not catch their attention. Additionally, sixty percent of participants indicated that they particularly liked using Instagram for social commerce due to the visual appeal of the media content.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 2:

- *Yes, it is definitely more appealing if it is high-quality; the quality shows the seller's attention to detail and makes it feel like the product you will receive is of higher quality. If their promotional material is high-quality, you can tell that a lot of effort is put into that.*

Participant 4:

- *One hundred percent, I mean, if you invest in the quality of your content, you're valuing your client. I would not want to buy something that looks dull and old. I want to buy something that looks attractive because it immediately catches my eye, and I'm sold, so quality is really important to me.*

Participant 6:

- *I am a visual person, so if the picture is not attractive, then I am not interested.*

Participant 8:

- *It definitely impacts my decision, as I feel if the image or video quality is not good, then the product quality will not be up to standard.*
- *I feel like if the video and the picture are going to be outstanding and of good quality, I just feel that I will get the best out of the product.*

Participant 11:

- *Absolutely! It is your first contact with that advert, product, or brand. If that is poor, that will make a difference to whether I followed through to go and make the purchase.*

Participant 3:

- *When the picture quality is not the greatest, you do not trust that you will get what you want. When the picture quality is of a certain standard, and when you zoom in and out, you can tell that there are details like a zip on the side, your trust levels are a bit higher than normal, and you look at it further.*

4.3.2 *Service Quality*

Next, we will look at the results of the impact of Service Quality on Instagram social commerce trust.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents say they have had predominantly good experiences with customer service from brands on Instagram. In contrast, the remaining thirty-three percent indicate having mixed experiences with vendors. Participants noted that some sellers were very responsive, while others did not respond within an acceptable time.

Eighty percent of participants indicated that responsive brands made them more likely to trust the brand to follow through with purchases. Thirty-three percent of participants would repurchase from a brand that provided them with good service.

Forty-seven percent of participants said long response times made them lose interest in a product or brand. Twenty percent of respondents feel that most small businesses are invested in good service quality as they are eager for business.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 14:

- *Yes, they are very responsive, and they're very helpful. They try to win you as a customer by providing you with many answers to your questions so that you can make up your mind. It's much easier to trust and go ahead with the sale then.*

Participant 1:

- *So, the brands that I've interacted with or purchased from, I find that they are actually really quick to respond, especially on Instagram.*
- *Based on a recent purchase that I made with a brand that my friend recommended, I made an incorrect purchase, and I wanted to amend the purchase order slightly. I emailed them, and then they didn't get back to me, and then I think I was a bit worried because it was about to be shipped off for delivery. So, I messaged him on*

Instagram, and they almost instantly responded to me, amended my order, and then delivered.

Participant 2:

- *Yeah, I think it depends. For the most part, every time I have contacted a brand and if I've had an issue with my order, they've responded fairly quickly, been very helpful and even helped me return items.*
- *They are so very helpful. It's because they are invested in their small business, and I usually try to only shop from local brands. They are very invested in their customers, and that is really helpful.*

Participant 11:

- *Oh, both. Some brands were extremely responsive. I think the smaller brands are very responsive on Instagram, where you know it's like a few people running the entire business; it is very close to them. With your bigger brands, you tend to get automated messages, and then you got to wait two days until somebody who's not a chatbot gets back to you.*

Participant 8:

- *Well, it depends. For certain brands, you would receive a response in maybe an hour or two, or you don't have to wait that long for a response. But for other brands, sometimes it will take maybe a day or two even get a response from them, and that puts me off because they obviously do not want my business or do not want me to purchase because of the long waiting time for a response. I probably would make a purchase or buy something, a different product from somewhere else.*

Participant 15:

- *When you get a good response, it makes the process easier, which makes your purchase most likely to happen. When they tend to take*

longer, or you don't get a response, I do not end up purchasing; I'm over it by that point.

Participant 3:

- *So, the responsive one, it's encouraging because you know you can easily go back and forth with questions if you want to inquire about anything. The non-responsive one, I mean, eventually, you just give up. You are not getting the information you were looking for, and you eventually lose interest. Sometimes if there's no response, you assume they must be expensive.*

4.3.3 *Information Quality*

Lastly, for proposition two, we will look at the results for Information Quality and how consumers feel about the information presented to them on Instagram.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that detailed product description was an essential factor in the decision-making process as the information helped to reduce their uncertainty regarding the product. These respondents indicated a need for more detailed information as the social commerce process eliminates salespeople and physically seeing or touching the product. Consumers also preferred to avoid contacting the brand for more information; sixty-seven percent of respondents agreed they would rather have the necessary information presented upfront.

Thirteen percent of respondents indicated that some products need more descriptive information than others. Their preference for the amount of information required would depend on the product.

Detailed product descriptions did not notably impact the remaining twenty percent. They expect the image or video content to convey as much of the required information as possible and limit the necessity for them to read detailed information.

Additionally, thirty-three percent of participants indicated they like Instagram social commerce due to the easily digestible nature of the information presented.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants**:**

Participant 6:

- *Detailed descriptions are important because it's a bit difficult online, unlike in a store where you can feel, touch, and see things yourself. So, if this information is not clearly available, like in a picture, then the description is very important.*

Participant 8:

- *Yes, it is important because it saves me the time of going and contacting the seller to find out more about the product. So, if everything is included in the description, then I know exactly what I'm purchasing without going and inquiring more about it.*

Participant 13:

- *Yes, the more you know about the product, the less you need to inquire; you can just purchase. So, the more details and descriptions, the better. So, you can quickly decide if it's what you need or want.*

Participant 7:

- *Yeah, I think detailed product descriptions are very, very important. When shopping online, especially since you have to rely on that as you cannot see the product. It must be very detailed, so you have the best knowledge of what you're purchasing without seeing it. You'd rely on that information.*

Participant 3:

- *It would depend on what you are shopping for. There's only so much detail that you can add to a dress advert, but if I'm buying a hair product, I like to see what other people have said about the product. I'd like to know the ingredients. I look for a bit more detail than if I'm shopping for clothing.*

Participant 1:

- *So, I don't read the descriptions that the company puts out there. I*
- *mostly care about what consumers say about the product, what they're posting about it, and whether it's in line with the images or the visuals the organization or the company is putting out there.*

Experience Quality plays a significant role in attracting customers on social commerce. Participants expect quick responses and interactive engagements from brands to build trust. Many participants make their purchasing decisions based on the information in the Instagram product post. A lack of this information upfront can deter users from purchasing. Lastly, the media content must be high quality to attract users' interest. Participants view the media content as a reflection of the brand and product sold. They are likelier to trust the brand and product quality if the advertisement is high-quality.

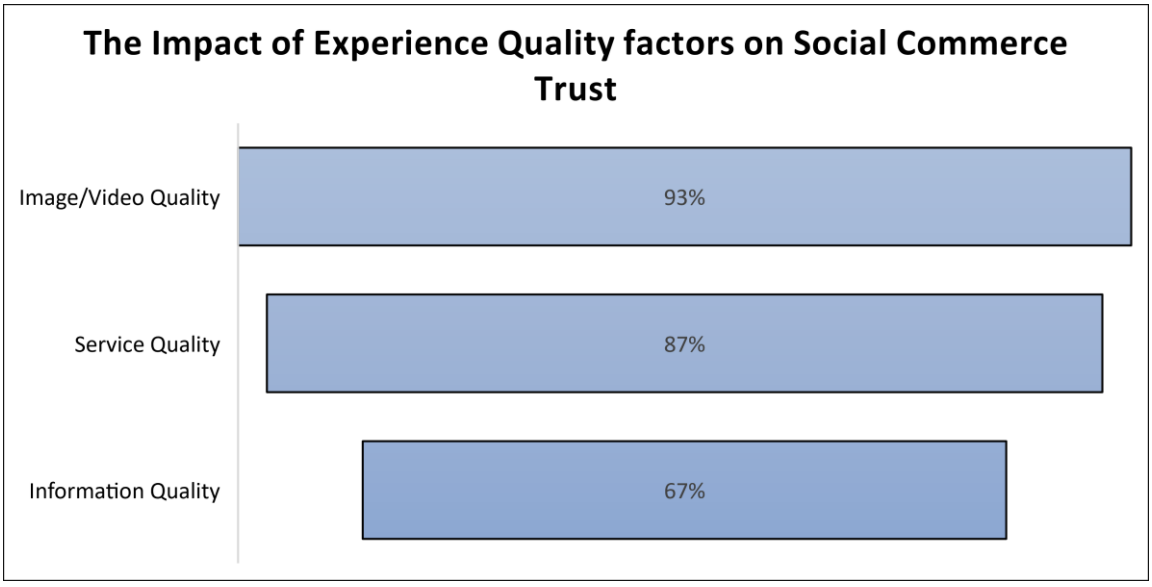


Figure 10: The Impact of Experience Quality Factors on Social Commerce Trust

As seen in the graph above, participants particularly emphasised the importance of Image/Video Quality and Service Quality. At the same time, while Information Quality is important, it did not rank as high on the list as Image/Video Quality and Service Quality. Fourteen of the fifteen respondents (93%) are drawn to high-quality media, thirteen of the fifteen respondents (87%) value service quality and ten of the fifteen respondents (67%) are influenced by information quality.

4.4 Results of Proposition 3: *Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*

Instagram social commerce has a variety of features to assist consumers with shopping. A hundred percent of respondents indicated they are comfortable using the Instagram social commerce features as they perceive them as easy to use. Our participants were asked about the Perceived Easiness of these features, namely, digital product tags, digital shop & the view-on-website option and the results are discussed below.

4.4.1 *Digital Product Tags*

Eighty-seven percent of participants agreed that having the digital product tags feature containing the product name and price was convenient, informative, and helpful to them. At the same time, sixty percent of participants indicated that having digital product tags improve their decision-making process. Consumers preferred having information upfront, particularly the price, as it was a key factor for faster decision-making. They felt confident to move forward with purchasing once they knew if the product was in their price-range or not.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 2:

- *Yeah, I really like that aspect. It is very helpful and nice to immediately see the price of something when you're looking at it, to know whether it's a viable purchase.*

Participant 5:

- *It's very effective. It's very useful because you don't have to keep messaging sellers to find out the cost or what it includes. All the information is already included in the tag.*

Participant 6:

- *Umm, definitely helpful. Sometimes I get irritated with people who don't post the price because it means you must make contact, right?*

Participant 9:

- *My favourite new addition. When that influencer tells me to go buy this product, I have to click on the link and then go out, whereas product tags have helped me tap and see, OK, that's out of my price range, and move on.*

Participant 15:

- *Definitely useful. It's going to save you a lot of time trying to find that item, and most people are looking for a price when they are shopping to know whether it's in their budget or not. If it's out of your budget, then you can keep looking for something else.*

4.4.2 *Digital Shop*

Ninety-three percent of participants agree that this feature makes shopping very convenient. Respondents highlighted that having curated items in the shop relevant to their needs or past interests was particularly helpful in their shopping journey. The respondents liked the visual appeal of the digital shop, the information available and the fact that it seemed like a trustworthy place to shop.

Fifty-three percent of participants indicated that targeted advertisements drive their use of Instagram shopping.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 3:

- *It's nice because they keep a list of the things you have looked at in the past if you ever want to go back.*

Participant 8:

- *That's also something that's really helpful and makes it so much easier and more efficient to shop. I just feel it makes your shopping experience so much better.*

Participant 15:

- *I quite like it, and it seems to be relevant items or items you had viewed previously that keep coming up.*

Participant 9:

- *Also, convenient, and it means I do not have to leave the platform to browse.*

Participant 10:

- *So absolutely great; the digital shop gives you more information and makes you more comfortable shopping on Instagram. I feel that it's verified brands if it's under the shopping tab. It gives me a little bit more comfort shopping. It ensures me I won't get scammed.*

4.4.3 *View-on-website Option*

When asked about the view on-website option, all respondents agreed that having the option to go to the website is excellent and a smooth transition, but they also noted some issues with this feature. Seven percent of participants noted

that leaving Instagram to complete the purchase was inconvenient. Twenty-seven percent of participants noted that the product they were interested in is only sometimes shown once on the website, leading the consumer to search from scratch.

Once on the website, though, all participants were comfortable continuing their purchases. Participants indicated that the website provided efficient checkout processes and easy-to-use interfaces.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents like the website due to secure payment processes. Sixty percent of participants noted that websites and customer reviews reassured them that the business was legit, which increased their trust levels for completing the purchases.

Seven percent of participants indicated that they preferred the website over the digital shop as there were more options presented on the website. Additionally, seventy-three percent of respondents indicated that the website was a trustworthy place to shop.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 4:

- *It gives people more than one option to shop. If they want to view a website, maybe they want to verify that the company is real and that they are really selling on Instagram. So, giving people more options in order for us to verify it is better because, you know, there's a lot of scams, and I am scared; what if I'm not purchasing from the real store, you know?*

Participant 3:

- *That option is nice, but if you can wrap up everything on Instagram, I don't see why I should branch off somewhere else.*

Participant 10:

- *If it takes you to the website, it might take you to a different product, and you'd have to search for it. So, there are some tweaks that some businesses need to get right with the link from Instagram to their website. So, sometimes they won't take you exactly to the product, they'll take you to the website, but you'll still have to search for the product.*

Participant 8:

- *The website lets you see whether it is a legit brand or supplier. You can also browse so much more stuff on the website directly.*

Participant 15:

- *I'm comfortable with it. It adds a layer of trust as well. If it takes you to the brand's website, it's a legit profile.*

Participant 7:

- *Viewing the company website also gives you a little bit more surety that it's a legit purchase.*

Participant 12:

- *From Instagram to the website, yes, but it's also brand-dependent because sometimes the website is not optimized correctly. So, you are clicking on a product like a conditioner, for example, and then when you go to the website, you are directed to shampoo. So, I feel like some brands are not optimizing their websites correctly, but I have not had any issues with the smaller brands' websites.*

4.4.4 *Opinions on the Checkout Feature being Trialled in the USA*

In addition to the current features on Instagram social commerce in SA, the participants were shown an example of the checkout feature being trialled in the USA and asked for their views.

All participants agreed that the new feature made Instagram social commerce more convenient, and sixty percent of respondents noted how easy the feature was. The respondents also indicated that the feature made them feel secure and made the process more efficient. Respondents indicated that this increased convenience and sense of security would prompt them to use the checkout feature in future as it seemed trustworthy.

Eighty-seven percent of users stated that this feature would prompt them to make more purchases from Instagram due to the sheer convenience of this more straightforward process.

Thirteen percent of the participants expressed doubt about this new feature. These participants were unsure if the checkout feature would be as secure as a website. Additionally, thirteen percent of participants felt they would be unable to verify that the business is legit like they do on the website. Participants felt more comfortable with the familiarity of using the website.

Twenty-seven percent of participants said they would be comfortable using the feature with known businesses they trust. Ninety-three percent of the respondents indicated that they would use this new feature when launched in SA.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 4:

- *Yes, definitely. I think it will make the purchase easier for me. I don't have to branch out to a website and check that it's secure. Also, I know that my payment is secure.*

Participant 11:

- *If I think about myself, I don't have an issue checking-out on Instagram if it is a known brand or product. I would prefer to visit the website if it's not a brand I know. From a payment security perspective, I prefer to check out on the website instead of Instagram.*

Participant 8:

- *I feel two-minded about it. I feel it is easier since you can just get it done on Instagram, but because I am so used to being directed to the website, I will be hesitant to change. Eventually, it should be OK.*

Participant 10:

- *I think it's really cool. It does add a lot of value. However, I am still reserved to use it until there is verification of the business and the product. Instagram must verify that the product exists for sale.*
- *I would probably use it on businesses that I currently purchase from.*

Participant 15:

- *I think it's a cool feature that they have added, and it will definitely add value to the Instagram experience. It creates convenience. It creates security.*

Participants were impressed with features that make their lives easier. The digital tags provide price information, which most respondents cited as a critical decision-making factor. The digital shop allows the users to browse items relevant to their needs as they are curated based on their activity. Users particularly like this feature as it saves time.

Participants like the view-on-website option but noted the inefficiency of leaving the Instagram application and sometimes losing sight of the desired product once on the website.

Users particularly like being directed to a website because it assures them that the company is legit and provides secure payment options. One of the participants' main concerns is verifying that a business is legit, and they feel that having a website makes the company more trustworthy. This ability to verify the business is a crucial factor for purchasing.

Participants are excited about the checkout feature as they believe it simplifies the social commerce experience on Instagram. Some participants expressed doubt about the security and being able to verify a business. Overall, participants are keen to try the feature with businesses they trust, and most participants feel that it will prompt them to make more purchases on Instagram as the process is much simpler.

4.5 Results of Proposition 4: *Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.*

Participants were asked to discuss how privacy and security concerns affected their social commerce experience.

Eighty percent of participants admitted to having security concerns when using Instagram social commerce, with twenty percent saying it was not a concern for them. Some of the concerns mentioned by users were:

- Fraud or fake business profiles/brands
- Safety of card details/secure payment options
- Hacking
- The app spies on or listens to the user via their device.

Sixty-seven percent of users were concerned about the safety of their card details when shopping online. Having secure payment options was important to respondents. They mentioned actively looking for secure pages and payment options before purchasing. Additionally, sixty-seven percent of participants mentioned that fake or fraudulent business accounts were a big concern, as Instagram did not validate business accounts. This lack of verification makes it harder for consumers to distinguish fake businesses from legitimate companies.

Sixty-seven percent of participants indicated having privacy concerns for their information while using Instagram social commerce, while thirty-three percent did not see this as an issue. Users cited protecting their information and use of their information post-purchase as some of their critical concerns. Participants

indicated that businesses must inform them what would happen to their personal information once a purchase is complete. Additionally, participants do not want to disclose too much personal information up front. These concerns led to decreased trust when considering using social commerce on Instagram.

Eighty percent of users indicated that these concerns had impacted their purchase behaviour as they would only follow through with purchases where the process was secure. Users did indicate that advances in technology and past good experiences are some of the factors that ease their concerns and increase their trust to continue to use social commerce. Participants also indicated that their concerns are related to more than just social commerce; they have these concerns with all online shopping.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 3:

- *I worry about the credit card details you put in there, but now, when you purchase on Instagram, you can pay with Apple Pay. So, that is a better option; the chances of your details getting cloned are less than when you input your physical card details online. Having your card details in the cloud is also scary, though.*

Participant 6:

- *Sometimes I have concerns, but it's like with all online platforms, right? You have to always wonder, is it secure or not? Just the fact that people can hack into your account worries me. My main security concern is that they may not be a real business.*

Participant 8:

- *I do not have concerns anymore. In the beginning, I was scared about card details being shared or fraudulent activity that could take place. Now, I feel comfortable making purchases online because I've been doing it for some time and have not experienced anything of that sort.*

Participant 4:

- *Yes, I do have concerns. Is my information secure? What happens with my information after I make the purchase?*
- *Is my information safe? Is my card information safe? Am I purchasing from the correct store or supplier? So, those are my main concerns. After the purchase is made, what happens to my information? Will it still be secured?*

Participant 9:

- *Yes, I have concerns, so I prefer to leave the platform and go to secure payment pages.*
- *The thing with Instagram is the ability of business profiles to appear and disappear very quickly. A lot of people have been conned. They pay thinking it's a legitimate business, then it disappears, or they do not commit to their promise.*
- *Not just the payment stuff concerns me; I'm not too trusting with my personal information. What are you going to do with my name and my phone number?*

Participant 7:

- *There is also that element of safety and security as Instagram business accounts are not being validated. There is a possibility of fraudulent accounts promoting items.*

Participant 1:

- *So, I think before the virtual card, I was a little bit concerned because I've had to change credit cards a few times, as a result of my card and my CVV being hacked. Now with the virtual card, I've never experienced any of those security concerns.*
- *With all the additional security features or products being released out there, with banks introducing products to the market like the*

virtual card, enabling safer online transactions, I'm not terribly concerned. The majority of my purchases are done online.

- *You know your data will be out there, and I follow those brands, so I'm sure they have access to a lot of my data. I like its targeted marketing aspect, so you know how concerned I am, really?*

Participant 10:

- *My main concern is the safety of my credit card. I'm also aware that some businesses may be fake. Those are my main concerns.*
- *When they ask for too much information, then it would prompt me not to complete filling out a form or an inquiry. So, requesting too much personal information will discourage me from actually inquiring.*
- *Yes, I have concerns, but since the Instagram links take you to the website, you feel secure if it says it is secured. They may have PayPal or something like that. That way, you can make your purchases securely, so that reassures me. If it does not take me there, then I will not proceed.*

Privacy and security concerns significantly impact the participants' purchase behaviour. Participants cited having secure payments and verified business profiles as the main aspects to increase their trust in purchasing on social commerce.

The participants were also confident they could conduct research to ease their security or privacy concerns. They do feel some accountability for preventing scams. Participants mentioned checking the number of followers a business has, looking for reviews, checking for secure icons on websites and secure payment options as some of the steps they take to ensure safety online.

4.6 Results of Proposition 5:

From propositions one to four, we have seen the effects of Social Influence, Experience Quality, Perceived Easiness, and Privacy/Security concerns on Trust.

The results indicate that all these factors affect consumers' trust in using social commerce. We will now look at the results for propositions 5a&b.

4.6.1 *Proposition 5a: An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*

We saw the importance of trust regarding the Experience Quality offered to consumers. Ninety-three percent of participants indicated that high-quality media makes the brand and product more trustworthy and directly influences their intent to view the product for more details. Forty-seven percent of participants indicated that low-quality media deters them from looking at the advert further. Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that a positive brand experience where the brand has responded quickly to inquiries and been friendly directly impacts their intent to purchase from the brand as they felt these brands are trustworthy. Participants indicated that non-responsive brands caused them to lose interest in the product. Forty percent of respondents have deliberately not purchased from brands they had a negative experience with, such as long response times and rude or no response. Sixty-seven percent of respondents noted that detailed product descriptions were imperative to build trust in the seller and product, as consumers cannot view the product in person.

Eighty-seven percent of participants indicated that peers they trust positively influenced them to use social commerce. Ninety-three percent of participants said they bought a product recommended by an influencer they trust. Once participants see or hear about someone's positive experience with a brand or product, their trust levels are increased, and they are more likely to purchase from that brand.

The Perceived Easiness of the social commerce features also played a role in participant trust. Seventy-three percent of participants felt the view-on-website option was trustworthy as it would take them to a legit website where they could verify the business's existence via the branding and reviews from other customers. They also felt at ease with the secure payment options on the website, which increased their confidence to continue their purchasing journey. The respondents liked the digital shop as it seemed like a trustworthy place to shop.

Additionally, sixty percent of respondents indicated that having the product information upfront in the digital tag increased their confidence to continue the purchase. Ninety-three percent of participants would use the Instagram checkout feature when it is launched. Participants were excited as they viewed it as trustworthy due to the secure payment options it would provide.

Eighty percent of users indicated that Privacy and Security concerns had impacted their purchase behavior as they would not follow through with purchases where the process did not seem secure. Trust levels increased when participants were directed to secure websites with secure payment options, and they could verify that the business was real. If the participants did not trust that the business was real or felt that the website was not secure, they would not proceed.

Below are some of the excerpts from the participants:

Participant 7:

***Features**: Checkout feature*

- *Yes, it is definitely going to prompt me to make more purchases. It is trustworthy, and with brands, I have purchased from before and had a good experience, the process is now shorter.*

High-quality media:

- *Going back to the previous point, if you are going to have a good-quality image or video, it will also say a lot about your product. It says it is more trustworthy, and you know you can take it.*

Positive brand experience:

- *I've had good experiences with vendors on Instagram, where I've purchased products. It was delivered in good quality.*

Information quality:

- *When shopping online, you must rely on the information provided as you don't have physical contact. It must be very detailed, so you have the best knowledge of what you're purchasing without seeing it.*

Participant 12:

***Features**: Checkout feature*

- *I mean anything that will make the experience quicker, easier and make me feel safe. That what I'm buying or who I'm buying from is legit.*

Positive brand experience:

- *So far, all the brands I've dealt with have been very responsive. It's definitely something that'll make me return and support them and buy more and more from them.*

Participant 14:

***Features**: Checkout feature*

- *Yes, I would see myself using it because it is secure.*

Positive brand experience:

- *A positive experience makes it seem that this person is more reliable, or I can go with their word, especially if there is kind of reviews on their past products. So, it's much easier for the person who wants to buy the product immediately to decide. It's easier to trust and go ahead with the sale with the person who answers your questions now than the person who answers after three hours.*

Participant 3:

High-quality media:

- *When the picture quality is not the greatest, you do not trust that you will get what you want. When the picture quality is of a certain standard, your trust levels are a bit higher than normal, and you look at it further.*

Social influence:

- *I'm sure I've bought a few dresses because I've seen Mihlali wearing them.*
- *I only started shopping when someone told me they had received the goods they had purchased. Only then were my trust issues alleviated.*

Participant 11:

Features: *view-on-website*

- *Seeing the product on their website is a bit more legit, especially for a brand or website you haven't visited before. You have more trust in making the purchase. You know that is not some sort of hoax website.*

Privacy/security concerns

- *If you're going on to a trusted website, you know you have security.*

Participant 10:

Privacy/security concerns

- *Yes, I do have concerns, but since the Instagram links take you to the website, and if it says it's secured, you feel secure. Maybe they have PayPal or something like that; that way, you can make your purchases securely, so that reassures me. If it doesn't take me there, then I will not proceed.*

Information quality:

- *So having detailed product descriptions helps me to make my decision quicker than waiting for a response from the salesperson or the business. It also tells me what I'm buying, so that's cool.*

Participant 8:

Service Quality

- *Well, it depends. For certain brands, you would receive a response in maybe an hour or two, or you don't have to wait that long for a response. But for other brands, sometimes it will take maybe a day or two even get a response from them, and that puts me off because they obviously do not want my business or do not want me to purchase because of the long waiting time for a response. I probably would make a purchase or buy something, a different product from somewhere else.*

Based on the findings, participants were eager to pursue a product or advertisement further once they felt comfortable that the product or business could be trusted. A positive brand interaction gave participants confidence in a brand, while high-quality media content gave them confidence in the product. Having the price upfront and using the digital shop gave users confidence in the seller and the product. Detailed product descriptions reduced participants' uncertainty about the advertised products and buying online. Going to a secure website increased trust and ensured participants that the business was not fake. At the same time, Social Influences gave participants the confidence to try brands and products based on recommendations from people they trust. In contrast, consumers would not pursue a product further if they did not trust the seller or the process.

4.6.2 *Proposition 5b: Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.*

Ninety-three percent of respondents indicated that Social Influence from influencers showing a product increased their trust in the product and influenced them to purchase. The respondents indicated that they trust the opinions of these influencers and that their use of the product assists in the purchase decision.

Participant 2:

- *I would go with the active wear one, which I get a lot, and it will be from local athletes that I follow, and they post about a product that they have tried and tested, and then I've gone and purchased that product.*

Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they purchased from a brand after having a positive engagement, which increased their trust in the seller. They also indicated that they would not purchase from brands where engagement was rude, or they took a long time to respond. Forty percent of participants said they would repurchase from brands that they had positive engagements with.

Participant 4:

- *I think for me because the communication is interactive, I enjoyed buying, or I enjoyed that experience because I didn't have to wait, and I had my questions answered immediately. That was a good experience, and I was more inclined to purchase, and I did purchase.*

Off the eighty-seven percent of participants who indicated that peers they trust could positively influence them to use social commerce, eighty percent completed purchases based on their peer recommendations.

Participant 1:

- *Oh yes, definitely. So, for example, one of the companies I found was a result of a friend of mine also from CrossFit. So, she purchased a lot from them and mentioned that they were similar to*

a brand I had already purchased from. So, I purchased it due to her recommendation, and it was great. The quality was great.

Sixty-seven percent of participants indicated they would complete a purchase when they saw a secure website. Sixty percent of respondents said that security or privacy concerns had stopped them from completing a purchase.

Participant 4:

- *With some of the websites, you check at the top for the secure tags and then check if they will send you an authentication from your bank when you are paying. So, those are the things I look for, and if I don't get those indicators, I become alarmed and would immediately stop the purchase.*

Ninety-three percent of respondents agree that the quality of media content presented influences their trust in a seller, which impacts their purchasing decision.

Participant 7:

- *Going back to the previous point, a good-quality image or video will also say a lot about your product. You know that it is a bit more trustworthy, and you know you can take it.*

Participant 13:

- *If the quality of your picture is not really good, obviously, I'm going to be put off. The better the presentation of it, the easier for me to want to purchase it. Therefore, the quality of the image is very important.*

Excerpts from participants where multiple factors played a role in the purchase completion:

Participant 2:

Yes, so a high-quality website with good reviews for the product, lots of reviews to show that people have bought this before and good descriptions

of the products. Nice photographs of the products as well, and lots of different angles and being local brands influenced me to complete the purchase.

Participant 10:

The friendly service, the influencer recommendation and finding what I needed. Those were the important things that helped me to complete my purchase.

4.7 Summary of the Results/findings

The summary of the results is as follows:’

Proposition	Summary of results
Proposition 1: Social influence will positively influence consumers’ trust in Instagram social commerce.	• Eighty percent of participants have purchased from Instagram social commerce based on recommendations and experiences of their peers. • Ninety-three percent of participants have been influenced to use social commerce by influencers. • Social influence positively influences participants' use of social commerce.
Proposition 2: The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram social commerce.	• Ninety-three percent of respondents agree that the Image/Video Quality used to advertise a product will impact their purchasing decision. • Eighty-seven percent of respondents indicated that a positive brand experience positively impacts purchasing decisions. • Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that detailed product descriptions were essential to the decision-making process.

	• High-quality images/videos and positive brand engagement are key factors in the consumer social commerce journey, with consumers noting the importance of detailed descriptions but not as highly as quality media and service quality.
Proposition 3: Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.	• Eighty-seven percent of participants agreed that having the digital product tags feature containing the product name and price was convenient, informative, and helpful to them. • Ninety-three percent of participants agree that the digital shop feature makes shopping convenient. • All respondents agree that having the option to go to the website is excellent and a smooth transition, reassuring them that the business is real. • All participants agreed that the checkout feature made Instagram social commerce more convenient, and sixty percent of respondents noted how easy the feature was. • The easy-to-use features give users the confidence to use social commerce on Instagram.
Proposition 4:	• Eighty percent of participants admitted to having security concerns when using Instagram social commerce.

Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.	• Sixty-seven percent of participants indicated having privacy concerns for their information while using Instagram social commerce. • Eighty percent of users indicated that these concerns had impacted their purchase behavior as they would not follow through with purchases where the process did not seem secure. • Security and privacy concerns negatively affect users' trust in Instagram social commerce.
Proposition 5a: An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.	• The results show that once trust has been established, participants are more likely to have positive purchase intentions. • Participants did not have positive purchase intentions if their concerns were not mitigated, and they could not trust the seller.
Proposition 5b: Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.	• Participants with positive purchase intentions completed their purchases. • Participants who did not have positive purchase intentions would move on and not complete a purchase.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OR FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will compare this study's results to similar studies. The findings will be discussed, and implications for business, marketers and Instagram will be addressed.

5.2 Discussion of Proposition 1 Results: *Social influence will positively influence consumers' trust in Instagram social commerce.*

Our findings show that Social Influence significantly affects consumer trust in social commerce. Over eighty percent of respondents were influenced by peers, and over ninety percent were influenced by influencers to use social commerce. This is consistent with findings from Rahman et al. (2020), who found that consumers are more confident using social commerce if their peers or community members recommend it. Consumers perceive social commerce as less risky if they know someone who has used it successfully and are, therefore, more likely to purchase. This is consistent with findings in a study done by Abed (2018) which cites social influence as a key determinant of social commerce usage.

A quantitative study by Alotaibi et al. (2019) showed that social influencers assisted in building consumer trust to use social commerce on Instagram if the consumers trusted the influencers. These consumers were more likely to purchase if they trusted the social influencer's recommendation. A study by Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) found that social influence from peers or trusted community members significantly affects participants' behavioural intention directly. Our results showed that participants were keen to see influencers use and explain the products. These influencer demonstrations increased their trust and encouraged them to go and view the recommended products.

Leong et al. (2020) conducted an online survey with four hundred and sixty-two responses which revealed that the social presence of others using social commerce was a contributing factor to building trust in consumers to have the confidence to use it themselves as they had seen the experiences others had. This finding is corroborated in a study by Lu et al. (2016) that tested social presence constructs, and the results revealed that the perception of others could influence consumers to change their behaviours when it comes to using social commerce.

A study by Kim & Park (2013) revealed that consumers are more likely to trust social commerce if they receive referrals from other consumers they trust. According to Guo & Li (2022), recommendations can assist in the information filtering process, speeding up the decision-making process for consumers. This finding is further validated in a study by Lin et al. (2019) which found trust in consumers to be the most significant factor for building trust in social commerce as the influence of others starts to play a more prominent role in others' trust and use of social commerce. Findings from Hu et al. (2019) further support the role of social influence in social commerce as their study confirmed people are more accepting of information from sources they trust and are willing to change their behaviours based on this information.

These findings align with this study as participants showed they were more inclined to trust a seller or the product if someone they trust recommends and had a positive experience. This finding is pertinent to businesses and marketers as they must encourage consumers to recommend their products and services to friends and followers. The business also needs to partner with influencers who can sell products to the company's target market, as the results indicate that consumers trust these sources.

5.3 Discussion of Proposition 2 Results: *The quality of the user experience will influence consumer trust in Instagram social commerce.*

To evaluate Experience Quality in this study, we used Image/Video (media) Quality, Information Quality, and Service Quality. Our respondents indicated that all three factors were key to building trust in social commerce. Image/Video and Service Quality were the most important factors, followed by Information Quality.

High-quality media was a crucial factor in the respondents' decision-making process, and they associated good-quality images and videos with trustworthy sellers. This finding is corroborated in studies by Liao et al. (2022) and Bohra & Bishnoi (2016), which found high-quality images essential in user decision-making. A study by Rafinda et al. (2018) found that high-quality images were a determinant of consumer trust as it was associated with a trustworthy seller. According to Bohra & Bishnoi (2016), users are not interested in seeing fancy effects on videos or images promoting a product; they would much rather have a high-resolution picture.

The study from Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) also revealed that respondents liked having detailed product information upfront. This ties in with our results, indicating that detailed product descriptions are essential to consumers. Participants in our study indicated that having detailed information reduced their need to contact the seller, improved their decision-making ability and increased their confidence in the product. Participants indicated they rely on this information as they cannot physically touch and see the product. A study by Kim & Park (2013) confirmed that consumers are likelier to trust sellers that provide detailed, valuable and accurate information regarding their products and services. Din et al. (2020) conducted a study which revealed that accurate, up-to-date, complete, and relevant information presented in a readable manner is critical to building consumer trust in social commerce. This finding is consistent with findings from the study done by Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) which revealed that consumers need access to sufficient quality information to make informed decisions on social commerce channels.

Users from a study by Bohra & Bishnoi (2016) indicated that interacting with brands on Instagram provided a personal touch that gave them confidence in the vendor. This finding is in line with the results from this study, where participants indicated that having positive engagements with the vendor increased their trust in the seller. This finding is validated by Leong et al. (2020), whose study using Social Support Theory and Social Presence Theory revealed that interactions with sellers could contribute significantly to building consumer trust in social commerce. A study by Kim & Park (2013) revealed that credible, correct and timely communications from the seller could build consumer trust in the seller. In contrast, sellers with poor communication skills run the risk of consumers not trusting them (Kim & Park, 2013). Participants from a study conducted by Rafinda et al. (2018) indicated that the speed of the seller's response and the helpfulness of the response was a vital determinant of trust for them. Our participants shared similar sentiments, with many indicating they are more likely to trust a seller that responds quickly and will easily lose interest in a seller that does not provide a prompt response. According to Alshibly (2014), sellers must portray that they care about their customers and are always honest to ensure that trust is built between them.

The quality of the social commerce experience significantly impacts consumers' propensity to trust sellers. Consumers look for high-quality media, good service and communication, and accurate, reliable information to indicate the seller's competence. Consumers associate low-quality media with low-quality products or untrustworthy sellers. At the same time, they associate long response times and a lack of relevant information with sellers that are not serious and cannot be trusted.

Considering these findings, business needs to ensure they provide a high-quality experience to their consumers on Instagram social commerce. They must focus on how the product information is presented in the advertisement, as consumers need sufficient information to trust the product and make quick decisions. Product marketing materials must be visually appealing and high-quality to attract users and gain their trust. Lastly, businesses must be dedicated to their social

commerce channel on Instagram, provide quick and informative consumer feedback, and build trusting relationships with them.

5.4 Discussion of Proposition 3 Results: *Consumers will trust Instagram social commerce if the features are easy to use or simplify purchasing.*

All participants in this study agreed that the Instagram social commerce features were easy to use. They liked that the tags showed the price upfront, and participants found the digital shop trustworthy and helpful as the items were curated for them. Participants liked the view-on-website option as the website was an indicator of a legitimate business and provided surety in terms of secure payment. However, the participants noted the inefficiency of leaving the Instagram application to complete a purchase and sometimes losing sight of the product they needed once on the website. When shown and asked about the checkout feature on Instagram being trialled in the US, ninety-three percent indicated that they would use it if given the opportunity. The simplified process of completing the transaction on Instagram was a key factor for them.

A study by Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) had similar findings, where users indicated the checkout function would significantly impact them as it fits into their lifestyle of quickly checking out on mobile apps. The study also revealed that social influence would impact users' decision to use the checkout feature as they would see it as a trend to be followed. Our respondents did not indicate that others would influence them to use the feature; the ease of the new purchase process influenced them instead. This finding aligns with Binns (2019), which states that simplifying the purchasing journey using the checkout function will ultimately attract users to transact more on Instagram. Eighty-seven percent of our respondents have indicated that this feature will encourage them to make more purchases in future. Romanowski et al. (2019) share similar sentiments stating that allowing users to complete transactions on the app increases convenience and will increase purchases for vendors.

Our participants particularly enjoyed the curated advert feature on Instagram that shows them products they have viewed before or similar products that interest them. A study by Liao et al. (2022) revealed similar sentiments from respondents who indicated that contextualised advertising was essential for them when viewing advertisements on Instagram. A study by Lin et al. (2019) showed that social commerce features were the second most influential factor in building consumer trust as consumers look to the features to help them complete their social commerce purchases swiftly. Our participants shared similar sentiments where having the tags, which gave them necessary product information, would direct them to view the product in the shop, which was convenient. The view-on-website option provided a seamless transition to the website, where participants could complete their purchases or view more products.

Findings Guo & Li (2022) and Saprikis & Avlogiaris (2021) are consistent with our results, as they emphasise that consumers gravitate to features that simplify and speed up their purchasing journeys. This is further corroborated by Akman & Mishra (2017) and Al-Adwan (2019) whose studies confirmed that users are more likely to engage in social commerce if the features are easy to use and enjoyable.

Easy-to-use features on social commerce that are intuitive and help users complete their tasks faster are crucial to consumer use of social commerce. Respondents in this study were impressed by the social commerce features, which gave them the confidence to use social commerce. They were particularly intrigued and excited about the new checkout feature being trialled, as it would simplify their Instagram social commerce journey. Businesses must implement these Instagram social commerce features to make their consumers' lives easier. If the features are not implemented, users will be frustrated and not trust the business or the product. The flow of finding the product, viewing the digital tag information, viewing the product on the shop, and transitioning to the website with the correct product must be seamless for the consumer.

5.5 Discussion of Proposition 4 Results: *Consumers' privacy or security concerns will negatively affect their trust in Instagram social commerce.*

Privacy or Security Concerns negatively affect consumer trust in social commerce. Eighty percent of participants will not complete a purchase if the purchasing process is not secure. This finding is corroborated by Kim & Park (2013), whose study confirmed that transaction safety significantly affects consumer trust. This finding aligns with a study by Rahman et al. (2020) in which respondents indicated that their privacy or security concerns ultimately affect their decision to purchase online. If consumers do not believe that the process is secure, the business is legit, or their information is safe, they will not continue purchasing. This ties in with the results from this study which showed that the participants were concerned with the leaking of their personal information and would not continue with a process if they felt it was not secure. This is further corroborated by Lee & Turban (2001) who state that consumers are reluctant to complete online purchases as they are unable to verify the seller or safety of their financial information.

Din et al. (2020) surveyed the factors influencing trust on social networks, and transaction safety was one of the critical determinants of consumer trust. Consumers were concerned about the safety of their information while transacting online (Din et al., 2020).

A study by Mukherjee & Nath (2007) revealed security as the second most important determinant of trust in online shopping environments, as consumers showed concern about their personal and financial information being leaked. Mukherjee & Nath (2007) revealed that respondents were explicitly looking for secure indicators when conducting transactions online, which corresponds with our participants, who indicated they would look for the secure lock or authentication indicators before continuing with a transaction.

Privacy and security concerns remain an issue for consumers purchasing online. While consumers are more educated and look for signs of security to ease their minds, it still affects their trust in Instagram social commerce. As consumers still

complete most of their purchases on the website, businesses must ensure that they have secure websites and payment methods. If consumers do not get the security they seek, they will not trust the business and are unlikely to purchase. Businesses must ensure transparent privacy policies as consumers become more wary of sharing their personal information. Lastly, Instagram needs to verify business profiles to ease the concerns of fake businesses so consumers can feel more secure when purchasing on Instagram.

5.6 Discussion of Proposition 5 Results

5.6.1 *Proposition 5a: An increase in Trust has a positive effect on consumer Behavioural Intention.*

The results from our study show that participants have more confidence in Instagram social commerce when their user experience quality is high, the features provide the required functionality for secure, informed & seamless transactions, if they get recommendations from peers or influencers they trust and if their privacy and security concerns are mitigated. All these factors contributed to building trust in sellers, allowing them to look further into the products being sold. Our findings align with studies done by Shoheib & Abu-Shanab (2022) and Din et al. (2018) whose findings confirm that trust influences consumer behavioural intentions.

This finding is corroborated by a quantitative study done by Abed (2018), which found trust to have a significant effect on consumer behavioural intention to use Instagram social commerce and a study by Farivar et al. (2017), which revealed that once trust is established, it increases consumers' purchase intention in social commerce environments. Hajli (2013) sought to create a social commerce adoption model. Their research revealed that trust was a significant influencer of behavioural intention to buy in social commerce as it provided the reassurance people needed (M. Hajli, 2013).

Findings from Lu et al. (2016) show that trust significantly positively affects purchase intentions in social commerce environments and that trust in the seller's

integrity and competence is vital for consumer purchase decisions. A study done by Lin et al. (2019) revealed that once consumer trust has been established, it positively impacts their purchase intention in social commerce. This finding is corroborated by Herzallah et al. (2022), who conducted a study on the factors influencing purchases on Instagram and found that trust significantly influenced purchase intentions in Instagram social commerce. Additionally, findings from Akman & Mishra (2017) state that perceived trust has a significant effect on consumer social commerce purchase intentions.

Once consumer trust is established, they are confident to use Instagram social commerce. Our respondents considered many factors before continuing with the purchasing journey to ensure they made the correct decision and addressed any perceived risks. Once they felt at ease by receiving good seller responses, recommendations from others, information for purchasing decisions, high-quality media advertisements, a smooth journey to purchasing and a secure process, they felt more inclined to purchase. Users stopped their purchasing journey when there was no seller response, long waiting periods, insufficient information, low-quality media, or security/privacy concerns. Consumers will have positive purchase intentions when they believe in the seller or process.

Businesses that want to create positive purchase intentions must consider the factors influencing trust in Instagram social commerce. Businesses can use the conceptual framework proposed in this study to evaluate their strengths and shortfalls and plan their strategy accordingly.

5.6.2 *Proposition 5b: Positive Behavioural Intention has a positive effect on Use Behaviour.*

Results from our study indicate that users who have doubt and do not trust a vendor, product or process will not have positive purchase intentions and will, therefore, not complete a purchase. Where participants had garnered enough evidence to trust the vendor, product or process, their positive intentions led to them completing purchases. This finding aligns with a study by Venkatesh et al. (2003), which found a direct link between consumer use intentions and use behaviour. This finding is corroborated by Sheikh et al. (2017), whose survey

gathered three hundred and ten valid responses, and the results confirmed that users with positive purchase intentions are more likely to engage in actual purchase behaviour in social commerce.

Consumers who have built their trust through social influences, high-quality experience, ease of navigating the features, or having their privacy/security concerns mitigated are more likely to have positive purchase intentions and complete a purchase. Businesses must implement the recommendations from this study to build consumer trust, as it will ultimately affect purchases on Instagram social commerce.

5.7 Conclusion

The role of trust in online shopping and Instagram social commerce has been highlighted throughout this study. Consumers perceive many risks associated with Instagram social commerce. If sellers can positively influence consumer trust, it will positively impact consumer intentions and use behaviour, such as purchasing on Instagram social commerce. Businesses can impact consumers' Trust in social commerce by focusing on Social Influences, Experience Quality, Perceived Easiness and Security/Privacy concerns.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In line with the purpose of this research, we developed four research questions to guide our endeavours. We will now propose an answer for each question based on the results we have gathered from our respondents.

This study contributes to the limited social commerce research in SA. It is poised to assist businesses, marketers, and Instagram in understanding what factors are influencing consumer adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel. This study contributes to existing research by providing the antecedents of building trust for Instagram social commerce use.

At the time of this study, we are unaware of other South African research that provides insights into impressions of the checkout feature being trialled in the USA. Our study contributes to the existing literature by providing the viewpoints of SA consumers on this future feature.

This study also contributes to the limited social commerce research done in developing countries where social commerce usage is on the rise.

6.2 Conclusions regarding Research Question 1: *What factors influence consumer shopping on social media platforms and Instagram in particular?*

Our results indicate that Social Influence from peers and influencers positively influences consumer shopping on social media. Participants were willing to try new brands on recommendations from their friends who had good previous experiences. They were also keen to try products highlighted by influencers they trusted. They liked that influencers would show how the product worked and could be used, influencing them to try it.

Quality information upfront is vital for quick decision-making, as respondents indicated they prefer to avoid contacting sellers for information. They will move on if they cannot get the information from the digital tag, post, or video. If the required information is presented to the consumer, they will trust the product and seller and continue with the purchasing process. These results for information quality and recommendations contrast with a study by Ramli et al. (2020), which found that recommendations and information quality have no effects on consumers purchasing journey on social commerce applications.

Experience Quality is essential in determining if participants would continue their social commerce journey. The Image/Video Quality was ranked the highest regarding Experience Quality. Participants look to the media quality as an indication of the seller's commitment to their business and product quality. The visual appeal of social commerce attracts users' attention, and high-quality media will perform better than low-quality media.

Lastly, Service Quality was a significant factor influencing the use of social commerce on Instagram, with participants indicating they would purchase from sellers who responded quickly and were helpful. In cases with long waiting periods, participants would move on and not consider purchasing from that seller.

Given the nature of social commerce, people have started to rely on factors like social influences and their experience on the app to influence their social commerce journeys. An increase in social influences and the higher quality of experience that the seller can provide will assist consumers in building their confidence and making quicker purchasing decisions. These results will assist businesses in understanding what factors are important to consumers when using Instagram social commerce in SA. This information can ensure consumers get the best quality experience when shopping on Instagram.

6.3 Conclusions regarding Research Question 2: *How do consumers perceive Instagram's social commerce features?*

Easy-to-use features that assisted participants in completing their shopping faster were a significant factor in social commerce use. Participants liked using the

digital shop, which contained curated items based on their activity. They also appreciated having the product information upfront on the digital tag, especially the price. This helped speed up their decision-making. Participants appreciated having a smooth transition to the website to complete their purchases. They mentioned that the website provided more options for them to browse. The seamless flow from the digital tag to the digital shop and the website simplified participants' shopping journeys and gave them the confidence to continue with purchases.

Participants were impressed with Instagram's social commerce features but mentioned a few factors that needed improvement. Participants were not impressed if the product they were interested in was not displayed once they transitioned to the website or if the website was not secure. Some participants mentioned they would appreciate being able to complete the purchase on Instagram, whilst others indicated they still prefer the seller's website as it is an indication of a legit seller and provides secure payments.

Participants agreed that the social commerce on Instagram was easy to use and understand. They particularly appreciated that these features were convenient and assisted in simplifying their purchasing journeys. They were excited about the checkout feature as it would lead to fewer distractions, and they were more likely to complete the purchases immediately.

As consumers become more familiarised with social commerce, they start to appreciate the speed with which they can shop. Sellers in SA can now understand the importance of using these social commerce features Instagram provides to attract consumers to their products and simplify their purchasing journey.

6.4 Conclusions regarding Research Question 3: *What are some of the concerns experienced by consumers when shopping on Instagram, and what can be done to improve their shopping experience?*

Participants were particularly concerned about their personal and financial information safety during transactions. They indicated they are accountable for

looking for the signs of fraud and particularly would look for the secure icon on payment pages and websites. Additionally, participants were concerned about how companies used their information once the transaction was complete. This finding contrasts with research from (Ramli et al., 2020), which found that transaction safety was not a factor of concern for social commerce users.

Another huge concern was the issue of fake business profiles. In the case of social commerce, users cannot interact with the product or the seller in person, so participants had doubts about some businesses on Instagram not being legit. They were concerned they would receive incorrect, low-quality, or fake products or not receive their purchases from these businesses.

Users indicated that having secure icons on websites and payments would ease their concerns. Additionally, having some indication on Instagram that a business was legit would assist in easing their concerns about fake business profiles. Participants mentioned that having a verified icon for business profiles would be nice.

Online security and privacy have become key consumer concerns with the rise of online shopping. Businesses in SA can now understand what consumers are looking for when they want to complete a transaction and implement strategies accordingly. Furthermore, Instagram now has insights into consumer concerns about fake business profiles, which could hinder purchases. They can plan and act accordingly to solve this for consumers.

6.5 Conclusions regarding Research Question 4: *How will the introduction of the checkout feature impact consumers' impression of S-commerce on Instagram?*

When asked about the Instagram checkout feature, all participants noted the convenience of this potential new feature addition on Instagram and indicated it would add value to the social commerce experience on Instagram. They were particularly excited that it would simplify the purchase process and that all purchasing steps could be completed on the app.

Some participants indicated concern over the feature, saying that they would only use it on brands they already trust and have purchased from, others still liked going to the website as they were used to this, and some participants were unsure of the security around this new checkout process.

Considering these views, most of the participants indicated they would use the feature if given the opportunity, and they did believe this new, simplified process would prompt them to purchase more products on Instagram as there would be no room for distractions.

The checkout feature could be a huge game changer for Instagram social commerce in SA. With this research, Instagram and businesses now understand consumers' feelings about this new feature.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 *Recommendations for Businesses & Marketers Using Instagram Social Commerce*

Social Influence is vital for building trust in social commerce. Therefore, businesses and marketers must encourage their customers to recommend their products and services to their peers. Businesses can implement a rewards system to ensure consumers follow through with the recommendations, as they may get something in return. Additionally, businesses can request that consumers tag their social media accounts in their product posts to get additional exposure to the consumer's followers. Businesses must repost consumer posts to encourage their participation in making recommendations on social media.

Businesses and marketers can partner with influencers or celebrities that appeal to their target market. They can capitalise on the trust that the influencer already has with their followers by requesting that the influencer recommend their product and show consumers its results or how to use it. As indicated by our participants, influencer recommendations were more effective than peer recommendations in building Instagram social commerce trust.

Participants were very impressed with the features that allowed them to complete their purchasing journey faster. Businesses and marketers must ensure that they employ all the social commerce features that Instagram offers. Participants frequently mentioned the importance of knowing the product price upfront. Businesses must ensure this information is available to consumers on digital tags and in the digital shop. Businesses must link their products on the Instagram advertisement to their website so that the customer can conveniently complete their purchasing journey. Businesses must also ensure the product the consumer was interested in is retained once directed to the website to reduce search time and alleviate irritation.

When the new checkout feature is launched in South Africa, businesses should sign up for the trial to ensure a competitive advantage. If no trials are needed, businesses should implement the feature immediately, as consumers were particularly excited to try it.

Businesses must invest in producing high-quality advertisements with high-quality media content. Instagram is popular among consumers due to its visual appeal, so businesses must capitalise on this by using eye-catching styles in their advertisements. Additionally, the product advertisement must contain detailed descriptions of the product, as consumers rely on this information when shopping online. Businesses must focus on adding details that will increase consumer confidence in a product, such as dimensions, sizes, size guides, and colours.

Businesses must focus on their communication with consumers on Instagram. They need a team of people who are dedicated to their Instagram channel to engage with consumers and quickly assist them. Social media is fast-paced, and consumers expect sellers to respond quickly. A social commerce communication strategy is pertinent to ensure consumers receive quality service on the Instagram platform.

Consumers have expressed concerns about online shopping due to the uncertain nature of this shopping mode. To ease consumer concerns, we suggest businesses have privacy policies that are easily accessible to consumers. Businesses should also ensure that links to their website or payment websites

are always secure. Adding security and privacy assurance messages would also help ease consumers' doubts.

6.6.2 *Recommendations for Instagram*

A key concern for our participants was distinguishing fake business profiles from real ones. Instagram should find a way to verify the business profiles and provide some certainty to consumers. Participants recommended a registration process for businesses and unique icons for verified businesses. This feature will ease consumers' doubts about shopping on Instagram and consumers will no longer need to check websites to ensure the business or seller is genuine.

Participants were excited about the checkout feature, but they had doubts about the security aspects. When the feature is launched in SA, Instagram must communicate the security benefits to acquire consumer buy-in.

6.6.3 *Limitations of the Study & Suggestions for Further Research*

Our research has focused on Instagram as a leading social commerce channel. Future research can focus on other social media applications that have risen in popularity and have different features for social commerce, such as TikTok.

Our research has focused on the factors influencing the adoption of Instagram as a social commerce channel. As Instagram and businesses work together to enhance social commerce offerings, other researchers can focus on factors influencing repurchase intentions on social commerce applications. Initial purchases are significant but repurchases indicate loyalty to a business and help a business grow.

Researchers can investigate other antecedents of trust in the context of social commerce, to understand what drives consumers to use social commerce. Furthermore, this research was qualitative, with fifteen respondents picked through purposive sampling. Further studies can be done using the quantitative method, allowing for more generalisation of results.

Participants emphasized the importance of quick and helpful seller engagements. Further studies can investigate how sellers can improve their engagement styles to better serve their customers on social commerce channels.

Lastly, our study was focused on SA only. Future studies could consider consumer views in other developing countries where social commerce use is also rising.

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APPENDIX A: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

The following participant sheet and consent form was presented to participants outlining the research objectives and key information about their participation in the study. The participants signed the consent and return the signed document to the researcher:

1. Introduction

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for completing the pre-screening questionnaire. You are invited to participate in the main study which will consist of an hour-long interview at a location of your choice. The purpose of the research and conditions of participation are outlined in the participation information section below.

Once you have read through the document kindly sign the consent section and return the document via email to girdharilall.michelle1@gmail.com.

2. Purpose of the research

I am currently completing my Master's in Digital business at the University of Witwatersrand and this research forms part of my requirements. This research aims to explore consumer perceptions of adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel.

Social commerce has been identified as an alternate retail channel due to its ease of use and the increase in social media usage. Instagram in particular has been identified as an ideal application for social commerce due to its visual appeal and it provides high engagement rates between consumers and sellers. While eCommerce uptake has lagged in South Africa, the growth of social commerce is promising. Consumers are showing a preference to shop from their social media applications.

Businesses must capitalise on this trend and implement adequate social commerce strategies to grow their revenue and strengthen consumer relationships, however, there is a lack of research regarding social commerce and the use of Instagram in developing countries such as South Africa. This research aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by providing insight into consumer perceptions of adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel. The research will try to ascertain the factors influencing the use of social commerce, consumer experiences, likes and concerns about using Instagram as a social commerce channel, how business can improve their social commerce approach and how the introduction of an in-application checkout process, which is being trialled in the United States of America, will affect user behaviour in future.

As per your responses to the pre-screening questionnaire, you have been identified as a candidate for this research. Kindly read the information below and sign the consent to take part in the research interview process.

3. Participant information

   a. *Reasons you are selected for the study*
      - As per the pre-screening questionnaire you have been identified as a suitable candidate that possesses the required knowledge to contribute meaningfully to this study.

   b. *Conditions of participation*
      - Participation in this study is voluntary.
      - You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study.

   c. *Research process*
      - This study will require one interview.
      - The interview can be done face-to-face or via video call, depending on the participant's preference.
      - The interviews will be recorded with your consent
      - The interview will last 1 hour.

   d. *Possible disadvantages of taking part in this study*
      - There have been no disadvantages identified for participants in this research.

   e. *Direct benefits*
      - This research is voluntary and therefore there is no compensation attached to participating in this study.
      - There are no personal costs for participants in this study.

   f. *Data considerations*
      - Participants have the option to remain anonymous. Identifying data will be removed during the analysis process.
      - No personal information will be included in the final report.
      - No personal information will be shared with third parties.
      - Anonymous quotes may be used in the final report.
      - The data will be stored for two years in an encrypted folder.
      - The data may be shared with other researchers within the two-year retention period. This shared data will not include any personal information.

   g. *Research information*
      - This research has been approved by The University of Witwatersrand.
      - Data collection for this research has been approved by the University of Witwatersrand.

4. Contact information

Researcher: Michelle Girdharilall

- Email: girdharilall.michelle1@gmail.com
- Cell: 0765577949

Supervisor: Nakuze Chalomba

- nakuze.chalomba@wits.ac.za

5. Participant consent

Participant details:

Name	
Surname	
Gender	
Age	

Consent details

Please indicate your consent by answering Yes/No to the below:

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information provided above	Yes/No
I consent to participate in this study	Yes/No
I consent to the recording of the interview	Yes/No
I consent to my responses anonymously being used in the report	Yes/No
I understand that no personal information will be used in the final report	Yes/No
I understand that my personal information will never be shared	Yes/No
I understand my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time	Yes/No

h. Interview preferences

Please indicate your preferences for the interview process:

Item	Preference
1. Video or face-to-face	
2. Remain anonymous during data processing	

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B: Pre-screening Questionnaire and Interview Guide

Pre-screening Interview Questionnaire

The pre-screening questionnaire below was used to identify suitable candidates for the research:

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Research

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently completing my Master's in Digital Business at the University of Witwatersrand, and this research forms part of my requirements. This research aims to explore consumer perceptions of adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel.

Social commerce has been identified as an alternate retail channel due to its ease of use and the increase in social media usage. Instagram, in particular, has been identified as an ideal application for social commerce due to its visual appeal, and it provides high engagement rates between consumers and sellers. While eCommerce uptake has lagged in South Africa, the growth of social commerce is promising. Consumers are showing a preference to shop from their social media applications.

Businesses must capitalise on this trend and implement adequate social commerce strategies to grow their revenue and strengthen consumer relationships. However, there is a lack of research regarding social commerce and the use of Instagram in developing countries such as South Africa. This research aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by providing insight into consumer perceptions of adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel. The research will try to ascertain the factors influencing the use of social commerce, consumer experiences, likes and concerns about using Instagram as a social commerce channel, how business can improve their social commerce approach and how the introduction of an in-application checkout process, which is being trialled in the United States of America, will affect user behaviour in future.

The pre-screening candidate questionnaire will assist in identifying the candidates that will be able to provide the details required for the study. By agreeing to complete the questionnaire below you are identifying yourself as a possible candidate for the main study.

2. Pre-screening candidate questionnaire

Personal details	Responses
Name & Surname	
Age	
Gender	
Pre-screening questions	**Responses**
Do you use social media?	
Which apps do you use most often?	
Do you use Instagram?	
How often do you use Instagram?	
Do you follow brands or companies on Instagram?	
Are you familiar with shoppable posts on Instagram?	
Have you bought any products via Instagram? If yes, please give a rough estimate of the number of times you have purchased via Instagram.	
Are you familiar with the digital product tags, digital shop, and view-on-website options on Instagram?	

3. Consent

The information above will be used in the pre-screening process of the study to identify suitable candidates. No personal data will be shared in the report or with others.

Full name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interview Guide

The interview guide contains the questions to be used for the study to address the research questions:

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Research

Social commerce has been identified as an alternate retail channel due to its ease of use and the increase in social media usage. Instagram in particular has been identified as an ideal application for social commerce due to its visual appeal and it provides high engagement rates between consumers and sellers. While eCommerce uptake has lagged in South Africa, the growth of social commerce is promising. Consumers are showing a preference to shop from their social media applications.

Businesses must capitalise on this trend and implement adequate social commerce strategies to grow their revenue and strengthen consumer relationships, however, there is a lack of research regarding social commerce and the use of Instagram in developing countries such as South Africa. This research aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by providing insight into consumer perceptions of adopting Instagram as a social commerce channel. The research will try to ascertain the factors influencing the use of social commerce, consumer experiences, likes and concerns about using Instagram as a social commerce channel, how business can improve their social commerce approach and how the introduction of an in-application checkout process, which is being trialled in the United States of America, will affect user behaviour in future.

2. Interview guide

Personal details	Responses	Notes
Name & Surname		Remain anonymous: Yes/No
Age		
Gender		
Consent received		Yes/No
RQ1: What factors influence consumer shopping on social media platforms and Instagram in particular?		
Questions	Responses	Notes/Follow-up questions
1. How often do you use social media?		
2. Why do you like social media?		
3. Which social media apps have you made purchases from other than Instagram?		
4. Please describe your experience.		
5. Why do you like shopping on social media platforms?		

6. How often do you use Instagram?		
7. Which are your favourite aspects of Instagram?		
8. Why do you like shopping on Instagram?		
9. What attracts you to a brand post promoting an item?		
10. Are detailed product descriptions important when shopping on Instagram? Please explain		
11. Does the quality of the image or video used by a brand affect your purchasing decision on Instagram? Please explain.		
12. Have you used social commerce based on recommendations from your peers?		
13. Have you used social commerce based on recommendations from influencers or other followers you trust?		
RQ2: How do consumers perceive Instagram's social commerce features?		
14. What is your experience when contacting brands on Instagram?		
15. How did this experience affect your view of buying from that brand on Instagram?		
16. After the interaction did you purchase from the brand?		
17. What is your view on the digital product tags used on items on Instagram?		

18. What's your view on the digital shop on Instagram used to display products?		
19. What is your opinion on the view-on-website option presented on the digital shop?		
20. In your opinion are these commerce features easy to& understand? Are you comfortable using them?		
21. What is your experience once you have clicked on the view-on-website option and were taken to the brand's website?		
22. Which factors of the experience prompted you to complete a purchase from Instagram to the brand's website?		
RQ3: What are some of the concerns experienced by consumers when shopping on Instagram and what can be done to improve their shopping experience?		
23. What are your main concerns surrounding shopping from Instagram?		
24. Do you have any concerns about the privacy of your information when shopping from Instagram?		
25. Do you have any security concerns when using social commerce on Instagram?		
26. Considering your experiences, what can be done to enhance your		

shopping experience on Instagram?		
27. Has privacy, security or any other concerns prevented you from completing a purchase from Instagram to the brand's website?		
RQ4: How will the introduction of the checkout feature impact consumers' impression of S-commerce on Instagram?		
28. Have you heard about the checkout feature on Instagram?		Explain the feature and show images
29. What do you think about the checkout feature? Does it add value to the current social commerce experience on Instagram?		
30. Do you see yourself using the checkout feature on Instagram when it is introduced?		
31. Do you think the checkout feature will prompt you to make more purchases on Instagram?		