

SOCIAL COMMERCE AND STUDENT DECISION-MAKING: A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW IN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Kenneth Sahetapy¹ Shapely Ambalao²

^{1,2}Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Klabat

[1k.sahetapy@unklab.ac.id](mailto:k.sahetapy@unklab.ac.id), [2shapelyambalao@unklab.ac.id](mailto:shapelyambalao@unklab.ac.id)

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of social commerce has significantly transformed how individuals, particularly students, make decisions in digital environments. This study aims to synthesize existing literature on social commerce and student decision-making within educational contexts. A narrative literature review approach was employed by analyzing 20 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2024, sourced from academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The selected studies were analyzed thematically to identify key determinants influencing decision-making processes. The findings reveal that trust is the most dominant factor shaping student decision-making, followed by social influence, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and platform characteristics. These factors interact within algorithm-driven digital environments, where user-generated content and social interactions significantly affect perception, evaluation, and behavioral intention. The study further highlights that students operate in hybrid digital ecosystems where social interaction, learning processes, and consumption behaviors intersect. As a result, decision-making is not solely an individual cognitive process but a socially mediated and technologically influenced phenomenon. This review contributes to the literature by integrating fragmented findings into a comprehensive framework that explains how social, technological, and behavioral factors collectively shape student decision-making in social commerce contexts. The study also emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and critical thinking skills in enabling students to navigate complex online environments effectively. Future research is recommended to explore algorithmic influence and cross-cultural variations in student behavior within social commerce ecosystems.

Keywords: social commerce, student decision-making, trust, e-WOM, digital behavior

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan social commerce telah secara signifikan mengubah cara individu, khususnya mahasiswa, dalam mengambil keputusan di lingkungan digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mensintesis literatur yang membahas social commerce dan pengambilan keputusan mahasiswa dalam konteks pendidikan. Metode yang digunakan adalah narrative literature review dengan menganalisis 20 artikel ilmiah yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2010–2024 yang diperoleh dari database

akademik seperti Scopus, Google Scholar, dan ScienceDirect. Analisis dilakukan secara tematik untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor utama yang memengaruhi proses pengambilan keputusan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan (trust) merupakan faktor paling dominan, diikuti oleh pengaruh sosial, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), dan karakteristik platform digital. Faktor-faktor tersebut saling berinteraksi dalam lingkungan digital berbasis algoritma yang memengaruhi persepsi, evaluasi, dan niat perilaku pengguna. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa mahasiswa berada dalam ekosistem digital hibrida di mana aktivitas sosial, proses pembelajaran, dan perilaku konsumsi saling beririsan. Dengan demikian, pengambilan keputusan tidak hanya merupakan proses kognitif individual, tetapi juga fenomena yang dimediasi secara sosial dan dipengaruhi oleh teknologi. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dengan menyatukan temuan yang terfragmentasi menjadi kerangka konseptual yang komprehensif. Selain itu, penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya literasi digital dan kemampuan berpikir kritis bagi mahasiswa dalam menghadapi kompleksitas lingkungan digital. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi pengaruh algoritma dan perbedaan lintas budaya dalam perilaku mahasiswa pada ekosistem social commerce.

Kata Kunci: *social commerce*, pengambilan keputusan mahasiswa, kepercayaan, e-WOM, perilaku digital

A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed how individuals interact, access information, and make decisions within increasingly complex online environments. Early studies on social media emphasized its significant role in reshaping communication patterns and enabling large-scale knowledge exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

In educational contexts, this transformation is particularly evident among students, who increasingly rely

on digital platforms not only for social interaction but also for information acquisition and decision-making processes. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook have evolved into algorithm-driven socio-technical ecosystems that integrate entertainment, information sharing, and commercial activities (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

This development has accelerated the emergence of social commerce, where decision-making processes are embedded within interactive and socially mediated

digital environments. For students, these environments influence not only purchasing behavior but also how they evaluate information, form opinions, and make judgments in digital contexts (Hajli et al., 2017; Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016).

Empirical studies have shown that key factors such as trust, social interaction, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) play a crucial role in shaping decision-making processes in social commerce environments (Hajli, 2015; Liang et al., 2012). In the context of students, these factors are closely related to digital literacy, peer influence, and the ability to critically evaluate online information.

However, despite the growing body of literature, existing studies tend to focus on general consumer behavior, with limited attention given to how these factors specifically influence students' decision-making within educational contexts. Furthermore, there is still a lack of integrative synthesis that explains how trust, social interaction, and e-WOM collectively shape students' behavior in digital environments.

Therefore, this study adopts a narrative literature review approach to synthesize and critically analyze

existing research on social commerce. The aim of this study is to identify key determinants influencing student decision-making and to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social commerce environments affect learning-related behaviors. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of theoretical perspectives in digital learning and offer practical implications for educators in fostering students' critical thinking and digital literacy skills.

B. Research Method

This study employs a narrative literature review approach to synthesize and critically analyze existing research on social commerce and student decision-making within educational contexts. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows for a comprehensive and flexible interpretation of prior studies, particularly in integrating diverse theoretical perspectives and identifying key themes across the literature.

The data for this study were collected from several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, to ensure the inclusion of relevant and high-

quality publications. The search process utilized a combination of keywords such as “social commerce,” “student decision-making,” “consumer behavior in education,” “trust in online environment,” “electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM),” and “social interaction in digital platforms.” were applied to refine the search results and enhance the relevance of the selected articles.

To ensure the quality and suitability of the literature, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2024, studies related to social commerce, digital consumer behavior, or student decision-making, and research addressing key variables such as trust, social interaction, and e-WOM. Conversely, non-academic publications, articles not written in English, and studies lacking methodological clarity or sufficient findings were excluded from the analysis. Based on this process, a total of approximately 20 relevant articles were selected for further examination.

The selected articles were analyzed using a thematic analysis

approach. This process involved careful reading and familiarization with each study, identification of recurring concepts and variables, grouping of findings into thematic categories, and synthesis of the results to uncover relationships among key determinants. The analysis resulted in several major themes, including trust in social commerce, social interaction and support, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), consumer behavior and decision-making, and emerging digital trends.

C. Results

This study reviews 20 selected articles to identify key themes influencing student decision-making within social commerce environments. A structured summary of these studies is presented in Table 1, which outlines their research focus, methods, and main findings. Based on the analysis, several dominant and interrelated themes emerge, including trust and perceived risk, social influence and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), platform characteristics, and student digital behavior.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Selected Studies (2010–2024).

No	Author(s) (Year)	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings
1	Hajli (2015)	Social commerce constructs	Empirical	Trust and social interaction significantly influence purchase decisions
2	Hajli et al. (2017)	Trust in social commerce	Survey	Trust positively affects purchase intention
3	Zhang & Benyoucef (2016)	Consumer behavior in social commerce	Conceptual	Social interaction shapes consumer decision-making
4	Liang et al. (2012)	Social support in online platforms	Empirical	Social support influences purchase decisions
5	Erkan & Evans (2016)	e-WOM impact	Empirical	e-WOM significantly affects purchase intention
6	Cheung & Thadani (2012)	e-WOM review	Literature review	e-WOM influences perception and decision-making
7	Filieri (2015)	Online reviews and trust	Empirical	Review credibility builds trust and reduces risk
8	Dwivedi et al. (2021)	Social media evolution	Conceptual	Algorithm-driven platforms shape user behavior
9	Kietzmann et al. (2011)	Social media framework	Conceptual	Identity, relationships, and interaction are key elements
10	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	Social media concept	Conceptual	Social media transforms global communication
11	Kim & Ko (2012)	Social media marketing	Empirical	Social media activities influence brand value and purchase
12	Zhou et al. (2013)	Online trust in e-commerce	Empirical	Trust is a key determinant of online purchasing
13	Huang & Benyoucef (2013)	Social commerce design	Conceptual	Platform design affects user interaction
14	Wang (2012)	Student online behavior	Empirical	Students actively engage in online purchasing
15	Smith & Anderson (2018)	Youth social media use	Survey	Students heavily rely on social media
16	Alalwan et al. (2017)	Social media and purchase intention	Empirical	Engagement drives purchase intention
17	Junco (2012)	Student engagement	Empirical	Social media affects student behavior and interaction
18	Tess (2013)	Social media in education	Literature review	Social media supports learning processes

No	Author(s) (Year)	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings
19	Shanmugam et al. (2020)	Social commerce adoption	Empirical	Social and technological factors influence adoption
20	Yadav et al. (2019)	Future of social commerce	Conceptual	Social commerce continues to evolve rapidly

Trust and Perceived Risk

Across the reviewed studies, trust emerges as the most fundamental determinant shaping decision-making processes in social commerce. Several studies indicate that trust is developed through social interaction, user-generated content, and community engagement, which collectively reduce perceived risk in online environments (Hajli, 2015; Hajli et al., 2017). In addition, trust has been consistently identified as a direct predictor of purchase intention (Kim & Park, 2013; Zhou et al., 2013). From a student perspective, trust is closely associated with the ability to evaluate the credibility of digital information. This reflects an important dimension of digital literacy, where students must navigate large volumes of online content and distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources.

Therefore, trust in social commerce extends beyond transactional confidence and becomes part of a broader cognitive evaluation process.

Social Influence and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

Social influence represents another dominant theme identified in the literature. The findings suggest that decision-making in social commerce is strongly shaped by interactions among users, including peer communication, shared experiences, and online feedback. Several studies demonstrate that social support and interaction enhance engagement and influence purchasing decisions (Liang et al., 2012; Hajli, 2014). Closely related to social influence is the role of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which functions as both an informational and persuasive mechanism. Prior research indicates that e-WOM significantly affects consumer perceptions, trust formation, and purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). In student contexts, e-WOM often takes the form of peer recommendations, reviews, and shared digital experiences, which play

a critical role in shaping judgments and choices. These findings suggest that decision-making is not purely individual but is socially constructed through continuous interaction within digital environments.

Platform Characteristics and Algorithmic Environment

The reviewed literature also highlights the importance of platform characteristics in shaping user behavior. Social commerce platforms are characterized by features such as interactivity, personalization, and content integration, all of which influence how users engage with information (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).

More recent studies emphasize the role of algorithm-driven systems in curating user experiences and shaping exposure to content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). These algorithmic mechanisms influence what users see, how frequently they interact with content, and ultimately how decisions are formed. For students, who are highly active users of platforms such as social media, this suggests that decision-making is partially guided by technologically mediated

environments rather than purely individual preferences. As a result, platform design and algorithmic exposure become critical factors in influencing behavior.

Student Digital Behavior in Social Commerce

Another important theme emerging from the analysis is the distinctive nature of student behavior in digital environments. The literature indicates that students are among the most active users of social media and social commerce platforms, demonstrating high levels of engagement and participation (Wang, 2012; Smith & Anderson, 2018). In addition, social media serves multiple functions for students, including communication, information seeking, and learning (Junco, 2012; Tess, 2013). This multifunctional use suggests that students operate within hybrid digital environments where social, educational, and commercial activities intersect. Consequently, student decision-making is not limited to purchasing behavior but is embedded within broader patterns of digital interaction and learning processes.

Integrated Decision-Making in Social Commerce

Overall, the findings indicate that decision-making in social commerce is a multi-dimensional and integrative process. Rather than being influenced by a single factor, decisions are shaped by the interaction of trust, social influence, e-WOM, and platform characteristics. Several studies suggest that these elements work collectively to influence consumer behavior and purchase intention (Alalwan et al., 2017; Shanmugam et al., 2020). Furthermore, the results show that social commerce environments facilitate interactive and dynamic decision-making processes, where users continuously evaluate information, engage with others, and adapt their preferences. In the context of students, this process resembles collaborative and socially mediated learning, where decisions are formed through both individual cognition and collective input. Finally, recent studies indicate that social commerce continues to evolve alongside digital transformation, with increasing reliance on social media platforms and algorithm-driven systems (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Paul, 2023; Elshaer et al.,

2024). This suggests that student decision-making will become increasingly embedded in complex digital ecosystems, reinforcing the importance of digital literacy and critical evaluation skills.

D. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive narrative review of 20 selected articles to examine the determinants of student decision-making within social commerce environments in educational contexts. The findings demonstrate that decision-making is a multi-dimensional and socially embedded process, shaped by the interaction of trust, social influence, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and platform characteristics. Among these factors, trust emerges as the most critical determinant, functioning not only as a mechanism for reducing perceived risk but also as a reflection of students' ability to evaluate the credibility of digital information. In addition, social interaction and e-WOM significantly influence how students form judgments and make decisions, highlighting the role of peer-driven and socially mediated environments. The

findings further reveal that platform characteristics and algorithm-driven systems actively shape user exposure and engagement, indicating that decision-making is increasingly influenced by technological infrastructures. Importantly, this study situates social commerce within an educational perspective, demonstrating that student decision-making extends beyond transactional behavior and reflects elements of digital literacy, collaborative learning, and cognitive evaluation. Students operate in hybrid environments where learning, social interaction, and consumption intersect, making their decision-making processes more dynamic and context-dependent.

This study contributes to the literature by offering a thematic synthesis that integrates social, technological, and educational dimensions, addressing the fragmentation found in prior research. It also highlights the need for future studies to develop integrated and student-centered frameworks, particularly those that consider the role of algorithms, digital learning environments, and cross-cultural contexts. In practical terms, the findings suggest that educators and

digital practitioners should emphasize the development of critical thinking and digital literacy skills, enabling students to navigate complex social commerce environments more effectively. At the same time, businesses and platform designers should consider trust-building strategies, authentic engagement, and responsible algorithmic design to better support user decision-making.

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