

# MODELLING SOCIAL COMMERCE BUYING BEHAVIOUR: AN ADAPTION OF THE SEQUENTIAL CONSUMER DECISION MAKING MODEL

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## Abstract

The study sought to examine the purchasing behaviour of consumers on social commerce platforms. The classical sequential consumer decision making process was queried for its one-way orientation and a backward-forward approach to social commerce buying was introduced and tested. Data was collected using a survey approach from social commerce consumers in the hotel industry. A structured questionnaire was used to collect 411 validated responses which were analysed using AMOS structural equation modelling (SEM) application. The model of social commerce buying behaviour was confirmed and the study concluded that social commerce's need construct, search construct and evaluation construct were significant in determining social commerce purchasing intention and actual social commerce buying behaviour. Consequently, the study concluded and validated the role of social commerce on post purchase buying behaviour and found out that social commerce post purchase behaviour acts as input for future social commerce purchase situations. The study therefore recommends the adoption of the tested model to enhance its robustness in predicting social commerce consumer purchasing behaviour.

**Keywords:** Social commerce, Consumer behaviour, Marketing, Social media, Consumer decision making

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a bid to understand the consumers' decision-making processes, the classical consumer decision making model was developed and discussed over the years; and it consists of five stages which consumers go through before and after a purchase (Kotler et al., 2018; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015; Rani, 2014). These stages are assumed to be happening in a one-way sequential order, from need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase to post purchase behaviour (Kaur & Kumar, 2016; Kotler et al., 2018; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015; Rani, 2014).

Social commerce has brought destructive innovation to consumer behaviour. The way in which consumers interact in brick-and-mortar environments was changed radically by social commerce. Although social commerce did not eliminate the buying process stages, it has elevated all the stages and offered new ways for consumers to make a decision to purchase online. This new phenomenon is still grey area for research as very few studies examined this effect (Chivandi et al., 2019; Hettiarachchi et al., 2018; Rad et al., 2010; Rowland & Rowland, 2021).

This study therefore examines the social commerce consumer decision-making behaviour process. The study is based on the adaptation of the classical consumer decision making process through querying the one-way sequential process. Given that social commerce buying behaviour is influenced by user generated content, firm generated content and social shopping (Makudza, Mugarisanwa & Siziba, 2020), a forward and backward consumer decision process is tested in this study. That offers a unique contribution of this study in ensuring that consumer decision making process is an endless cycle whereby each consumer buying episode feeds-in backwards and forward as input to the process; thereby allowing consumers to make free-flow waves in

between need identification and post purchase behaviour. Practically, the study enhances the management of social commerce consumers on social platforms.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Social commerce buying

According to Zamrudi et al. (2019), social commerce buying relates to the buying process of consumers using social network systems and application. The process which customers go through when they are interacting on social commerce develops step by step stages which aid decision making. Wang and Zhang (2012) view social commerce buying as the consumers' practical application and usage of social platforms. It relates to the level of usefulness of social commerce in identifying the need for the product, proficiency in consumers' searches online and the evaluation of existing alternatives (Hajli et al., 2017; Rowland & Rowland, 2021; Zamrudi, Suyadi & Abdillah, 2019). In line with Sheikh, et al. (2019), social commerce buying supports consumers by providing textual information about their purchasing decisions.

Relating to social commerce buying constructs, Hajli et al. (2017) found out that consumers are increasingly using social commerce buying constructs as a medium for social interaction. The interactions eventually lead them to become closer to each other and influence their participation and online behaviour. This leads to the concept of virtual community relationship, which is defined as the personal friendships developed between members of the blogosphere community (Hajli et al., 2017). These relationships often develop through private online communication, and they sometimes move into face-to-face interactions about the common topic of interest (Hettiarachchi et al., 2018).

### 2.2. Consumer decision making

The consumer decision making is a process which relates to the consumers' response to a problem (Stankevich, 2017). Maulborough and Technal (2020) characterized the consumer decision-making process as the amount of effort that goes into the decision each time it must be made. Qazzafi (2019) indicates that the consumer decision making process relates to the stages that consumers go through when making a decision to buy. Since consumers are rational beings, they make conscious decisions based on their prevailing circumstances (Hettiarachchi et al., 2018).

### 2.3. Consumer decision making process debate: the rational versus the sequential consumer

According to Rostami et al. (2016) consumers' buying process is sequential and it resembles a process with definite stages. Regarding the aspects of definite stages, Hettiarachchi et al. (2018) argue that consumers are not robots that are programmed to act specifically in a certain manner, rather in decision making consumers actually possess a repertoire of strategies. Although the views of Hettiarachchi et al. (2018) were seconded by several other scholars, like Maulborough and Technal (2020), the concept of a definite consumer decision making process still holds water in helping to understand what consumers do before, during and after a purchase.

Several scholars second the concept of a definite and sequential consumer decision making process in their research works (Han & Trimi; 2017; Kotler et al., 2018; Qazzafi, 2019; Zamrudi, Suyadi & Abdillah, 2019). For instance, according to Zamrudi et al. (2019), adopting the notion that consumer decision making stages are known and are sequential helps in managing consumer behaviour at each stage and touch point. Without this understanding, it would be difficult to study social online consumer behaviour, since it would be acceptable to be nomadic, mysterious and incomprehensible (Han & Trimi, 2017).

#### 2.3.1. The grand models of consumer decision making

The pioneer group of consumer decision making models are the ones which Karimi (2013) classify as the grand models. In this class of models, there are three ancient models namely; the Nicosia's model (1966), the Howard and Sheth's model (1969) and the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model (1968). These models are renowned for

complicating the understanding of consumer buying process. Karimi (2013) notes that with the grand models, there are a large number of boxes connected to each other with the aim of illustrating how the actions are derived from perceptual factors and external factors internalized by the consumer.

According to Karimi (2013) the grand models of consumer decision making are primarily fancy yet they cannot be empirically tested. They were presented as series of connections and associations which are intuitively developed and hard to support using empirical studies. Erasmus et al. (2001) also criticised the grand models on the basis of poor theoretical foundation that feeds into model development.

### 2.3.2. The classical consumer decision making process model

The classical decision-making model is a sequential framework which shows how consumers make decisions to buy from the time they are exposed to a stimulus (Rani, 2014; Thangamani, 2019; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015). The classical model is also known as the traditional model and it enjoys its major benefit by concentrating on a simplified yet logical process which consumers go through to make a decision to buy and the post purchase behaviour thereof (Rowland & Rowland, 2021; Qazzafi, 2019).

The classical decision-making process consists of five stages which consumers go through before and after a purchase (Kotler et al., 2018; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015; Rani, 2014). These stages are assumed to be happening in a sequential order, from need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post purchase behaviour (Kaur & Kumar, 2016; Kotler et al., 2018; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015; Rani, 2014).

### 2.3.3. Model of social commerce consumer buying process

Rad et al. (2010) developed a model which evaluates the effects of social commerce on various stages of consumers' purchase decision making. The Rad model shows the social commerce processes that consumers go through in making a purchase. The model posits that consumers move from need recognition, to post purchase evaluation through product brokerage, merchant brokerage, purchase decision and purchase (Rad et al., 2010). The stages of the model were informed by the classical consumer decision making model (Rad et al., 2010).

Hajli et al. (2017) appraised the model as an overarching model because it factors in the role that social commerce plays in decision making. The major diverging aspect of the model from the traditional classical model is that in the latter, the entire decision-making processes are done on social commerce platforms yet in the classical model they are done in physical brick and mortar situations. Hettiarachchi et al. (2017) also confirm that the Rad Model was the first attempt, and best attempt thereof, to explain consumer decision making which was solely based on social commerce interactions

Although the Rad et al. (2010) model is a sequential model of consumer behaviour, it addresses the weaknesses of the grand models of consumer behaviour by acknowledging that consumers can make backward and forward moves along the decision line. However, the Rad et al. (2010) model fails to acknowledge the association between post purchase behaviour and other stages of the decision making. The constructs used in the Rad et al. (2010) model (product brokerage, merchant brokerage) are not easy to understand, thereby complicating the understanding of the social consumer buying process. In addition, social buying and social effect were not well related to the social consumer, which impels the need for further refinement of the understanding of the social commerce consumer.

## 2.4. Conceptualising social commerce buying process

Some scholars have considered how consumers interact on social platforms (Chivandi et al., 2019; Hettiarachchi et al., 2018; Maulborough & Technal, 2020) yet failed to link it to pre-usage social commerce behaviour and post purchase social commerce behaviour. Relating to that aspect, these scholars posit that social commerce consumer buying behaviour is a process which starts from need identification and ends at buying (Qazzafi, 2019; Rostami et al., 2016; Stankevich, 2017).

However, contemporary scholars argue that there is need to consider social commerce post purchase behaviour (Banoobhai-Anwar & Keating, 2016; Meirs & Nicklemin, 2021). Specifically, Meirs and Nicklemin (2021) argue that given lots of electronic waste (e-waste) it is imperative to consider how consumers dispose of the products they buy on social platforms. Therefore, a holistic understanding of social commerce buying behaviour from pre-purchase behaviour, purchase behaviour and post purchase behaviour has been lacking among the current body of knowledge. Figure 1 is presented as the conceptual model to close the identified theoretical gap.

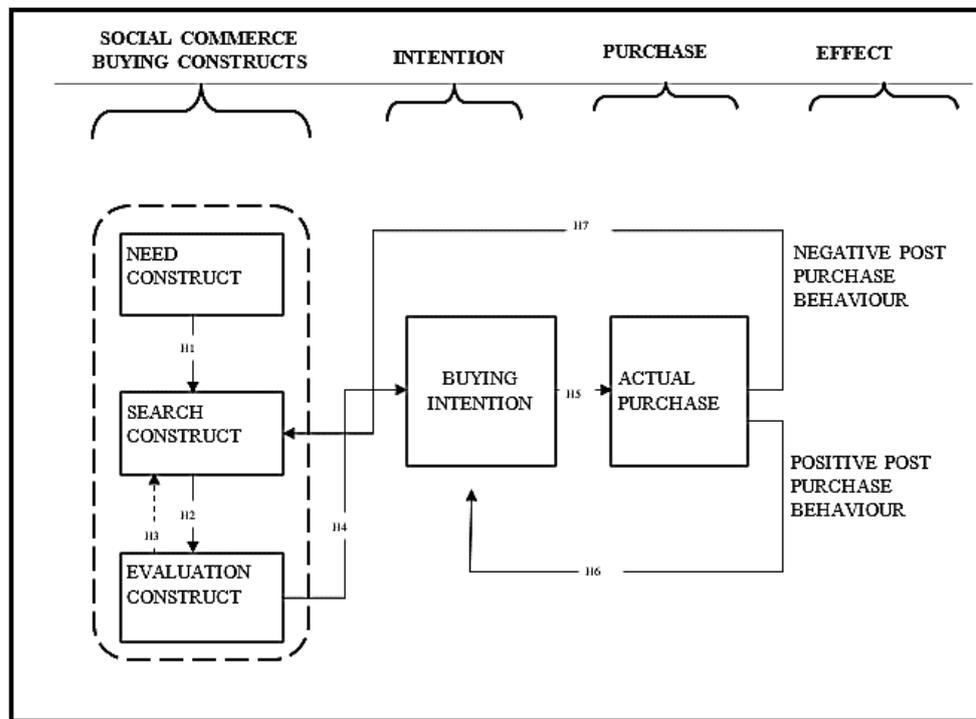


FIGURE 1 - THE RESEARCH MODEL

#### 2.4.1. Social commerce need construct

Need recognition is the difference between consumer's actual and desired state of affairs (Hettiarachchi et al., 2018). It is that point when a need is triggered in a consumer and the consumer notices the void which can be filled by a social commerce product or service. According to the Rad et al. (2010), need recognition on social commerce is presumed to be the first stage of consumer decision making. However, this is not primarily the first stage as the role of social commerce marketers begin long before the social commerce consumer becomes aware of the product and service (Maulborough & Technal, 2020).

In the study's model, the need construct shows how social commerce triggers the need in consumers. The social commerce need construct is made up of need triggering social commerce attributes such as normative/mutual social influence, social media advertising, informational social influence, recommender systems and viral advertisement (Hettiarachchi, et al., 2017; Rad et al., 2010). Although the existing board of knowledge lacks substantial empirical foundation regarding the social commerce construct, the study by Hettiarachchi, Wickramasinghe, Ranathunga (2018) enhances our understanding. Hettiarachchi et al. (2017) note that online social networks provide the opportunity for consumers to regularly inform and observe about their member activities including information about certain products and services; this information triggers the need recognition stage.

In support of the role of social commerce on need identification, Yadav et al. (2013) found out that social commerce can act as source of inspiration and referral for the consumer to become aware of the problem or need. Kaur and Kumar (2016) also found out that social commerce tools are significantly effective towards stimulating consumers' needs online. Similarly, Hajji (2015) focuses on the social commerce constructs such

as ratings and reviews, social shopping and communities. His study concluded that social commerce tools are effective towards driving consumer motives.

The study therefore posits that the need construct has an effect on consumer buying and that the need construct directly feeds into the search construct, which is the second stage of consumer buying process. With that reasoning, the following proposition is made:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Social commerce need construct is positively associated with social commerce information search.*

#### **2.4.2. Social commerce search construct**

Social commerce search construct relates to a collection of social commerce tools that consumers can use to search for product or service information on online social networks (OSN). Social commerce search construct acknowledges that consumers' search involves internal and external search. Yadav et al. (2013) found that online social networks are essential in offering important information to customers. Their study further found out that, just like in offline buying situations, online social networks allow consumers to even search for information from their social circles including parents, friends and workmates.

Hettiarachchi et al. (2017) further found out that online social networks are rich information sources as members tend to trust the information and opinions from their connections. Conversely, Poturak and Softic (2019) found a significant association between social media use and user/ firm created social media content ( $p < 0.05$ ). Makudza et al. (2020) also concluded that when consumers search for information on social networks, they value user generated information more than firm generated content. Maulborough and Technal (2020) also concluded that consumers value social information online and that drives them from one stage of consumer decision making to the other.

The study therefore posits that social commerce online tools are helpful during the social commerce buying process and that they directly impact the evaluation of alternatives stage. Therefore, the following proposition was stated:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Social commerce search construct is positively associated with social commerce evaluation.*

#### **2.4.3. Social commerce evaluation construct**

After successfully searching for information about a product or service online, the study model posits that consumers start to evaluate alternatives. The model theorises that the evaluation construct is done on social platforms through; multi browsing, merchant support services, group influence and social identity effect. The model addressed the challenges of the one-way sequential consumer buying process whereby consumer buying process was believed to be a one-way sequential process from need identification to post purchase evaluation. The model rather indicates that consumers can move forward and backwards at each stage. Therefore, during the product evaluation stage (evaluation construct) on the social commerce, when consumers feel the need to do more searches for their options, they return to the previous information search stage (search construct).

The propositions made in the framework were also aligned with empirical findings. Permatasari and Kuswadi (2018) found out that social networks significantly affect brand selection. That was further linked to the role of social influence as other social players can also influence the evaluation of brand choices. Similarly, Meirs and Nicklemin (2021) found that social networks, especially family opinions have a strong influence on the buying decisions while buying an expensive product. Yin et al. (2019) found out that the intimacy between social users contributes to trust-building, and that positively impacts on product selection, brand choice and vendor choice.

The study therefore theorises that the evaluation construct is so powerful that it drives consumers' behavioural intention to buy using online social networks (OSN). The study therefore theorises that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Social commerce evaluation construct significantly impacts on the social commerce search process.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Social commerce evaluation construct positively impacts on consumers' purchase intention to buy on social commerce.*

#### 2.4.4. Social commerce buying

The study model posits that successful evaluation of products and services on social networks lead to consumers' behavioural intention to buy products on social platforms. The model is premised on the notion that social commerce behavioural intention to buy directly predicts actual social commerce buying behaviour. Social platforms support online purchases through online payments and instant receipting.

Scholarly work proves that social commerce buying process promotes intention to buy and buying behaviour (Sriram, Namitha, Giridhar & Kamath, 2021). Laksamana (2018) found out that social network marketing significantly impacts both purchase intention and brand loyalty. A related study by Kosarizadeh and Hamdi (2015) found out that the variables of social media activities were effective on the variables of value equity and these variables themselves affect purchase intention. Purchase intention depends on the impetus towards willingness to perform a behaviour, and the extent a consumer is ready to make efforts in this regard (Abrar, Sibtain & Shabbir).

Similarly, Poturak and Softic (2019) found out that both user generated and firm created content positively affect consumers' behavioural intention and usage behaviour of social media activities. A study by Rowland and Rowland (2021) also considered the antecedents of social commerce and measured its impact on consumer purchase intention and concluded that social commerce affect consumers' buying behaviour but its magnitude varies depending on the strength of the predictor variables. Marandu, Makudza and Ngwenya (2019) also confirmed that intention predicts actual behaviour.

In light of the foregoing discussion, the study hypothesizes a direct association between social commerce purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour as follows:

*H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive association between social commerce consumer purchase intention and actual social commerce purchase behaviour.*

#### 2.4.5. Social commerce post purchase behaviour

Unlike its predecessors (Chivandi et al., 2019; Hettiarachchi et al., 2018; Rowland & Rowland, 2021), this study's conceptual model takes a holistic view of consumer behaviour. This includes pre-usage behaviour, usage behaviour and post usage behaviour. To this point, the model has discussed the first two parts (pre usage and usage behaviour). The final part of consumer behaviour measures the post usage effect that social commerce has on social online consumers.

The model theorises that social commerce purchasing may lead to customer satisfaction (positive effect) or customer dissatisfaction (negative effect). The model postulates that the effect, either positive or negative, feeds backwards into the social commerce consumer buying process, thereby formulating a cycle of interlinked phases. In this regard, a satisfied consumer is more likely to use social platforms for purchases. Thus, positive post purchase effect feeds backwards into the consumers' internal memory storage and the next time a consumer thinks about satisfying the same need, the consumer skips all the first stages of the buying process and goes straight to purchasing intention. However, if the consumer was dissatisfied with the purchase, the consumer would want to search for other available brands or service alternatives online. Therefore, negative post purchase effect feeds backward into the search construct.

Empirical literature regarding the associations discussed in the above paragraph are rather scarce. However, Hettiarachchi et al. (2018) found out that after a purchase, consumers often compare their actual consumption experience with their expectations. Subsequently, consumers may communicate their level of satisfaction to other consumers via OSNs. Conversely, Yadav et al. (2013) found out that through post usage behaviour, consumers recommend and share their experience with other consumers on social platforms.

The study therefore makes the following propositions:

*H6: Positive post purchase evaluations of social commerce directly affect social commerce purchase intention*  
*H7: Negative post purchase evaluations of social commerce directly affect the search construct*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative orientation was adopted in this study through the adoption of an explanatory research design. The research design was adopted because it enables the researchers to measure causality among social commerce buying constructs, purchase intention, purchase and post purchase behaviour. A deductive research approach was assumed which started from a general understanding of social concept to a more specific aspect of social commerce buying behaviour. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and it was administered to social commerce customers of star rated hotel services in Zimbabwe. Given that the target population was infinite, Morgan (1970) indicated that the minimum sample size for an infinite population is 384 respondents at 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval, which the study adopted and adjusted for non-respondents. The actual sample size was then set at 492 respondents. Data was analysed using AMOS-SEM and good research ethical practices were upheld throughout the study.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Demographic profiling

The study received and validated 411 responses. The demographic distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Gender	%	Age	%	Qualification	%
Male	50.9	18 to 25 years	10.0	Certificate	10.2
Female	44.0	26 to 35 years	61.3	Degree	28.0
Missing	5.1	36 to 45 years	24.1	Diploma	21.4
		46 to 55 years	2.4	High School	24.8
		Above 55 years	2.2	Post graduate degree	15.6

The study found out that the majority of social commerce users were males than females. Typically, young adults aged between 26 to 35 years were the majority of social commerce users. Conversely, the elderly above 46 years and the young ones below 25 years were least represented. This means that social commerce was primarily a tool which found haven among the young adults. The results also indicate that the degreed consumers were the ones who mainly engage in social commerce activities.

#### 4.2. Social commerce usage

The study examined the usage rate of social networks and found out that WhatsApp and Facebook were mainly used by the targeted group. Other more popular social networking platforms which consumers were using included Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, Google+; in the order of usage rate from highest to lowest. The majority of respondents (70.6%) access social platforms using smart phones. Others access social platforms using computers (21.7%), tablets (4.6%), phablets (2.4%) and non-smart phones (0.7%). The majority of respondents had used social networks for an average period ranging between 9 to 12 years.

Specifically for the social networks in the hotel industry, the widely used platforms, in the order of usage rate from highest to lowest, were: TripAdvisor, Bookings.com, Hotels.com, iRecommend and Yelp. Interestingly, consumers indicated that they spend an average of 5 hours per day on general social networking platforms and about 1 hour per week on hotel specific social platforms. Uses of social commerce in the hotel industry included: bookings, hotel search, information search, ratings, recommendations, referrals, and reservations, reviews, sharing information with others, and shopping.

### 4.3. Measurement model

Using confirmatory analysis, the model fit for the measurement model was within acceptable ranges (CMIN = 456.112, df = 160, P= 0.00, CMIN/DF = 2.85, GFI = 0.904, CFI = 0.966, RMSEA = 0.067) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Table 2 shows the results.

TABLE 2 - RELIABILITY STATISTICS

Factors	Item	Standard Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
<b>Need Construct</b>	Hotel advertisements on social networks stimulate my need for hotel services	0.893	0.915	0.9171	0.7346
	I feel like using hotel services through seeing hotel experiences of other consumers on social media	0.881			
	Recommendations by my social networks drive me to consider particular hotels.	0.836			
	Word of mouth on social networks can incite a need in me.	0.816			
<b>Search Construct</b>	I search for hotel information using hotel's social network handles	0.795	0.928	0.9420	0.8030
	I search for information on social network groups	0.893			
	When searching for hotel information, I use previous users' ratings	0.958			
	I search for hotel information using social media referrals	0.93			
<b>Evaluation Construct</b>	I can use two or more social sites at the same time for comparison reasons (multi-browsing)	0.907	0.936	0.9366	0.7874
	Hotel social media handles offer online support for further enquiry (merchant support)	0.931			
	My social network groups influence my evaluation of hotel services (Group Influence)	0.893			
	My evaluation of hotel services is influenced by my social identity	0.814			
<b>Intention</b>	I intent to use social networks in the hotel industry	0.878	0.933	0.9336	0.7788
	I intent to encourage others to use social networks for hotel services	0.911			
	I intent to buy hotel services using social commerce platforms	0.914			
	I intent to upgrade my skills in social commerce	0.824			
<b>Purchase</b>	I use social networks in the hotel industry	0.929	0.962	0.9629	0.8664
	I encourage others to use social networks for hotel services	0.912			
	I buy hotel services using social commerce platforms	0.938			
	I share with others about my hotel experiences on social networks	0.944			

Using statistics in Table 2, convergent validity was proved because indicators were closely related, with factor loadings in excess of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). That proves that indicators were measuring the underlying factors. The instrument was also reliable with cronbach alpha and composite reliability scores above 0.7 (Tabachnick

& Fidell, 2013). The average variance extracted for the latent variables of the study's latent variables had a range of 0.7346 to 0.8664. This exceeded the minimum cut off point stated by Hair et al. (2010) of 0.5.

Table 3 shows the discriminant validity statistics.

TABLE 3 - DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

	Need	Search	Evaluation	Intention	Purchase
Need	<b>0.857082551</b>				
Search	0.399	<b>0.896122</b>			
Evaluation	0.227	0.710	<b>0.887335</b>		
Intention	0.181	0.600	0.577	<b>0.882493</b>	
Purchase	0.272	0.671	0.579	0.560	<b>0.930828</b>

Results in Table 3 demonstrate evidence for discriminant validity. The square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) was higher than the correlations between the latent factors. Guided by Hair et al. (2010), the study concluded that each latent variable was measuring its own unique attributes. However, Table 3 also shows that there is a high positive correlation between social commerce search and actual social commerce purchase. This means that consumers who search for products and services are more likely to buy using social commerce platforms. In other words, the more consumers search for products using social network systems, the more likely that they will purchase using social commerce.

#### 4.4. The structural model

The structural model for the study is presented in Figure 2.

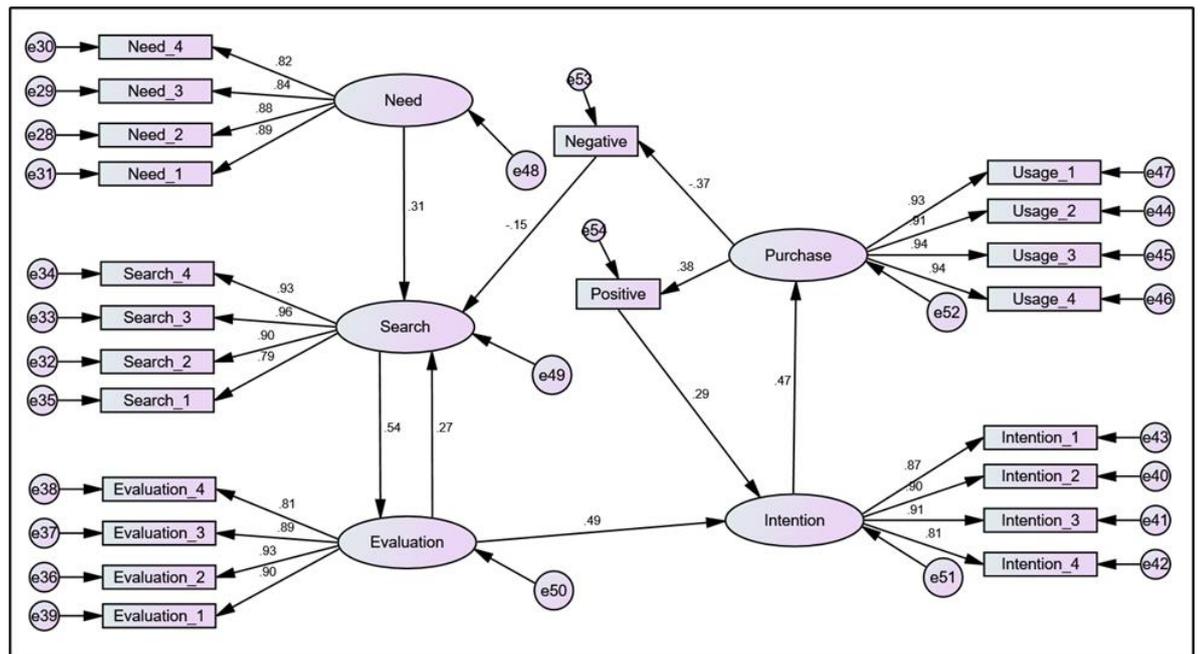


FIGURE 2 - THE STRUCTURAL MODEL

The structural model presented in Figure 2 had acceptable fit statistics (CMIN = 694.46, df = 202, P= 0.00, CMIN/DF = 3.43, CFI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.077) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Table 4 statistical output was used to make conclusions on the stated hypotheses.

TABLE 4 - THE STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HYPOTHESISED ASSOCIATIONS

			Standardised Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
Search	<---	Need	.313	.110	6.736	***	Supported
Evaluation	<---	Search	.538	.086	5.471	***	Supported
Intention	<---	Evaluation	.495	.044	11.318	***	Supported
Search	<---	Evaluation	.274	.134	2.348	.019	Supported
Purchase	<---	Intention	.473	.054	9.526	***	Supported
Positive	<---	Purchase	.379	.018	7.570	***	Supported
Intention	<---	Positive	.289	.118	6.338	***	Supported
Negative	<---	Purchase	-.367	.017	-7.683	***	Supported
Search	<---	Negative	-.146	.118	-3.556	***	Supported

Table 4 shows that all hypothesised associations were confirmed using an alpha value of 0.05. The social commerce need construct had a positive statistically significant impact on the search construct ( $\beta = 0.313$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). That means that when consumers identify a need on social commerce, they start searching for information of service providers using social commerce. The study therefore accepted  $H_1$ . The same conclusion was reached by Hettiarachchi et al. (2017) whilst Yadav et al. (2013) found out that social commerce can act as a source of inspiration and referral for the consumer to become aware of the problem or need and to lubricate the quest to look for information to satisfy the need.

The second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) was also accepted which means that social commerce search positively and statistically significantly impacts on social commerce evaluation ( $\beta = 0.538$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). A high impact factor observable here indicates that when consumers search for information using social commerce, they consider social network handles, social media groups, social commerce ratings and social media referrals. That also means that social commerce search predicts evaluation of social commerce brands. When consumers search for information on social networks, they are more likely to evaluate brand alternatives on social networks. Yadav et al. (2013) found that online social networks are essential in offering important information to customers. Conversely, Maulborough and Technal (2020) concluded that consumers value social information online and that drives them from one stage of consumer decision making to the other.

The study confirms that the social commerce evaluation construct positively impacts on consumer's purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.495$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). That means that social commerce is a significant platform for brand selection and that drives intention behaviour. It also follows that consumers of social commerce can multi browse, use merchant support, consider social group influence and social identity, when making a decision to buy. Such factors in turn propel consumers to develop purchase intention behaviour.

At the same time, the study managed to disconfirm the one-way sequential consumer decision making process. As consumers evaluate alternatives, if they see the need to search for more information, they can go back to the previous stage of social commerce searching ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $P = 0.019$ ). Hettiarachchi et al. (2018) found out that the impact of OSNs in the pre-purchase phase including the alternative evaluation stage is highly significant as consumers can access the reviews, ratings, and recommendations of the other members of the same community. Meirs and Nicklemin (2021) found out that social networks, especially family opinions have a strong influence on the buying decisions while buying an expensive product.

The impact of social commerce purchase intention on the actual social commerce purchase behaviour was also proved ( $\beta = 0.473$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). This means that when consumers develop an intention to buy using social commerce, they eventually buy. Therefore,  $H_5$  was accepted and the acceptance was supported empirically by other scholars (Kosarizadeh & Hamdi, 2015; Laksamana, 2018; Poturak & Softic, 2019).

In offering a renewed approach to social commerce buying behaviour, the study managed to prove that social commerce consumers are rational beings whose post purchase behaviour influences their future buying behaviour. Social commerce buying can lead to either a positive effect (customer satisfaction) or a negative effect (customer dissatisfaction). Positive post purchase evaluations of social commerce directly affect social commerce purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). This means that the next time a consumer seeks to satisfy

the same utility level, they skip other stages of the consumer decision making and proceed straight to purchase intention. Conversely, negative post purchase evaluations of social commerce purchase inversely affect the search construct (H7) ( $\beta = -0.146$ ,  $P = 0.00$ ). This means that dissatisfied consumers are more likely to shun social commerce buying. In any case, they start searching for the information again in expectation of getting a better offer. Hettiarachchi et al. (2018) found out that after a purchase, consumers often compare their actual consumption experience with their expectations.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that consumers are rational beings who make rational decisions when making a decision to buy on social commerce. Although the study adopted the sequential consumer decision making process, it concludes that consumers move upwards and downwards among the various stages of social commerce buying. Using social commerce web 2.0 systems, consumers on social platforms can identify a need on social networks, search for information using social platforms, evaluate alternatives using social applications and make a purchase on social commerce systems. The study also concludes that satisfied consumers develop a behavioural intention to purchase on social commerce the next time they seek to satisfy their needs, whilst dissatisfied consumers are inversely related to social commerce information search.

The study faced a theoretical limitation of testing a model which has never been tested before. This introduces model integrity limitations in different geographical aspects. However, to minimize the threat, the measurement model was tested and it passed reliability and validity tests. The model was developed through a deductive approach, leading to theory extension not a radical theory. Therefore, the researchers encourage future researchers to retest the model in various situations to validate its robustness.

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