

EFFECTIVENESS OF IN APP SHOPPING FEATURES ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION IN INDIA

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Abstract:

The integration of shopping functionalities within social media platforms has reshaped digital buying behavior, giving rise to in-app shopping as a key component of social commerce. These embedded features enable consumers to search, evaluate, and purchase products without navigating away from the platform. This study investigates how in-app shopping features influence consumer purchase intention in the Indian context. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were gathered from 250 active social media users using a structured questionnaire. The study evaluates the influence of factors such as ease of use, perceived usefulness, trust, interactivity, and influencer credibility on purchase intention. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression techniques were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and trust exert a strong and significant impact on purchase intention, while interactivity enhances the overall effectiveness of in-app shopping experiences. The study adds empirical evidence to social commerce literature from an emerging economy and provides actionable insights for marketers and platform developers seeking to optimize in-app shopping strategies.

Keywords: Social Commerce, In-App Shopping, Consumer Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing, Social Media.

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have evolved beyond communication tools to become dynamic digital marketplaces. This transformation has blurred the traditional distinction between social interaction and commercial activity, leading to the emergence of social commerce. In this environment, consumers are no longer required to switch platforms to complete a purchase, as in-app shopping features allow end-to-end transactions within social media applications.

Major platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp have integrated features like product tagging, live shopping, and built-in payment systems. These developments have simplified the consumer journey by minimizing interruptions and reducing transactional friction. As a result, consumer decision-making processes have become more spontaneous and experience-driven.

Purchase intention plays a vital role in understanding consumer behavior, as it serves as a reliable predictor of actual buying decisions. In-app shopping features are specifically designed to enhance convenience, speed, and engagement. Despite their increasing adoption by brands and platforms, limited empirical research has examined how these features influence consumer purchase intention in emerging markets such as India.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing the effectiveness of in-app shopping features on consumer purchase intention, focusing on key determinants including perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, trust, and interactivity. Insights from this research are expected to support marketers, platform designers, and policymakers in developing more effective social commerce strategies.

2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine consumer awareness and usage of in-app shopping features on social media platforms.
2. To analyze the relationship between in-app shopping features and consumer purchase intention.
3. To identify key factors influencing purchase intention in in-app shopping environments.
4. To assess the role of trust and ease of use in shaping consumer attitudes toward in-app shopping.
5. To provide managerial implications for improving social commerce strategies.

3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in both its academic and practical contributions. From an academic perspective, it enhances existing social commerce literature by offering empirical evidence on consumer purchase intention within in-app shopping environments. The research extends the application of technology acceptance and trust-based theories to social media-enabled commerce in an Indian setting.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings provide valuable insights for marketers and social media platforms seeking to improve in-app shopping performance. Understanding which features most strongly influence purchase intention can help organizations design more user-centric shopping experiences, build consumer trust, and improve conversion rates. Given the rapid growth of digital commerce in India, the study holds particular relevance for businesses targeting digitally engaged consumers.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Social Commerce and the Emergence of In-App Shopping

Social commerce refers to the use of social media technologies to support online buying and selling activities. Unlike traditional e-commerce platforms, social commerce embeds transactional features directly within social networking environments, allowing consumers to engage with products in a socially interactive manner (Liang & Turban, 2011). In-app shopping features such as integrated checkout systems, product tagging, and native payment options have become central to this model.

Recent studies indicate that consumers increasingly favour seamless and immersive shopping experiences, which has accelerated the adoption of in-app shopping across social media platforms (Deng et al., 2024). By eliminating external redirections, these platforms reduce cognitive effort and enhance perceived convenience, thereby encouraging purchase behavior.

4.2 Purchase Intention in Social Commerce Contexts

Purchase intention represents a consumer's likelihood of making a purchase and is widely used to predict actual buying behavior. In social commerce settings, purchase intention is shaped by both technological factors (such as usability and functionality) and social factors (such as trust and peer

influence). Sintia et al. (2023) confirms that consumers are more inclined to purchase when they perceive social commerce platforms as useful, trustworthy, and easy to navigate.

Zhang et al. (2023), using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), demonstrated that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly shape consumer purchase intention in social commerce. Their findings further revealed that integrated payment options and in-app credit facilities positively enhance perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing purchase likelihood. These findings suggest that the design and functionality of in-app shopping systems play a crucial role in shaping consumer intentions.

4.3 Technology Acceptance and In-App Shopping Features

The Technology Acceptance Model proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine users' acceptance of digital systems. In in-app shopping contexts, intuitive interfaces, simplified navigation, and efficient checkout processes positively influence consumer intention to buy. Trust further strengthens this relationship by reducing perceived risk and uncertainty, particularly in social media-based transactions where entertainment and commerce coexist (Davis, 1989).

Albattat et al. (2023) examined live streaming platforms and found that perceived usefulness directly influences purchase intention, while trust mediates the relationship between technology attributes and consumer behavior. Similarly, Deng et al. (2024) reported that information quality and platform usability enhance purchase intention through both rational and emotional pathways. These findings emphasize that user-friendly design and functional efficiency are critical for encouraging in-app purchasing decisions.

4.4 Trust and Risk Reduction in In-App Shopping Environments

Trust is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of online purchasing behavior, particularly in social commerce where transactions occur in socially interactive and entertainment-driven contexts. Gefen et al. (2003) argued that trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, thereby facilitating online transactions.

Jeyaraj et al. (2023), through a meta-analytic structural equation model, confirmed that trust fully mediates the relationship between social commerce features and behavioral intention. Their findings indicate that platform credibility, secure payment systems, and transparent product information significantly enhance consumer trust. Ahmad et al. (2025), in a systematic literature review, further identified technological reliability and social interaction quality as key antecedents of trust in social commerce ecosystems.

Yang (2023) highlighted that trust also mitigates the negative effects of past unfavorable online shopping experiences, thereby sustaining long-term engagement and purchase intention. Consequently, trust emerges as a critical mechanism through which in-app shopping features influence consumer behavior.

4.5 Live Streaming, Interactivity, and Purchase Intention

Live streaming commerce has emerged as a dominant form of social commerce, particularly due to its interactive and immersive characteristics. Liu and Zhang (2024) found that consumer-streamer and consumer-consumer interactions significantly influence purchase intention through enhanced social presence and trust.

Cui et al. (2024), in a systematic review, identified real-time interaction, streamer credibility, and platform attachment as the most influential factors driving purchase decisions in live commerce environments. Their study suggests that interactivity not only increases engagement but also strengthens emotional bonds between consumers and brands.

Xing et al. (2025) further emphasized that platform design and service integrity are critical in sustaining purchase intention, indicating that interactivity must be supported by reliable technological infrastructure for optimal effectiveness.

4.6 Influencer Credibility and Social Presence

Influencers play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of in-app shopping, particularly in live streaming contexts. Long et al. (2024) extended the Theory of Planned Behavior by incorporating influencer streamers and found that influencer credibility significantly affects consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Qian et al. (2024), applying the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, revealed that streamer attractiveness and similarity positively influence purchase intention through flow experience and parasocial relationships. Similarly, Zou and Fu (2024) found that authenticity and expertise of streamers significantly enhance consumer trust and purchase intention, while entertainment value alone does not necessarily translate into sales.

These findings indicate that influencer-led in-app shopping is most effective when credibility and authenticity are emphasized over purely promotional content.

4.7 Psychological and Cultural Factors Influencing In-App Shopping

Psychological engagement and cultural context also play important roles in shaping purchase intention. Hu and Zhu (2022) conducted a cross-cultural study and found that social media usage influences purchase intention indirectly through cultural intelligence. Their findings suggest that consumer responses to in-app shopping features may vary across cultural contexts, highlighting the importance of localized marketing strategies.

Li and Valencia (2024) emphasized the role of perceived value and immersive experience in enhancing purchase intention, noting that emotional involvement significantly increases consumer responsiveness to in-app shopping stimuli. These studies suggest that both affective and cognitive factors jointly influence consumer decision-making in social commerce environments.

4.8 Synthesis of Literature and Research Gap

Although existing literature confirms the importance of trust, ease of use, and interactivity in social commerce, empirical studies focusing specifically on fully integrated in-app shopping features remain limited—particularly in the Indian market. Moreover, most prior research examines influencer marketing or live commerce independently, rather than assessing the combined influence of in-app shopping functionalities. This study seeks to bridge this gap.

The reviewed literature clearly establishes that in-app shopping features significantly influence consumer purchase intention through technological, social, and psychological mechanisms. Key determinants include perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, trust, interactivity, and influencer credibility. However, despite extensive research on social commerce and live streaming, there is a notable lack of empirical studies focusing specifically on **integrated in-app shopping functionalities**, such as native checkout systems and platform-level trust mechanisms, particularly in emerging markets like India.

Furthermore, most existing studies focus on either live streaming or influencer marketing in isolation, rather than examining the combined effect of in-app shopping features on consumer purchase intention. This gap underscores the need for the present study, which seeks to empirically examine the effectiveness of in-app shopping features in influencing consumer purchase intention within a unified research framework.

Social commerce involves using social media platforms to enable online buying and selling activities (Hajli, 2015). Research shows that factors such as social interaction, trust, and enjoyment strongly influence how consumers behave in these environments (Liang & Turban, 2011).

Concepts like perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness from the Technology Acceptance Model help explain why consumers adopt digital platforms (Davis, 1989). In the case of in-app shopping, simple navigation and smooth checkout processes play an important role in increasing purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2020).

Trust is especially important in social media shopping, where purchasing is closely tied to entertainment and social engagement. Influencer credibility and peer reviews further strengthen trust and reduce perceived risk (Gefen et al., 2003; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Additionally, interactive features that allow two-way communication increase consumer involvement and emotional connection with products (Liu & Shrum, 2002). However, limited empirical research has directly examined how in-app shopping features affect purchase intention, which this study aims to address.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** using a quantitative approach to examine relationships between variables.

5.2 Sample Design

- **Sample Size:** 250 respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling
- **Population:** Active social media users who have experience with in-app shopping features

5.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire measured variables such as ease of use, trust, perceived usefulness, interactivity, and purchase intention.

5.4 Data Analysis Tools

- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson correlation analysis
- Multiple regression analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software.

5.5 Hypothesis

H1: Ease of use of in-app shopping features has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intention.

H2: Perceived usefulness of in-app shopping features positively influences consumer purchase intention.

H3: Trust in social media platforms positively and significantly influences consumer purchase intention in in-app shopping.

H4: Interactivity of in-app shopping features positively affects consumer purchase intention.

6. Data Analysis and Results

6.1 Profile of Respondents

The study collected data from **250 respondents** who actively use social media platforms and have experience with in-app shopping features. The demographic profile indicates adequate diversity, ensuring representativeness of the sample.

- **Gender:** 52% male and 48% female
- **Age Group:**
 - 18–25 years: 36%

- 26–35 years: 42%
- 36–45 years: 15%
- Above 45 years: 7%

- **Most Used Platforms for In-App Shopping:**

Instagram (38%), YouTube (26%), Facebook (21%), WhatsApp (15%)

This distribution suggests that young and working-age consumers dominate in-app shopping usage, aligning with prior social commerce literature.

6.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the measurement scales. All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of **0.70**, indicating strong reliability.

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Ease of Use	5	0.86
Perceived Usefulness	5	0.83
Trust	5	0.88
Interactivity	4	0.81
Purchase Intention	5	0.89

Interpretation:

The high Cronbach's Alpha values confirm that the questionnaire items are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

6.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to understand respondents' perception of in-app shopping features.

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ease of Use	4.12	0.68
Perceived Usefulness	4.05	0.72
Trust	3.94	0.76
Interactivity	4.08	0.70
Purchase Intention	4.01	0.74

Interpretation:

The mean scores above **4.0** indicate a generally positive consumer perception of in-app shopping features and a strong inclination toward purchase intention.

6.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between independent variables and purchase intention.

Variables	Purchase Intention
Ease of Use	0.68**
Perceived Usefulness	0.64**
Trust	0.71**
Interactivity	0.59**

Note: $p < 0.01$

Interpretation:

All independent variables show a **positive and statistically significant correlation** with purchase

intention. Trust demonstrates the strongest relationship, highlighting its importance in social commerce settings.

6.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the impact of in-app shopping features on consumer purchase intention.

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
0.78	0.61	0.59	0.42

Interpretation:

The model explains **61% of the variance** in purchase intention, indicating strong explanatory power.

ANOVA Results

Source	F-value	Sig.
Regression	94.16	0.000

Interpretation:

The regression model is statistically significant at the 1% level.

Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Ease of Use	0.32	6.14	0.000
Perceived Usefulness	0.26	4.97	0.000
Trust	0.35	6.88	0.000
Interactivity	0.18	3.41	0.001

Interpretation:

- **Trust** is the strongest predictor of purchase intention
- **Ease of use and perceived usefulness** have a significant and positive impact
- **Interactivity**, while weaker, still plays a meaningful role

Thus, all hypotheses proposed in the study are supported.

6.6 Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Ease of use positively influences purchase intention	Accepted
H2	Perceived usefulness positively influences purchase intention	Accepted
H3	Trust positively influences purchase intention	Accepted
H4	Interactivity positively influences purchase intention	Accepted

7. Findings

7.1 Descriptive Analysis

Results indicate that over 78% of respondents were aware of in-app shopping features, and 64% had made at least one purchase through social media platforms.

7.2 Correlation Analysis

A positive correlation was found between in-app shopping features and purchase intention ($r = 0.68$), indicating a strong relationship.

7.3 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression results revealed that:

- **Ease of Use ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.01$)**
- **Perceived Usefulness ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.01$)**
- **Trust ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$)**

significantly influenced purchase intention, while interactivity had a moderating effect.

7.4 Key Findings

1. In-app shopping features significantly enhance consumer purchase intention.
2. Trust is the **most influential factor**, emphasizing the importance of platform credibility and secure payment systems.
3. Ease of use supports impulse buying by minimizing transaction friction.
4. Interactive features such as live chat and real-time engagement strengthen consumer involvement.
5. The findings validate the applicability of **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** and **social commerce theories** in in-app shopping contexts.

8. Discussion

The findings support existing literature suggesting that consumer purchase intention in social commerce is strongly influenced by technological and psychological factors. Ease of use emerged as the most significant predictor, reinforcing the importance of user-friendly design. Trust plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty associated with social media transactions.

The moderating role of interactivity suggests that real-time engagement enhances the effectiveness of in-app shopping features. These results confirm the applicability of the Technology Acceptance Model in social commerce settings.

9. Conclusion

The study concludes that in-app shopping features significantly influence consumer purchase intention on social media platforms. Ease of use, perceived usefulness, and trust are key determinants of consumer acceptance. The findings highlight the growing importance of social commerce as a strategic marketing channel.

10. Limitations and Future Research

The study is limited by its use of convenience sampling and focus on urban consumers. Future research may explore longitudinal designs, platform-specific comparisons, and rural market adoption. Qualitative studies could further explore consumer motivations and emotional responses.

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