

ANTECEDENTS OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE INTENTION AT SOCIAL COMMERCE PLATFORMS

ANTECEDENTES DA INFLUÊNCIA SOCIAL NA INTENÇÃO DE COMPRA EM PLATAFORMAS DE SOCIAL COMMERCE

DILIANE SALUSTIANO DE FARIAS

Universidade Federal da Paraíba
dilianefarias.adm@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1704-4109>

EDVAN CRUZ AGUIAR

Universidade Federal de Campina Grande
edvan.ed@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3433-6210>

NICOLE STEFANIE GOMES DOS SANTOS

Universidade Federal de Campina Grande
nicole.stefanie.77@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4265-8997>

MANOELA COSTA POLICARPO

Universidad del País Vasco
manoelacpolicarpo@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7774-783X>

A B S T R A C T

The present work sought to investigate how social factors social commerce platforms are inherently related to consumer buying behavior. Based on structural equation modeling, the research involved the application of an online survey among the target audience (consumers of collective purchasing sites), obtaining a sample of 283 respondents. The findings showed that social presence and informational support on social commerce sites generate more trust in other members than vendors. It was also found that confidence in members is associated with repurchase intention. The article contributes to a better understanding of the sense of social presence and the informational support in the formation of trust in sellers and in members who influence repurchase intentions.

K E Y W O R D S

Social commerce; Feeling of social presence; Informational support; Trust in members; Repurchase intention.

R E S U M O

O presente estudo buscou investigar de que maneira fatores sociais inerentes às plataformas de social commerce se relacionam com o comportamento de compra do consumidor. A partir de uma modelagem de equações estruturais, a pesquisa envolveu a aplicação de um survey on-line junto ao público-alvo (consumidores de sites de compras coletivas), obtendo-se uma amostra de 283 respondentes. Os achados evidenciaram que a sensação de presença social e o suporte informa-

cional em sites de social commerce geram mais confiança nos outros membros do que nos vendedores. Verificou-se ainda que a confiança nos membros se associa com a intenção de recompra. O artigo contribui para uma melhor compreensão acerca da sensação de presença social e do suporte informacional na formação da confiança nos vendedores e nos membros que influenciam as intenções de recompra.

P A L A V R A S - C H A V E

Social commerce; Sensação de presença social; Suporte informacional; Confiança nos membros; Intenção de recompra.

INTRODUCTION

Advances in the field of information systems and the consolidation of technologies associated with Web 2.0 have brought new opportunities for electronic commerce (Hajli, 2015; Meilatinova, 2021). In this sense, e-commerce has evolved into what is meant by social commerce, a context in which consumers are increasingly dependent on each other and seek online support (informational, emotional, and social) even before making a purchase (Bilal et al., 2021; Hajli, 2020).

Social commerce it is related to the use of social media to carry out business transactions through, especially, social interactions and user contributions (selling, comparing, and sharing information about products). According to Stephen and Toubia (2010), it corresponds to a form of social media based on the internet that allows people to actively participate in activities about marketing and selling products and services in markets and communities.

Social commerce websites have three main attributes, namely: (1) the presence of technologies associated with social media; (2) interaction between communities; (3) commercial activities. According to Rosa et al. (2014), there are two methods of social commerce: (1) Characterized by social networking websites that offer space for advertising and transactions, such as buying and selling products, with an interface that facilitates this process; (2) Known by traditional e-commerce websites that use the capabilities of social networks to take advantage of their reach and confidence.

Social commerce has been growing mainly with the use of marketing through digital channels, exchange, and sharing of information and social networks that seek to attract more customers and change consumer behavior through advertisements, incentives, and promotions. Social networks allow companies to interact with millions of customers at the same time without investing a fortune in marketing to use social media (Cuypers et al., 2020; Gamboa; Gonçalves, 2014).

From the perspective of organizations, social commerce has a great potential to generate value from interactions between consumers (Maia et al., 2018). It is argued that understanding consumer behavior in this context has become critical for companies that aim to better influence consumers and harness the power of their social ties (Hajli, 2020; Lal, 2017; Zhang; Benyoucef, 2016). Social commerce has been growing mainly with the use of marketing through digital channels, exchange,

and sharing of information and social networks that seek to attract more customers and change consumer behavior through advertisements, incentives, and promotions.

To provide insights into the dynamics of consumer participation in social commerce, Zhang et al. (2014) found out that behavioral intentions are ascertained by factors such as support and social presence in the online environment. In the same way, Lu et al. (2016) showed that the factors associated with social presence (ex: social interaction, comments, and evaluations) contribute significantly to the construction of relationships of trust, as well as to the formation of purchasing behavior.

According to Queiros Rios & Luft (2019), social commerce in the Brazilian context is identified as an emerging phenomenon, presenting considerable potential for expansion as digital enterprises increasingly recognize and adopt social media. In the same context, Mesquita et al. (2021) identified that trust in the Social Commerce platform positively affects purchase and word-of-mouth intentions. Both studies corroborate the need for more studies on purchasing behavior on social commerce.

Although empirical studies have been observed in the academic literature that investigates determinants of purchasing behavior on social commerce platforms (Hu et al., 2019; Leong et al., 2020; Yeon et al., 2019), it is understandable that further studies are required to examine the impact of new developments in electronic commerce technologies on consumer behavior, especially in the Brazilian context, which presents little evidence in this regard. In light of this, the present study seeks to investigate how social factors inherent to social commerce platforms are related to consumer buying behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides an overview of social commerce, and discusses factors that have been highlighted as consumers' influencers in social commerce context (i.e Social Presence, Informational Support, Trust and Repurchase Intention).

Social commerce

Social commerce understands the integration of e-commerce with social media and is one of the ways in which companies operating on the internet engage their consumers in order to obtain feedback on their valuable products (Braojos et al., 2019; Hajli & Featherman, 2017). This new method of leading businesses takes advantage of customers' participation to add value to their commercial activities, enabling buyers to have a more social, interactive, and collaborative online experience (Busalim & Ghabban, 2021; Huang & Benyoucef, 2015).

The evolution of social media has changed the landscape of electronic commerce for both companies and consumers. From the consumers' perspective, these changes have been reflecting in their purchasing behaviors (Lal, 2017). It is discussed that their decisions associated with consumption cease to be purely individual and become social.

According to Wang and Yu (2017), the interaction between consumers on social networks is considered a prerequisite for the social commerce phenomenon happen since they wait for interactions and social experiences during the purchase decision-making process. Thus, the concept of social commerce comprises activities related to commercial exchanges that occur or are influenced by social environments mediated by a person's social network, in which the activities correspond to the stages of recognition, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase of a focal exchange (Cheng et al., 2019; Yadav et al., 2013).

The option on social commerce is frequently due to the amount of reliable information about certain products and services that are exchanged by their own members and which mainly reflects in obtaining the best prices on purchases (Ghahtarani et al., 2020; Kim & Park, 2013). Therefore, it is essential to define the social factors that make up social commerce platforms and how they relate to other consumer responses.

Dimensions of social commerce

In social commerce, the salesperson's main objective is to convert customers into brand advocates, as it allows users to participate in marketing, sales, purchasing, and sharing information about products and services (Hajli & Featherman, 2017; Leung et al., 2022;). In this way, it is understood that the inherent social factors contribute to trust being established and purchasing behavior be exercised.

Consumers tend to make a point of expressing their likes, dislikes, evaluations, and brand experiences (Cutshall et al., 2022; He et al., 2019). The social media system is the preferred medium that brands use to interact with consumers, while the consumer is at ease to socialize. In this way, the social resources associated with these applications promote user interaction, facilitating the online purchase of products and services (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015; Molinillo et al., 2021).

Maia et al. (2018), in their study, identified the following components inherent to social commerce platforms: user comments about products, services, and brands and ratings and reviews of post-consumer products. In social commerce, the recommendation system emerges as an instrument for building the reputation of salespeople, companies, and brands, leading to a reduction in uncertainties about products and a consequent increase in confidence.

Some studies show that the valence and volume of content generated by third parties influence sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Liu, 2006). Although the social support construct has been extensively investigated in other areas (ex: sociology and social psychology), the field of marketing and consumer behavior has started to incorporate this idea recently (Hajli & Lin, 2016; Hajli, 2014; Zhao et al., 2020).

Social support in the context of social commerce occurs to the extent that interactions and exchanges of information and content between members of a virtual community influence individual purchasing decisions. And this has a significant impact on the way that the company, its brand, and its products are seeing by the market.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how the dimensions (or elements) that are present in social commerce platforms determine their use by consumers, as well as their buying behavior (Hajli, 2020; Hajli, 2015). It is argued that social commerce facilitates the exchange of operating resources (ex: ideas, information, and knowledge) between multiple actors, which leads to interaction between the consumer and the company. Thus, it is understandable that the factors associated with social presence contribute significantly to the construction of relationships of reliance as well as in the formation of purchasing behaviors.

Social Presence

Interactions and user-generated content in social commerce environments provide consumers with improvements not only in their purchasing decisions but also in their experiences (Chen et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). In other words, this trade configuration has changed the form of communication and collaboration between consumers, who are increasingly connected through virtual ties.

In this sense, it is discussed that as a result of these changes in consumer behavior, customers began to obtain a sense of social presence (Kim, 2022; Sheikh et al., 2019). The study by Weisberg et al. (2011) points out that when there is a social presence on an e-commerce platform, consumers feel more secure and predisposed to buy.

Lu et al. (2016), on the other hand, found that the feeling of social presence transmitted by a website, through the perception of third parties or interaction with sellers, increases the buyers' beliefs of trust. The work suggests, therefore, that factors related to social presence play a fundamental role in building consumer confidence in sellers on social commerce platforms.

In addition to the relationship with vendors, the sense of social presence might be associate with trust in other members of the community. Then, it implies that the social influences present in online environments make consumers feel more connected to other buyers, increasing the perception of social presence and, consequently, the level of trust between the parties. From these considerations, the following hypotheses were established:

H1a. The feeling of Social Presence on social commerce sites is positively related to trust in sellers.

H1b. The feeling of Social Presence on social commerce sites is positively related to trust in members.

Informational Support

Informational support is an important concept to investigate, as it is one of the most crucial dimensions of social support in the context of social commerce (Yahia et al., 2018; Yhen & Shen, 2015). It is characterized by contributions that offer individuals advice, guidance, recommendations, or simply an experience of using a product or service.

Researches show that informational support can be useful to customers, both in solving problems and in their purchasing decisions. For example, Lal's (2017) paper; identified that informational

support as the factor that most influences an individual's decision to use a social commerce website. Chen and Shen (2015), in turn, reported that informational support is positively related to trust in members. Soon, members of a social commerce community become trusted, as the information provided by them is considered relevant by others for decision-making (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Lal, 2017).

In this perspective, when believing that the information transmitted by third parties is relevant, the consumer assumes that the seller is honest and builds a bond of friendship and trust with him. For this reason, informational support has a direct impact on sellers' confidence (Porter & Donthu, 2008; Zhao et al., 2019). Based on the above, it is understood that:

H2a. Informational Support relates positively to Trust in Sellers.

H2b. Informational Support relates positively to Trust in Members.

Trust in vendors and members

When analyzing the literature, it appears that trust is a crucial element in reducing the uncertainties generated by the absence of face-to-face communication between buyers and sellers in online shopping environments (Jiang et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers tend to evaluate sellers of social commerce before their purchase decision, and reliability becomes a key factor in this evaluation process.

Trust positively influences the intention of the consumer to buy in social commerce environments (Hajli, 2016; Lu et al., 2016; Ng, 2013). Other studies show that reliability in sellers has a positive impact on the individual's willingness to continue buying, that is, on the intention to repurchase (Zhao et al., 2019). Based on this assumption, the following hypothesis was outlined:

H3. The consumer confidence in sellers of social commerce sites is positively related to the Repurchase Intention.

According to Chen and Shen (2015), trust in members is recognized as an individual's willingness to believe in the information, guidance, and recommendations of other members of the social commerce community. The literature offers evidence of the impact of trust on members in the intention to purchase, in sharing experiences, and in the use of social commerce sites (Chen & Shen, 2015; Lal, 2017).

Therefore, the other members represent a significant aspect to understand the behavior of consumers, especially in the context of social commerce. Consequently, it is known that the trust of customers in other users of social commerce sites may influence the intention to repurchase. Thus, the following hypothesis was elaborated:

H4. Consumer confidence in other members of social commerce sites is positively related to the Repurchase Intent.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research proposal assumes a quantitative nature of a descriptive character, in which the survey method was adopted. In the area of marketing and consumer behavior, this type of research presents a quantitative or numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions from people, based on a sample of that population (Malhotra et al., 2018). The study is still classified as a cross-section since it was structured to measure characteristics of a sample at a single point in time, and the correlational type since there was no deliberate manipulation of variables, but the obtainment data through the structured collection instrument (Hair et al., 2015).

Design of the data collection instrument

The instrument corresponded to a structured questionnaire, which was sent electronically (survey online) for the research subjects and divided into three sections. The first contained a filter question, in which the subject of research indicated the social commerce site that made purchases in the last three months. When answered "None of the alternatives," the respondent finished the questionnaire.

The second section was composed of the indicators that measured the variables: informational support; social presence; trust in the members and vendors; and repurchase intention. Table I shows these variables and their definitions, as well as their respective indicators.

Table I - Construct indicators

Constructs	Definition	Indicators
Informational Support: Lal (2017)	The support offers advice, guidance, or information helping to solve problems, generate new ideas, or make decisions.	<p>SI1 - On this website, some users would offer suggestions if I needed help.</p> <p>SI2 - If I find a problem, some users of the website would provide information to help me.</p> <p>SI3 - When I need to get some information, website users help me by providing suggestions.</p>
Social Presence: Lal (2017)	Feeling of warmth and sociability within a website.	<p>PS1 - There is a sense of human contact on this website.</p> <p>PS2 - There is sociability on this website</p> <p>PS3 - There is a feeling of human warmth on this website.</p> <p>PS4 - There is human sensitivity on this website.</p>

<p>Trust in the members: Lal (2017)</p>	<p>Willingness of an individual to rely on words, actions and decisions of other members of the social commerce community.</p>	<p>CM1 - Users of the website will always try to help me if I have difficulties. CM2 - Website users always keep their promises to each other. CM3 - Website users are sincere in dealing with each other.</p>
<p>Trust in vendors: Lal (2017)</p>	<p>Willingness of an individual to rely on words, actions and decisions of vendors.</p>	<p>CV1 - I trust the sellers on this website very much. CV2 - I am willing to talk and communicate with vendors when I find problems. CV3 - My relationship with vendors is very close. CV4 - I am very sincere and friendly with the salespeople.</p>
<p>Repurchase Intent: Zhao et al. (2019)</p>	<p>Intention to repeatedly buy a product or service from the same supplier.</p>	<p>IR1 - It is very likely that I will continually buy the product from the seller. IR2 - I would consider buying the product from the seller in the future. IR3 - I intend to buy the product when I need it.</p>

SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

The third and last section contained questions for sample characterization purposes, such as gender, age, income, and level of education. It is crucial to mention that the scales were of the 5-point Likert type, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Collection procedures

The target audience of the survey corresponded to customers that made purchases in the past three months on collective purchasing websites. After defining the target audience, it was selected four famous collective shopping websites: Groupon, Mercado Livre, OLX, and Peixe Urbano. The choice of these websites was aimed at checking the social influences present in these online shopping environments and the consequent implications for customers' purchasing behavior.

The data for this study were acquired through a survey online distributed on wide-ranging social media platforms. The online questionnaire made it possible to approach consumers familiar with such platforms who had carried out commercial transactions three months before participating in the research. The filter question made it possible to select only the target audience for the research. The sample was of the non-probabilistic and accessibility type. To define its size, Hair et al. (2015) practical norms criterion was used for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), in which at least fifteen useful indicators are desired for each indicator. The final sample had 283 respondents and was considered apt ($283 > 17 * 15 = 255$) because it had a higher value than necessary for 17

psychometric items. The questionnaire was published between December 2019 and June 2020 to reach the necessary number of respondents.

Data analysis procedures

Regarding the analysis procedures, the data initially went through an inspection process (data screening). The goal was to identify and resolve the existence of missing data, extreme data (outliers), and other inconsistencies, corresponding to the preparation of the data matrix for efficient analysis. Given this, 57 invalid observations were excluded.

After the inspection process, the study adopted the MEE based on covariance for data analysis (Field et al., 2012). According to Anderson and Gerbing (1988), there are two steps in the MEE to be followed, the measurement model and the structural modeling. Initially, the measurement model was used to assess the relationships between the variables and the corresponding indicators. Thus, through confirmatory factor analysis (AFC) were accessed reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2015).

The second stage corresponded to the structural modeling that was developed to find the best model to test the causal relationship between the variables (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). It is important to mention that to assist in the analysis procedures, it was used The R Project for Statistical Computing - R, a statistical software for Windows, version 3.5.2.

RESULTS

Characterization of the sample

As previously mentioned, the sample was composed of consumers who made purchases in the last three months on collective purchasing sites. In it, the majority corresponds to the female gender (52.65%), at undergraduate level (complete or incomplete), with a family income of up to two minimum wages (R \$ 2,090.00) and has an average age of 28 years. This finding was similar for both genders, suggesting that customers are generally young adults looking for practicality, low prices, and exclusive promotions when making purchases on social commerce websites.

Table 2 - Profile of respondents

Variable	Categories	Descriptive statistics	
		N	%
Gender	Female	149	52,65
	Male	131	46,29
	Other	3	1,06

Variable	Categories	Descriptive statistics	
		N	%
Age	Less than 20	30	10,60
	21 – 30	146	51,59
	31 – 40	64	22,61
	41 – 50	27	9,54
	Over 50	16	5,65
Education	High school	24	8,48
	Undergraduate student	118	41,70
	Undergraduate degree	58	20,49
	Graduate student	21	7,42
	Graduate degree	62	21,91
Family Income (R\$)	Until 2.090,00	124	43,82
	2.090,01 – 4.180,00	73	25,79
	4.180,01 – 10.450,00	54	19,08
	Mais que 10.450,01	32	11,31
Social Commerce website	Groupon	5	1,77
	Mercado Livre	218	77,03
	OLX	28	9,89
	Peixe Urbano	32	11,31

SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

As we can see in Table 2, among the collective purchasing sites surveyed, Mercado Livre stands out with a significant percentage of 77.03%, leading the choice of customers at the time of purchase. It is worth noticing that the sum of the percentages of the other websites is not able to exceed their favoritism. In the market for discounts and promotions for a limited time, Peixe Urbano appears with 11.31%, OLX assumes the third position with 9.89%, and Groupon appears as the last option with a percentage of 1.77%.

Reliability and validity of scales

A Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the quality and adequacy of the scales used. From the initial findings of the CFA, two items (both from Trust in Sellers (CVI and CV3) were excluded, since the factorial loads were less than 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2015). After excluding these items, the CFA analysis was performed again. The CFA results showed an acceptable fit between the measurement model and the data set.

To rate both reliability of the constructs and the convergent and discriminant validity, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability (CF), and average extracted variance (AVE) values were used (Fornell & Larcker; 1981; Hair et al., 2015). As can be observed in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs were above the recommended minimum level of 0.7. In marketing research, these values indicate an internal consistency between the items (Malhotra, 2018).

Table 3 - Results of confirmatory factor analysis

Constructs / Indicators	Factorial Load	Cronbach's α	CF	AVE
Informational Support (SI)		0.92	0.92	0.79
SI1	0.835			
SI2	0.940			
SI3	0.896			
Social Presence (PS)		0.91	0.91	0.72
PS1	0.805			
PS2	0.797			
PS3	0.887			
PS4	0.890			
Trust in Members (CM)		0.88	0.88	0.71
CM1	0.840			
CM2	0.859			
CM3	0.827			
Trust in Vendors (CV)		0.80	0.83	0.72
CV2	0.907			
CV4	0.781			
Repurchase Intention (IR)		0.94	0.94	0.83
IR1	0.875			
IR2	0.949			
IR3	0.909			

SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

To test the convergent validity of the constructs, CF and AVE were calculated. The CF values were above the recommended minimum level of 0.7 in research in the area (Hair et al., 2015; Malhotra, 2012). Likewise, the AVE values varied above the recommended level of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, it appears that this measurement model has reached convergent validity.

Furthermore, the discriminant validity has been accessed from the criterion by Larcker and Fornell (1981). Thus, as shown in label 3, the square root of the stroke of each construct, shown

diagonally, was higher than all the correlations between the constructs, which supported the discriminating validity (Paulraj et al., 2008). Therefore, given these results, it can be concluded that the measurement model presents adequacy of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Table 4 - Discriminant validity of the measurement model and descriptive statistics

Construct	Informational Support	Social Presence	Trust in Members	Trust In Vendors	Repurchase Intention
Informational support	0.891	0.256**	0.429**	0.140**	0.135**
Social Presence		0.845	0.382**	0.248**	0.130**
Trust in Members			0.842	0.283**	0.216**
Trust in Vendors				0.846	0.564**
Repurchase Intention					0.911
Average	2.66	2.49	2.67	2.90	3.84
Standard deviation	1.17	1.06	1.00	1.04	1.10

SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

After enabling the continuity of the research, the next step corresponded to the descriptive analysis of latent variables. As seen in Chart 3, the average on the assessment of informational support (2.66) can express the information available on these websites is suitable and serve the needs of the consumers. Moreover, it is noticed a high level in the average consumer concerning confidence in members (2.67) and sellers (2.90). It may indicate that consumers perceive veracity in the information provided by members, and even more so in the case of sellers, which is in line with the positive assessment of informational support.

The variable social presence had the lowest average (2.49), which shows a low sense of warmth and sociability among the buyers of the studied websites. On the other hand, the variable “Intention to Repurchase” had the highest average among the constructs evaluated (3.84), evidencing the predisposition of buyers to continue buying on collective shopping websites.

Model analysis and verification of hypotheses

The quality of fit of the proposed conceptual model was assessed using the following indicators: χ^2 (chi-square), χ^2 / Gl (chi-square by degrees of freedom), NFI (normalized adjustment index), IFI (Corrected Adjustment Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis index), CFI (comparative adjustment index), RFI (Relative adjustment index), RMSEA (root of the mean square error of approximation) and SRMR (standard root mean square root).

Overall, the indices showed a good adjustment of the model, $\chi^2 = 229,486$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2 / GI = 2,765$, $NFI = 0.936$, $IFI = 0.958$, $TLI = 0.947$, $CFI = 0.958$, $RFI = 0.919$, $RMSEA = 0.079$, and $SRMR = 0.058$. The χ^2 / GI presents an acceptable adjustment since values between 2 and 5 indicate a good adjustment. The adjustment indices (NFI , IFI , TLI , CFI , and RFI) are close to the 1.0 perfect fit criterion (Kline, 2011). Finally, the $RMSEA$ and the $SRMR$ present an acceptable adjustment, as they are below 0.8 (Arbuckle, 2012). From these results, it is verified the adequacy of the proposed, and thus, the hypothesis testing stage could be started.

The verification of these hypotheses corresponds to the stage of structural modeling in the MEE procedure proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). For a better visualization of the results, Table 5 presents the hypotheses postulated and the values obtained, in which it is understood that ** $p < 0.01$ and *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5 - Hypothesis test results

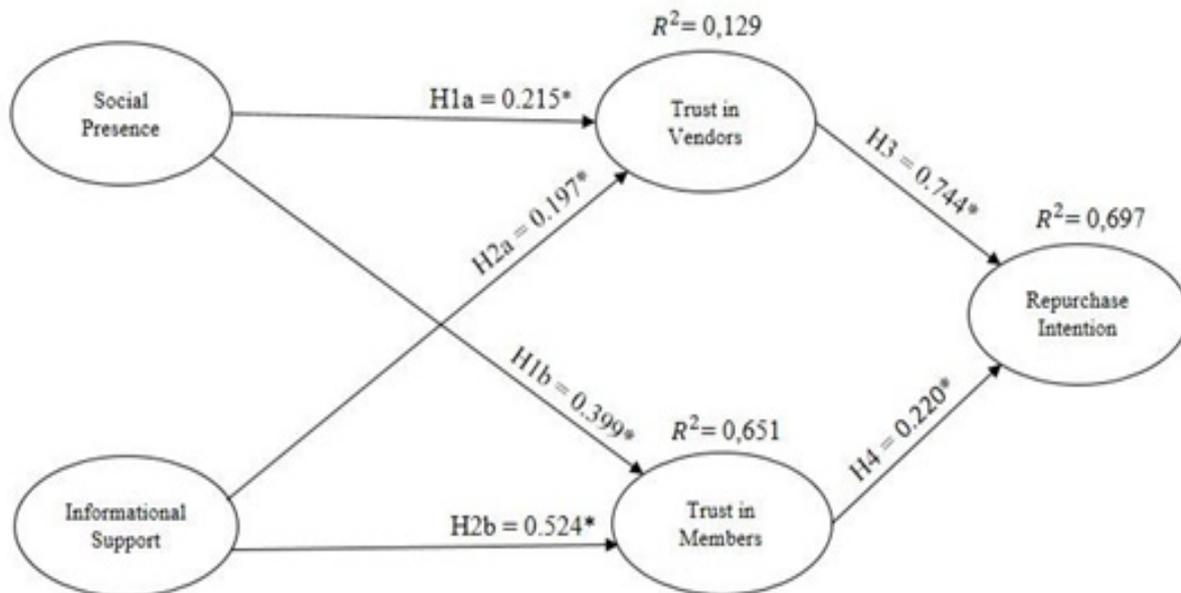
Paths	Path coefficients	z-Values	Hypotheses	Results
PS → CV	0.215	2.802**	H1a	Supported
PS → CM	0.399	6.440***	H1b	Supported
SI → CV	0.197	2.602**	H2a	Supported
SI → CM	0.524	7.823***	H2b	Supported
CV → IR $r^2 = 0,129$	0.744	9.107***	H3	Supported
CM → IR $r^2 = 0,651$	0.220	4.578***	H4	Supported

SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

The sense of social presence significantly influences trust in salespeople ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.01$) and trust in members ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.001$), which supports hypotheses H1a and H1b, respectively. Likewise, informational support has a significant positive influence on confidence in sellers ($\beta = 0.197$, $p < 0.01$) and confidence in members ($\beta = 0.524$, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypotheses H2a and H2b.

Reliability in sellers of social commerce websites had shown to be significantly related to the intention to repurchase ($\beta = 0.744$, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypothesis H3. In turn, trust in members proved to be statistically significant concerning the intention to repurchase on social commerce sites ($\beta = 0.220$, $p < 0.001$), which supported hypothesis H4. It is crucial to mention that the variables (independent and mediating) evidenced in the model, explain approximately 70% of the Repurchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.697$). Figure 1 shows the results of these causal relationships.

Figure 1 - Causal relationship between the constructs of the model



SOURCE: ELABORATED BY THE AUTHORS (2022).

DISCUSSIONS

This research found that the social presence conveyed by websites is positively related to buyers' trust in sellers. It means that websites facilitate consumer interactions, making exchanging information, ratings, and recommendations possible. For example, they convey a greater sense of social presence, positively influencing buyers' trust in sellers. This finding can be explained by the perspective that the social presence of a website reduces the perceived distance between buyers and sellers, favoring the formation of trusting relationships (Pavlou et al., 2007). Therefore, the relevance of the website's social atmosphere in building consumers' trust in sellers in social commerce markets is evident (Jiang et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2016).

Similarly, it was found that the feeling of social presence also influences the credibility of other users. It implies that the social, personal, and warm interactions developed between members of the sites, whether through assistance in solving possible problems, ratings, and reviews or through the information and recommendations provided, give consumers a sense of social presence, leading them to develop trust in other members of social commerce platforms. This finding is relevant because it suggests that contexts with high social presence are associated with trustworthy behavior (Gefen & Straub, 2004; Li, 2019; Zhang et al., 2014).

In addition, the results reinforce the considerations of Zhao et al. (2019), by substantiating the premise that informational support is an important element in building consumer trust in salespeople. Customers are increasingly concerned about assessing the integrity of suppliers before making purchases (Jiang et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2019). The provision of information has also been

shown to affect trust in other members of the site (Chen & Shen, 2015). Thus, it is understood that when consumers obtain assistance, such as information, advice, and guidance from other users who use social commerce sites, they are more likely to form a sense of trust between themselves and about sellers.

The study also found that trust in sellers is positively associated with repurchase intention. This finding reveals that, in social commerce environments, consumers are more likely to repurchase products and services when they trust sellers. Jiang et al. (2019) found that trust in sellers significantly affects purchase intention. Therefore, it seems plausible to infer that buyers who have confidence in sellers' honesty and develop a relationship of reciprocity and trust with them tend to make frequent transactions.

The results also revealed that trust in other members is positively related to the intention to repurchase. In other words, by recognizing the authenticity of other members, consumers are more likely to continue buying. This finding is relevant, as it shows that in addition to trust in sellers, the credibility of other users of social commerce sites is an important aspect in boosting individuals' willingness to make continuous purchases (Chen & Shen, 2015; Cheng et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

This work investigates how social factors inherent to social commerce platforms relate to consumer purchasing behavior. The main results reveal that social presence and informational support are precedents of consumer trust in sellers and other members, providing evidence that reinforces the mediating role of these variables in repurchase intention.

This study found that, in addition to informational support, the feeling of social presence on a social commerce site provides consumers with trust in other members. In this way, it breaks new ground by associating social presence with trust in members, since, as far as we know, the relationship between these constructs has not been examined in previous studies.

It was also possible to demonstrate the effect of trust in other members on repurchase intention, which, as far as we know, had not been evaluated. As a result, this study distinguishes trust into two distinct constructs (trust in salespeople and trust in members). The study suggests that there is a propensity for consumers to make continuous purchases when they trust other members, substantiating the argument that other users represent an important point for analyzing customers' willingness to repurchase.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study contributes to a better understanding of consumer behavior in social commerce, especially in understanding the effects of social presence and informational support in building trust. Furthermore, by distinguishing trust into two distinct categories, the article highlights the importance of considering the role that the credibility of other members can play in the intention to repurchase.

Finally, the empirical evidence makes it possible to expand the understanding of this phenomenon in the Brazilian context, given that the literature in this scenario is still considered to be incipient. To date, research in this field in the country has focused on investigating consumers' intention to

engage in social commerce (ex: Queiros Rios et al., 2019), word-of-mouth and purchase behavior (ex: Mesquita et al., 2021), while neglecting an important factor which is consumers' intention to buy continuously.

With regard to management perspectives, it is recommended that to establish a relationship of trust with consumers, sellers should reinforce the perception of social presence and provide informational support in the online environment. For example, developing an environment that enables consumers to share their shopping experiences, creating a space for customer interaction on social networks, and providing clear information about products and services are all measures that can be implemented to reduce uncertainty and increase buyer confidence. In addition, it is essential to provide consumers with trust in other members, since both types of trust have a significant impact on repurchase intentions.

About the study's limitations, it is worth noting that it is not possible to generalize the findings since the sample used was non-probabilistic by accessibility. By supporting the hypotheses, the results suggest that consumers in the Brazilian context show similar behaviors to those in other countries regarding social commerce. The positive relationship between social presence, informational support, trust in sellers and members, and the influence of these variations on repurchase intention point to patterns of behavior that can transcend geographical borders.

However, caution is required when exploring and comparing the results, considering the cultural and contextual nuances that can influence consumer behavior. Furthermore, the research was limited to consumers who had purchased on group buying sites in the last three months before participating in the survey. It is therefore recommended that further studies extend the target audience to users of other e-commerce sites. In addition, buyers who have made a purchase and remember it could also be potential participants. Finally, future research could consider comparative investigations between different countries and other antecedents and consequents for a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in social commerce.

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APPENDIX A – MEASUREMENT SCALE

ESCALA ORIGINAL EM INGLÊS	ESCALA TRADUZIDA PARA PORTUGUÊS
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERRALS (RAR) (Hajli, 2015)</p> <p>RE1 - I feel my friends' recommendations are generally frank RE2 - I feel my friends' recommendations are generally reliable RE3 - Overall, my friends' recommendations are trustworthy RE4 - I trust my friends on SNSs and share my status, pictures with them</p>	<p>RECOMENDAÇÕES E REFERÊNCIAS (RER)</p> <p>RER1 - Sinto que as recomendações dos outros usuários deste site são geralmente francas. RER2 - Sinto que as recomendações dos outros usuários deste site geralmente são confiáveis RER3 - Em geral, as recomendações dos outros usuários deste site são confiáveis RER4 - Confio nos outros usuários deste site e faço recomendações a eles.</p>
<p>RATINGS AND REVIEWS (RR) (Hajli, 2015)</p> <p>RT1 - I feel my friends rating and reviews are generally frank RT2 - I feel my friends rating and reviews reliable RT3 - Overall, my friends rating and reviews are trustworthy RT4 - I trust my friends on rating and reviews and share my status, pictures with them</p>	<p>CLASSIFICAÇÕES E AVALIAÇÕES (CA)</p> <p>CA1 - Os comentários dos outros usuários deste site são geralmente francos CA2 - Os comentários dos outros usuários deste site são confiáveis . CA3 - No geral, os comentários dos outros usuários deste site são confiáveis CA4 - Confio nos outros usuários deste site, nos seus comentários e comparo minhas avaliações com eles</p>

<p>INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT (IS) (Lal, 2017)</p> <p>ISI - On the XX, some people would offer suggestions when I needed help IS2 - When I encountered a problem, some people on the XX would give me information to help me overcome the problem IS3 - When faced with difficulties, some people on the XX would help me discover the cause and provide me with suggestions</p>	<p>SUPORTE INFORMACIONAL (SI)</p> <p>SII - Neste site, alguns usuários ofereciam sugestões caso eu precisasse de ajuda SI2 - Caso eu encontre um problema, alguns usuários do site forneceriam informações para me ajudar SI3 - Quando preciso obter alguma informação, os usuários do site me auxiliam fornecendo sugestões</p>
<p>SOCIAL PRESENCE (SP) (Lal, 2017)</p> <p>SPI - There is a sense of human contact in Facebook. SP2 - There is a sense of sociability in Facebook. SP3 - There is a sense of human warmth in Facebook. SP4 - There is a sense of human sensitivity in Facebook</p>	<p>PRESEÇA SOCIAL (PS)</p> <p>PSI - Existe uma sensação de contato humano neste site PS2 - Há sociabilidade neste site PS3 - Existe uma sensação de calor humano neste site PS4 - Há uma sensação de sensibilidade humana neste site</p>
<p>TRUST TOWARD COMMUNITY (TTC) (Lal, 2017)</p> <p>TTC1 - The performance of XX always meets my expectations TTC2 - XX can be counted on as a good social networking site TTC3 - XX is a reliable social networking site</p>	<p>CONFIANÇA EM RELAÇÃO À COMUNIDADE (CC)</p> <p>CCI - Este site sempre atende às minhas expectativas CC2 - Eu penso que este é um bom site CC3 - Acredito que este site é confiável</p>
<p>TRUST TOWARD MEMBERS (TTM) (Lal, 2017)</p> <p>TTM1 - Members in XX will always try and help me out if I get into difficulties. TTM2 - Members in XX always keep the promises they make to one another. TTM3 - Members in XX are truthful in dealing with one another.</p>	<p>CONFIANÇA EM RELAÇÃO AOS MEMBROS (CM)</p> <p>CMI - Os usuários do site sempre tentam me ajudar se eu tiver dificuldades CM2 - Os usuários do site sempre cumprem as promessas que fazem um ao outro CM3 - Os usuários do site são sinceros ao lidar uns com os outros.</p>
<p>TRUST IN SELLERS (TS) (Zhao, Huang, & Su, 2019)</p> <p>TS1 - I trust the WeChat business sellers very much TS2 - I am willing to talk to and communicate with the seller when I encounter problems TS3 - My relationship with the seller is very close TS4 - I am very sincere and friendly with seller</p>	<p>CONFIANÇA NOS VENDEDORES (CV)</p> <p>CV1 - Confio muito nos vendedores deste site CV2 - Estou disposto a conversar e me comunicar com os vendedores caso encontre problemas CV3 - Meu relacionamento com os vendedores é muito próximo CV4 - Eu sou muito sincero e amigável com os vendedores</p>

CONTINUOUS PURCHASE INTENTION (CPI) (Zhao, Huang, & Su, 2019)	INTENÇÃO DE RECOMPRA (IR)
CPI1 - I am very likely to continuously buy the product from seller CPI2 - I would consider buying the product from the seller in the future. CPI3 - I intend to buy the product when I need	IR1 - É muito provável que eu compre continuamente o produto do vendedor IR2 - Eu consideraria comprar o produto do vendedor no futuro IR3 - Pretendo comprar o produto quando precisar