

Impact of Social Commerce on Purchase Decision by Customer

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Abstract. Over the years' consumer behaviour towards technology has changed and they have started to become digital savvy which enables them to break social and cultural boundaries continuously. Many recent studies have shown interest to identify how the global market purchasing scenario is changing rapidly with the introduction of e-commerce and social commerce. This research examines the impact of social networking platforms (social commerce) on creating demand and altering customer behaviour. The impact of social commerce is being modelled, and the certain hypothesis has been defined which were tested with a sample size of 327 respondents from India. Research findings indicate that the tested individual variables of trust & confidence, perceived usefulness, user friendliness and word of mouth have significant direct impact on creating demand and altering customer behaviour while using social commerce. However, culture did not have any major impact on demand creation or behaviour modification.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Customer Behaviour, Purchase Decision

1. Introduction

Historically buyers have been influenced by traditional marketing techniques, which included newsletters, billboards, flyers, newspaper print ads. Science progressed, and Televisions came into existence which brought the advertising industry to the living room of every household. This changed forever when Internet became a common name. About 1 Exabyte (1 million terabytes) of data is generated annually worldwide, including 99.997% available only in digital form (Daniel A. Keim, 2015). The retail industry is one of the biggest industries in the world, and as the scope of social media is increasing day by day, companies are trying to find a foundation on which they can base their strategic decisions regarding how to employ social media to engage and influence their customers (Hoffman & Novak, 2012).

The concept of Social Commerce dated to November 2005 when Yahoo developed it to enable online shoppers to obtain reliable advice and support from online experts regarding their transactions. With the advent of fast internet connections, advancement in smartphones, online related technology and payment & delivery options Social Commerce has started growing very rapidly. Social media increased its share of e-commerce referrals nearly by 200% between the first quarters of 2014 and 2015. Facebook accounts for 50% of total social referrals and 64% of total social revenue (Business Insider 2015).

A Review of literature shows that many studies have been conducted on the increased usage of internet in different regions of the world and the growth of retail via e-commerce. However, limited research has been done on the impact of social networking in creating demand for products online without the usage of any brick and mortar stores and altering customer behaviour. The following areas are identified as variables for further research to understand better the Impact of Social Commerce on purchase decision by customers.

- a. Trust and Confidence – Friedrich, T. (2015); Wang, Y., Min, Q., & Han, S. (2016); Noor, A. D., Sulaiman, R., & Bakar, A. A. (2014) ; Qu, Zhe, Wang, Youwei, Wang, Shan, Zhang, Yanhui (2013)
- b. Perceived Usefulness – Zhang, H., Lu, Y., Gupta, S., & Zhao, L. (2014); Jia Shen. (2014); Philipp, Klaus. (2013) ; Shadkam, Mahdi, O'Hara, James. (2013) ; Bilgihan, A., Kandampully, J., & Zhang, T. (2016)
- c. User-Friendly – Featherman, Mauricio S; Hajli, Nick. (Dec 2016) ; Smith, Terry J..(2014); Turban, E., Strauss, J., & Lai, L. (2016); Nawi, N. B. C., Nasir, N. A. B. M., & Al Mamun, A. (2016); Chang, C. C., Hung, S. W., Cheng, M. J., & Wu, C. Y. (2015)
- d. Word of Mouth – See-To, E. W., & Ho, K. K. (2014) ; Zheng, X., Zhu, S., & Lin, Z. (2013) ; Wang, Y., & Yu, C. (2015) ; Yadav, M. S., De Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T., Hoffman, D. L., & Spann, M. (2013) ; Yan, Qiang; Wu, Shuang; Wang, Lingli; Wu, Pengfei; Chen, Hejie; Wei, Guohong. (May 2016)
- e. Culture – Ng, C. S. P. (2013); Senarathna, I., Warren, M., Yeoh, W., & Salzman, S. (2014); Van Slyke, Craig, Hao Lou, Belanger, France, Sridhar, Varadharajan. (2014) ; Chen, Jim Q., Zhang, Ruidong, Lee, Jaeyung. (2013)

This research aims to develop the various hypotheses and prove relationship impacts of individual variables on social commerce and its effect on customer purchase decision.

2. Application of Psychoanalytical theory and a research paper on purchase decision-making process model of online consumers

Psychoanalytical theory by Sigmund Freud is considered the cornerstone of modern psychology. According to these theory instincts, urges, and thoughts are responsible for human behaviour and sales team capitalises on these three factors. The most significant impact is of Instinct. The urge is when a customer is out for shopping and finds a product at lower price than usual or finds an offer on it, he/ she is encouraged to buy the product. While the psychoanalytical theory centres on only psychological factors, purchase decision-making process model analyse the online consumer behaviour at two levels:

- 1) Individual behaviour of consumers;
- 2) Actual aggregated behaviour of consumers in the online market

The questionnaire of this research consisted of questions on their demographics, Web skills, IT expertise and online shopping experience. Participants were selected based on their IT level, who had previous experience of online shopping.

3. Research Question

The objective of this research is to identify and correlate parameters which impact social commerce and in turn impact the purchase decision of its users. To determine these parameters and to statistically prove their correlation with social commerce and purchase decision, we at this moment identify the following research questions.

1. Do User-friendly, online word of mouth; culture, perceived usefulness and trust & confidence contribute in impacting social commerce?
2. Are the impacts mentioned above statistically significant in s-commerce?
3. Do the impacts which are statistically significant also impact the purchase intention?
4. Can these parameters which have the significant impact on social commerce and its effect on purchase decision be adopted by the industry for better business?

4. Review of Literature

The existing literature finds out the driving forces for the Impact of Social Commerce on Customer Purchase decision, which are affected by factors such as Trust and Confidence, Perceived Usefulness, User-Friendly, Word of Mouth and Culture.

4.1 Trust and Confidence

Trust is a decisive factor in influencing customer's purchase decision. Trust and confidence are the two elements which can convert a website visitor into a client. Although the convenience of online shopping is appreciated nowadays, some people may be hesitant to buy from an unfamiliar website or an unfamiliar vendor online. (Brian-Patrick-Eha, 2014). People are more likely to make a purchase from a site if they have both high levels of trust and low levels of perceived risk when using the website (Research at Singapore Management University in 2016). Confidence/ satisfaction is an important antecedent of trust, and it comes from the consistency between expectations and the real perception (Logistics, Informatics and Service Sciences (LISS), 2016 International Conference). Research shows that 72% customers rely on online reviews as much as personal recommendations (Local Consumer Review Survey, 2012).

4.1.1 Website Credibility

Trust on a website is even more valuable given the absence of human interaction and direct observation of the service provider (Ferreira, Daniel Brantes, Mar 2015). Customers accessing websites see the website to be a virtual representation of the brand. The customer trusts the brand, but they still feel uncomfortable with sharing personal information and conducting transactions over a portable device.

4.1.2 Interaction

Human interaction develops a trust based on the tangible and intangible of the communication, but online transactions lack the physical interaction. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides background for understanding the relationship between attitudes, intentions and behaviours based on the premise that human makes decisions based on the information available (Friedrich, T., 2015).

4.1.3 Security

Security is one of the most important sub-variables about the review for trust and confidence. Individual behaviours towards social media platforms depend on the confidence they have about the security protocols of the social media platform (SMPs'). Trust and risk have significant effects on individual behaviour towards SMPs'. Trust has a stronger effect on individual's behaviour toward SMPs' than risk (Wang, Y., Min, Q., & Han, S., 2016).

4.1.4 Data Privacy

Trust and confidence can be gained if data shared online on social platforms is secured and private. Online commerce can get a boost with six factors playing in the right direction. The six factors namely; usefulness, ease of use, security, privacy, website design and e-word of mouth (Noor, A. D., Sulaiman, R., & Bakar, A. A. 2014, November).

4.1.5 Vendor Integrity

The vendor plays an important part to enable e-retailers' in promoting their business and developing social capital. As per (Qu, Zhe; Wang, Youwei; Wang, Shan; Zhang, Yanhui; 2013), Social capital is

defined as “the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Unidirectional friendship ties and bi-directional friendship ties enable e-retailers’ to reveal peer sellers and demonstrate mutual friendship between a focal e-retailer and e-commerce participant respectively.

4.2 Perceived Usefulness

As social media is getting popular, social commerce is also providing new opportunities for interacting and sharing information between people. (International Journal of Information and Education Technology, Vol. 6, No. 3, March 2016). A model called Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed to study the individual’s IT acceptance behaviour. While Perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) are the two factors which determine one's behavioural intention to use technology, perceived usefulness has 50% stronger effect. (Mohammad Chuttur Indiana University, USA). Therefore, consumers adopt Social commerce if they perceive s-Commerce would help them to attain desired performance.

4.2.1 Customer Dynamics

It is safe to say that commerce growth can be directly related to total no. of orders placed and processed. Customers play a direct and important role in increasing this commerce. Especially in social commerce where opinion holds a significant value, Customers perceived usefulness are influenced by perceived interactivity, personalization and sociability features of the social commerce environment (Zhang, H., Lu, Y., Gupta, S., & Zhao, L.; 2014).

4.2.2 Participation Behavior

The transaction, information collection and social mingling can be three broad categories under which online participation can be classified. This play a significant role in enhancing the user experience as social commerce fulfils the social aspects of shopping, and potentially enhances the information collection aspect as well (Jia Shen.; 2014). Though resourceful, participation might not have a direct impact on the transactional aspect of social commerce.

4.2.3 Emotional Need to be Heard

Customer’s emotional need to be heard is an important stepping stone while moving ahead in improving online customer service experience. (Shadkam, Mahdi; O’Hara, James. 2013) In their article describe that using social commerce satisfies the emotional need to be heard and allows one to promote the things they love. Such openness in sharing and gaining from each other's experience adds many users in social networks on a day to day basis and engages them to persuade business.

4.2.4 Technical Attributes of Website

(Philipp, Klaus.; 2013) Suggest that functionality and psychological factors are the two most critical dimensions of online service experience faced by customers. Functionality is a mixed set which indicates the technical attributes of the online vendor, product presence, social presence, communication and interactivity. Psychological attributes consist of the sub-dimension context of familiarity, trust and value for money.

4.2.5 User Experience of Transaction

Transactional experience finds its place in being an important measure because eventually, a buyer will come back online only if the experience while doing the transaction was smooth. The customer might have absolute trust in the services and products provided, but if the experience of a transaction is not smooth, he/ she might not want to visit the website anymore for business. According to Bilgihan, say that subjective norm is a key behavioural antecedent to use social commerce.

4.3 Culture

The technological progress on a daily basis has created a platform to carry out commercial activities quickly and with ever-increasing speed. However, it is imperative to consider the cultural issues. When cultural differences are understood well and conducted successfully, it can lead to creative business operations and permanent competitive advantage. (Steencamp, 2001;30) Culture can be defined as the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits and arts. How important it is to consider cultural differences was noticed when American companies first joined international markets. Misunderstandings can be caused when working with people whose cultural values are different from ours. Hence, after many valuable experiences managers and traders have realised that commerce and traditions are not two separate issues. (3rd International Conference on Information and Financial Engineering IPEDR vol.12 (2011) © (2011) IACSIT Press, Singapore)

4.3.1 Cross Cultural Study

Cultural bias is predominant in s-commerce. As different countries have varied culture, and a variety of values the behaviour of social network users differs in their intentions to purchase on a social commerce site (Ng, C. S. P.; 2013). Region and language also created this divide. The reason is not merely the race or religion of the seller, but the availability of the type of products. It is noticed that certain cultures prefer certain products only because they have always seen people using them around or they are aware of those products only. Social commerce can help create more awareness about different products, but if not placed to the customers in the right manner it can do more worse than good.

4.3.2 Social Interaction

Interaction single handily can create the opportunity for business and has the power to increase business revenue as well. In today's age when we all can interact socially, the world has become a smaller place. However, still, it is noticed that there is a positive correlation between adhocracy culture and adoption of s-commerce and a negative correlation between hierarchical culture and approval of s-commerce (Senarathna, I., Warren, M., Yeoh, W., & Salzman, S.; 2014). With the increase in some people joining social networking sites on a daily basis, it will become imperative to understand the impact of culture for these new incumbents on their use of social commerce.

4.3.3 Adoption Maturity

Some cultures preach rigidity, and some are based on tolerance. It is often observed that adoption to change is very difficult and in today's era where to change the most predominant fact, cultural boundaries have shrunk and customers have become more open. The concern that most have while in adopting social commerce is privacy. It was noted in a study conducted by (Chen, Jim Q.; Zhang, Ruidong; Lee, Jaejung.; 2013), the Korean sample was much more active in using social commerce compared to their United States counterpart because of their concern about privacy.

4.3.4 National Culture

National ideology does influence a majority of its citizens. Social networking provides a virtual platform for groups of people to unite and interact about a certain issue while being at the comfort of their home. This also filters into the usage of electronic and social commerce. The study shows that consumer-oriented electronic commerce is a global phenomenon, but national culture does influence intentions to purchase online (Van Slyke, Craig; Hao Lou; Belanger, France; Sridhar, Varadharajan; 2014).

4.3.5 Positive Disconfirmation

Studying the effect of disconfirmations on electronic/ social commerce can be directly related to customer satisfaction, behaviour and loyalty. Some parts of the world might be culturally more tolerant than the others, which also depicts in their usage of electronic services available online. A positive correlation is observed in Chinese Customers towards tolerance of e-services which have a negative disconfirmation. For customers in the United States it is seen that there is more chance of a person to be loyal and generate preferential word of mouth marketing for only positive disconfirmations (Song, Lei; Weisstein, Fei L.; Anderson, Rolph E.; Swaminathan, Srinivasan; Wu, Gavin Jiayun; Feng, Shan; Tan, Kang; Oct-Dec2016).

4.4 User Friendliness

In today's digital world, when a thousand of businesses are only dependent on the internet for their sales, if a user cannot quickly and easily locate their need on your website, they will skip your website and move to another. The user friendliness of a website (user interface design) plays a vital role in bringing high volume web traffic (Vanessa Hogg 27/01/2017 In Design Services). In general terms, user friendly website means easy readability and easy navigation. Any site which is too complex or difficult to use will switch off the users resulting in the loss of web traffic. User friendly site is the ultimate goal when designing a website

4.4.1 Free of Effort

Transactions online can be difficult because of the complexities in performing the transaction etc. Easier to use systems can help consumers to use the systems in a user-friendly manner. (Featherman, Mauricio S; Hajli, Nick.; Dec 2016) suggest that perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort.

4.4.2 Usability by Aging Population

Internet was used as early as in 1960 by US defence forces. It was after 20 years, in the early 1980s' when it transformed to a stage where the general public was also able to take its benefits globally. Only in the 1990s' the Internet usage started to increase exponentially on a global scale. In the 21st Century Internet and the technology it supports have grown multi-fold and the ageing population is not so conversant with the tool as well as the ever-developing technology. If a website is easily usable by senior's (ageing citizens), it is seen that this usability positively and significantly impacts the perceived ease of use of commerce activities on the internet (Smith, Terry J.; 2014).

4.4.3 Social Tools

Use of internet and transactions via e-commerce have risen greatly in the past decade after 2007. There have been many social networking websites, but none have seen success equally measured to

the one that Facebook has seen since it has opened to public use after 2006. Today it leads the way in owning credit for fuelling e-commerce transactions via social networking sites. Social media tools enhance the user friendliness in electronic transactions making them seem easy and doable (Turban, E., Strauss, J., & Lai, L.; 2016).

4.4.4 Ease of use of Social Media by Young Entrepreneurs

Silicon Valley is the global epicentre for young entrepreneurs who wish to start a company and try their luck in becoming Microsoft, Apple, Facebook, etc. A large number of technology/ internet related start-ups see the light every year. These new born companies use social media as a way to reach out to prospective users. As per (Nawi, N. B. C., Nasir, N. A. B. M., & Al Mamun, A.; 2016) the key reason why entrepreneurs use social media as a business platform to operate their business is that social media can be easily used to spread information in the quickest way possible with the least efforts and resources involved.

4.4.5 Ease of Locating Products

A store which places products in the most logical order and place similar items collectively seems user-friendly as a customer does not have to walk pass many isles in the supermarket to buy cheese and yoghurt. Similarly, on an online portal, it is very important to place the products on the website in a manner that it is easy. All items cannot be placed on one screen which appears on the front, so it is also important to create easy navigation path to the products. A Positive reaction has been recorded in a study by (Chang, C. C., Hung, S. W., Cheng, M. J., & Wu, C. Y.; 2015) to visual appeal and navigational structure of the websites. Ease of locating products and ease of navigation is very important to make a user-friendly portal.

4.5 Word of Mouth

Social networking sites not only allows customers to search for more trusted product information but and at the same time; allows them to provide their own experience with the products. (Abdallah Q. Bataineh : January 26, 2015) In s-commerce, online product reviews significantly influence the 13 purchase decisions of buyers and the marketing strategies employed by vendors (Zheng, X., Zhu, S., & Lin, Z. (2013). Capturing the essence of word-of- mouth for social commerce: Assessing the quality of online e-commerce reviews by a semi-supervised approach. *Decision Support Systems*, 56, 211-222.) Out of 28,000 Internet respondents in 56 countries, 92 percent of consumers say they trust recommendations from friends and family above all other forms of advertising (By Paul Chaney In *Social Commerce* April 16, 2012). Sometimes due to the abundance of reviews, customers/ potential customers are not able to differentiate between useful and useless reviews.

4.5.1 Review Mining

Social commerce is picking up so fast because of this quality of review mining attached to the system. The credibility of reviewers is judged based on their social media profiles. (Zheng, X., Zhu, S., & Lin, Z.; 2013) Says abundance of online reviews and their uneven quality the benefits of the online review system. Reviewer's social features play an important role in classifying better results. Classification can also be done based on customer purchase habits and product type.

4.5.2 Direct Impact on Purchase Intention

Value co-creation is positively impacted when a consumer trusts on a product. Word of mouth for social media reference is called e-word of mouth (e-wom). There is a direct impact on purchase

intention with e-wom (See-To, E. W., & Ho, K. K.; 2014). Messages/ reviews across social networking sites impact customer trust on products. Also, message source moderates the impact of e-wom. An intention to purchase is increasing with a positive e-wom from a credible source. For ex. Web portal amazon.com is world-wide accepted norm for reviews on checking out “review and prices” for the product you want to purchase.

4.5.3 Social Interaction

Reviewing a product socially is the most common way of social interaction on social media websites. Also, friends/ acquaintances on social media platforms ask each other about their experience for a product of seller. A study by (Wang, Y., & Yu, C.; 2015) shows that social interaction activities embedded in social commerce websites influence the intention to purchase. Also, intention to purchase can be increased by observing and learning from the customer's behaviours and search patterns. Positive e-word of mouth content significantly increases the intention to purchase a product.

4.5.4 Adoption Process of S-Commerce

To adopt any process of a tool, it is imperative that the tool/ technology must be empirically proved. The empirical analysis shows that e-word of mouth's usefulness and credibility positively influences the adoption of e-wom for e-commerce but negatively influences for social media word of mouth Yan, Qiang; Wu, Shuang; Wang, Lingli; Wu, Pengfei; Chen, Hejie; Wei, Guohong.; May 2016).

4.5.5 Market Potential

The most fundamental pillars of social commerce can be defined as social media and commercial activities online. A study by (Yadav, M. S., De Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T., Hoffman, D. L., & Spann, M.; 2013) shows that social commerce refers to exchange related activities that occur in, or are influenced by, an individual's social network in computer mediated social environments. Here the activities correspond to the need recognition, pre-purchase, purchase and post purchase stages of a focal exchange.

The below table shows the summary of indicators that were made after the research of connected pieces.

Sl. No.	Indicators	Reference Literature	Independent Variables
1	Website Credibility	Ferreira, Daniel Brantes, (Mar 2015)	Trust and Confidence
2	Interaction	Friedrich, T., (2015)	
3	Security	Wang, Y., Min, Q., & Han, S., (2016)	
4	Data Privacy	Noor, A. D., Sulaiman, R., & Bakar, A. A. (2014, November)	
5	Vendor Integrity	Qu, Zhe; Wang, Youwei; Wang, Shan; Zhang, Yanhui; (2013)	
6	Cross cultural study	Ng, C. S. P. (2013)	Culture
7	Social interaction	Senarathna, I., Warren, M., Yeoh, W., & Salzman, S.; (2014)	
8	Adoption maturity	Chen, Jim Q.; Zhang, Ruidong; Lee, Jaejung. (2013)	
9	National culture	Van Slyke, Craig; Hao Lou; Belanger, France; Sridhar, Varadharajan (2014)	
10	Positive	Song, Lei; Weisstein, Fei L.; Anderson, Rolph	

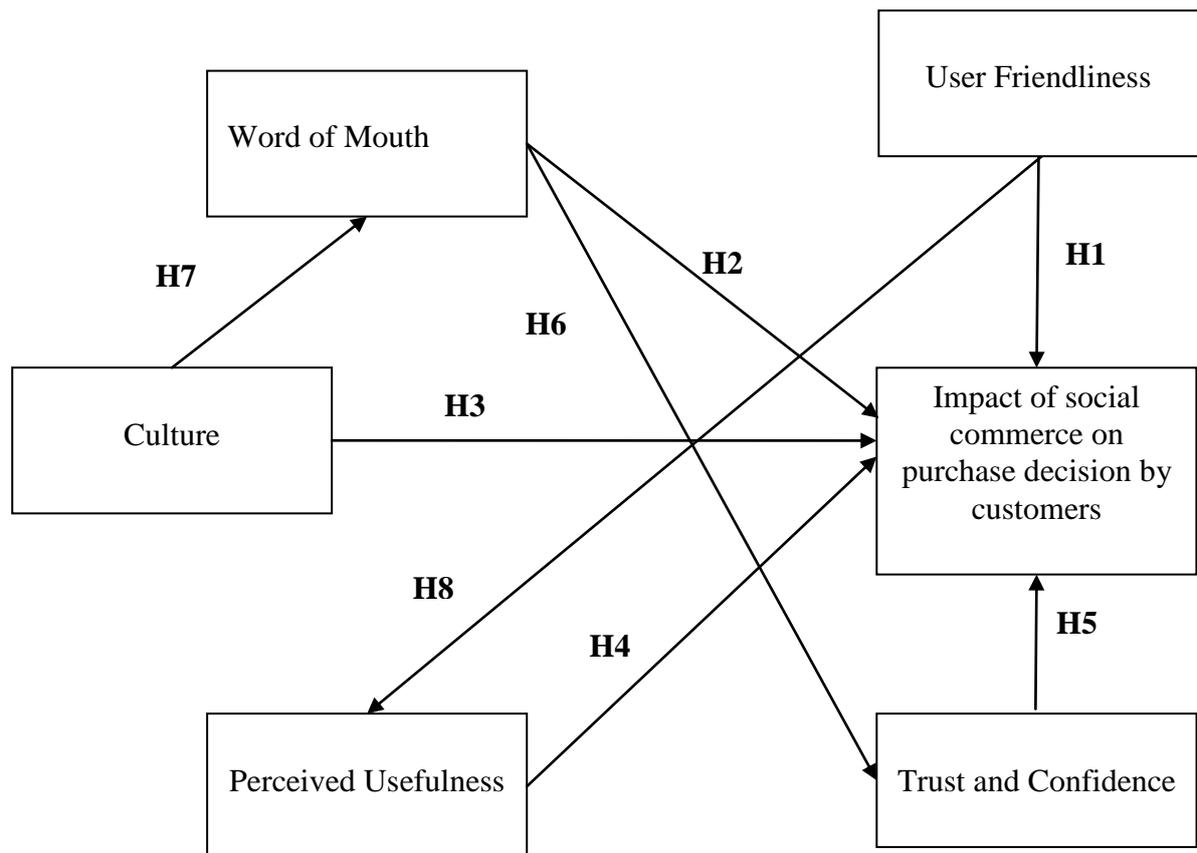
	Disconfirmation	E.; Swaminathan, Srinivasan; Wu, Gavin Jiayun; Feng, Shan; Tan, Kang (Oct-Dec2016)	
11	Customer Dynamics	Zhang, H., Lu, Y., Gupta, S., & Zhao, L.; (2014)	Perceived Usefulness
12	Participation Behaviour	Jia Shen. (2014)	
13	Emotional need to be heard	Shadkam, Mahdi; O’Hara, James.; (2013)	
14	Technical attributes of website	Philipp, Klaus. (2013)	
15	User experience of transaction	Bilgihan, A., Kandampully, J., & Zhang, T. (2016)	
16	Free of effort	Featherman, Mauricio S; Hajli, Nick. (Dec 2016)	User Friendly
17	Usability by ageing population	Smith, Terry J. (2014)	
18	Social Tools	Turban, E., Strauss, J., & Lai, L. (2016)	
19	Ease of use of social media by young entrepreneurs	Nawi, N. B. C., Nasir, N. A. B. M., & Al Mamun, A. (2016)	
20	Ease of locating products	Chang, C. C., Hung, S. W., Cheng, M. J., & Wu, C. Y. (2015)	Word of Mouth
21	Review mining	Zheng, X., Zhu, S., & Lin, Z. (2013)	
22	Direct impact on purchase intention	See-To, E. W., & Ho, K. K. (2014)	
23	Social Interaction	Wang, Y., & Yu, C. (2015)	
24	Adoption process of s-commerce	Yan, Qiang; Wu, Shuang; Wang, Lingli; Wu, Pengfei; Chen, Hejie; Wei, Guohong. (May 2016)	Social commerce in customer purchase decision
25	Market potential	Yadav, M. S., De Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T., Hoffman, D. L., & Spann, M. (2013)	
26	Increased usage of social commerce	Hamari, J., & Koivisto, J. (2015). “Working out for likes”: An empirical study on social influence in exercise gamification. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 50, 333-347.	
27	Value for money	Zheng, X., Lee, M., & Cheung, C. (2017). Examining e-loyalty towards online shopping platforms: the role of coupon proneness and value consciousness. <i>Internet Research</i> , 27(3).	
28	More s commerce adoption	Hajli, M. (2013). A research framework for social commerce adoption. <i>Information Management & Computer Security</i> , 21(3), 144-154.	
29	Fulfilment of emotional need	Hu, T., Kettinger, W. J., & Poston, R. S. (2015). The effect of online social value on satisfaction and continued use of social media. <i>European Journal of Information Systems</i> , 24(4), 391-410.	

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Table I: Proposed Indicators and Independent Variables

5. Research Methodology

The qualitative and quantitative research was conducted, and understandings were captured using primary and secondary data. Surveys were conducted to gather primary data and literature review was done to obtain secondary data. The secondary data was compiled by reviewing 47 academic research papers/ journals all written on or after the year 2013. The timeline is important as recent research papers/ journals would give more relevant data for the deeper understanding of the gaps to be identified and researched upon in this paper. With the help of extensive literature review, future research scope of research for the independent variable, impact of social commerce on purchase decision by customers was explained. Primary data was collected via an online questionnaire whose sample population was aged 21yrs to 49yrs. Location: India. The respondents have an understanding of the concept of social commerce and have indulged in trade activity via social networking sites directly or indirectly.



H- Hypothesis

Figure 1: Research Framework

5.1 Formulation of Hypothesis

The dependent and independent variable are depicted in the diagram above Fig:1. Based on the above diagram a total of 9 hypotheses has been defined for further study using Structural Equation Modelling.

The list of hypotheses is enumerated below:

H1: Online portal is being user-friendly will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers

H2: Online Word of mouth will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers

H3: Cultural background will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers

H4: Increased Perceived Usefulness of user will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers

H5: Increased Trust and Confidence of user will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers

H6: Online Word of mouth will have positive impact of Trust and Confidence

H7: Cultural background will have positive impact on online word of mouth

H8: Online portal is being User-Friendly will show positive impact on Perceived Usefulness for user

H9: Cultural background will show positive impact on Trust and Confidence

5.2 Data Collection

For a collection of secondary data, the questionnaire was developed based on the identified dependent variables and their sub-variables. All questions in the questionnaire were diligently reviewed and are backed by research findings in the literature review.

The prepared questionnaire was then distributed to a sample of 30 respondents for testing and gathering inputs on the questions, format, scale used for data collection and any other inputs. The feedback resulted in further refinement of the questionnaire, and the final survey form included 23 questions having five measures of the dependent variable. The survey form had three to five questions to quantify the impact of the independent variable in the dependent variable. A Likert scale (5-point scale) was used to measure responses from 1 to 5 where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement to the question asked. The developed questionnaire was distributed to respondents by email, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, staying in India. Care was taken to see that the respondents have been directly or indirectly associated with performing a commercial activity over a social networking site (social commerce).

5.2.1 Profile of respondents

All respondents were users of smart devices. Respondents were categorised by age and sex. For the respondents to understand the scenario of research, a small abstract was shared with the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 950 respondents out of which 560 responded. Amongst this, the responses from 327 respondents were used for the final quantitative research.

Table II is demonstrating the profile of respondents, whose survey was collected.

CHARACTERISTIC	MEASURE	FREQUENCY/NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
SEX	Male	275	84.10%
	Female	52	15.90%
AGE	21 – 29 Years	101	30.88%
	30 – 39 Years	193	59.02%

	40 – 49 Years	33	10.10%
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Table II: Characteristics of Respondents

5.3 Data Analysis

The data collected for primary research was calculated using ADANCO statistical package. This is an equation modelling tool which models' equations that are variance-based postulating hypotheses. This creates a research framework (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). The approach used is composite modelling approach to validate hypotheses. This is advantageous as it does not impose normality conditions on the data (Calantone, 2014; Sinkovics, 2009). It consisted of 2 steps: 1st step: - Estimate structural model through modelling.

2nd step: - Determination of best model fit via measuring reliability and validity

Regression and Path Analysis, both of them, follow linear statistical models.

Path Analysis is an extremely springy methodology. Path Analysis variables can be independent and dependent, whereas Regression Analysis variables are either independent or dependent.

For this research five dependent variables were chosen from the literature review, for which in-turn 5/6 sub-variables were also highlighted in the literature review. These sub-variables played an elemental part in formalising the questions to be asked in the survey. Data collected in the survey was then analysed using SEM and sub-variables with above 0.5 path coefficient value was taken into consideration.

5.4 Reliability

Cronbach’s alpha value is used for tau-equivalent reliability. Standard reliability can be assumed for values of Cronbach’s alpha greater than 0.6 and less than 1. Below are the statistics for each construct in Table III.

Statistics for each construct in Table III.

Construct	R ²	Jöreskog’s Rho (ρ _c)	Cronbach’s Alpha (α)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Impact of Social Commerce on Purchase Decision by Customer	0.704	0.8685	0.7998	0.6243
Trust and Confidence		0.8585	0.7864	0.6057
Perceived Usefulness		0.8933	0.8406	0.6772
Culture		0.7863	0.6031	0.5511
Word of Mouth		0.8973	0.8484	0.6873
User Friendly		0.8582	0.7794	0.6046

Table III: Complete Reliability of Constructs

5.5 Convergent Validity

AVE value = 0.5 or > 0.5 is the recognised threshold value (Chin, 1998). As shown below, 0.5511 is the minimum AVE value. Therefore, requirements of the research model are fulfilled.

Construct	AVE
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Impact of Social Commerce on Purchase Decision by Customer	0.6243
Trust and Confidence	0.6057
Perceived Usefulness	0.6772
Culture	0.5511
Word of Mouth	0.6873
User Friendly	0.6046

Table IV: Convergent Validity

5.6 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity between constructs also needs to be measured. Observed by the AVE of other constructs which should be < than the square root of the AVE of a particular construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Construct	Impact of Social Commerce on Purchase Decision by Customer	Trust and Confidence	Perceived Usefulness	Culture	Word of Mouth	User Friendly
Impact of Social Commerce on Purchase Decision by Customer	0.6243					
Trust and Confidence	0.4641	0.6057				
Perceived Usefulness	0.3855	0.2474	0.6772			
Culture	0.3085	0.2184	0.2273	0.5511		
Word of Mouth	0.5588	0.3423	0.2802	0.3765	0.6873	
User Friendly	0.5560	0.4228	0.4185	0.2915	0.5137	0.6046

Table V: Discriminant Validity
Squared Correlations; AVE diagonal

5.7 Significance Levels

Nine hypotheses were formed in this research, and we verified their reliability by comparing with the recorded t-values of the independent variables on the dependent variables, Table VII (next page). Significance levels were accorded as per Table VI below.

	Significance	t-value
Level of Significance	p<0.1	1.65
	p<0.05	1.96
	p<0.01	2.59

Table VI: Significance Levels

5.8 SEM Model

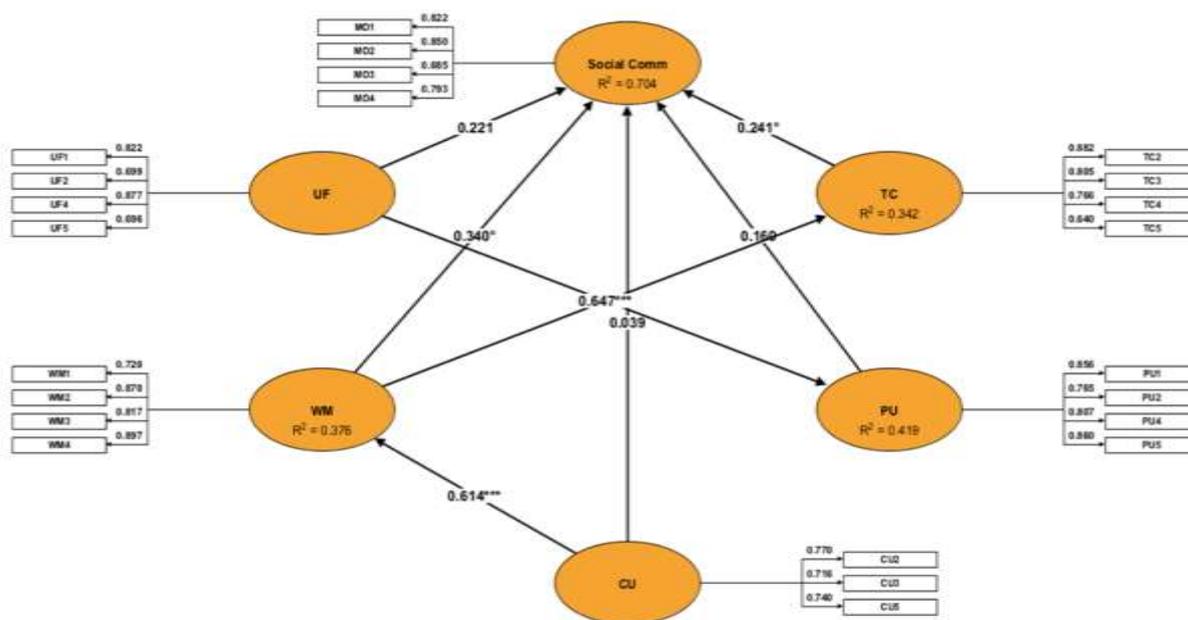


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of the model

5.9 Hypothesis Results

H	Effect	Original Coefficient	Standard Bootstrap Results					Percentile Bootstrap Quantiles				Supported
			Mean Value	Standard Error	t-value	p-value (2-Sided)	p-value (1-Sided)	0.5%	2.5%	97.5%	99.5%	
H1	UF -> SC	0.3245	0.3370	0.2076	1.5629	0.1184	0.0592	-0.5613	-0.1644	0.6599	0.7241	No
H2	WM -> SC	0.4808	0.4810	0.2013	2.3886	0.0171	0.0085	-0.0302	0.1053	0.9189	1.3255	Yes
H3	CU -> SC	0.3336	0.3449	0.1750	1.9056	0.0570	0.0285	-0.1292	-0.0006	0.6854	0.9368	Yes
H4	PU -> SC	0.1596	0.1812	0.1851	0.8624	0.3887	0.1943	-0.3476	-0.1848	0.5733	0.7141	No
H5	TC -> SC	0.2412	0.2071	0.1408	1.7129	0.0870	0.0435	-0.2285	-0.0944	0.4552	0.5047	Yes
H6	WM -> TC	0.5851	0.6071	0.1010	5.7922	0.0000	0.0000	0.2468	0.3805	0.7698	0.7965	Yes
H7	CU -> WM	0.6136	0.6243	0.1022	6.0054	0.0000	0.0000	0.3166	0.4069	0.7966	0.8283	Yes
H8	UF -> PU	0.6469	0.6762	0.1008	6.4200	0.0000	0.0000	0.3016	0.4361	0.8363	0.8799	Yes
H9	CU -> TC	0.3590	0.3801	0.0928	3.8680	0.0001	0.0001	0.1053	0.1976	0.5623	0.6037	Yes

Table VII: Results of the Hypothesis Testing

6. Research Findings

7/9 hypotheses occupied the research gap. The path coefficients depicting strong and weak relationships between dependent and independent variables for accepted and rejected hypotheses respectively are described in detail below.

We identified nine hypotheses; seven out of nine hypotheses have shown a high level of significance. The Hypotheses H4 Increased Perceived Usefulness of user will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers is rejected. Below is an explanation on the postulated hypothesis.

The first hypothesis, H1, states – Online portal is being user-friendly will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers. Poor influence is shown (t-value = 1.5629, CI > 90%); accordingly, H1 ($\beta = 0.3245$, $p > 0.1$) is rejected. This indicates that there is no major impact of Online Portals being user-friendly on showing a positive impact of social commerce on purchase decision by a customer. However, (Smith, Terry J.; 2014) indicates that online portal user friendliness plays a vital role in the leaving a positive impact on customer purchase decision. In our study, it has been empirically proved, and this study fills the research gap.

The second hypothesis, H2, states - Online Word of mouth will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers. It shows a moderately strong significance (t-value = 2.3886, CI > 95%); thus. H2 ($\beta = 0.4808$, $p < 0.05$) is believed. This indicates that there is moderate significance between Online Word of Mouth having a positive impact on social commerce on

purchase decision by a customer. (Chen, Hejie; Wei, Guohong.; May 2016) Shows that online word of mouth usefulness and credibility positively influence the adoption of e-commerce electronic word of mouth (EC-eWOM), but negatively influence that of social media electronic word of mouth (SM-eWOM). Through our survey, we have identified that Online Word of mouth has a positive effect of s-commerce on customer purchase decision, thus filling the gap in previous research.

The third hypothesis, H3, states - Cultural background will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers. It shows some positive significance (t-value = 1.9056, CI > 90%), hence, H3 ($\beta = 0.3336$, $p < 0.1$) is believed. This indicates there is some sign to culture having a positive impact on social commerce on purchase decision by a customer. (Sridhar, Varadharajan.; 2014) Shows that although Consumer-oriented electronic commerce is a global phenomenon, national culture does influence intentions to purchase online, but it does not study the effect of a cultural factor on the relationship between social interaction and purchase intention in social commerce. In our research, we have studied this and found that a user's cultural background has a positive impact of s-commerce on customer purchase decision.

The fourth hypothesis, H4, states – Increased Perceived Usefulness of user will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers. It shows a weak influence (t-value = 0.8624, CI < 90%) hence, H4 ($\beta = 0.1596$, $p > 0.1$) is rejected. This indicates that there is no significance of increased perceived usefulness of user on an impact of social commerce on purchase decision by a customer. Business and Management Journal says that usefulness is an individual perception that using the internet as shopping media will increase their shopping performance. It does not have a significant influence on intention to shop online. Our research empirically proved same.

The fifth hypothesis, H5, states - Increased Trust and Confidence of user will show positive Impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers. It shows some positive significance (t-value = 1.7129, CI > 90%), hence, H5 ($\beta = 0.2412$, $p < 0.1$) is recognized. This indicates that there is some sign of trust and confidence showing a positive impact of social commerce on purchase decision by the customer. (Friedrich, T.;2015) Suggests that trust directly affects purchase decision and behaviour. Our research adds on to previous research also significantly proving that trust not only has a positive impact on a customer's purchase decision and behaviour but also with increased trust there is a positive impact of social commerce on purchase decisions by customers.

The sixth hypothesis, H6, states - Online Word of mouth will have a positive impact of Trust and Confidence. A very strong significance is shown with (t-value = 5.7922, CI > 99%). H6 ($\beta = 0.5851$, $p < 0.01$) is accepted. This indicates that a positive word of mouth review online will strongly impact the trust and confidence factor for that product online. (Kim, S., & Park, H.; 2013) Suggests that reputation, size, information quality, transaction safety, communication, economic feasibility, and word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals, that is, the characteristics of s-commerce influencing consumers' trust in s-commerce. The same has been empirically proved by our research.

The seventh hypothesis, H7, states - Cultural background will have a positive impact on online word of mouth. H7 is highly significant (t-value = 6.0054, CI > 99%) and H7 ($\beta = 0.6136$, $p < 0.01$) is accepted. This indicates that being of similar cultural backgrounds will have a positive impact on online word of mouth. (Zheng, X., Zhu, S., & Lin, Z.; 2013) Suggest that the social features of reviewers are important in deriving better classification results while review mining. Our research fills that gap and significantly proves that not only social features but cultural background also has a positive impact on online reviews registered by users (online word of mouth).

The eighth hypothesis, H8, states - Online portal is being User Friendly will show a positive impact on Perceived Usefulness for the user. H8 is highly significant (t-value = 6.4200, CI > 99%). and H8 ($\beta = 0.6469$, $p < 0.01$) is supported. This indicates that when a user is using an online platform which is user friendly, he/ she will have a high correlation to the feeling of perceived usefulness. (Smith, Terry J.; 2014) Quantitatively proved that for seniors going online the user friendliness of the online portal had direct positive impact on the perceived usefulness by the seniors. Our research fills that gap and indicates that also for young and middle-aged adults the scenario remains the same.

The ninth hypothesis, H9, states - Cultural background will show a positive impact on Trust and Confidence. H9 is very significant (t-value = 3.8680, CI > 99%). H9 ($\beta = 0.3590$, $p < 0.01$) is supported. This indicates that users from similar cultural background show a positive impact on the trust and confidence. (Ng, C. S. P.;2013) Suggest that there might not be equivalence in user's intention to purchase via social networking sites considering users from different counties have varied inherent values and cultures. Our research fills the gap by proving significance between cultural background and trust building over purchase via social networking sites. The earlier research does not indicate the effect of the cultural factor on creating trust in a social networking community.

Seven out of nine hypotheses postulated are acceptable empirically and show moderate to very high significance. The same can also be vetted using bootstrapped structural equation modelling which is represented in the Figure 7 below, and they show a strong relation.

7. Contributions

The aim of this research is to prove relationships and impacts of individual variables on social commerce and its effect on customer purchase decision. With this research, we have significantly bridged the gaps of previous research done related to social commerce and factors that affect customer purchase decisions.

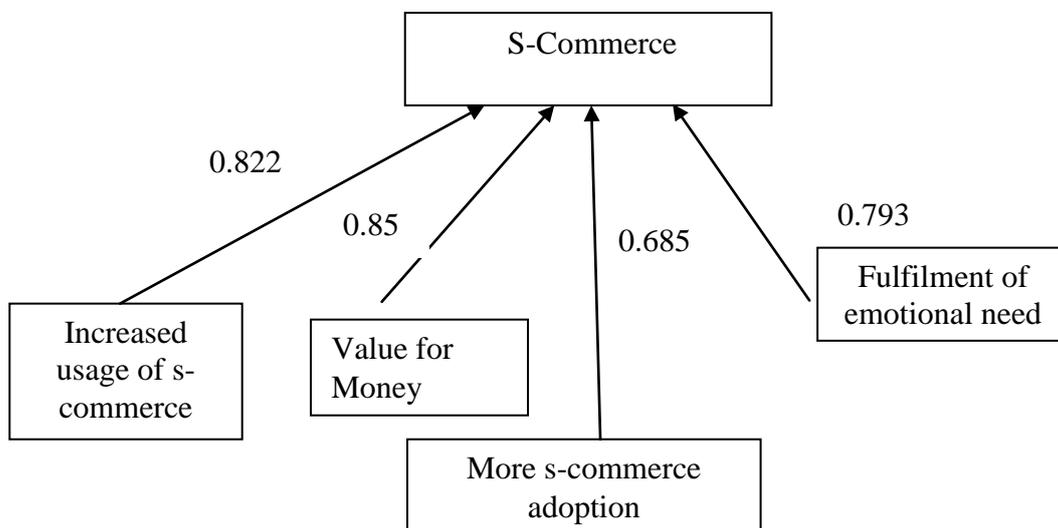


Figure 3: Social Commerce and their associated path coefficients

In the above SEM model, the path coefficients for individual sub-variables, namely Increased usage of S-commerce (0.882) and Value for money (0.850) are above 0.8, which signifies a strong effect on the dependent variable. Whereas, path coefficients for Fulfilment of emotional need (0.793) and More S-Commerce Adoption (0.685) lies in ranges between 0.5 and 0.8 and signifies a moderate effect on the dependent variable.

The answers to the four research questions are given below.

Firstly, this study shows that the variables online word of mouth, culture and trust & confidence show direct and significant levels of contribution in impacting social commerce. The variables perceived usefulness and user friendly does no impact the social commerce growth significantly.

Secondly, it has been proved that the variables online word of mouth, culture and trust & confidence are statistically significant.

Thirdly, in our findings we clearly see that there is clear and substantial impact of these variables on the purchase intention of the customers.

And finally, with the statistical results our research shows that these variables can be adopted by the industry and will show immense improvement in business.

Comparative study between our paper and cross-sector analysis done at Manchester Business School (2013)			
A purchase decision-making process model of online consumers and its influential factor a cross-sector analysis	E-services	Service quality	Trust and risk
Impact of social commerce on purchase decision by customer	User friendly	Perceived usefulness	Trust and confidence

Table VIII – Comparative Study

The research done at Manchester Business School identifies three variables, namely; E-services, Service Quality and Trust and Risk which effect the purchase decision making process model of online consumers. Comparatively, in our research, we have identified the significance of variables such as; User Friendly, Perceived Usefulness and Trust and confidence showing the impact of social commerce on purchase decision by the customer.

However, our research deals with two more very important and significant parameters, namely; Culture, Online Word of mouth. The earlier research does not talk about the influence of culture and online word of mouth on purchase intention via social commerce, and thus our research bridges the gap.

8. Implications

This research shows there is a great vantage point for Social Commerce website shortly. Users today have shifted greatly to Social Commerce because of its attributes such as Online word of mouth, cultural background similarity and trust and confidence. Moving ahead social commerce should take advantage greatly from the facts statistically proved in this research; cultural background similarity imbibes great trust and confidence. Social commerce websites are can develop such portals which make users believe connected as one virtual family sharing similar culture over the internet, then they can expect users to have trust and confidence in their portal. Similarly, this research also emphasises on the implication of online word of mouth on social commerce and its effect on purchase intention. Online word of mouth if portrayed correctly on social commerce platforms can help the platforms by positively impacting the intention to purchase.

9. Limitations and Future Research

The research context could be limited as data collected in only from respondents in India. It cannot be generalised for the world over view. Also, the research does identify parameters of social and human psychological importance, but does not identify the correlation of these parameters with purchasing power. Resource availability with individuals, which enables them to buy products, might show changes in significance as depicted in this paper when studied in correlation.

10. Conclusion

The impact of social commerce on purchase intention is positively correlated with online word of mouth, cultural background and trust & confidence. Whereas, there is no significant correlation of impact of social commerce on purchase intention with online portals being user-friendly or users having perceived usefulness while using online portals. Trust and confidence on online portals seem to be one of the most important parameters and also the relationship that trust and confidence share with the cultural background is important to note. New companies with service oriented business model can gain from our research and base their business model on this factor. The aim of this study was to identify individual variables and prove their relationships and impacts on social commerce and its effects on purchase intention. Our study uniquely concludes by statistically measuring parameters such as; Word of mouth, culture and Trust to have an impact directly on the purchase decision by customer.

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