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# The role of platform interactivity in enhancing trust: unlocking purchase intentions for skincare products on Facebook

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## ABSTRACT

Social commerce, which integrates social media with e-commerce, has transformed how consumers engage with brands and make purchasing decisions. In Sri Lanka, the skincare product market on Facebook has seen significant growth, emphasizing the need to understand the factors influencing consumer purchase intention. This study explores how social media, perceived usefulness and platform interactivity influence trust in the seller and, in turn, affect social commerce purchase intention. Using purposive sampling, the study targeted active Facebook users who purchase skincare products. An online questionnaire was administered to 384 such users. Using structural equation modelling, the study found that perceived usefulness and platform interactivity significantly enhance trust in sellers. Additionally, trust in the seller plays a mediating role between these factors and purchase intention. The study offers theoretical contributions by extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) into a high-involvement product context. The findings highlight that a more interactive and engaging platform experience increases consumer confidence in online sellers, ultimately encouraging purchase behavior. Social media platforms like Facebook not only provide a space for product promotion but also serve as trust-building environments through user engagement and perceived usefulness. This study finds that useful and interactive Facebook posts build trust and lead to more skincare product purchases. Brands should post better content to earn trust and boost sales. For businesses, especially skincare brands operating in social commerce environments, this study offers practical insights into developing strategies focused on enhancing platform interactivity and trust to drive consumer engagement and intention to purchase.

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## Introduction

A higher rise in platform interactivity on social media contributes to greater perceived usefulness, leading to improved consumer confidence and purchase likelihood in social commerce (Asanprakit & Kraiwanit, 2023). According to Statista (2024), by late 2024, 5.2 billion people making up 68.3% of the global population, used social media platforms emphasizing the broad impact of digital engagement worldwide. Presently, social media has been a trend where most people have at least one social media application on their smartphones (O'Regan, 2016). This specifies that consumers are increasingly transforming to social media platforms for their day-to-day activities and communications (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Originally conceived as a platform for sharing information, social media has become a dynamic sales and marketing enterprise, further connecting businesses and consumers, creating a context that drives the growth of the marketing industry (Rodriguez et al., 2012). According to Wang and Zhang (2012), social media has evolved into a dynamic gateway for social commerce, enabling users to discover and explore products and services easily, and transforming the way they shop and interact with the brands they love. The connection between social media platforms and their interaction with consumer

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purchase intentions has emerged as a powerful trend, playing a key role in purchasing decisions in an ever-evolving landscape of dynamic content.

According to Kemp (2024), nowadays, people are connected to various social media platforms, but Facebook remains the most popular with 3.2 billion active users. In addition to its role as a communication tool, Facebook enables businesses to connect directly with their customers. This level of platform interaction helps build trust and strengthens user engagement with brands and content (Lim & Rasul, 2022). This widespread user community highlights the growing connection with Facebook, while also demonstrating its power today as a digital marketing tool that allows businesses to reach and interact with a large audience smoothly (Khanom, 2023).

Contrasted to other industries in Sri Lanka, the skincare market has seen a significant shift, with consumers increasingly turning to social media platforms to purchase skincare products. This transformation is happening as skincare marketers today embrace social media as a marketing channel. As a result, the skincare market has become highly competitive, mirroring the dynamics of other industries in the digital space (Hettiarachchi et al., 2019).

With the increasing use of social commerce platforms such as Facebook, platform interactions play a crucial role in shaping consumer engagement and decision-making (Jothi & Gaffoor, 2017). According to Xiong et al. (2021) nowadays, in the skincare industry, where product quality and authenticity are essential, consumers rely on interactive features such as reviews, comments and direct communication with sellers to assess product credibility. Furthermore, the perceived usefulness of product information significantly influences purchase decisions, as consumers seek reliable and relevant information before committing to a purchase (Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). Therefore, trust in sellers further influences consumer trust and their willingness to engage in transactions (Hong & Cho, 2011; Wang et al., 2022). Despite the growing importance of these factors, their combined impact on social commerce purchase intention in Sri Lanka has yet to be explored in a single framework due to limited research.

Previous research has examined the role of trust in sellers and perceived usefulness in social commerce, particularly their influence on consumer decision making. Hence, trust in online sellers significantly affects consumers' willingness to engage in e-commerce, with factors such as familiarity, reputation and prior experience playing key roles (Gefen, 2000). Several prior studies have utilized mixed-method approaches, including qualitative analysis and latent class analysis (LCA), to explore interactions between consumers and brands across social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022; Rohm et al., 2013). However, limited research has focused on skincare consumers specifically on Facebook. This present analysis, fills gap by adopting a purely quantitative methodology, focusing on skin care consumers aged 18–34, both male and female, in the context of Facebook-based social commerce.

Specifically, the skincare sector uniquely combines elements of consumer behavior with platform interactivity, perceived usefulness, trust and purchase intention. It stands out from other shopper categories because skincare is associated with more risk. Products are used on the skin, and they impact one's appearance, health and safety. Therefore, consumers expect more than just marketing slogans; they expect greater peer validation and interactive transparency (Lu et al., 2016). Literature indicates that for categories with higher involvement and experience, such as skincare, consumers tend to rely more on visual and testimonial precisions, as well as on direct interactions with the seller to assess the products (Ning Shen & Khalifa, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014). These dynamics heighten the importance of social commerce, making platform interactivity and perceived usefulness stronger determinants of trust and purchase behavior than with other lower risk products. Thus, this research does not simply adapt existing models to the new context, but rather expands the framework on trust and interaction mechanisms in high trust, high engagement digital product spaces, such as skincare.

To strengthen the theoretical contribution, this study integrates perspectives beyond the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by considering product category involvement and social presence. Skincare, as a high-involvement and sensory-driven category, requires consumers to process more information and rely heavily on visual content, peer reviews and seller interaction. These characteristics increase cognitive effort and highlight the role of platform vividness and interactivity in trust formation. Moreover, Facebook's social features such as comments, live videos and group discussions enhance perceived social presence, which can significantly influence purchase intention (Lu et al., 2016). Prior studies suggest that the

alignment between product type and platform affordances is crucial in shaping engagement and trust (Cyr et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2014). Thus, this study contributes theoretically by framing skincare not merely as a context, but as a product category was platform interactivity and perceived usefulness function with amplified relevance.

While earlier studies examined social commerce's ecosystem components such as platform interactivity, perceived usefulness, trust and purchase intention, few have focused on the skincare industry. Skincare products, as a category, demand comprehensive consumer engagement and involve a significant degree of personal experience. To alleviate perceived risk, consumers require visuals and must-read reviews, alongside expert endorsements. Care decisions are personal and deeply emotional due to the consequences of health and beauty, fostering trust and an emotional bond. Thus, interactivity and trust are of paramount importance, and the lack of research on this area is remarkable. Furthermore, social commerce for skincare is more pronounced on Facebook, where users provide and share reviews, discussions, and feedback dynamically, infusing social presence and engagement distinct from other sectors. Therefore, using TAM here is not a mere reproduction, but rather a powerful, impactful adaptation that demonstrates the theory's applicability across diverse contexts of products and platforms. Bridging consumer behavior with platform features fills gaps identified in previous research.

Hence, this research aims to address these empirical gaps by examining the combined impact of trust in sellers and Perceived usefulness on purchase intention in Facebook-based social commerce in the skincare industry in Sri Lanka. The findings of this study present how businesses can enhance customer trust and develop targeted relationship strategies to influence purchase intention in Facebook-based social commerce within the Sri Lankan skincare industry.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to investigate how platform interaction, perceived usefulness and trust in sellers influence social commerce purchase intention in the Sri Lankan context. Eventually, this research examines how interactive features on Facebook enhance user experience, platform interaction, fostering greater trust and increasing purchase intention. Plus, the present research contributes to broader social commerce research by focusing on an unexplored aspect in Sri Lanka and provides new perspectives on consumer behavior and information trust in developing countries.

The remaining sections of the article are structured as follows: 'Literature Review' which examines the existing body of research; 'Data and Methodology' which describes the data sources and methods used, respectively; 'Results and Discussion' which analyses the practical findings and their implications; and 'Conclusion' which provides recommendations and final remarks.

## Literature review

### *Platform interactivity*

The rise of Web 2.0 technology has led to the creation of many user-friendly platforms. Those platforms made ease of interaction over others. Social media platforms have a strong consumer base diverse over online platform. To improve interaction quality in platforms, utilize more advanced forms of audio, video, pictures and other resources (Geng & Chen, 2021). Within the improvement of S - Commerce (Social Commerce) platform interaction such as content usefulness, engaging real-time communication dimensions emphasizes interpersonal communication with others online. This process encompasses contact and feedback among customers and collaborations between consumers and retailers. Perceived usefulness is characterized as the 'degree to which a person believes that the use of a system would improve one's performance' (Amin et al., 2014; Davis, 1989; Karahanna & Straub, 1999). While purchasing in social commerce, consumers mainly consider the overall wealth of usefulness of the social media message or information that shared on the platform (Wu & Chang, 2005). The effective platform interaction and the information shared on social media gain consumers' attention and increase engagement and their involvement in purchasing in social networking and enhancing their experiences

In social commerce, the positive perceptions of user interaction show user's willingness to engage and real-time communication, and actively control information on the platform (Animesh et al., 2011). In the

Internet environment, consumers can not only view product information but browse the generated content of others. They can directly interact with others to obtain more comprehensive information and form their own useful perception of the product. Therefore, this study proposed hypothesis:

- H<sub>1</sub>** Platform interactivity positively impacts on consumers' perceived usefulness.
- H<sub>2</sub>** Platform interactivity positively impacts on consumers trust in seller.

### ***Perceived usefulness***

Perceived usefulness refers to 'individuals who are thinking of utilizing a specific system would enhance their job performance' (Amin et al., 2014; Davis, 1989; Karahanna & Straub, 1999). A prior study indicated that perceived usefulness positively affects purchase intention in an online environment (Hamid et al., 2016). Similarly to that, Boon-Itt (2019) proves that perceived usefulness can positively impact trust and purchase. According to Dhahak and Huseynov (2020), persons think that adopting specific technology can enhance their work efficiency, and also they believe using those techniques helps to complete activities quickly and increase performance, and productivity, making activities easier for consumers. It means that users do not pay attention to use technology to purchase products or services via social media unless after understanding that it will be advantageous to them.

Additionally, perceived usefulness gives benefits to consumers to improve their quality of life by utilizing technology, and it positively impacts consumers purchasing activities in the online environment. Therefore, perceived usefulness important that social commerce environment needs to provide numerous information and product descriptions, it is made consumers to easily find out everything about the products before making the purchase (Ru et al., 2021). Considering the above literature below hypothesis proposed:

- H<sub>3</sub>** Perceived usefulness positively impacts social commerce purchase intention

### ***Trust in seller***

Platform interactivity plays a key role in impacting purchase intention by enhancing the online shopping experience. When the consumer gets a quick response from the seller on the platform it leads to improved trust in the seller. Minimizing the uncertainties and real-time interaction increases the credibility of the platform and sharing information on social media (Zhong et al., 2022). The platform interactivity and engaging level of sellers influence on trust of consumers and trust leads to making purchases in an online setting. Also, live chat and quick responses of sellers in social commerce platforms enhance the confidence of consumers and willingness to make purchases (Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Similarly, Meng and Lin (2023), stated that the interactivity of sellers and platform features strongly affects consumer engagement and purchase intention. A higher level of streamer engagement and consumer base shows integrity, benevolence, and competence. These are all the utmost elements of trust in an online community and transactions (Sebastianelli et al., 2008). In the social media environment, consumers cannot communicate physically, which raises uncertainties and risks in the online environment when purchasing products. Based on this scenario trust is a fundamental thing of consumer purchase decision making (Chong et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2019). Also, consumer recommendations can influence the selection of products through trust and usually, consumers purchase products by reviewing the reviews, and comments related to the seller and product (Smith et al., 2005). Consumers' impression of products or services, improves trust, reduces transaction risk and enhances purchase intention (Wirtz & Lwin, 2009).

Furthermore, the trust developed by this direct contact reduces the uncertainties often connected to online shopping and promotes purchasing decisions (Sung et al., 2023). Based on the previous studies mentioned above, below hypotheses are formulated:

- H<sub>4</sub>** Trust in the seller positively impacts on consumers social commerce purchase intention.

## ***Social commerce purchase intention***

According to Hajli et al. (2017), social commerce, a subset of electronic commerce, has recently emerged as a significant area of study. Social media commerce has become a central focus of research in recent years. While some studies have examined how social media platforms influence consumers' purchase intentions, others have explored the role of social interactions in shaping consumer behavior (Zhang et al., 2024). For example, the prior research by Mikalef et al. (2017), investigated how the features of social commerce platforms impact users' purchase intentions and participation in word-of-mouth communication. While Jakob and Hueb (2016), analysed the effect of social media platform usage on users' purchase intentions.

Social commerce involves not only buyers and sellers but also individuals with social connections on the platform, which influences the flow of information on social media. According to Algharabat and Rana (2021), consumers' purchase intentions can be significantly enhanced through instrumental inter-user connections, which improve their perception of information and product quality. With social networking sites and social media enabling consumers to create content online actively, social commerce represents a novel and appealing development in e-commerce. Social media plays a crucial role in distinguishing social commerce from traditional e-commerce by fostering active user interaction and engagement (Hajli, 2015).

Social commerce leverages Web 2.0 applications to enable interactions among users in an online environment, where their contributions can facilitate the acquisition of products and services (Liang & Turban, 2011). While related research has been conducted on social media commerce. According to Zhang et al. (2024), noted that few studies have specifically examined how information (content) affects consumer purchase intentions. This is particularly significant on social media platforms, where customers cannot physically inspect the products, they are considering and must rely on information provided by sellers and intermediaries.

This gap highlights the need to study the fundamental mechanisms through which information impacts consumer purchase intentions in the context of social commerce. Addressing this research vacuum is critical for understanding how consumers navigate the unique challenges and opportunities of making purchasing decisions in a digital, socially interactive environment.

## ***Mediation effect***

Platform interactivity significantly influences user perceptions and behaviors in social commerce. An interactive platform improves user engagement through real-time communication, tailored content and social features, hence augmenting the platform's perceived utility. When users recognize a platform's utility, they are more inclined to make purchasing decisions, rendering perceived usefulness an essential mediator in the connection between platform interaction and social commerce purchase intention (Zhou et al., 2019). Moreover, platform interactivity cultivates trust in sellers by enabling direct contacts, transparent communication, and customer reviews, hence augmenting buyers' faith in the seller's legitimacy and reliability. This heightened trust subsequently enhances purchase intention on social commerce platforms (Dincer & Dincer, 2023; Wirtz & Lwin, 2009). Consequently, the subsequent hypotheses are posited:

**H<sub>5</sub>** Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between platform interactivity and social commerce purchase intention.

**H<sub>6</sub>** Trust in the seller mediates the relationship between platform interactivity and social commerce purchase intention.

## ***Theoretical contribution***

By incorporating concepts from the TAM alongside modern notions reflecting contemporary online shopping dynamics, particularly within the skincare sector, this study seeks to enhance and refine the conceptual social commerce framework. As TAM is centered on the acceptance of technology through its perceived usefulness and ease of utilization (Davis & Davis, 1989), it lacks consideration of consumer social

interactions with the technology, such as engagement with the platform and seller, which are vital in social commerce. In this regard, this study augments TAM by emphasizing platform interactivity and trust in the seller as focal parameters of the model. This is particularly salient within the skincare market, where trust, review, and social interactions, which TAM cannot fully account for, dominate consumer purchasing decisions.

The study also contributes to theory by explaining the differentiation made by the type of product and platform used. The skincare category is both personal and visual. Purchasers seek to learn how to properly use the product, check out reviews and interact with the seller. Facebook is excellent at supplying these needs with graphics, real-time interaction and groups. Earlier work demonstrated that differing product and service categories are associated with platforms, and that this 'fit' influences user engagement, purchasing and decision-making activities (Van Reijmersdal et al., 2020). This is one of the gaps that we are trying to address with this research.

Besides TAM, user participation, workload, user involvement and user workload. During the use of social commerce platforms, users may be excited and engaged because of the presence of interactive features, and at the same time, the features may be too much information or content, which can also trigger the feeling of being overwhelmed. This is rooted in the theory of cognitive load and digital engagement, which concerns the user's online content processing (Chan et al., 2021). Providing this information is crucial because it demonstrates users' responses are based on the feeling and effort involved, in addition to the platform's value on usability.

Finally, concepts such as social presence and vividness, which are included in our study, contribute to explaining online trust user interactions. Through chat, comments, videos or any real-time interactions, social presence is the feeling of being connected to the rest of the world. Vividness is the richness, clearness and engagement of the content. In social commerce, social presence and vividness are critical to purchasing and trust (Lu et al., 2016). Incorporating these concepts in the model enhances the explanation on the influence of emotions and social interactions on the intention to purchase.

The contribution to theory is made by integrating the TAM model with emotional, social and cognitive factors, as adapted to the social commerce context. The model developed with the skincare market focus and the social media platform of Facebook as the main communication tool demonstrates the unique role of trust, interaction, content richness, engagement and purchase in a way that traditional models do not.

Based on hypotheses developed from previous literature, key variables are outlined in [Table 1](#).

### ***Research conceptual model***

Based on the study's objectives, the impact of platform interactivity on social commerce purchase intention was conceptualized. Additionally, the study examines how platform interactivity influences trust in sellers and perceived usefulness. The mediating effects of trust in sellers and perceived usefulness on the relationship between platform interactivity and social commerce purchase intention are also explored. Based on these objectives, the conceptual framework shown in [Figure 1](#) was developed. Platform interactivity is identified as the independent variable, social commerce purchase intention is the dependent variable, and trust in sellers and perceived usefulness serve as mediating variables.

### **Methodology**

This study investigates the impact of platform interactivity on social commerce purchase intention in skincare products via Facebook, considering trust in sellers and perceived usefulness as mediators (Herzallah et al., 2022). The framework of the study examines the interrelations among these constructs to elucidate consumer behavior in social commerce contexts.

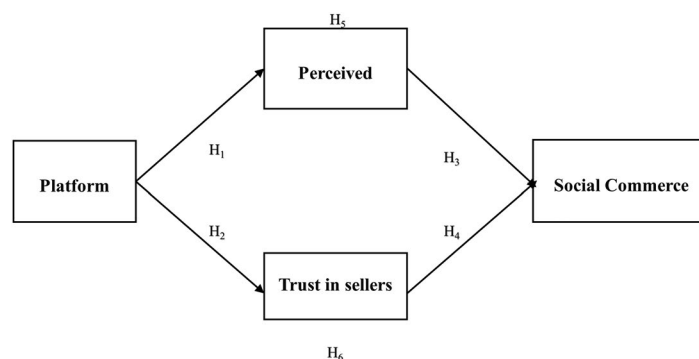
### ***Research design***

This study utilizes quantitative research design to explore the impact of platform interactivity on the social commerce purchase intention of skincare products, with trust in sellers and perceived usefulness

**Table 1.** Variables and sources.

Variables	Definition of the variable	Dimension	Measurement (likert scale)	Survey question	Source
Platform interactivity	The ability of digital environments or applications to engage users actively, allowing them to communicate, participate, and interact dynamically rather than passively consume content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content usefulness</li> <li>Engaging</li> <li>Real-time communication</li> </ul>	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I always read Facebook post descriptions when I purchase skincare products.</li> <li>The attractiveness of skin care products posts on Facebook influences my purchase decision.</li> <li>I often get quick responses from sellers when I inquire about skincare products on Facebook.</li> <li>I can interact with sellers or other users instantly through comments or chat on Facebook posts.</li> <li>I feel I have control over my purchase decisions through the information shared on Facebook.</li> <li>The skincare product suggestions I see on Facebook are personalized to my preferences.</li> <li>Facebook sellers respond quickly to my queries.</li> </ul>	(Amin et al., 2014; Animesh et al., 2011; Karahanna & Straub, 1999; Lu et al., 2016; Wu & Chang, 2005)
Perceived usefulness	A consumer's willingness to engage in online social commerce transactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control</li> <li>Personalization</li> <li>Responsiveness</li> </ul>	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that sellers of skincare products on Facebook as honest.</li> <li>I think the promises made by sellers on Facebook about skincare products are reliable.</li> <li>Sellers who post skincare products on Facebook are skilled and experienced.</li> <li>I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions with my friends on Facebook, when they buying skincare products.</li> <li>I am very likely to do transactions via social media for purchasing skincare products.</li> <li>I am willing to search on Facebook for more information about skincare products.</li> <li>If there is best new skincare product that I want to purchase, I would like to purchase it through Facebook.</li> </ul>	(Boon-Itt, 2019; Dhahak & Huseynov, 2020; Ru et al., 2021)
Trust in seller	The consumer's belief in the seller's ability, friendliness, and honesty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrity</li> <li>Benevolence</li> <li>Competence</li> </ul>	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that sellers of skincare products on Facebook as honest.</li> <li>I think the promises made by sellers on Facebook about skincare products are reliable.</li> <li>Sellers who post skincare products on Facebook are skilled and experienced.</li> <li>I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions with my friends on Facebook, when they buying skincare products.</li> <li>I am very likely to do transactions via social media for purchasing skincare products.</li> <li>I am willing to search on Facebook for more information about skincare products.</li> <li>If there is best new skincare product that I want to purchase, I would like to purchase it through Facebook.</li> </ul>	(Chong et al., 2023; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020; Zhong et al., 2022)
Social commerce purchase intention	A consumer's willingness to engage in online social commerce transactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social presence</li> <li>Trust</li> <li>Social interaction</li> </ul>	1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that sellers of skincare products on Facebook as honest.</li> <li>I think the promises made by sellers on Facebook about skincare products are reliable.</li> <li>Sellers who post skincare products on Facebook are skilled and experienced.</li> <li>I am willing to share my experiences and suggestions with my friends on Facebook, when they buying skincare products.</li> <li>I am very likely to do transactions via social media for purchasing skincare products.</li> <li>I am willing to search on Facebook for more information about skincare products.</li> <li>If there is best new skincare product that I want to purchase, I would like to purchase it through Facebook.</li> </ul>	(Algharabat & Rana, 2021;; Hajli, 2015; Mikalef et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2024)

Source: Authors' compilation.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework. *Source:* Authors' illustration.

serving as mediators (Nadia & Elistia, 2024). A deductive approach was implemented to assess the proposed theoretical model. The research adopts a cross-sectional design, gathering data at a single time point to evaluate consumer perceptions. A structured questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale was employed for data collection. Data were gathered from Facebook users in Sri Lanka who purchase skincare products. This methodological framework facilitates a systematic analysis of the relationships among the identified variables (Wisenthige, 2023).

### **Sampling and data collection**

The study's population consisted of Facebook users who purchase skincare products *via* Facebook and millennials aged 19–34 in Sri Lanka, representing Generations Y and Z. A purposive sampling method was utilized to target respondents fitting the study's criteria, ensuring data were collected from individuals with relevant experience. Purposive sampling was used in this study to make sure the gathered data related to the goals of the investigation. Targeting respondents with direct experience in this environment was crucial given the study concentrated on social commerce purchase intention for skincare products *via* Facebook. Two filter questions were used to find individuals that had previously bought skincare goods especially on Facebook and had made transactions through Facebook (Geraldine et al., 2022; Nadia & Elistia, 2024). Allowing participants to provide responses purposefully, an online structured questionnaire was distributed. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'), to assess variables concerning platform interactivity, perceived usefulness, trust in sellers, and social commerce purchase intention.

The survey instrument was developed based on validated measures from prior studies and customized to the context of social commerce. To enhance cultural relevance, the questionnaire was translated into English and Sinhala<sup>1</sup> by academics and reviewed by subject experts. Data collection took place over four months, and a cross-sectional survey was conducted, collecting data from 468 respondents using structured questionnaires. Initial data filtering focused on demographic consistency, resulting in 410 valid responses. Further refinement eliminated incomplete submissions, yielding 384 respondents, fulfilling the sample size criteria.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis was performed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the study variables (Wibisono et al., 2023). PLS-SEM is an effective statistical technique for analyzing intricate relationships between observed and latent variables, thus aligning with the study's framework. It is particularly effective for handling non-normal data distributions and small to medium sample sizes. Smart PLS is a user-friendly interface that facilitates advanced statistical analysis, model validation and hypothesis testing. This methodology allowed for a thorough investigation of platform interactivity, perceived usefulness, trust in sellers and social commerce purchase intention, thereby ensuring the findings were reliable and valid.

## Consent to participate and ethical considerations

To ensure ethical consent, participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives in the questionnaire. Explicit written consent was obtained from each respondent by ticking the consent statement in questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only those who explicitly consented were given with access to the rest of the questionnaire. The study was conducted with the ethical approval of the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) Business School Ethics Review Committee (SLIIT/ERC/SBS/2024/07).

## Results

### Measurement model assessment

The assessment of the measurement model evaluates the validity and reliability of the variables and their indicators. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, while convergent validity was examined through outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The discriminant validity was determined using Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to verify that the constructs are not related to one another.

Table 2 results indicate that all constructs have very strong reliability as both Cronbach's alpha values and composite reliability values were above the recommended threshold 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). The outer loadings of the individual items of measurement support construct validity as each item demonstrates significant loadings above the recommended threshold 0.50 (Hayes et al., 2017). Moreover, the AVE values also meet the recommended threshold 0.50 which confirms that a substantial portion of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective constructs (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations between constructs which is shown in Table 3 confirms discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The HTMT ratios further confirm this, with most values below the common threshold of 0.85, indicating that the constructs are sufficiently different from one another. However in Table 3, HTMT value of 0.891 between Perceived Usefulness and Platform Interactivity is above the threshold of 0.85 and approaches the more conservative threshold of 0.90, thus indicating that discriminant validity may be at risk for this pair of constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

### Model evaluation

The R-square values reveal the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables for each construct in the model. Similarly, perceived usefulness, social commerce purchase intention and trust in sellers have associated measures of R-square and adjusted R-square values. All these results in Table 4

**Table 2.** Measurement model assessment.

Variable	Item code	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Platform interactivity	PI1	0.681	0.814	0.878	0.645
	PI2	0.817			
	PI3	0.869			
	PI4	0.832			
Perceived usefulness	PU1	0.845	0.815	0.890	0.730
	PU2	0.860			
	PU3	0.858			
Trust in sellers	TIS1	0.915	0.911	0.944	0.850
	TIS2	0.950			
	TIS3	0.900			
Social commerce purchase intention	SCPI1	0.842	0.910	0.937	0.788
	SCPI2	0.912			
	SCPI3	0.912			
	SCPI4	0.883			

Source: Authors' compilation, extracted from Smart PLS.

**Table 3.** Fornell–Larcker and HTMT assessment.

	HTMT matrix			
	PI	PU	SCPI	TIS
PI				
PU	0.891			
SCPI	0.821	0.848		
TIS	0.850	0.768	0.890	
Fornell–Larcker criterion				
	PI	PU	SCPI	TIS
PI	0.803			
PU	0.726	0.854		
SCPI	0.712	0.730	0.888	
TIS	0.743	0.663	0.813	0.922

Source: Authors' compilation, extracted from Smart PLS.

**Table 4.** R-Square and model fit indices.

Construct/model fit		Value 1	Value 2
R-square ( $R^2$ )	PU	0.527	0.525 (Adjusted)
	SCPI	0.727	0.725 (Adjusted)
	TIS	0.584	0.582 (Adjusted)
Model fit indices	SRMR	0.059 (Saturated)	0.060 (Estimated)
	Chi-square	564.088 (Saturated)	565.223 (Estimated)
	NFI	0.866 (Saturated)	0.865 (Estimated)

Source: Authors' compilation, extracted from smart PLS.

demonstrate how the model was helpful in explaining the variation in the dependent constructs (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

In Table 4, model fit indices assess the overall fitness of both the saturated and estimated models. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) values for both the saturated model and the estimated model indicate a good fit. The Chi-square values are closely aligned, and the normed fit index (NFI) values are slightly below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.90. These results provide insights into the model's overall fit and performance, suggesting that while the model demonstrates reasonable fit, there may be opportunities for refinement.

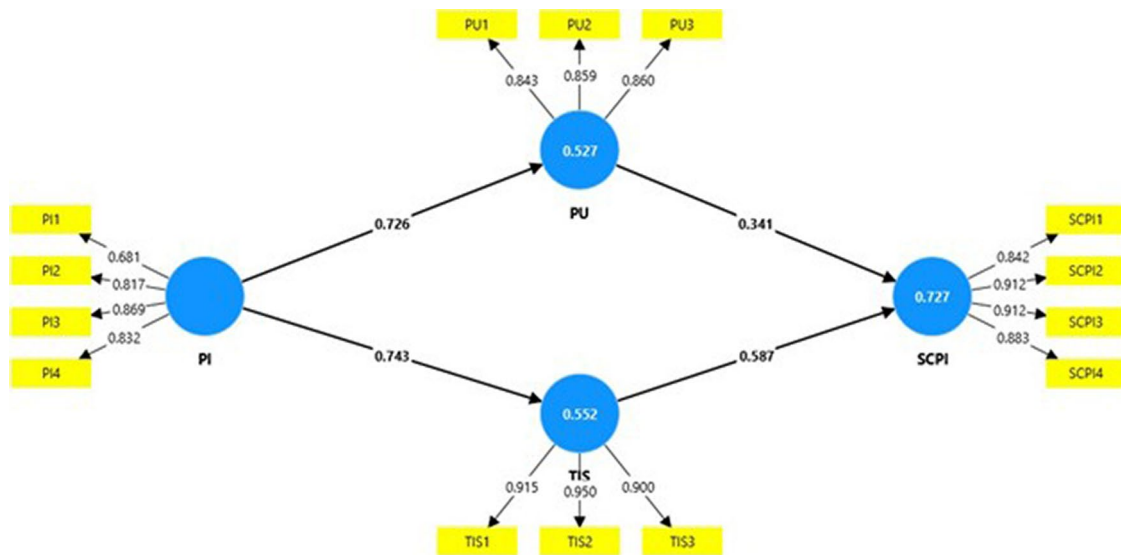
### Structural model assessment

The structural model of the research was analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0. This model evaluation focuses on examining the relationships between the constructs and assessing their explanatory power. In the exhibit, the model in Figure 2 illustrates the factor loadings for each measurable component. The recommended threshold for factor loadings is 0.700, which indicates acceptable indicator reliability. In these results, the lowest factor loading value is 0.681, which is slightly below the recommended threshold. The factor loadings for the constructs PI, PU, TIS and SCPI demonstrate strong and consistent values as well, further reinforcing the reliability of the measurement model. Overall, these findings confirm that the indicators effectively measure their respective constructs, ensuring satisfactory internal consistency and construct validity.

### Path coefficient and hypotheses testing

Hypothesis testing results reveal significant relationships between the constructs in the model. PI has a strong positive impact on PU, indicating that higher platform interactivity enhances users' perception of usefulness. Additionally, PI positively impact TIS, suggesting that an interactive platform fosters greater trust in online sellers.

Furthermore, PU also positively impact SCPI, meaning that a higher perception of usefulness increases the likelihood of making a purchase. Additionally, TIS has the strongest impact on SCPI, reinforcing the critical role of trust in driving purchase intentions.



**Figure 2.** SEM path analysis results of the structural relationship between research variables. *Source:* Authors' illustration, extracted from Smart PLS.

**Table 5.** Results of hypotheses analysis.

Hypothesis		Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t-value	Decision
Direct	H <sub>1</sub>	PI > PU	0.726	0.029	24.730	Supported
	H <sub>2</sub>	PI > TIS	0.552	0.069	7.997	Supported
	H <sub>3</sub>	PU > SCPI	0.341	0.048	7.035	Supported
	H <sub>4</sub>	TIS > SCPI	0.587	0.051	11.422	Supported
Indirect	H <sub>5</sub>	PI > PU > SCPI	0.247	0.036	6.891	Supported
	H <sub>6</sub>	PI > TIS > SCPI	0.324	0.050	6.478	Supported

*Source:* Authors' compilation, extracted from Smart PLS.

The standard deviation values in Table 5 measure the variability of path coefficients, ensuring result stability. Lower standard deviation values indicate greater precision in the estimated relationships. The t-values, which assess the strength of the relationships, exceed the recommended threshold of 1.96 confirming strong statistical significance. The results suggest that the relationships between the constructs are robust and statistically significant, with  $p$  values  $\leq 0.001$  in all cases.

The strong path coefficient between TIS and SCPI underscores the importance of trust in sellers in shaping purchase decisions. Similarly, the relationship between PI and PU highlights the significance of platform interactivity in enhancing user perceptions. Overall, the model demonstrates strong predictive power and reliability, confirming that the constructs effectively capture consumer behavior in social commerce settings.

Table 5 presents the significant indirect effects obtained from the bootstrapping procedure, demonstrating that, with a sample size of 384 with 5000 subsamples and no sign changes, platform interactivity plays a vital role in shaping social commerce purchase intentions. The results indicate that platform interactivity significantly impacts purchase intention through perceived usefulness, with a path coefficient of 0.247. Furthermore, platform interactivity demonstrates a strong indirect effect on purchase intention through trust in sellers, with a path coefficient of 0.324. These findings highlight the essential mediating roles of perceived usefulness and trust in sellers in influencing social commerce purchase intention.

## Discussion

This study highlights the significance of platform interactivity in influencing consumer purchase intention and behaviors in social commerce. The results indicate that platform interactivity is crucial for augmenting perceived usefulness and trust in the seller, hence positively influencing social commerce purchase intention.

The findings indicate that platform interaction strongly impacts consumers' perceived usefulness of the platform. Interactive elements, like real-time communication, personalized recommendations and intuitive interfaces, enhance the value and utility seen by users on the platform. This corresponds with previous research, which has consistently demonstrated that platforms incorporating interactive features foster a more engaging and effective atmosphere, resulting in elevated evaluations of usefulness (Amin et al., 2014; Davis, 1989; Karahanna & Straub, 1999). When consumers perceive a platform as beneficial, they are more inclined to interact with it and ultimately make purchasing decisions. Consistent with prior research, our study demonstrates that when consumers view a platform as advantageous, they are more likely to engage with it and subsequently make purchasing decisions (Animesh et al., 2011). Nonetheless, whereas prior research has predominantly focused on global or Western contexts, our study distinctly contributes by exploring these relationships among Sri Lankan skincare consumers, offering insights into cultural and regional disparities.

Similarly, the interactivity of the platform is demonstrated to enhance trust in the seller. The platform's interactive features encourage openness and dialogue, helping consumers establish trust in the seller. This aligns with earlier studies showing that trust plays a vital role in online purchases and can be greatly improved through engaging platform features like customer support and detailed product information (Boon-Itt, 2019; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Clear and engaging communication through interactive features lessens perceived risks, allowing consumers to feel more assured in their buying choices. The findings support this but also suggest that trust-building mechanisms may be particularly crucial in Sri Lanka, where online shopping behaviors are still evolving, and consumer skepticism toward digital transactions remains relatively high. The role of interactive features in reducing perceived risks and reinforcing trust is thus more pronounced in this emerging market than in more established e-commerce settings (Sebastianelli et al., 2008).

Additionally, the research underscores that the intention to purchase from social commerce is substantially influenced by perceived usefulness. When consumers perceive a platform as beneficial, whether by simplifying the decision-making process, offering efficient tools or providing pertinent information, they are more inclined to make a purchase. This discovery is consistent with prior research on the TAM, which posits that perceived utility is a critical factor in influencing consumer behavior in online environments (Ru et al., 2021). For instance, findings confirm this established theory but add to the literature by specifically demonstrating its applicability in the Sri Lankan skincare market, a sector where informed decision-making is particularly vital due to concerns over product authenticity and effectiveness.

Ultimately, trust in the seller significantly influences the intention to purchase in social commerce (Smith et al., 2005; Ranjith et al., 2025). When consumers have trust in the seller, they are more inclined to engage in a transaction. The findings underscore the significance of trust in mitigating uncertainty and promoting purchasing behavior in online environments. Prior research indicates that trust in online sellers mediates the relationship between consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Dincer & Dincer, 2023; Wirtz & Lwin, 2009). Within the discipline of social commerce, trust in the seller is a pivotal factor influencing buy intention, as it mitigates apprehensions regarding product quality, delivery, and overall dependability. However, this study findings reinforce these assertions, while also contributing a regional perspective: Sri Lankan consumers appear to place a higher emphasis on trust in online transactions, given the relatively nascent stage of social commerce adoption in the country. As a result, sellers who effectively leverage platform interactivity to establish credibility and transparency may experience greater success in this market (Zhong et al., 2022).

Moreover, this study offers a novel understanding of the mediation effects of perceived usefulness and trust in the seller on social commerce purchase intention, therefore confirming their importance as main drivers of consumer behavior. The results confirm that perceived usefulness moderates the link between platform interactivity and social commerce purchase intention, implying that consumers are more likely to participate in social commerce when they believe the platform to be efficient, informative and useful in their decision-making process. This validates other studies stressing that consumer involvement and buying behavior are much influenced by the value of a platform (Mikalef et al., 2017; Zhong et al., 2022). Similarly, trust in the seller moderates the association between platform interactivity and social commerce purchase intention, therefore supporting the notion that interactive features help to build consumer confidence by lowering uncertainty and improving buyer-seller interactions.

The study has a significant contribution in the simultaneous analysis of these two mediation effects inside a single framework, therefore providing a more complete knowledge of how platform interactivity shapes buying behavior. Although earlier studies have looked at these mediating influences separately, this study combines them to offer a better knowledge of the linked routes guiding consumer choice in social commerce (Boon-Itt, 2019; Chong et al., 2023; Rasaputhra et al., 2024). The results imply that platform interactivity improves consumers' impressions of the operation of the platform as well as their confidence in the seller, both of which are essential for motivating buy intentions.

This research adds to the social commerce literature by examining how product characteristic in conjunction with a specific platform feature shape purchase intention without strictly relying on the TAM. The skincare industry exemplifies a high-involvement product category that necessitates an experience in which the consumer engages with credible and vivid content to lessen risk and trust. Choosing Facebook as the platform accentuates the importance of social presence and digital engagement because the platform enables direct interaction as well as video and picture content that boosts user attention and participation. With the inclusion of cognitive load in the framework of involvement and digital engagement, social commerce stands to benefit from enhanced knowledge on how consumers process intricate information. Therefore, this research enriches existing theories by considering the merger of consumer behavior with social commerce and product dynamics, thereby, deepening understanding of the role that trust and interactivity play in driving purchase intention in the skincare industry.

Further study extends these findings by focusing on Sri Lanka's unique market conditions, where consumer trust in online transactions is still developing. The findings of the study examine how Sri Lankan consumers use platform interactivity and trust in sellers in a relatively new social commerce landscape, unlike previous studies that focused on Western or Chinese platforms.

Additionally, platform differences shape consumer experiences. We focus on Facebook, a platform that lacks direct e-commerce integration but is a key channel for social commerce in Sri Lanka. Previous studies have focused on platforms like WeChat, Instagram and Amazon, which have ecosystems integrating payment systems and AI-driven recommendations (Khanom, 2023; Meng & Lin, 2023). This distinction emphasizes how platform selection affects consumer trust and usability.

Skincare has unique considerations compared to other consumer product sectors. Social commerce studies have focused on consumer electronics and apparel markets, where specifications and price comparisons influence purchases (Hettiarachchi et al., 2019; Xiong et al., 2021). Before buying skincare, consumers rely on peer reviews, expert advice and interactive discussions. Our study shows that social commerce platforms' interactive features are even more important in this industry, where consumers seek authenticity, ingredient transparency and efficacy before buying. Sellers can boost consumer engagement and purchase intentions by using these interactive and trust-building features, helping the region's social commerce ecosystem grow.

## Implications

This investigation offers insights for skincare businesses in Sri Lanka using Facebook for social commerce. To enhance purchase intention, businesses should improve platform interactivity with live sessions, product demonstrations, and real-time chat support, increasing involvement and trust.

Trust in the seller is significant for consumer engagement. Skincare brands should offer transparent product information, authenticated seller profiles and responsive customer service. Cooperating with experts or influencers can further improve trust. Customer recommendations, validated reviews and real user involvement also establish trust and authenticity.

Perceived usefulness stimulates purchase intention. Brands should emphasize practical benefits with detailed product explanations, ingredient breakdowns and customized suggestions. Technologies like AI can boost usefulness by offering tailored services.

Since trust and perceived usefulness affect purchase intention, brands should integrate credibility with value-based content. safe payment options, hassle-free returns and approachable customer support can minimize uncertainty and enhance conversion rates. Enhancing platform interaction while strengthening trust and usefulness will develop a more collaborating and conversion-driven social commerce ecosystem.

## Limitations and future research

This study has numerous limitations influencing the generalizability and scope of its findings. Initially, convenience sampling limits the typicality of the sample, which may not mirror the wider population of social commerce consumers in Sri Lanka or other regions. Subsequently, concentrating solely on Facebook limits the suitability of the outcomes to other social media platforms, as different platforms may have various scales of interactivity, perceived usefulness and trust, which could impact purchase intentions differently.

The sample primarily included young consumers aged 19–29, restricting the generalizability to older age groups with various purchasing behaviors and social commerce interactions. Further, the study specialized on platform interactivity and perceived usefulness, excepting other factors like brand reputation, product quality and platform-specific characteristics that may also influence purchase intentions.

The regional and cultural context of Sri Lanka further limits the outcomes' suitability to countries with various cultural dynamics. Given the fast evolution of social commerce platforms, the findings may not remain relevant as platform engagement and consumer trust evolve with technological developments and trends.

Further investigations could address these limitations by comprising a more diverse sample from numerous demographics and regions. A cross-platform strategy comparing interactivity, trust and perceived usefulness across platforms including Instagram and Twitter would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how various platforms shape purchase intentions. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how credibility, trust and purchase intentions change gradually.

Additional research could explore additional mediating and moderating variables, namely, consumer involvement, brand reputation or product quality, to enhance comprehension of their impact on purchase intentions. Exploring these factors across numerous product categories, particularly in industries with diverse credibility factors, would enhance generalizability. Experimental and qualitative approaches, including interviews or focus groups, could enhance understanding of the function of trust and credibility in social commerce.

Ultimately, while this study offers significant outcomes into platform interactivity, perceived usefulness, trust in sellers, and social commerce purchase intention in the background of skincare products on Facebook, future research should build on these outcomes to deepen the understanding of social commerce behavior.

## Conclusion

This investigation examined the connection between social commerce purchase intention and platform interactivity, mediated by perceived usefulness and trust in sellers. The outcomes show that increased platform interactivity improves perceptions of usefulness and trust, affecting purchasing decisions. These observations support previous research, highlighting the role of engaging elements in fostering trust and engagement. Limited research exists on Sri Lanka's skincare market, making this study a significant contribution. It provides knowledge for businesses to enhance online sales through interactive features like real-time communication, user-generated content and personalized suggestions. Strengthening trust via visible policies and secure payment systems can drive consumer loyalty and purchase intention. This study highlights platform interactivity as a crucial element in social commerce behavior. Future research should explore these dynamics across different products and market niches.

## Note

1. Sinhala, spoken by approximately 74% of Sri Lanka's population, is the most widely used language in the country. It serves as one of the official and national languages alongside Tamil and is predominantly used by the Sinhalese ethnic majority.

## Consent to participate and ethical considerations

To ensure ethical consent, participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives in the questionnaire. Explicit written consent was obtained from each respondent by ticking the consent statement in the questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary, and only those who explicitly consented were given access

to the rest of the questionnaire. The study was conducted with the ethical approval of the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) Business School Ethics Review Committee (SLIIT/ERC/SBS/2024/07).

## Author contributions

CRedit: **Nimesha Jayasingha**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Weerasekara Kavindiya**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Deshani Prarthana Ranjith**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Sumudu Nisansala Pathiranage**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Krishantha Wisenthige**: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing; **Nirmani Dayapathirana**: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

## Statements and declarations

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## Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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