

**The importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as
drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South
Africa**

Student number: 16390769

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Abstract

The integration of electronic commerce (e-commerce) and social media has facilitated a new way for consumers to shop and socialise, through what is today known as social commerce (s-commerce). The rise in internet penetration and the increase in popularity of social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have opened opportunities for new business models, such as social commerce. This is a significant opportunity for small businesses in South Africa to leverage, given the challenges faced amid the challenging market dynamics they operate in, growth uncertainties, fluctuating market demand, lack of resources, and increased competition due to globalisation that has become an enormous threat with online shopping. However, if implemented skilfully, social commerce is a worthy tool to explore for small businesses that represent the largest sector of companies and are essential to driving economic growth and economic sustainability in emerging economies, like South Africa.

The study aimed to explore the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. It sought to understand small business owners' awareness of the potential benefits of s-commerce for their businesses, and the importance of consumer trust, social support, and social media platform usage in implementing s-commerce in their businesses.

The quantitative responses of 150 small business owners in Gauteng were statistically analysed. The results revealed that small business owners are very aware of the benefits of social commerce, and they consider building consumer trust, social support, and platform use as very important drivers of social commerce. The study revealed significant positive relationships between small business owners' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of building consumer's trust, social support, and platform use.

Keywords: Social commerce, trust, social support, platform usage, small businesses

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Kershnee Kallee

01 November 2022

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem

1.1. Explication of the research problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a devastating event that has not just changed the world, but also the way we see the world, the way we think, and the way we conduct business (He & Harris, 2020). As a consequence of enforced lockdowns since 2020, locally and globally, many shoppers pursued online shopping, accelerating the growth of online shopping (Luo, 2021). According to Pham, Thi and Le (2020) “COVID-19 played a moderating role in consumer’s awareness of utilities, encouraging shoppers towards online shopping” (pp.1), which created a new revolution in social networks, facilitating the way business was being conducted (Abed, 2020). Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom (and a plethora of others) exploded in use and the digital age of online, mobile, and social media marketing went from a figurative pre-adolescent through a turbulent teenager phase right through to adulthood in a matter of weeks (He & Harris, 2020), with online shopping becoming a dominant consumer channel (Abbruzzese, Ingram & Click, 2020).

Online business, typically known as electronic commerce (e-commerce), is described as a business transaction which includes the sharing of data throughout the internet, while commerce is defined as an exchange between groups, companies, and individuals of products and services (Liang & Turban, 2011). Social commerce, on the other hand is defined as the use of electronic commerce activities using social media platforms and technologies, that companies and consumers can leverage to acquire or distribute information, and make purchases (Abed, 2020). The development of Web 2.0 technologies has made it possible for social media platforms to promote electronic business transactions in a way that encourages social interaction and participation to attract more customers to online platforms (Meilatinova, 2021). The integration of e-commerce and social media has facilitated a new way for consumers to shop and socialise through what is known as social commerce (s-commerce) (Wang, Meister & Gray, 2013).

Although the concept of social commerce dates back to more than a decade ago (Wang & Zhang, 2012), it is the rise in internet penetration and the increase in popularity of social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram in recent years that has opened opportunities for new business models using social commerce (Luo, 2021). Businesses now have the opportunity to reach new markets, broaden their target markets, and increase brand awareness and presence to improve the business performance and consumers are now offered more choice, better prices and more information before making a purchase (Hsu, Hung & Chiu, 2022).

Whilst there has been an increase in online shopping over the past two years (Sun & Xu, 2019), the use of social commerce is still in a nascence phase and its potential among social commerce vendors (s-vendors) is still under-explored (Yahia, Al-Neamab & Kerbache, 2018). Many larger businesses, globally, have adopted social commerce and other internet-based strategies with much more ease compared to smaller businesses, that have been hesitant to adopt social media and social commerce due to the lack of technical skills, trust factors, and the lack of understanding implementation and monitoring, which have increased the gap between adaptors and non-adaptors of social commerce in the small business context (Qalati, Yuan, Khan & Anwar, 2021).

However, social commerce - if implemented skilfully – represents a good tool for small businesses, that represent the largest sector of companies and are essential to driving economic growth and economic sustainability in emerging economies, like South Africa (Abed, 2020). Social commerce has considerable potential for small businesses due to its low cost, technical manageability, and ease of use, its capability to connect with, and reach many consumers, as well as to strengthen customer relationships that are essential to boost sales performance (Qalati et al., 2021).

Social commerce can be extremely beneficial for small businesses, given the current challenges that they are facing amid the current challenging market dynamics that they operate in, the trying current economic climate, growth uncertainties, fluctuating

market demand, lack of resources, and increased competition due of globalisation that has become an even bigger threat with online shopping (Qalati et al., 2021). While social commerce is a more cost-effective and targeted approach for small businesses that are challenged with marketing resources that are required for growth (Yahia et al., 2018), it is not clear why it has been underutilized by small businesses to date, and which challenges are encountered by those who have not done it well - particularly from customers' point of view.

To date, inadequate research has been done on how small businesses can adopt and adapt to social commerce. Past research has examined social media and social commerce, predominantly from a consumer perspective (Abed, 2020). Not much has been done to date about the adoption of social media as an online business platform utilised by small businesses. Also, many of the previous studies have admitted limitations in terms of the sample size, have restricted attention to certain geography and industry sectors - which were mostly professional and IT services - and hence focused on selected platforms that were rather limited. Therefore, the findings could not be used for generalised for small businesses in emerging market contexts (Qalati et al., 2021).

For social commerce to grow, there is an urgent need to understand the phenomenon better, particularly shoppers' perceptions of vendors in terms of trust and social support while considering the specificity of the social media platform (Yahia et al., 2018). Moreover, little research has been done on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social commerce, considering that the pandemic has served as a potent catalyst for changes in consumer behaviour, which have not yet been fully explored (Mason, Brown, Mason & Narcum, 2021). Understanding the changes in consumers' behaviour is imperative for businesses to take advantage of new opportunities, such as social commerce that is cost-effective, so that they can adjust their business strategies to the newly emerged consumer trends (Mason, Narcum and Mason, 2020).

1.2. Research questions

The research questions that emerged from the research problem and will be explored in this quantitative study, are:

Research Question 1: How aware are small business owners of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses?

Research Question 2: How important is the development of social commerce platforms to small business owners in terms of their optimisation to derive benefits from social commerce?

Research Question 3: How important is social support in driving small business owners' use of social commerce platforms?

Research Question 4: How important is building consumers' trust in social commerce for business owners?

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and their consideration of consumers' trust in social commerce platforms?

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and small business owners' regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms?

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance to develop social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from it?

1.3. Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to adapt and replicate a model for social commerce, as an enabler for small businesses in South Africa, departing from a study done by Yahia, Al-Neamab and Kerbache (2018). They focused on small businesses and sought to develop a model to understand the effect of vendor characteristics, such as consumers' trust, reputation, company size, information quality, transaction safety, economic feasibility, and communication and platform perceived usage on consumers' purchase intent using social commerce. Contrary to the above-mentioned study (Yahia et al., 2018), which focused on *consumers'* perspective of social commerce, this study aims to explore and describe the value that social commerce potentially holds from the perspective of *small businesses* to gain insight that can be used to help improve their current social commerce operations. This will be done through a quantitative investigation, from a business perspective, of selected drivers of social commerce, namely trust, social support, and platform usage that small businesses need to be more cognisant of.

Aiming to shed light on selected drivers of social commerce, namely trust, social support, and platform usage, that social vendors need to be aware of to successfully implement social commerce activities, this study will implement an adapted version of the study of Yahia et al. (2018). This study will focus on small businesses' perceptions in the South African market context to provide empirical evidence that could be used to guide small business owners and managers about the potential value that social commerce might hold for them.

1.4. Business contribution of the research

In the early 2000s, the objective of many businesses was to develop and maintain good customer relationships to encourage purchase and customer loyalty (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). More than 20 years later, for many businesses, this remains a key objective as strong customer relationships lead to positive business performance (Tuominen, Reijonen, Nagy, Buratti & Laukkanen, 2022). The rise in internet

penetration and social media usage present businesses with the opportunity to build strong customer relationships at a lower cost than traditional mediums to foster positive business growth (Borah, Iqbal & Akhtar, 2022). As businesses start to leverage the opportunities that social commerce presents, it is imperative that they understand the drivers of social commerce to incorporate this approach into their business strategies. This study is relevant for small businesses, particularly those face resource limitations, as it may inform small business owners/ managers on how to adjust their marketing strategies to incorporate social commerce as a marketing tool to reach consumers in a more direct and cost-effective way.

In addition to building stronger customer relationships, the COVID-19 outbreak brought about a behavioural shift in consumers' shopping habits as people shifted to online shopping more than ever before with social media shopping, in particular, gaining prominence (Mason et al., 2021). Consumers felt that social media platforms are better places to learn about new products than online search (COVID-19 has changed online shopping, 2020). Sharma and Jhamb (2020) reiterate that the COVID-19 outbreak has forced consumers to change from traditional shopping channels to online shopping and foresee that online shopping adoption is likely to become a permanent one. Amid evidence about the growing importance of social media, it is therefore imperative for small business owners/ managers to better understand and leverage the opportunities that social commerce presents.

1.5. Theoretical contribution of the research

The rise in internet penetration and social media usage has spotlighted social commerce as an important online business channel. However, there currently is inadequate research about the adoption of social commerce in emerging countries such as South Africa and on how small businesses can adopt and adapt to social commerce (Aydin, 2019). Additionally, previous research has examined social media and social commerce, predominantly from a consumer perspective and not from the perspective of the vendor (Abed, 2020). This study is an extension of a model for social commerce as an enabler for small businesses in South Africa, departing from

a study done by Yahia et al. (2018). To fill the theoretical gap, this study will shed light on the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa and will draw attention to the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as the key drivers for social commerce adoption.

1.6. Nature of the research

The purpose of this research is to be able to quantify responses to provide insights and recommendations to small business owners regarding the future use of SC. This research intends to explore the relevance of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers of SC for small businesses. As such, a cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted using an electronic survey that was sent to 170 small business owners and/or managers operating in the Gauteng area, using convenience sampling, supplemented by snowballing. Distribution of the survey was done through social media sites, which included Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. Of the 170 small businesses approached, 150 met the stipulated criteria to participate in the survey and were used for the statistical analysis.

1.7. Structure of the research report

This research report will comprise six chapters, namely:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the research problem. This chapter provides an explication of the research problem, the purpose of the study, its contribution to the business, and its theoretical contribution.

Chapter 2: A literature review. The literature review contextualises social commerce and relevant constructs based on recent, good-quality academic literature.

Chapter 3: Research Questions and Hypotheses. This chapter focuses on the research questions and hypotheses derived from the academic literature review.

Chapter 4: Research methodology. The choice of methodology is defended and explained in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Results. The results obtained from statistical analyses are documented in chapter 5, including the descriptive analyses.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the results. The results obtained from statistical analyses are discussed.

Chapter 7: Conclusive findings, limitations and, recommendations. This chapter wraps up the research, highlighting the research response to the research questions, and presents the limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Section overview

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of small businesses' apparent reluctance to implement social commerce, and to understand the potential drivers of social commerce (SC) for small businesses in South Africa. This literature review provides an overview of existing literature related to social commerce and the opportunity it presents to small businesses. Indications are, that to capitalise on the potential of social commerce, small business owners have to understand the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers of social commerce. Accordingly, this literature review outlines the drivers of social commerce for small businesses and the potential benefits of social commerce if it is skilfully implemented.

In evaluating how social commerce can be leveraged by small businesses, the acceptance of technology and the drivers, which enable social commerce need to be acknowledged. The literature is underpinned by the Social Commerce Adoption Model (SCAM) proposed by Hajli (2012), which borrows from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which was developed by Davis (1989), explaining that social commerce adoption is linked to social support, trust, and platform usage which, if implemented skilfully, will increase consumers' intention to purchase on social commerce platforms.

The rest of the chapter will explore the importance of social commerce adoption as well as the variables within each SCAM pillar and how they interact with each other.

2.2. Increased importance of social commerce

Online business is described as a business transaction, which includes the sharing of data throughout the internet, while commerce is defined as an exchange of

transactions related to products and services among groups, companies, and individuals (Liang & Turban, 2011). Social commerce (SC) is defined as the use of electronic commerce activities using social media platforms and technologies, that companies and consumers can leverage to acquire or distribute information and make purchases (Abed, 2020). It differs from traditional e-commerce in that the social media dimension has opened numerous opportunities for this alternate online shopping channel with and among social networks (Liang & Turban, 2011). Social commerce is the hybrid between e-commerce and social media and can be realised via two approaches, namely by adding online shopping functions to social network sites, and by inspiring shopper-related information sharing among users to encourage purchases (Curty & Zhang, 2013). These approaches have allowed businesses and consumers to explore numerous new buying and selling methods that were not possible in the past (Alnoor, Al-Abrrow, Halbusi, Khaw, Chew, Al-Maatoq & Alharbi, 2021).

Businesses use social commerce to create connections, strengthen their relationships, and gather information about their customers to serve them better, which enhances their competitive advantage (Lin, Wang & Hajli, 2019). Many larger businesses, globally, have adopted social commerce and other internet-based strategies with much more ease compared to smaller businesses. Smaller businesses have however been hesitant to adopt social media and social commerce for reasons such as the lack of technical skills in understanding how the platform operates within a small company, trust factors, and the lack of understanding of implementation and monitoring of transactions and communication, which have increased the gap between adoptors and non-adoptors of social commerce in the small business context (Qalati et al., 2021). It is suggested that, social commerce, if implemented skilfully, represents a good tool for small businesses, that represent the largest sector of companies in emerging economies and are essential in driving economic growth and economic sustainability in countries like South Africa (Abed, 2020).

In South Africa, 38.19 million people have access to the internet, 41.9% are active social media users, and as the situation stands presently, 65% have used online shopping applications (The Global State of Digital, 2021). The growth in internet usage and social media users in January 2021 versus January 2020 was at 4.5% (1.7 million) and 13.6% (3 million) respectively (The Global State of Digital, 2021). The increase in internet users, social media usage, and online shopping signifies an opportunity for social commerce adoption for South African businesses.

The use of SC can be extremely beneficial for small businesses, given the current challenges that they are facing amid the prevailing challenging market dynamics that they operate in, the trying current economic climate, growth uncertainties, fluctuating market demand, lack of resources, and increased competition due to globalisation that has become an even bigger threat with online shopping (Qalati et al., 2021). Social commerce has considerable potential for small businesses due to its low cost, technical manageability, and ease of use, as well as the capability to connect with and reach many consumers, and to strengthen customer relationships that are essential to boost sales performance (Qalati et al., 2021).

While social commerce presents a more cost-effective and targeted approach for small businesses that are challenged with marketing resources that are required for growth, it has not been fully utilized by small businesses to date, due to trust factors associated with online platforms, social support requirements, and the perceived platform usage choices which has overshadowed the potential benefits of social commerce (Yahia et al., 2018). Therefore, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 1: Small business owners are not fully aware of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses.

Additionally, the COVID-19 outbreak has accelerated the trend toward online shopping and will be a trend that will most likely continue as consumers maintain their modified behaviour (Kim, 2020). Many businesses, after the COVID-19 outbreak, have adopted social media strategies with some being compelled to

consider online channels due to the enforced lockdown (Guthrie, Fosso-Wamba & Arnaud, 2021). However, just an online channel presence or social content is not sufficient for businesses to be successful. They have to create an enjoyable consumer experience, despite some noted challenges including trust issues, accessibility-, security-, and usability challenges, as well as the complexity of using social media, along with difficulty in installing apps, lack of customer guidance, and user instructions as features could either stimulate or hinder the enjoyable online customer experience (Pour, Hosseinzadeh & Mansouri, 2022).

2.3. Technology Acceptance Model

As indicated before, the literature is underpinned by the Social Commerce Adoption Model (SCAM) of Hajli (2012), which borrows from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of Davis (1989), explaining that social commerce adoption is linked to social support, trust, and platform usage which, if implemented skilfully, will increase consumers' intention to purchase on social commerce platforms.

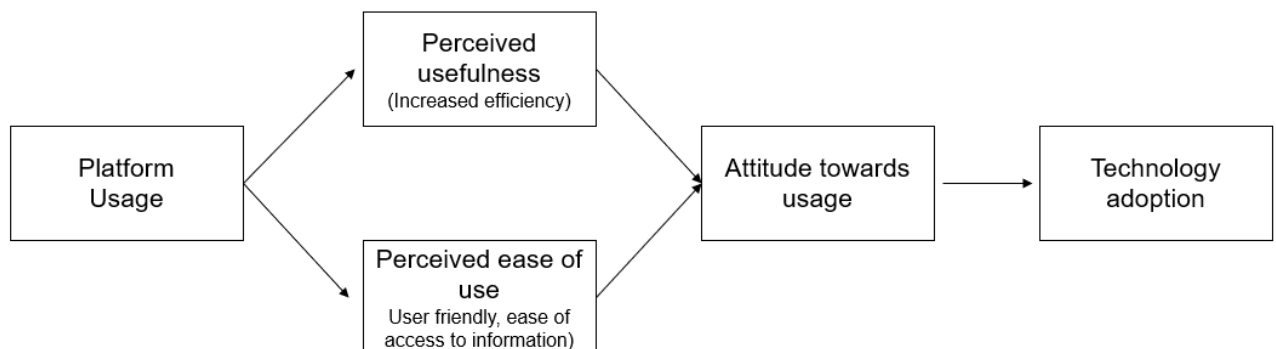
2.3.1. Principles of the theory

The TAM theory introduced by Davis (1989) is one of the most successful theories used to predict an individual's use of technology. The purpose of the original study was to provide an explanation of the determining factors of computer acceptance across a range of users and to provide possible solutions to influence the outcome of technology acceptance and adoption (Davis, 1989). It has since then been applied to a range of technology-related studies, including e-commerce and social commerce due to the model being a strong predictor of individuals' acceptance and adoption of technology (Samarasinghe & Silva, 2019). Therefore, this study makes use of a model based on TAM theory to understand how small businesses should skilfully implement SC.

The TAM theory suggests that people will use technology if they believe that it will be useful in improving productivity and providing satisfaction in the execution of tasks

(Samarasinghe & Silva, 2019). Accordingly, technology acceptance behaviour is determined by perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), and attitude towards using technology as illustrated in figure 1 (Davis, 1989). Research done by Hajli, Sims, Zadeh and Richard (2017) explains that due to the rapid growth of social media platforms, it is difficult to understand how each of the platforms operate as each has unique characteristics that impact how the social commerce platform influences consumers' purchase behaviour. Ideally, therefore, the platform should be perceived as useful and easy to use to encourage use. Platforms that are seen useful and easy to use have shown to drive an increase in shopping activity on online platforms (Handarkho, 2020).

Figure 1: Adapted TAM



Source: Davis, 1989

2.3.2. Perceived platform usage in social commerce

Social commerce uses social media technologies and capabilities such as Facebook Marketplace, Instagram Shop and WhatsApp for business (to name a few) as an added business channel to target and sell to customers. These platforms have added shop now icons that allow for customers to click and shop without leaving the platform (Osatuyi & Turel, 2018). The emergence of Web 2.0 technologies has improved online as well as social presence through the rapid growth of social platforms which has helped businesses to provide customers with more efficient ways to transact with them (Al-Adwan & Kokash, 2019).

Social commerce, as explained above, is a form of commerce that makes use of technologies to support buying and selling activities. This means that it lacks the warmth and sociability that comes with face-to-face shopping experiences which is an important driver that impacts the purchase decision. It is considered anonymous, impersonal, and computerised (Lu, Fan & Zhou, 2016). Therefore, it is important for social technologies to have the ability to initiate and facilitate social interactions with buyers by providing them with a platform that is efficient and easy to use and one that is able to provide a better understanding and more information to facilitate consumers' online purchase decisions (Al-Adwan & Kokash, 2019).

For platform adoption to occur, the platform has to be perceived as useful. Perceived usefulness of technology suggests that using technology can improve task performance (Davis, 1989). Accordingly, Cha (2015) postulates that the use of technology has improved consumers' shopping experiences through the use of online platforms which have led to consumers participating in social commerce activities. Social commerce is seen as more significant than traditional e-commerce platforms due to the wider audience available to reach in a more personal and customised approach to improve the online shopping experience (e.g. efficient product search, tailored recommendations, and reviews) due to the Web 2.0 technology (Bernal-Jurado, Mozas-Moral, Fernández-Uclés, & Medina-Viruel, 2017). The online shopping process has evolved into a more collaborative platform that empowers consumers to have real-time discussions and generate better insights, increasing consumers' purchasing intentions (Hu, Chen, Davison & Liu, 2021).

Additionally, the platform must be perceived as easy to use. Research on the adoption of technology by Kinard, Capella, and Kinard (2009) suggests that customer anxiety about technology, readiness to adopt technology, and perceived performance and satisfaction with the use of technology are key contributors to technology adoption. Previous literature stated that consumers are more willing to participate in online platforms if they perceive the site to be easy to use (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The study of Whirty (2017) revealed that 30% of consumers did not complete their online purchases due to the site being slow, the system hung,

or contained confusing information. As such, platform design is crucial when implementing social commerce.

Furthermore, both technology adoption factors, expectancy, and effort factors must be considered when developing a social commerce platform. Performance expectancy of technology refers to the expectation that the use of technology would be helpful, while effort expectancy refers to the ease of using technology facilitates the use of technology (Alnoor et al., 2021). Paying attention to technology acceptance factors facilitates the formation of positive attitudes, increased loyalty, and positive behavioural intentions as the experience of using technology improves trust in online platforms (Cha, 2015). Moreover, social commerce sites must be simple and easy to navigate to prevent consumers' distrust of the platform (Bernal-Jurado et al., 2017).

Existing research suggests that there are limited studies on social commerce adoption by small businesses (Abed, 2020). Unlike larger businesses, small businesses are challenged by the lack of financial resources and the lack of expert knowledge and management concerning the adoption of technology (Cerchione & Esposito, 2017). Additionally, studies have found that attitude and self-efficacy are the two factors that can either promote or inhibit the adoption of social commerce platforms by small business owners (Abed, 2020). Therefore, the study proposes that:

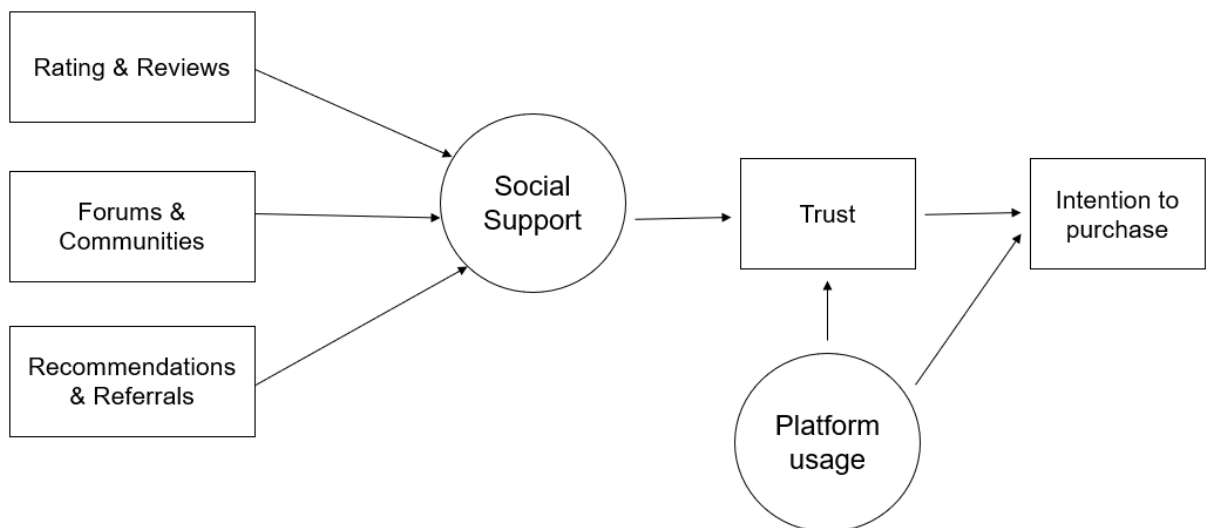
Hypothesis 2: Small business owners do not consider the importance of their conduct on social commerce platforms in terms of the optimisation of social platforms from which they could derive multiple benefits.

2.4. Social Commerce Adoption Model

In addition to the TAM theory and platform usage as drivers of social commerce, Hajli (2012), introduced the Social Commerce Adoption Model (SCAM) which explains the predictors of social commerce adoption, namely, ratings and reviews, forums and

communities, and recommendations and referrals as social commerce constructs that influence trust in social commerce platforms and ultimately influence consumers' purchase intention. These constructs are used as a platform to communicate with customers and to allow them to communicate with each other to increase levels of trust which is a key driver for the adoption of social commerce (Hajli, 2012). Chen and Shen (2015) further expanded on the social commerce constructs and grouped the constructs together as social support, which is a key driver for the implementation of social commerce. Both platform use and social support are important in generating trust, which is another key driver for the successful implementation of social commerce. Therefore, for social commerce adoption platform use, social support and trust are important drivers that small business owners must be aware of. Figure 2 presents an adapted social commerce adoption model.

Figure 2: Adapted social commerce adoption model



Source: Hajli, 2012

2.4.1. Social Support as a driver of social commerce

Social support elements have had significant impact on social commerce purchase intentions through the presence of virtual groups and communities where customers rate, review, recommend or refer each other to products and services (Sheikh, Yezheng, Islam, Hameed & Khan, 2019). Social support does not only have a significant impact on buyer to buyer relationship, it also enhanced the relationship between buyer and seller which has led to an increase in trust in the seller's social commerce platform which in turn encouraged customers to use the social commerce site (Sheikh et al., 2019).

Social support is a critical component of social commerce that forms part of the behavioural incentives toward participation in social commerce (Hu, Huang, Zhong, Davison & Zhao, 2016). It refers to the resources or physical help provided by another person through an interactive process between groups of individuals using social media networks (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). The two types of social support that are prominent in social commerce as highlighted in the study by Liang, Ho, Li, and Turban (2011), are *informational social support* and *emotional social support*.

Informational social support culminates when social communities that are formed share product-related information, and platform experiences, as well as their reviews on post-purchases, which exerts significant and positive impact on other community member's intention to use social commerce (Chen & Shen, 2015). Additionally, the outcome is related to the user's information exchange in which word of mouth (WOM) plays a critical role. However, the success of WOM relies on source credibility and the interactive relationship amongst the individuals (Chen & Shen, 2015). Therefore, when there is strong information social support, consumers are more likely to seek advice from a social community group when they require information, which in turn leads to them participating in social commerce activities.

Emotional social support refers to the psychological needs which reinforce consumers' positive perceptions and provokes hedonistic emotions towards social commerce (Hu et al., 2021). Emotional social support hence satisfies consumers'

intrinsic needs playing an indirect role compared to informational support which is considered secondary (Hu et al., 2021). This is consistent with the belief that social commerce users have a higher regard for the important information that they gather which can improve their shopping experience.

Social support is effective in building a sense of community on social media platforms which is an important driver for the success of social commerce. Social support has led to social community development which increased customer engagement and had a significant influence on purchase intentions on social commerce sites (Molinillo, Anaya-Sánchez & Liébana-Cabanillas, 2020). Businesses that have previously adopted social commerce generated customer reviews and recommendations of products at least once a month with many customers making a purchase decision after reading the reviews or obtaining advice from their online peers (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay & Richard, 2017).

Information exchange activities depend on social interaction to positively influence people's perception of social commerce (Liang et al., 2011). Accordingly, source credibility and social interactions are two crucial social commerce factors that will have an impact on consumer's perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and social support during social commerce activities (Liang et al., 2011). Therefore, source credibility and social interactions are crucial requirements for trust and social support as drivers of social commerce. Hence the hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Strong social support on social commerce platforms facilitates the attraction and retention of customers on social commerce platforms.

2.4.2. Trust in online platforms – as a driver of social commerce

In the social commerce context, trust has been defined as the willingness of the user to trust in the ability, integrity, predictability, and belief in the seller to act to the benefit of its customers (Kim & Park, 2013). Lin, Wang and Hajli (2019) further indicated that to trust a person, means to depend on them with the belief that the person's opinions and decisions are sensible and unflinching. This implies that a person can rely on

another to act according to their expectation. Trust is a challenge faced by online environments largely due to the nature of online platforms which are based on user-generated information and lack face-to-face interactions. It is therefore crucial to mitigate the risk and insecurity barriers that are associated with the online environment (Alnoor et al., 2021). The study of Herrando, Jimenez-Martinez and Hoyos (2019) indicated that, consumers need to be less concerned about risks associated with online transactions and business owners must try to initiate a safe and comfortable environment.

The perceived risks in online platforms are financial risk, convenience risk, non-delivery risk and product risk which have shown to have had a significant impact on online shopping behaviour - the greater the perceived risk in social commerce platforms, the lower the participation in social commerce platforms - but if managed better resulted in an increase in consumer participation in social commerce platforms (Wai, Dastane, Johari & Ismail, 2019).

Trust in social commerce is built through various aspects, such as building a social presence, technology acceptance factors, simple social commerce sites, and enhanced security measures. Social presence is defined as a website that has socially aligned images and rich content that provides more information for transparency on the web which prevents suspicious behaviours and helps reduce the distance between buyers and sellers (Alnoor et al., 2021). Hajli (2015) posits that the absence of human interaction requires a social presence to be created to build trust amongst business owners and consumers, to inspire hedonic motivations and positively enhance trust and enjoyment of the social commerce site.

Technology acceptance factors plays an important role in building consumers trust in online platforms through the consumers perceived usage and perceived ease of use regarding the social commerce platform. Paying attention to technology acceptance factors facilitated the formation of positive attitudes, increased loyalty, and positive behavioural intentions as the experience of using technology improves

trust in online platforms (Cha, 2015). Moreover, social commerce sites must be simple and easy to navigate to prevent consumers' distrust of the platform (Bernal-Jurado et al., 2017).

In addition to the perceived risk factors that affects consumers trust in online platforms, privacy concerns regarding personal information and payment information also played a role in consumers trust regarding the social commerce platform usage. Previous studies in several developing countries like Malaysia have struggled to adopt social commerce due to online theft, which had a negative impact on consumers' and businesses' trust in social commerce platforms. Therefore, business owners must create a sense of security that advocates transparency amongst consumers in their sharing and exchange of information, experiences, advice, and opinions. Information provided by users is considered more trustworthy, accurate, reliable and valid than when shared from the business point of view (Herrando et al., 2019). Cheng and Shiu (2019), explains that if small business owners are more aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, they are more likely to enhance their involvement in social commerce sites to attract customers through social support which in turn builds consumer trust.

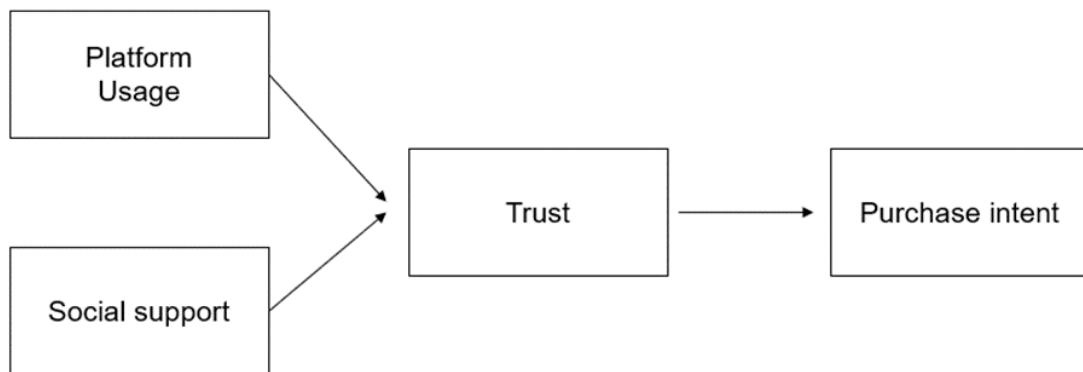
Building consumers trust in online platforms is vital as more and more consumers have been using social media as a source of product and/or service-related information platforms to assist them in their purchase decisions (Lin et al., 2019). Abed (2018) affirms that social influence and trust will alter behaviour and purchase intent on social commerce sites, therefore it is imperative for businesses to ensure that they have all the rudiments in place to enhance consumers trust on social commerce sites. Therefore, the following was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Building consumers' trust in social commerce is important for small businesses to increase consumers' purchase intentions

From a business perspective, Yahia et al. (2018) have identified six criteria that businesses required to work on to build trust and increase purchase intent on social commerce platforms, namely, reputation, price advantage, social interactions,

product differentiation, language, and hedonic efforts. The study showed that reputation and price advantage had the strongest positive impact on trust and are two focus areas for business when engaging in social commerce activities (Yahia, et al., 2018). These results were in line with a previous study done by Hajli (2015), which demonstrated that social support improved trust through relationship quality, which impacted reputation, satisfaction, and engagement which positively influenced SC. The relationships among the constructs are indicated in Figure 3

Figure 3: Drivers of social commerce adapted from TAM and SCAM



Source: Davis, 1989; Hajli, 2012

2.5. Benefits of social commerce for small businesses

Small businesses play a vital role in the country's economy as they represent the largest sector of companies (Taylor, 2019). However, unlike large companies, small businesses are challenged by limited financial resources, economic changes, globalisation. Increased competition, changes in consumer needs and rapid technological development (Puklavec, Oliveira & Popovic, 2018). To compete effectively they need to find more innovative and cost-effective ways of doing business. The use of social media and social commerce provides numerous opportunities that are low cost, require minimal information technology skills and have low barriers to entry (Abed, Dwivedi & Williams, 2017).

Social commerce allows small businesses to advertise and promote their businesses in a more cost-effective way, reach more consumers and create wider networks versus traditional marketing tactics (Guha, Harrigan & Soutar, 2018). In addition, employing social commerce as part of their business strategies allowed for the building of brand communities which enabled customers to provide reviews and feedback regarding products and services which served as market intelligence that business owners used to improve their businesses (Abed, 2018). Furthermore, employing social commerce activities built consumer's trust and loyalty which led to better customer relationships which in turn boosted business performance (Guha et al., 2018).

Although social commerce presents a host of benefits for small businesses, not many have adopted social commerce as part of their business strategies. The findings from the study done by Abed (2020) concluded that social commerce adoption amongst small businesses have been low due to the perceived usefulness of social commerce that small business owners are not fully aware of, safety and security concerns, and technological know-how.

2.6. Trust, social support and platform usage as drivers of social commerce

The SCAM model suggests that social support, platform usage and trust are the key drivers of social commerce from a customer perspective. The study by Yahia et al. (2018) confirmed the effect of trust and platform usage on social commerce from a business perspective, which had a significant, positive influence on customers purchase intention. Additionally, social support aided in building trust and enhancing platform usage essentials that were critical for social commerce adoption (Yahia et al., 2018). The drivers of social commerce from the customer's perspective are aligned to the drivers of social commerce from the business perspective. It further

suggests that small business owners should be cognisant of the drivers when implementing social commerce for their businesses as this is what will increase customers purchase intentions.

The study further elaborated that social commerce adoption by small business owners was low due to trust factors associated with online platforms, social support requirements, and the perceived platform usage choices which had overshadowed the potential benefits of social commerce (Yahia et al., 2018). Cheng and Shiu (2019), explains that if small business owners are more aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, they are more likely to enhance their involvement in social commerce sites to attract customers through social support which in turn builds consumer trust. Hence the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and their consideration to enhance trust on social commerce platforms.

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the benefits of social commerce and their regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from.

2.7. Summary

As there is limited research on the adoption of social commerce by small businesses, this study focussed on the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. Research by Yahia et al (2018) and then by Abed (2020), have concluded that whilst social commerce presents a host of benefits for small businesses, many

have been reluctant to employ social commerce as part of their business strategies. Literature indicated that small businesses are still reluctant to implement social commerce in their business due to the perceived complexity associated with successful implementation due to lack of know-how and trust issues that overshadow the potential benefits of social commerce. Hence, small business owners are not fully aware of the potential benefits that social commerce holds for small businesses. This is a pity, considering the current challenges that they are facing amid the current market dynamics that they are operating in. Two theoretical perspectives, namely TAM and SCAM theories (Davis, 1989; Hajli, 2012) provide useful insights for small businesses to take into consideration to adopt and skilfully implement SC in their businesses.

3. Chapter 3: Research Questions and Hypotheses

3.1. Introduction

The literature review identified perceived platform usage, social support and trust as key constructs for the successful implementation (driving) of social commerce. The study done by Yahia et al. (2018) affirms that platform usage, social support and trust are key drivers of social commerce for consumers. This study investigates these constructs as drivers of social commerce in a small business context. The research questions and related hypotheses following a detailed literature review, are as follows:

3.2. Research questions and hypotheses

The following research questions and related hypotheses that were formulated after a thorough literature review, guided the study

Research Question 1: How aware are small business owners of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses?

Hypothesis 1: Small business owners are not fully aware of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses.

Research Question 2: How important is the development of social commerce platforms to small business owners in terms of the optimisation of the potential usage that may derive benefits from social commerce?

Hypothesis 2: Small business owners do not consider the importance of their conduct on social commerce platforms in terms of the optimisation of social platforms from which they could derive multiple benefits.

Research Question 3: How important is social support in driving small business owners' usage of social commerce platforms?

Hypothesis 3: Strong social support on social commerce platforms facilitates the attraction and retention of customers on social commerce platforms.

Research Question 4: How important is building consumers' trust in social commerce for business owners?

Hypothesis 4: Building consumers' trust in social commerce is important for small businesses to increase consumers' purchase intentions

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and their considerations to enhance trust in their social commerce platforms?

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and their consideration to enhance trust on social commerce platforms.

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and small business owners' regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms?

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the benefits of social commerce and their regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms.

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from it?

Hypothesis 7: There is a positive relationship between small businesses' awareness of the benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from.

3.3. Conclusion

This study sought to identify the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. The above stated research questions and hypotheses guided the research.

4. Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This quantitative research aims to provide insights and recommendations to small business owners in South Africa concerning the optimisation of SC as a tool of communication with customers within their businesses in the future. This research specifically intended to explore the relevance of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers of SC for small businesses in South Africa. Being descriptive research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), the study explores selected characteristics and trends pertaining to a particular phenomenon, seeking to describe the drivers of social commerce for small business in South Africa. As this topic is relatively new in research in the South African space, new insights regarding SC drivers for small businesses in South Africa could emerge. According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), this represents an exploratory research design.

A quantitative approach was chosen, using an electronic survey to gather data from small business owners in South Africa regarding their awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of perceived platform use, social support, and trust in skilfully implementing social commerce in their businesses.

This chapter presents the strategy used to gather answers to the research questions. Details provided in the chapter, include the choice of methodology, research design, population sampling, unit of analysis and, sampling size. The research instrument is also explicated. In addition, the data gathering approach, validity and reliability of the data, processes to ensure ethical conduct, as well as the envisaged analysis and interpretation of the results are explained.

4.2. Research philosophy and approach

The positivist philosophy was chosen to provide objective unambiguous, and accurate information that was free from any bias due to human intervention (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As such, the study was quantitative in nature and was conducted in the form of an online survey, aiming to gather numerical data (Ryan, 2018). As is typically associated with positivistic research, this study was guided by the research questions that were derived from existing and recent literature on the topic (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

A deductive approach was used to test existing theory on the topics of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers for SC, to explore their relevance in a South African context (Hyde, 2000). With the deductive approach, data was collected and tested using statistical analysis to confirm or reject hypotheses that were deduced from existing theory (Woicehyn & Daellenbach, 2018), particularly a set of assumptions deduced from the study done by Yahia et al. (2018). The study is quantitative in nature as numerical data is being collected and analysed statistically (Claydon, 2015) in a new context.

4.3. Methodological choice and strategy

A mono method quantitative survey was used to collect quantifiable data gathered by means of a structured questionnaire (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), that was adapted from previous research that was constructed from a consumer point of view, while this study involved business owners. The survey was a single-phase, electronic endeavour. Therefore, an electronic survey presenting a structured questionnaire was used, which focused on the key constructs of the study, namely consumer trust, social support, and the use of diverse social platforms, and was disseminated via email or social media platforms to the selected sample.

4.4. Time horizon

This study was cross-sectional, as it had to be completed as part of a compulsory academic endeavour, within a fixed time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Data was collected at a single point in time.

4.5. Proposed research methodology

4.5.1. Population

The purpose of this study was to determine the drives of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. Therefore, the population for this study was defined as small business owners in South Africa (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). It is estimated that there are approximately 2.6 million small businesses in South Africa (Economic Cooperation and Development, 2022). This study aimed to target small businesses in South Africa, irrespective of whether they have used social commerce to further their business operations, however they needed to be aware of the concept of social commerce. For small businesses, there has been only a few success stories of skilfully using SC, yet SC has the potential to offer immense value to their organizations if adapted and adopted suitably (Yahia et al., 2018). Small businesses in the context of this research, is defined as having a maximum of fifty employees (Cloete, Courtney & Fintz, 2002).

4.5.2. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was small business owners in the Gauteng metropolitan that could be approached by the researcher to participate in the survey on the condition that they were aware of social commerce platforms, even though they may not necessarily have used them to further their businesses.

4.5.3. Sampling method and size

The sample must be representative of the population to make inferences regarding the population in relation to existing theory (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The sample for this study was small business owners or managers that operated in South Africa

in the Gauteng area. This research implemented non-probability, purposive sampling with a clear rationale for the specific inclusion of certain individuals over others (Taherdoost, 2016). This entailed specific criteria, namely being a small business with no more than 50 employees, operating in Gauteng, and being aware of social media as a communication tool to be able to provide answers to the research questions. The sample size had to be large enough to accurately represent the population as this played a significant role in the validity of the research (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). This research aimed to recruit approximately 150 respondents selected against the sample criteria.

4.5.4. Measurement Instrument

The measuring instrument was adapted from previous studies regarding the characteristics of trust, social support, and ease of platform use. The questionnaire was developed for online completion, using Google Forms. The questionnaire took approximately ten minutes to complete and comprised of the following sections:

- 1) The **cover page** provided an overview of the aim and objective of the survey. It noted that participation in the survey was voluntary and it provided the estimated duration of the survey. In line with POPI Act, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Researcher and supervisor details were shared should any queries or concerns arise. Respondents were assured that no penalty would be applied if they chose to drop out of the study during completion of the questionnaire.

- 2) **Screening questions** to eliminate respondents that did not qualify to participate in the survey, were:
 - 2.1. Are you 18 years and older?
 - 2.2. Are you a small business owner, with no more than 50 employees?
 - 2.3. Do you operate in the Gauteng area?
 - 2.4. Are you aware of social commerce (The use of online or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, to buy and sell products and services)?

- 3) **Section A** tested the demographics of the population. Demographic information was gathered to test relationships, for example links between time in business, and the responses to the constructs being tested (Taherdoost, 2016).

- 4) **Section B** covered the benefits of social commerce (Abed, 2020; Yahia et al., 2018) and focused on the main variables relating to the benefits of SC. A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used, corresponding respectively to “1 = Not at all aware, 2 = Slightly aware, 3 = Somewhat aware, 4 = Moderately aware and 5 = Very aware”.

- 5) **Section C** focused on the importance of trust in social commerce (Abed, 2020; Yahia et al., 2018) and tested the main variable relating to trust in adopting social commerce. A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used, corresponding respectively to “1 = Not important at all, 2 = Low importance, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Important and 5 = Very important”.

- 6) **Section D** focused on the importance of social support in social commerce (Abed, 2020; Yahia et al., 2018) and tested the main drivers of social support to successfully implement social commerce. A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5, was used, corresponding respectively to “1 = Not important at all, 2 = Low importance, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Important and 5 = Very important”.

- 7) **Section E** focused on the importance of social platform usage in social commerce (Yahia et al, 2018) and tested the drivers of platform usage in social commerce. A five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5, was used, corresponding respectively to “1 = Not at all aware, 2 = Slightly aware, 3 = Somewhat aware, 4 = Moderately aware and 5 = Very aware”.

4.6. Reliability and Validity

According to Pallant (2007), research validity refers to the ability to which a measurement scale measures what it was intended to measure, and reliability refers to the consistent results of the measure. In this study, validity and reliability apply to the constructs of trust, social support and platform usage.

To test the validity of the measurement scales, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was done. EFA was used as this is a newly adapted survey and the interrelationships among the set of variables needed to be explored (Pallant, 2007). The extraction method used, was the Principle Axis Factoring (PAF) which does not make any distribution assumptions (Taherdoost, Sahibuddin & Jalaliyoon, 2022). With Likert-type scale data, there is no normality due to the data being skewed (Louangrath & Sutanapong, 2018), as such, normal distribution was not required when using PAF (Taherdoost et al., 2022). The first Order factor analysis using Varimax Rotation produced a simplified factor structure (Zhang, Hattori & Trichtinger, 2022).

In order to test the consistency of the responses, internal consistency and reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha measures for trust, social support and platform usage (Field, 2013). The Cronbach's Alpha of a scale should ideally be over 0.7 for factor to be reliable (Pallant, 2007). In the event that the is lower than 0.7, the Inter-Item Correlations Mean had to be greater than 0.2 for the factor and related content to be reliable (Field, 2013). Only one factor produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.648, with an Inter-Item Correlations Mean = 0.257. Hence all factors were considered reliable.

4.7. Data gathering

The electronic questionnaire was shared via email, or a social media platform such as WhatsApp or LinkedIn for convenience with small business owners based on the selection criteria. A period of three weeks was allowed to distribute and receive feedback. The researcher engaged with small business owners on social platforms and shared the survey with them. Additionally, snowballing was utilised as the researcher contacted small businesses on a convenient-to-reach basis, asking them to volunteer the names of other businesses in their area, or to share the survey with other business owners they were familiar with and who met the stipulated criteria for participation (Emerson, 2015).

A pilot test was done prior to distributing the final survey with 20 individuals to check if the research tool performed well. Pallant (2007) recommends pilot testing to ensure the research tool is accurate. All issues that stemmed from the pilot test, namely rephrasing of certain questions for clarity and the use of simpler words for better understanding, were addressed prior to distribution to the target population.

The Google Forms link was shared via email, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook with 170 potential small businesses in the Gauteng area. A total of 150 useful responses were received within 3 weeks, which was large enough for the statistical analysis.

4.8. Data Analysis

The data must be interpreted first before conclusions are drawn (Wegner 2020), which will therefore be analysed statistically using the statistics tool SPSS. A qualified statistician was consulted to guide statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) were used to describe the characteristics of the sample which is then used to make inferences about what the population might think from the sample data (Wegner, 2020), which will enable the researcher to understand the drivers of social commerce in the small business context in South Africa.

Being a quantitative study, descriptive data analysis was performed (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), using SPSS. The data was assessed against set criteria and incomplete data were removed. Data coding followed. Firstly, demographic results were summarised, described and explained. Validity and reliability tests were then conducted. Validity was tested using the Principle Axis Factoring (PAF) (Taherdoost et al., 2022). Reliability was tested for trust, social support and platform usage using the Cronbach's Alpha measures (Field, 2013) that had to be > 0.7 (4 out of the 5 factors met this requirement; for the fifth factor, the Inter-Item Correlation Mean was > 0.2 , and therefore, all factors were deemed reliable.

A correlation analysis was done to test if a relationship between the constructs exist (Allua & Thompson, 2009). A Pearson's r correlation was used to describe the relationship, the significance, and the strength of the relationship between selected constructs (Allua & Thompson, 2009). Statistical significance using regression was done to determine if all variables are significant predictors (Wegner, 2020). Given the sample size of this study, regression analysis with interaction amongst the constructs was also performed to measure the accuracy of the strength of the relationships.

4.9. Quality Controls

Ensuring the quality of the data is of utmost importance, as it is significant in the validity and reliability of the research (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). Research validity refers to the accuracy of the method used to measure what it is intended to measure, and reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement results (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). In this study, validity and reliability applied to constructs of trust, social support, and platform usage.

Quality measures that were implemented are summarised as follows:

- 1) To ensure theoretical validity, a thorough literature review was conducted on recent and good quality journals, to identify constructs in social commerce that

formed the basis of the conceptual framework (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). All the references are acknowledged properly in a reference list, while proper citation within the document was done.

- 2) The constructs identified were appropriately captured in the measuring instrument and content validity, criteria validity and construct validity were assessed (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).
- 3) The reliability of the questionnaire refers to the consistency of the measure. A pilot test was conducted to check the questionnaire for understandability and ease of completion before distribution to a larger scale to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire to allow adjustment of the questionnaire based on the pilot sample feedback (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).
- 4) Selection criteria for the sample was formulated to ensure that the appropriate sample is approached (Uprichard, 2013).
- 5) The researcher recruited small businesses on social media platforms and requested their permission to share the survey with them. They were also informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary and they could terminate their participation in the survey at any time. In addition, the snowballing approach was utilised as the researcher also contacted small businesses on a convenient-to-reach basis and then asked them to volunteer the names of other businesses in their area, or to share the survey with other small business owners they may know (Emerson, 2015).
- 6) As Google Forms were used to set up and distribute the survey, it was able to monitor responses to prevent multiple responses from the same IP address as this would have impacted the validity of the results.
- 7) Once the survey was live, data was extracted every week to assess data quality and completeness.
- 8) Data was stored on a cloud storage account as well as on an external hard drive for security purposes.
- 9) A qualified statistician was consulted to guide the statistical analysis and to ensure accuracy of the data analysis process.

4.10. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are critical when conducting research that involves collecting primary data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). For this research, the following strict ethical standards were considered prior to starting the research, the data collection process, data analysis, reporting and storage of the data:

- 1) Before commencement of data collection, ethical clearance was requested and approved by the Ethics Committee at GIBS.
- 2) Academic integrity was upheld by refraining from plagiarism and following appropriate referencing standards.
- 3) Respondents were fully informed about the nature of the research and was allowed to freely consent to participating, without any pressure to continue if they rather wanted to drop out.
- 4) No incentives or coercion was used to encourage participation.
- 5) Subjects had to be 18 years and older to participate.
- 6) Nobody that had any personal relationship with the researcher was allowed to participate.
- 7) In honouring the POPI Act, consent was gained from all those concerned and only relevant information relating to the research was collected. All information was stored in the cloud, using security measures such as non-disclosure of identities and company details.
- 8) Data will be stored in a protected file at GIBS for a period of 10 years.

4.11. Limitations

Eventual generalisation of the results to the South African population is a limitation, as this research is not representative of the population of South African small businesses. Unfortunately, the sample size that had to be recruited within a very limited time span is not a true representation of the social commerce population in

the country. Thus, this research cannot be generalised. The second limitation is that this research was limited to South Africa, and therefore, the results cannot be generalised to social commerce vendors in other countries. Thirdly, this research focused mainly on social commerce drivers and cannot be applied to other electronic commerce, or online shopping platforms. Lastly, a cross-sectional time horizon was used, given the time constraints of this study. A longitudinal study may be worthwhile in future, considering the rapid evolution of social media and social commerce.

5. Chapter 5: Results

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the statistical results obtained from the data that was gathered via a questionnaire using Google Forms. Data were collected from 168 respondents. Thereafter the data was checked against the pre-requisites, and respondents that did not meet the criteria were removed from the data set, producing a sample set of $N = 150$ that were coded for statistical analysis using SPSS.

The below sections provide the results of the research in the following sequence (1) descriptive statistics; (2) data validation using exploratory factor analysis (EFA); and (3) correlation and regression modelling. EFA tested the construct validity and the reliability of the measurement scales. Thereafter, correlation analysis was done to test possible relationships between selected constructs, while regression analysis was done to measure the accuracy of the strength of the relationship between the constructs (Allua & Thompson, 2009).

5.2. Preliminary data analysis

5.2.1. Data preparation and coding

Data collection took a period of three weeks. Thereafter, data were cleaned, and 150 responses met the criteria to participate in the survey. Data was collected using a five-point Likert-type scales and were numerically coded for analysis using SPSS.

5.2.2. Data screening

The following table 1 confirms that the data analysis was done on all respondents that met the survey criteria which were; participants had to be 18 years and older, have a small business that comprised of up to 50 employees, operate in the Gauteng area and be aware of social commerce.

Table 1: Survey criteria

SQ1 Are you 18 years and older?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	150	100.0	100.0	100.0
SQ2 Are you a small business owner? (2 – 50 employees)				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	150.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
SQ3 Are you operating in the Gauteng Area?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	150	100.0	100.0	100.0
SQ4 Are you aware of social commerce? (The use of online or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, to buy and sell products and services)				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	150	100.0	100.0	100.0

5.3. Descriptive statistics

The following table 2 shows the percentage of small businesses that have social media pages (88%), and those that do not (12%). Hereby, near 90% of small businesses in the Gauteng area have indeed adopted social media marketing as part of their business strategies.

Table 2: Number of businesses that have social media pages

Does your business have social media pages?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	132	88	88	88
No	18	12	12	100
Total	150	100	100	

The following table 3 indicates the number of small businesses that have a social commerce site (51.3%) and those that do not have a social commerce site (48.7%). The results illustrate that although a large number of small businesses may have adopted social media in their businesses, almost half of them do not have a social commerce site linked to their social media pages.

Table 3: Number of businesses that have a social commerce site

Does your business have a social commerce site or an online shop that makes use of social media?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	77	51.3	51.3	51.3
No	73	48.7	48.7	100
Total	150	100	100	

The following table 4 describes the number of years of social media and/or social commerce experience that small business owners acquire. Hereby two thirds in the sample of small business owners had between 1 year and 6 years of experience at the time of the study, which indicates the nascency of the adoption of social media and social commerce in small businesses.

Table 4: Number of years of social media/social commerce experience

How many years of social media/ social commerce experience do you have?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	27	18	18	18
1-3 years	57	38	38	56
4-6 years	42	28	28	84
7-9 years	10	6.7	6.7	90.7
10 years+	14	9.3	9.3	100
Total	150	100	100	

Results for **small business owner's awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce** is presented in tables 5 and 6. Based on the means, small business owners' awareness was relatively high across all the items ($M > 4$), indicating that social commerce as a valuable platform to advertise their business and products/services, is a familiar phenomenon (Means ranged between $M = 4.23$, and $M = 4.48$), which is encouraging. The average response for question B4 ranged between moderately aware and very aware. The benefit they are least aware of, is B3, namely "social commerce allows businesses to offer products that they cannot always have in their physical geographic area", but $M = 4.23$ nevertheless indicates a relatively strong awareness among small businesses.

Table 5: Awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce (N = 150)

		Not at all aware	Slightly aware	Somewhat aware	Moderately aware	Very aware
B1 Social commerce holds potential benefits for my business	Count	4	8	15	22	101
	Row N %	2.7%	5.3%	10.0%	14.7%	67.3%
B2 Social commerce allows me to offer a range/ variety of products through my social commerce site to attract more customers	Count	3	6	18	22	101
	Row N %	2.0%	4.0%	12.0%	14.7%	67.3%
B3 Social commerce allows me to offer products that I cannot always have in my physical geographic area	Count	6	5	24	29	86
	Row N %	4.0%	3.3%	16.0%	19.3%	57.3%
B4 Social commerce is a valuable platform to advertise my products and/or business	Count	2	3	10	26	109
	Row N %	1.3%	2.0%	6.7%	17.3%	72.7%
B5 Social commerce is a more affordable way of advertising my business versus traditional advertising methods which cost a lot more	Count	1	4	18	27	100
	Row N %	0.7%	2.7%	12.0%	18.0%	66.7%
B6 Social media platforms can be optimised to generate new business ideas to expand and grow my business	Count	4	7	19	25	95
	Row N %	2.7%	4.7%	12.7%	16.7%	63.3%

Table 6: Mean awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce (N = 150)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
B4	4.58	5.00	5	0.81
B5	4.47	5.00	5	0.86
B2	4.41	5.00	5	0.98
B1	4.39	5.00	5	1.04
B6	4.33	5.00	5	1.04
B3	4.23	5.00	5	1.09

Results pertaining to the importance of building consumers' trust in social commerce platforms is presented in tables 7 and 8. All the items listed, were considered relatively to very important, but the two most important considerations concerned having safe and secure payment methods, as well as keeping their promises ($M > 4.7$). Although still considered important ($M > 4$), the least important

considerations on the list, were: to allow customers to freely express their views, as well as maintaining privacy settings on the platforms. The least important for them, was to offer a differentiated range of products to boost trust in the business (M<4).

Table 7: Trust in social commerce platforms (N = 150)

		Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
C7 Our company should gain consumers' trust on our social commerce platforms	Count	0	4	10	43	93
	Row N %	0.0%	2.7%	6.7%	28.7%	62.0%
C8 Privacy settings are required on my social commerce sites to enhance consumers' trust	Count	1	5	16	43	85
	Row N %	0.7%	3.3%	10.7%	28.7%	56.7%
C9 Keeping my promises to my online customers to secure their trust in my business	Count	0	1	2	31	116
	Row N %	0.0%	0.7%	1.3%	20.7%	77.3%
C10 Having safe and secure payment method options are required to enhance consumers' trust	Count	1	0	4	23	122
	Row N %	0.7%	0.0%	2.7%	15.3%	81.3%
C11 Allowing my customers to freely express themselves on my social platforms to win their trust	Count	2	7	14	48	79
	Row N %	1.3%	4.7%	9.3%	32.0%	52.7%
C12 A differentiated range of products are required online to boost consumers' trust in my business	Count	3	17	40	42	48
	Row N %	2.0%	11.3%	26.7%	28.0%	32.0%

Table 8: Mean trust in social commerce platforms (N = 150)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
C10	4.77	5.00	5	0.56
C9	4.75	5.00	5	0.51
C7	4.50	5.00	5	0.74
C8	4.37	5.00	5	0.86
C11	4.30	5.00	5	0.92
C12	3.77	4.00	5	1.08

Results pertaining to the **importance of social support on s-commerce platforms**, is presented in tables 9 and 10. Updating social commerce sites regularly with relevant information was the most important variable in driving social support in social commerce platforms seemed the most important consideration (M = 4.65), while offering emotional help and support was the least important (M = 3.65), and only moderately important to them.

Table 9: Importance of social support (N = 150)

		Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
D13 Connecting with my customers on social commerce platforms	Count	0	7	14	44	85
	Row N %	0.0%	4.7%	9.3%	29.3%	56.7%
D14 Encouraging customers' feedback	Count	1	6	6	49	88
	Row N %	0.7%	4.0%	4.0%	32.7%	58.7%
D15 Engaging with customers by responding to their feedback and comments on social commerce	Count	0	2	9	42	97
	Row N %	0.0%	1.3%	6.0%	28.0%	64.7%
D16 Updating social commerce platforms regularly with relevant information	Count	0	1	6	37	106
	Row N %	0.0%	0.7%	4.0%	24.7%	70.7%
D17 Offer emotional help and support on my social commerce platforms	Count	9	14	46	32	49
	Row N %	6.0%	9.3%	30.7%	21.3%	32.7%

Table 10: Mean importance of social support (N= 150)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
D16	4.65	5.00	5	0.59
D15	4.56	5.00	5	0.67
D14	4.45	5.00	5	0.81
D13	4.38	5.00	5	0.84
D17	3.65	4.00	5	1.20

The importance of platform use in social commerce, is quantitatively described in tables 11 and 12. Only one of the items, hence the least important consideration - concerning a feedback facility on the site to capture shoppers' comments on their experience - achieved an average score ($M < 4$). The three most important considerations ($M > 4.5$), concerned having a social commerce site that was practical and easy to use ($M = 4.63$); to ensure that the s-commerce site is compatible with multiple devices ($M = 4.62$); and selecting an appropriate s-commerce platform ($M = 4.59$). Small business owners therefore generally seem cognisant of measures to enhance platform use.

Table 11: Importance of platform usage (N = 150)

		Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
E18 Selecting the appropriate social commerce platform to use for my business communication.	Count	0	1	3	52	94
	Row N %	0.0%	0.7%	2.0%	34.7%	62.7%
E19 That my social commerce site is linked to a social media site or company website to facilitate consumers' understanding of my business	Count	0	2	15	50	83
	Row N %	0.0%	1.3%	10.0%	33.3%	55.3%
E20 To have a "shop now" or "click through" link included to make it easier for customers to get to know my business	Count	1	4	15	49	81
	Row N %	0.7%	2.7%	10.0%	32.7%	54.0%
E21 That my social commerce site is practical and easy to use	Count	1	0	5	41	103
	Row N %	0.7%	0.0%	3.3%	27.3%	68.7%
E22 That I offer a personal and customized approach to my social commerce site to keep my customers interested	Count	2	4	15	51	78
	Row N %	1.3%	2.7%	10.0%	34.0%	52.0%
E23 There is a feedback/ discussion tab on the social media platform for real time discussion among customers about my business operations	Count	4	13	32	47	54
	Row N %	2.7%	8.7%	21.3%	31.3%	36.0%
E24 That the social commerce site is compatible with different devices/ web applications to ensure that I reach as many consumers possible	Count	2	0	3	43	102
	Row N %	1.3%	0.0%	2.0%	28.7%	68.0%

Table 12: Mean importance of platform use (N = 150)

	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
E21	4.63	5.00	5	0.62
E24	4.62	5.00	5	0.66
E18	4.59	5.00	5	0.57
E19	4.43	5.00	5	0.73
E20	4.37	5.00	5	0.82
E22	4.33	5.00	5	0.86
E23	3.89	4.00	5	1.08

5.4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis was done to examine the reliability of the measurement instrument that was an adapted version of the original instrument, to pose the questions from the point of view of the businesses rather than the customers (Pallant, 2007). The extraction method used, was Principle Axis Factoring (PAF), which is most commonly used for Likert-type scale data, which is usually skewed data as respondents provide answers from a range on one end of the scale to the other (Pallant, 2007). PAF does not make any distribution assumptions, and therefore, no test for normality was done as normal distribution was not needed. Varimax rotation as extraction method was used to confirm the relationship amongst the factor at the first level and to minimise the number of variables to those with higher loadings (Pallant, 2007).

5.4.1. Validity

5.4.1.1 Validity of the independent variable (Section B – the awareness of the benefits of social commerce)

In factor analysis, the correlations per factor should be equal to or greater than 0.3 (Pallant, 2007). Table 13, presented in Appendix 1, confirms that the correlations per factor are >0.3. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures (KMO) should be >0.6

and the p-value should be <0.05 to support the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2007). Table 14, shown in Appendix 1, shows that the KMO Measure is 0.839 (which is greater than 0.60), and $p = 0.00$ which denotes that it is statistically significant, and supports the factorability of the correlation matrix. No items needed to be removed, as all items' MSA ranged between 0.769 and 0.909 (see table 15, in Appendix 1), which were greater than the required minimum of 0.60 (Pallant, 2007).

Communalities explain the variances across each item and must be >0.3 (Pallant, 2007). Table 16 in Appendix 1 depicts the communalities between all items, which ranged between 0.407 and 0.705, with more than a 30% shared variance between items as such no items needed to be removed.

Factors acknowledged, are identified based on an Eigenvalue of 1 or more (Pallant, 2007). *All items grouped into a single factor*, with an Eigenvalue of 3.852, hence >1 , explaining 64.19% of the variance in the data (see table 17, Appendix 1). Table 18 (see Appendix 1) explains the loading of the single factor extracted, using PAF.

5.4.1.2 Validity of the dependent variables (Section C, D, E – the constructs: trust, social support and platform use)

Sections C, D, and E of the questionnaire represented the dependent variables that were all grouped together for the factor analysis. To conduct EFA, the correlations should be equal to or greater than 0.3 (Pallant, 2007). Table 19 (see Appendix 1) confirms that factor analysis could be done because many correlations greater than 0.3.

In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures should be >0.6 and the p-value should be less than 0.05 to support the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2007). Table 20 in Appendix 1 shows that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure is 0.815, and $p = 0.00$ which denotes that it is significant and supports the factorability of the correlation matrix. No items needed to be removed as all items' MSAs ranged

between 0.735 and 0.917 (Table 21, Appendix 1). MSA values must be greater than 0.6 (Pallant, 2007).

Communalities explain the variances across each item and must be bigger than 0.3 (Pallant, 2007). Table 22, shown in Appendix 1 depicts the communalities between all items, which ranged between 0.319 and 0.926, with more than a 30% shared variance between items as such no items needed to be removed.

Coherent items extracted per factor must have an Eigenvalue of 1 or more (Pallant, 2007). Theoretically, there were three factors: trust, social support, and platform usage. As seen in table 23 in Appendix 1, empirically, five factors were extracted with Eigenvalues greater than 1, which explained 64.57% of the variance in the data before rotation and 51.66% after rotation. Five factors that represent the **empirical factors** were extracted as shown in table 24. These factors were labelled as:

Factor 1: The importance of platform usage in social support.

Factor 2: The importance of social support in social support.

Factor 3: Building consumers trust by allowing consumers to freely express themselves and by offering emotional support on social commerce platforms.

Factor 4: Building consumers trust through safe and secure payment methods.

Factor 5: Building consumers trust through privacy settings in social commerce.

Table 24: Dependent Variables Rotated Factor Matrix (Empirical factors)

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
E20	0.692	0.038	0.138	0.140	0.251
E22	0.667	0.211	0.395	-0.066	-0.021
E21	0.650	0.033	0.224	0.161	0.175
E19	0.546	0.152	0.046	0.133	-0.071
E23	0.536	0.140	0.431	-0.062	0.010
E24	0.524	0.154	-0.137	0.308	0.153
E18	0.465	0.371	0.061	0.438	0.028
D13	0.153	0.918	0.160	0.105	0.154
D15	0.120	0.638	0.259	0.199	0.119
D14	0.259	0.545	0.303	0.231	0.233
D16	0.307	0.373	0.069	0.219	0.261
D17	0.220	0.106	0.703	-0.050	0.158
C11	0.136	0.311	0.658	0.533	0.078
C12	0.072	0.262	0.451	0.203	-0.026
C10	0.121	0.068	0.076	0.647	0.149
C9	0.117	0.219	0.055	0.501	0.150
C7	-0.013	0.239	0.010	0.093	0.600
C8	0.163	0.042	0.098	0.159	0.537
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.					
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. ^a					
a. Rotation converged in 11 iterations.					

5.4.2. Reliability

5.4.2.1 Theoretical reliability

The reliability was tested for the theoretical constructs/factors trust, social support, and platform usage using the Cronbach's Alpha measures (Field, 2013) that had to be >0.7. The one factor that did not meet the requirement, had an Inter-Item Correlation Mean >0.2, and therefore, all factors were deemed reliable (see table 25).

Table 25: Theoretical reliabilities

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Inter-item correlation mean
The Importance of Trust in Social Commerce	0.648	0.259
The Importance of Social Support in Social Commerce	0.753	
The Importance of Social Platform Usage:	0.817	

5.4.2.2 Empirical reliability

Reliability on the six empirical factors (section B, which produced a single factor, and section C, D, E (which produced 5 factors) were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha measures (Field, 2013) that had to be > 0.7 , indicating that three of the six empirical factors' coefficients were > 0.7 . The three factors that did not meet the minimum requirement, had an Inter-Item Correlation Mean > 0.2 , and therefore, all factors were deemed reliable (see table 26).

Table 26: Empirical reliabilities

Factor	Factor Name	Cronbach's Alpha	Inter-item correlation mean
Section B - Factor 1	Awareness of potential benefits of social commerce	0.883	
Section C, D, E - Factor 1	Importance of platform use in social commerce	0.816	
Section C, D, E - Factor 2	Importance of social support in social commerce	0.816	
Section C, D, E - Factor 3	Building trust by allowing consumers to freely express themselves and by offering emotional support on social commerce platforms	0.695	0.448
Section C, D, E - Factor 4	Building trust through safe and secure payment methods.	0.549	0.381
Section C, D, E - Factor 5	Building trust through privacy settings in social commerce.	0.526	0.361

After contemplation of the theoretical and the empirical factors, it was decided to rather proceed the statistical analysis using the theoretical factors as this provided the opportunity to compare results with the previous study that inspired this investigation (see reliabilities in table 25). The factors were labelled:

Factor 1: Trust in social commerce

Factor 2: Social support in social commerce

Factor 3: Importance of platform use in social commerce

5.5. Descriptive statistics on the scales

For benefits of social commerce, $M > 4.4$ indicates that small business owners are moderately to very aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, the importance of trust, as well as the importance of using social media platforms, while the importance of social support in social commerce is also regarded rather important $M = 4.3$.

Table 27: Means across the scales for the different constructs

	N		Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing					
Benefits The Benefits of Social Commerce	150	0	4.4022	4.7500	0.77556	1.00	5.00
Trust The Importance of Trust in Social Commerce	150	0	4.4089	4.5000	0.48335	2.67	5.00
SocSupp The Importance of Social Support in Social Commerce	150	0	4.3387	4.4000	0.60065	1.80	5.00
SocPlatf The Importance of Social Platform Usage	150	0	4.4086	4.4286	0.53734	2.57	5.00

5.6. Regression analysis

A regression analysis was done to address the research questions that were proposed for this study. For the regression analysis to be done, there must be a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables with the correlations being greater than 0.3 (Pallant, 2007). Table 28 (see Appendix 1) confirms a relationship between the independent and dependent variable which is statistically significant ($p = 0.000$).

Pearson's correlation of 0.353 indicates a positive, moderate relationship between the *benefits of social commerce* and *the importance of trust*, hence, the more small business owners are aware of the benefits of social commerce, the more they regard the importance of trust in social commerce.

Table 29 (see Appendix 1) presents the R Square value, which explains that 12.4% of the variance in the importance of trust is explained by businesses' awareness of the benefits of SC, which is, not strong. Table 30 (in Appendix 1) shows that $p < 0.001$,

and therefore, the benefits of social commerce are significant in predicting the importance of trust in social commerce.

The unstandardized beta value in table 31 (see Appendix 1) illustrates that for every 1 unit of awareness on the benefits of social commerce, there is an increase of 0.219 in the importance of trust. The residual values presented in figure 4 (see Appendix 1) are between -3 and 3, resembling a normal distribution.

For the regression analysis on the importance of social support as a dependent variable, there were outliers present as seen in figure 5 (see Appendix 1), as such 1 case was omitted. Table 32 (see Appendix 1) confirms that a relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable exists, and $p = 0.000$ suggests a significant relationship between the variables. Pearson's correlation of 0.337 indicates a positive moderate relationship between *the benefits of social commerce* and *the importance of social support*. Hence, the more small business owners are aware of the benefits of social commerce, the more they know that social support is an important part of social commerce.

Table 33 (in Appendix 1) presents the R Square value, indicating that 11.4% of the variance in the importance of social support is explained by the awareness of benefits, which is not a strong relationship. The significance value represented in table 34 (see Appendix 1), is <0.001 and therefore, the benefits of social commerce are significant in predicting the importance of social support in social commerce. The unstandardized beta value presented in table 35 (Appendix 1) illustrates that for every 1 unit of awareness on the benefits of social commerce, there is an increase of 0.245 in the importance of social support increased. The residual values in figure 6 below are between -3 and 3, resembling a normal distribution.

Table 36 (see Appendix 1) confirms that a relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable exists, and $p = 0.010$ reveals that the relationship is significant. The Pearson's correlation of 0.189 indicates a positive, but weak

relationship between the benefits of social commerce and the importance of platform usage. Table 37 (see Appendix 1) shows the R Square value, which explains that 3.6% of the variance in the *importance of the platform per the benefits of social commerce, which is not a strong relationship*. The significance value presented in table 38 (see Appendix 1), $p = 0.020$, which is <0.05 , therefore the benefits of social commerce are significant in predicting the importance of platform usage in social commerce.

The unstandardized beta value presented in table 39 (Appendix 1) suggests that for every 1 unit of awareness on the benefits of social commerce, there is an increase of 0.131 in the importance of platform use. The residual values in figure 7 (Appendix 1) are between -3 and 3, resembling a normal distribution.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the results of the statistical analysis of the data were provided. Firstly, in the preliminary analysis data was prepared, coded, and cleaned to remove all respondents that did not meet the qualifying criteria, producing $N = 150$ usable responses for further analysis.

Secondly, descriptive statistics were run on the data to get a view of the underlying characteristics of small business owners and social commerce. The data showed that whilst more than 80% of small business owners had adopted social media in their businesses, less than 50% had adopted social commerce in their businesses. Additionally, small business owners were very aware of the benefits of social commerce and considered trust and social support as very important drivers.

Thirdly, as part of the data validation, EFA was done to test the validity and reliability of the measurements. The models showed adequate fit, validity, and reliability. Both theoretical and empirical factors that were drawn were valid and reliable, however, the decision was to process the theoretical factors for the regression analysis as

these were reliable and were better aligned with the hypotheses formulated for investigation.

Lastly, the regression analysis tested the relationships between the benefits of social commerce and the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage. Both importance of trust and the importance of social support proved to have significant moderate relationships with the benefits of social commerce, whilst platform usage resulted in a significant but weak relationship.

6. Chapter 6: Discussion of the results

6.1. Introduction

The objective of this study was to determine the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. Social commerce can be extremely beneficial for small businesses, given the current challenges that they are facing amid the current challenging market dynamics that they operate in, the trying current economic climate, growth uncertainties, fluctuating market demand, lack of resources, and increased competition due of globalisation that has become an even bigger threat with online shopping (Qalati et al., 2021). The research questions set out in chapter 3 focused on understanding small business owners' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and their understanding of the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage in skilfully implanting social commerce for businesses. These research questions will be further elaborated on in this chapter.

6.2. Demographics

6.2.1. Small businesses social media presence

This question was used to determine how many small businesses that participated in the research had an active social media presence. Of the N = 150 small business owners who participated in the survey, n = 132 (88%) did indeed have a social media page for their business, and n = 18 (12%) did not. The large percentage of small businesses that have now adopted social media is in line with previous research that indicates that in emerging economies, small businesses have increasingly started to look at using social media in their businesses as a top-level strategy (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). Additionally, less complexity, less cost, and effectiveness of social media have motivated small businesses to use social media (Ritz, Wolf & McQuitty, 2019). Furthermore, the rise in internet penetration in South Africa has created a conducive environment for small businesses to reach their target markets on social media

platforms, benefitting both businesses and customers (The Global State of Digital, 2021).

6.2.2. *Small businesses that have a social commerce site*

Of the N = 150 respondents, n = 77 (51.3%) small business owners indicated that they had a social commerce site for their businesses. This is in line with the study done by Yahia et al. (2018), which reported that social commerce is underutilized by small businesses due to trust factors associated with online platforms, social support requirements, and the perceived platform use choices which have overshadowed the potential benefits of social commerce. Additionally, the number of years of experience that small business owners possessed ranged between 1 to 6 years, which probably explains the nascency of social commerce adoption amongst small businesses in South Africa.

6.3. Discussion of the research questions

6.3.1. *Research question 1: How aware are small business owners of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses?*

Results indicated that the means calculated across all items that measured the awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce ranged from M = 4.23 to M = 4.48 (Max: M = 5), which is moderately to very aware. The median indicated that half of the respondents were very aware of the potential benefits of social commerce. Since the study that was done by Yahia et al. (2018), which hypothesised that there was low awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce amongst small businesses which limited the adoption of social commerce, there seems to have been an increase among small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce. This may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused many businesses to adopt social media strategies, with some being compelled to consider online channels due to the enforced lockdown (Guthrie et al., 2021).

Social commerce as a valuable platform to advertise products and businesses, and social commerce as a more affordable way to advertise versus traditional methods were ranked the most important benefits in terms of small business owner's awareness of potential benefits, with using social commerce to offer products that cannot always be available in their physical geographic area being the least important potential benefit that small business owners are aware of. Therefore, small business owners seem more aware of the benefits of social commerce from an advertising point of view. However, the opportunity exists for small business owners to use these platforms to offer a wider range of products across larger geographic areas. According to the study done by Yahia et al. (2018), product differentiation is a valuable benefit of social commerce for small business owners that are constrained by shop floor space and geographic area. Additionally, having a wide range of products available, enhances the social vendor's credibility which in turn improves consumers' trust (Yahia et al., 2018).

The results from this study do not support hypothesis 1, therefore it is concluded based on this study that small business owners are aware of the potential benefits of social commerce.

6.3.2. *Research question 2: How important is the development of social commerce platforms to small business owners in terms of the optimisation of the potential usage that may derive benefits from social commerce?*

Means calculated across all items that measured the importance of platform use in social commerce, ranged from $M = 3.89$ to $M = 4.63$, which reflect an above average understanding of small businesses of the importance of SC platforms in terms of benefits that may be derived for their businesses. The median indicated that almost half of the respondents felt that platform usage is very important in social commerce.

Selecting the appropriate social commerce platform, having a site that is compatible with different devices and web applications, and ensuring that the site is practical

and easy to use ranked the highest in terms of importance for small business owners to consider when developing a social commerce platform. This is consistent with the TAM model which indicated that the use of technology must be seen as useful and easy to use (Davis, 1989). A recent study (Williams, 2021) confirmed that consumers are more likely to use a platform that they find simple and easy to use. The process from installing the application all the way through to payment must be one that consumers have a good experience with, as this positively impacts consumers' purchase intention on social commerce platforms (Xiang, Chau, Iqbal, Irfan & Dagar, 2022).

The results from this study does not support hypothesis 2, as small business owners consider platform usage as very important when considering social commerce for their businesses.

In addition, an area for small businesses owners to consider is including a feedback or discussion tab on the platform to encourage real-time discussion amongst customers was considered least important despite the online shopping process having evolved into a more collaborative platform that empowers consumers to have real-time discussions, and generate better insights, increasing consumers' purchasing intentions (Hu et al., 2022). Including a feedback or discussion tab will have a significant impact on consumer engagement on social commerce platforms which positively influences consumers' purchase intentions (Busalim, Ghabban & Hussin, 2021).

6.3.3. Research question 3: How important is social support in driving small business owners' usage of social commerce platforms?

The mean across all items that measured the importance of social support in social commerce ranged from $M = 3.65$ to $M = 4.65$ ($M_{\text{Maximum}} = 5$), which indicates importance to very important. The median indicated that almost half of the

respondents felt that social support is very important in social commerce. Updating social commerce regularly with relevant information and engaging with customers, and responding to their feedback was the most important considerations, which corresponds with the study done by Chen and Shen (2015) that reported that informational social support culminated when social communities that are formed share product-related information and platform experiences, as well as their reviews on post-purchases. This exerts a significant and positive impact on other community members' intention to use social commerce. In addition, research done by Tajvidi, Richard, Wang and Hajli (2020), supported information sharing as a key contributor to social support and relationship quality that positively affect purchase intent, addressing privacy concerns associated with social commerce.

Furthermore, encouraging customers' feedback was also a very important aspect of social support, which, according to Meilatinova (2021), leads to positive word-of-mouth interactions which has a significant impact on customers' adoption of a social commerce site and repeat purchases on social commerce platforms. Therefore, it is imperative to provide a platform for customers to share their feedback (Busalim et al., 2021).

The results from this study support hypothesis 3 and confirms the importance of social support for small business owners' usage of social commerce platforms to drive consumers purchase intentions.

One of the items in social support, namely offering emotional help and support ranked was considered the least important by small business owners, which is consistent with a study done by Hu et al. (2021). This affirms that whilst both informational support and emotional support have a positive influence on social interactions amongst customers, emotional support does not significantly influence social shopping intention and has no impact on consumers' trust in product recommendations.

6.3.4. Research question 4: How important is building consumers' trust in social commerce for business owners?

The means calculated across all the items that measured the importance of social support in social commerce ranged from $M = 3.77$ to $M = 4.77$, signifying that social support is considered important to very important ($M_{\text{Maximum}} = 5$). The median indicated that almost half of the respondents felt that building consumer trust is very important in social commerce. Having a safe and secure payment method and keeping their promises to their customers were the two most important attributes - according to small business owners and managers - to build consumer trust on online platforms. This coincides with the study of Herrando et al. (2019) that reported that businesses should initiate a safe and comfortable environment as consumers need to be less concerned about risks associated with online transactions. Additionally, having a platform that is safe and secure for customers to transact on was a significant contributor to online purchase intention (Leong, Hew, Ooi, & Chong, 2020). Trust in social commerce is built through various aspects, such as building a social presence, technology acceptance factors, simple social commerce sites, and enhanced security measures.

The result of this study is consistent with past literature and supports H4. It also confirms building consumer's trust is an important driver for small business owners to be cognisant of when implementing social commerce strategies for their businesses.

6.3.5. Research question 5: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and their considerations to enhance trust in their social commerce platforms?

The regression analysis conducted on the relationship between businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of trust in social commerce revealed a significant positive, moderate relationship between these variables, that was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). Pearson's correlation of

0.353 confirmed a positive moderate relationship between the benefits of social commerce and the importance of trust, hence, the more small business owners are aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, the more they consider enhancing consumer's trust in the platforms. Therefore, business owners must create a sense of security that advocates transparency amongst consumers in their sharing and exchange of information, experiences, advice, and opinions. This is consistent with work done by Cheng and Shiu (2019), which reported that if small business owners are more aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, they are more likely to increase their involvement in social commerce sites.

The results support H5. Therefore, it can be concluded that when small business owners are aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, they are likely to increase their considerations to enhance trust on their social commerce platforms.

6.3.6. Research question 6: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and small business owners' regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms?

The investigation of the relationship between businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of social support when using social commerce resulted in a significant positive, moderate relationship between the two variables, and $p = 0.000$ indicates that this is a significant relationship. Pearson's correlation of 0.337 indicates a positive moderate relationship between the benefits of social commerce and the importance of social support. The more small business owners are aware of the potential benefits of social commerce, the more they regard the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms.

One of the benefits of social commerce is customer relationship building which small businesses that adopt social commerce are aware of. Relationship building on social commerce platforms requires strong social support to create interactions and engagement among customers (Chen & Shen, 2015). Cheng and Shiu (2019), explains that if small business owners are more aware of the potential benefits of

social commerce, they are more likely to enhance their involvement in social commerce sites to attract customers through social support which in turn builds consumer trust. Therefore, this study supports H6 and confirms the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and small business owners' regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms.

6.3.7. Research question 7: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from it?

A positive, weak, statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.01$) was found between small business owner's awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from it, and the relationship between both variables are significant ($p < 0.05$) Pearson's correlation of 0.189 indicated that the relationship is positive but weak. This study supports H7 and confirms the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from

Whilst small business owners consider platform use an important driver of social commerce, many of them have been challenged by the lack of financial resources and the lack of expert knowledge and management concerning the adoption of technology which impacts on their decisions regarding platform usage and benefits (Cerchione & Esposito, 2017). However, paying attention to technology acceptance factors facilitates the formation of positive attitudes, increased loyalty, and positive behavioural intentions as the experience of using technology improves trust in online platforms (Cha, 2015) and must be something that small business owners strongly consider when launching social commerce sites.

6.4. Summary of the findings

RQ 1: How aware are small business owners of the potential benefits that social commerce may hold for their businesses?	Very aware
RQ2: How important is the development of social commerce platforms to small business owners in terms of the optimisation of the potential usage that may derive benefits from social commerce?	Important - Very important
RQ3: How important is social support in driving small business owners' usage of social commerce platforms?	Important - Very important
RQ4: How important is building consumers' trust in social commerce for business owners?	Important - Very important
RQ5: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and their considerations to enhance trust in their social commerce platforms?	Significant, positive, moderate relationship
RQ6: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, and small business owners' regard of the importance of their social support on social commerce platforms?	Significant, positive, moderate relationship
RQ7: What is the relationship between small businesses' awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits that could be derived from it?	Significant, positive, weak relationship

6.5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to determine the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. This chapter presented the findings based on the results presented in chapter 5, related to the research questions.

The results confirmed that small business owners are aware of the potential benefits of social commerce. The relationship between small business owners awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of trust and the importance of social support are significant, positive and moderately strong, although the relationship between small business owners awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and their regard of the importance of platform use is also positive, but weak. The results are consistent with previous literature and confirms the importance of trust, social support and platform usage as drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa.

7. Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the study around the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. It discusses the consolidated findings of the study, presenting the, theoretical implications, implications for management, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

The constructs of social commerce namely, the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage were tested amongst small business owners in South Africa, specifically the Gauteng area. This was done using a questionnaire that was adapted from the study done by Yahia et al. (2018). The questionnaire was distributed to small business owners via social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn) to gather insight into the pertinent research questions concerning the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa for them to skillfully adopt and implement social commerce as part of their business strategies.

7.2. Principle conclusions

This study investigated the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa guided by a conceptual model based on existing literature. Hereby, three social commerce drivers were identified, namely the importance of building consumers' trust, the importance of social support, and the importance of platform usage in social commerce. The model was empirically tested through a quantitative study using an online survey that was distributed to small business owners in South Africa. The first step was to identify small business owners' awareness of social commerce, their use of this medium, the potential benefits of social commerce and the importance of selected drivers of social commerce (trust, social support, and platform usage). The second step was to explore the relationship between small business owners'

awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce and the drivers of social commerce.

The results from the study indicated that small business owners in South Africa are aware of the potential benefits that social commerce holds for their businesses. They are aware that social commerce is a valuable platform to advertise their products and businesses, and that social commerce is a more affordable way to advertise their services compared to traditional methods. Small business owners are however more aware of the benefits of social commerce from an advertising point of view. The opportunity exists for small business owners to optimise SC to communicate their offering of a wider range of products. According to the study done by Yahia et al. (2018), product differentiation is a valuable benefit of social commerce for small business owners that are constrained by shop floor space and geographic area. Additionally, having a wide range of products available adds to the social vendor credibility, which in turn improves consumers' trust (Yahia et al., 2018). Despite businesses' awareness of SC, less than half of the sample actively pursued the opportunity, indicating a gap.

In addition to their awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce, the results revealed that they also consider building consumer trust, social support, and platform usage as important drivers of social commerce. Trust in social commerce is built through various aspects, such as building a social presence, technology acceptance factors, simple-to-use social commerce sites, and enhanced security measures. Information sharing was a key contributor to social support and relationship quality that positively affected purchase intent and privacy concerns associated with social commerce. Evidence indicates that, from a platform usage perspective, consumers are more likely to use a platform that they find simple and easy to use (Williams, 2021), and that the process from installing the application all the way through to payment must be a good experience as this positively impacts consumers' purchase intention on social commerce platforms (Xiang et al., 2022).

The relationship between small business owners' awareness of the potential benefits and the drivers of social commerce, related to both trust and social support were found to be significantly positive, although moderately strong. On the contrary, the relationship with platform usage, although significant, was weak relationship. Therefore, the more small business owners are aware of the benefits of social commerce the more likely they are to implement activities to build consumer trust and social support on social commerce platforms. However, their awareness of the benefits of social commerce does not influence the development of social commerce platforms to optimise the benefits they could further derive from it as much as building consumer trust and social support does. Yet, platform usage is an imperative driver of social commerce, according to TAM theory that suggests that people will use technology if they believe that it will be useful in improving productivity and providing satisfaction in the execution of tasks (Samarasinghe & Silva, 2019). Accordingly, technology acceptance behaviour is determined by perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), and attitude towards using technology (Davis, 1989) and more recently confirmed by Makmor, Aziz and Alam (2019)

7.3. Theoretical contributions

The rise in internet penetration and social media usage has highlighted social commerce as an important online business channel. However, there currently is inadequate research about the adoption of social commerce in emerging countries such as South Africa and on how small businesses can adopt and adapt to social commerce (Aydin, 2019). Additionally, previous research has examined social media and social commerce, predominantly from a consumer perspective and not from the perspective of the vendor (Abed, 2020). This study was an extension of a model for social commerce as an enabler for small businesses in South Africa, departing from a study done by Yahia et al. (2018). The study shed light on the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa and drew attention to the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as the key drivers for social commerce adoption.

To date, inadequate research has been done on how small businesses can adopt and adapt to social commerce. Past research has examined social media and social commerce, predominantly from a consumer perspective (Abed, 2020). Not much has been done to date about the adoption of social media as an online business platform, and many of the previous studies have admitted limitations in terms of the sample size, the restriction to certain industry sectors - which were mostly professional and IT services - and a focus on selected platforms that were not very diverse. This research provides new insights concerning a better understanding of the importance of trust, social support, and platform usage as drivers of social commerce for small businesses.

7.4. Implications for management

The rise in internet penetration and the increase in popularity of social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have opened new business opportunities for small business owners (Luo, 2021). It is therefore imperative for small business owners to adjust their current business strategies to incorporate social commerce as a new business channel.

Based on the findings of this study, small business owners are aware of some of the potential benefits of social commerce, namely, the cost-effective advertising opportunities that it presents. Social commerce, however, offers more than just advertising benefits and small business owners should take advantage of the wider product range and geographical advantages that social commerce offers.

In addition, small business owners should focus on building consumer trust by ensuring that they have safe and secure payment methods and privacy settings that protect their customers' information. There are laws currently in place to protect consumers privacy and small business owners must make themselves familiar with this to ensure the protect consumers privacy in the social commerce endeavours (Abed, 2020).

It is unfortunate that small business owners and managers do not prioritise the feedback facility on social media platforms yet, as that could be an important guide for them to enhance their operations and to boost shoppers' trust in their businesses. They should hence provide social support on social commerce platforms by connecting and engaging with their customers and ensuring that their social commerce site is updated with regular and relevant feedback to keep their customers informed. Providing social support also inspires consumers trust, which is a key driver for social commerce success.

Furthermore, small business owners should ensure that their social commerce site is built on a platform that is easy to use. They should carefully consider the social commerce platform and its requirements before launching any social commerce strategy for their businesses. Internet technology and internet-based business activities are rapidly changing, and small business owners should stay abreast of these to skilfully implement social commerce in their businesses (Abed, 2020).

Lastly, small business owners should be geared for the investment required to skilfully implement social commerce in their businesses with regards to platform development and maintenance and upskilling themselves and/or their teams to stay up to date on technology changes which impacts social commerce. That will contribute to their business image as consumers are operating in a rapidly changing environment where technology has become increasingly important.

7.5. Limitations of the research

The eventual generalisation of the results to the South African population is a limitation, as this research is not representative of the population of South African small businesses due to the sample size and geographic limitations set for the sample recruitment. Unfortunately, therefore, the sample size that had to be recruited within a very limited period is not a true representation of the social commerce

population in the country. The second limitation is that this research was limited to South Africa, and therefore, the results cannot be generalised to social commerce vendors in other emerging or developing countries. Thirdly, this research focused mainly on social commerce drivers and cannot be applied to other electronic commerce, or online shopping platforms. Lastly, a cross-sectional time horizon was used, given the time constraints of this study. A longitudinal study may be worthwhile in the future considering the rapid evolution of social media and social commerce.

7.6. Suggestions for future research

This study took into consideration all social media types linked to social commerce (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and LinkedIn). Future studies could focus on the different commerce platform and understand the drivers of each of platforms as the different platforms have their own unique characteristics (Ventre, Molla-Descals & Frasquet, 2021).

This study focused on small businesses in the Gauteng area. Future studies should consider other geographic locations within South African to test and understand the regional nuances and difference in consumer perceptions and behaviours regarding social commerce as regional and cultural differences influence social networking differently (Obschonka, Lee, Rodríguez-Pose, Eichstaedt & Ebert, 2020).

Additionally, this study focussed on external factors that influenced consumers trust, social support and platform. Future research could focus on s-vendor characteristics such as their reputation, product offering and brand offering and its influence on consumer trust, social support and platform usage. Also, only the benefits of social commerce for small business owners were explored; future studies could explore the challenges of social commerce that small business owners face and provide insights as to how small business owners should respond to these challenges

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic and lock-down restrictions have led to the exponential growth of social commerce (Luo, 2021), it would be interesting to see if there were any changes to online shopping habits post lock-down restrictions.

7.7. Conclusion

This research was based on understanding the drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. Small businesses represent the largest sector of companies in emerging economies and are essential in driving economic growth and economic sustainability in countries like South Africa. Social commerce was identified as a valuable tool for small businesses to boost their performance amid the current challenging market dynamics that they operate in.

In this study, the importance of trust, social support and platform usage were verified as drivers of social commerce for small businesses in South Africa. If implemented skilfully, social commerce has considerable potential for small businesses due to its low cost, technical manageability, and ease of use, its capability to connect with, and reach many consumers, as well as to strengthen customer relationships that are essential to boost sales performance.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Tables and figures to supplement discussion in chapter 5

Table 13: Awareness of the potential benefits of social commerce correlation matrix

		B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
Correlation	B1	1.000	0.720	0.621	0.669	0.598	0.419
	B2	0.720	1.000	0.626	0.654	0.514	0.579
	B3	0.621	0.626	1.000	0.617	0.453	0.395
	B4	0.669	0.654	0.617	1.000	0.547	0.508
	B5	0.598	0.514	0.453	0.547	1.000	0.590
	B6	0.419	0.579	0.395	0.508	0.590	1.000

Table 14: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.839
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	480.547
	df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Table 15: Anti-image Matrices

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
B1	.809 ^a	-0.432	-0.183	-0.249	-0.343	0.213
B2	-0.432	.825 ^a	-0.230	-0.158	0.102	-0.368
B3	-0.183	-0.230	.909 ^a	-0.253	-0.038	0.022
B4	-0.249	-0.158	-0.253	.907 ^a	-0.113	-0.148
B5	-0.343	0.102	-0.038	-0.113	.821 ^a	-0.423
B6	0.213	-0.368	0.022	-0.148	-0.423	.769 ^a

a. Measures of Sampling Adequacy(MSA)

Table 16: Commonalities

	Initial	Extraction
B1	0.654	0.677
B2	0.654	0.705
B3	0.492	0.516
B4	0.571	0.647
B5	0.508	0.490
B6	0.482	0.407
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		

Table 17: Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.851	64.187	64.187	3.442	57.372	57.372
2	0.728	12.140	76.327			
3	0.474	7.894	84.222			
4	0.387	6.454	90.676			
5	0.355	5.918	96.594			
6	0.204	3.406	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.						

Table 18: Factor Matrix

	Factor
	1
B2	0.840
B1	0.823
B4	0.805
B3	0.719
B5	0.700
B6	0.638

Table 19: Dependent Variables Correlation Matrix

	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	D13	D14	D15	D16	D17	E18	E19	E20	E21	E22	E23	E24
C7	1.000	0.361	0.232	0.105	0.203	0.088	0.318	0.275	0.230	0.261	0.098	0.136	-0.025	0.149	0.125	0.058	0.017	0.185
C8	0.361	1.000	0.157	0.253	0.215	0.087	0.184	0.262	0.136	0.258	0.179	0.218	0.087	0.300	0.197	0.125	0.182	0.181
C9	0.232	0.157	1.000	0.381	0.424	0.295	0.321	0.262	0.242	0.332	0.020	0.269	0.168	0.224	0.173	0.114	0.135	0.311
C10	0.105	0.253	0.381	1.000	0.411	0.142	0.189	0.291	0.261	0.200	0.129	0.437	0.081	0.216	0.255	0.075	0.047	0.302
C11	0.203	0.215	0.424	0.411	1.000	0.503	0.460	0.543	0.500	0.342	0.510	0.480	0.239	0.271	0.361	0.367	0.373	0.189
C12	0.088	0.087	0.295	0.142	0.503	1.000	0.341	0.343	0.292	0.187	0.330	0.215	0.196	0.157	0.142	0.276	0.278	0.035
D13	0.318	0.184	0.321	0.189	0.460	0.341	1.000	0.648	0.680	0.470	0.265	0.494	0.249	0.244	0.180	0.327	0.305	0.213
D14	0.275	0.262	0.262	0.291	0.543	0.343	0.648	1.000	0.577	0.369	0.335	0.471	0.142	0.308	0.398	0.396	0.341	0.345
D15	0.230	0.136	0.242	0.261	0.500	0.292	0.680	0.577	1.000	0.392	0.327	0.372	0.195	0.197	0.224	0.320	0.186	0.226
D16	0.261	0.258	0.332	0.200	0.342	0.187	0.470	0.369	0.392	1.000	0.227	0.377	0.331	0.346	0.330	0.263	0.174	0.279
D17	0.098	0.179	0.020	0.129	0.510	0.330	0.265	0.335	0.327	0.227	1.000	0.156	0.163	0.334	0.326	0.402	0.450	0.002
E18	0.136	0.218	0.269	0.437	0.480	0.215	0.494	0.471	0.372	0.377	0.156	1.000	0.406	0.393	0.375	0.409	0.291	0.424
E19	-0.025	0.087	0.168	0.081	0.239	0.196	0.249	0.142	0.195	0.331	0.163	0.406	1.000	0.500	0.351	0.343	0.291	0.297
E20	0.149	0.300	0.224	0.216	0.271	0.157	0.244	0.308	0.197	0.346	0.334	0.393	0.500	1.000	0.583	0.426	0.409	0.393
E21	0.125	0.197	0.173	0.255	0.361	0.142	0.180	0.398	0.224	0.330	0.326	0.375	0.351	0.583	1.000	0.591	0.345	0.379
E22	0.058	0.125	0.114	0.075	0.367	0.276	0.327	0.396	0.320	0.263	0.402	0.409	0.343	0.426	0.591	1.000	0.638	0.324
E23	0.017	0.182	0.135	0.047	0.373	0.278	0.305	0.341	0.186	0.174	0.450	0.291	0.291	0.409	0.345	0.638	1.000	0.329
E24	0.185	0.181	0.311	0.302	0.189	0.035	0.213	0.345	0.226	0.279	0.002	0.424	0.297	0.393	0.379	0.324	0.329	1.000

Table 20: Dependent Variables KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.815
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1088.784
	df	153
	Sig.	0.000

Table 21: Dependent Variables Anti-image Matrices

	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	D13	D14	D15	D16	D17	E18	E19	E20	E21	E22	E23	E24
C7	.735 ^a	-0.305	-0.090	0.108	-0.067	0.024	-0.194	-0.003	0.025	-0.054	-0.031	0.065	0.148	-0.043	-0.030	0.008	0.152	-0.144
C8	-0.305	.796 ^a	0.036	-0.162	0.009	0.018	0.062	-0.096	0.044	-0.119	-0.021	-0.028	0.030	-0.154	0.038	0.051	-0.110	0.044
C9	-0.090	0.036	.757 ^a	-0.233	-0.298	-0.153	-0.146	0.094	0.078	-0.159	0.248	0.153	0.012	-0.104	0.033	0.020	-0.008	-0.175
C10	0.108	-0.162	-0.233	.769 ^a	-0.153	0.022	0.102	0.000	-0.104	0.057	-0.066	-0.305	0.139	-0.019	-0.107	0.148	0.102	-0.134
C11	-0.067	0.009	-0.298	-0.153	.829 ^a	-0.261	0.105	-0.168	-0.192	0.004	-0.339	-0.259	-0.056	0.164	-0.124	0.084	-0.147	0.150
C12	0.024	0.018	-0.153	0.022	-0.261	.874 ^a	-0.063	-0.100	0.036	0.035	-0.072	0.066	-0.106	0.002	0.101	-0.103	-0.016	0.104
D13	-0.194	0.062	-0.146	0.102	0.105	-0.063	.788 ^a	-0.371	-0.455	-0.200	0.032	-0.273	-0.076	0.002	0.175	0.017	-0.175	0.188
D14	-0.003	-0.096	0.094	0.000	-0.168	-0.100	-0.371	.884 ^a	-0.137	0.027	-0.009	-0.059	0.215	-0.006	-0.209	0.014	-0.023	-0.184
D15	0.025	0.044	0.078	-0.104	-0.192	0.036	-0.455	-0.137	.831 ^a	-0.060	-0.115	0.128	-0.037	0.023	0.068	-0.159	0.225	-0.129
D16	-0.054	-0.119	-0.159	0.057	0.004	0.035	-0.200	0.027	-0.060	.917 ^a	-0.095	-0.052	-0.138	-0.031	-0.117	0.011	0.103	-0.060
D17	-0.031	-0.021	0.248	-0.066	-0.339	-0.072	0.032	-0.009	-0.115	-0.095	.784 ^a	0.180	0.044	-0.195	-0.034	-0.070	-0.239	0.201
E18	0.065	-0.028	0.153	-0.305	-0.259	0.066	-0.273	-0.059	0.128	-0.052	0.180	.834 ^a	-0.198	-0.091	0.045	-0.200	0.086	-0.177
E19	0.148	0.030	0.012	0.139	-0.056	-0.106	-0.076	0.215	-0.037	-0.138	0.044	-0.198	.812 ^a	-0.315	-0.054	-0.021	-0.012	-0.099
E20	-0.043	-0.154	-0.104	-0.019	0.164	0.002	0.002	-0.006	0.023	-0.031	-0.195	-0.091	-0.315	.842 ^a	-0.357	0.077	-0.145	-0.085
E21	-0.030	0.038	0.033	-0.107	-0.124	0.101	0.175	-0.209	0.068	-0.117	-0.034	0.045	-0.054	-0.357	.797 ^a	-0.447	0.175	-0.082
E22	0.008	0.051	0.020	0.148	0.084	-0.103	0.017	0.014	-0.159	0.011	-0.070	-0.200	-0.021	0.077	-0.447	.800 ^a	-0.475	-0.001
E23	0.152	-0.110	-0.008	0.102	-0.147	-0.016	-0.175	-0.023	0.225	0.103	-0.239	0.086	-0.012	-0.145	0.175	-0.475	.750 ^a	-0.265
E24	-0.144	0.044	-0.175	-0.134	0.150	0.104	0.188	-0.184	-0.129	-0.060	0.201	-0.177	-0.099	-0.085	-0.082	-0.001	-0.265	.792 ^a

a. Measures of Sampling Adequacy(MSA)

Table 22: Dependent Variables Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
C7	0.273	0.427
C8	0.255	0.352
C9	0.393	0.338
C10	0.398	0.466
C11	0.638	0.839
C12	0.328	0.319
D13	0.677	0.926
D14	0.599	0.564
D15	0.566	0.543
D16	0.369	0.355
D17	0.483	0.581
E18	0.551	0.550
E19	0.396	0.347
E20	0.532	0.582
E21	0.573	0.530
E22	0.618	0.650
E23	0.562	0.496
E24	0.428	0.435

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Table 23: Dependent Variables Total Variance Explained

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.017	33.428	33.428	5.584	31.021	31.021	2.750	15.275	15.275
2	1.800	10.000	43.428	1.361	7.563	38.584	2.225	12.363	27.639
3	1.547	8.596	52.023	1.048	5.824	44.408	1.773	9.852	37.491
4	1.174	6.522	58.546	0.701	3.897	48.305	1.542	8.565	46.056
5	1.084	6.022	64.568	0.604	3.354	51.659	1.009	5.604	51.659
6	0.927	5.148	69.715						
7	0.837	4.651	74.366						
8	0.706	3.920	78.286						
9	0.601	3.337	81.623						
10	0.544	3.025	84.648						
11	0.514	2.855	87.503						
12	0.471	2.618	90.120						
13	0.424	2.353	92.474						
14	0.386	2.146	94.620						
15	0.313	1.738	96.358						
16	0.266	1.476	97.834						
17	0.216	1.201	99.035						
18	0.174	0.965	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Table 25: Theoretical reliabilities

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Inter-item correlation mean
The Importance of Trust in Social Commerce	0.648	0.259
The Importance of Social Support in Social Commerce	0.753	
The Importance of Social Platform Usage:	0.817	

Table 26: Empirical reliabilities

Factor	Factor Name	Cronbach's Alpha	Inter-item correlation mean
Section B - Factor 1	Awareness of potential benefits of social commerce	0.883	
Section C, D, E - Factor 1	Importance of platform use in social commerce	0.816	
Section C, D, E - Factor 2	Importance of social support in social commerce	0.816	
Section C, D, E - Factor 3	Building trust by allowing consumers to freely express themselves and by offering emotional support on social commerce platforms	0.695	0.448
Section C, D, E - Factor 4	Building trust through safe and secure payment methods.	0.549	0.381
Section C, D, E - Factor 5	Building trust through privacy settings in social commerce.	0.526	0.361

Table 28: Correlations of the Importance of trust as the dependent variable

		Trust	Benefits
Pearson Correlation	Trust	1.000	0.352
	Benefits	0.352	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Trust		0.000
	Benefits	0.000	
N	Trust	150	150
	Benefits	150	150

Table 29: Model summary (Benefits of social commerce and importance of trust)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.352 ^a	0.124	0.118	0.454
a. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits				
b. Dependent Variable: Trust				

Table 30: Anova (Benefits of social commerce and importance of trust)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.302	1	4.302	20.871	<.001 ^b
	Residual	30.508	148	0.206		
	Total	34.810	149			
a. Dependent Variable: Trust						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits						

Table 31: Coefficients (Benefits of social commerce and importance of trust)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.444	0.214		16.068	0.000	3.021	3.868
	Benefits	0.219	0.048	0.352	4.568	0.000	0.124	0.314
a. Dependent Variable: Trust								

Figure 5: The importance of social support in social commerce

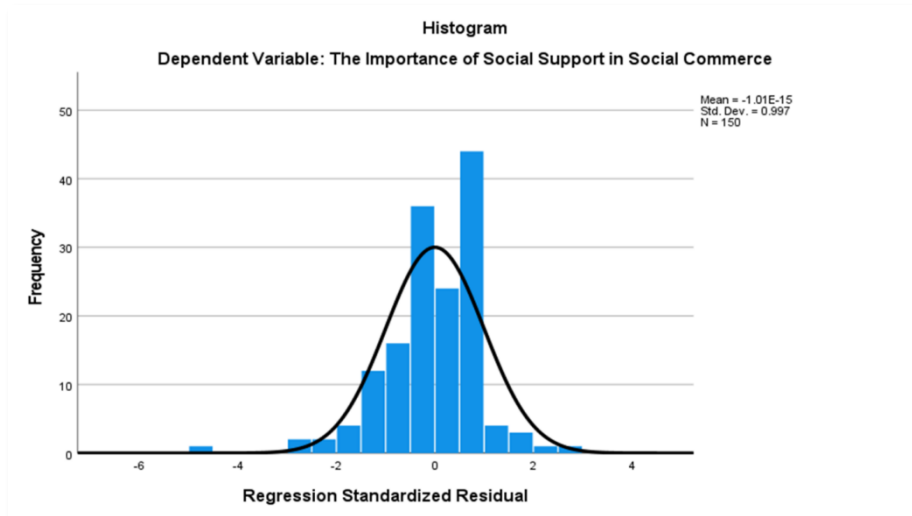


Table 32: Correlations of the Importance of social support as the dependent variable

		SocSupp	Benefits
Pearson Correlation	SocSupp	1.000	0.337
	Benefits	0.337	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SocSupp		0.000
	Benefits	0.000	
N	SocSupp	149	149
	Benefits	149	149

Table 33: Model summary (Benefits of social commerce and importance of social support)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.337 ^a	0.114	0.108	0.534
a. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits				
b. Dependent Variable: SocSupp				

Table 34: Anova (Benefits of social commerce and importance of social support)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.377	1	5.377	18.868	<,001 ^b
	Residual	41.891	147	0.285		
	Total	47.268	148			
a. Dependent Variable: SocSupp						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits						

Table 35: Coefficients (Benefits of social commerce and importance of social support)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.277	0.252		13.003	0.000	2.779	3.776
	Benefits	0.245	0.056	0.337	4.344	0.000	0.134	0.357
a. Dependent Variable: SocSupp								

Figure 6: The importance of social support in social commerce (after removing 1 case)

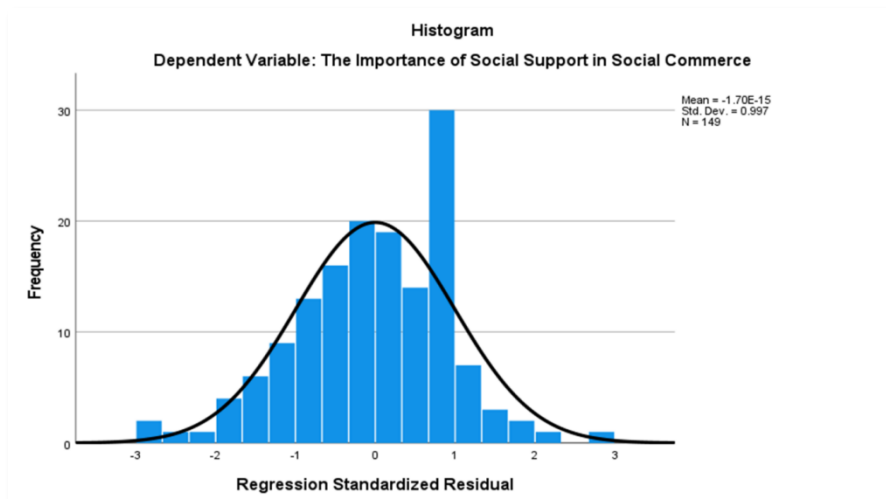


Table 36: Correlations of the Importance of platform use as the dependent variable

		SocPlatf	Benefits
Pearson Correlation	SocPlatf	1.000	0.189
	Benefits	0.189	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	SocPlatf		0.010
	Benefits	0.010	
N	SocPlatf	150	150
	Benefits	150	150

Table 37: Model summary: Benefits of social commerce and importance of platform use

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.189 ^a	0.036	0.029	0.529
a. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits				
b. Dependent Variable: SocPlatf				

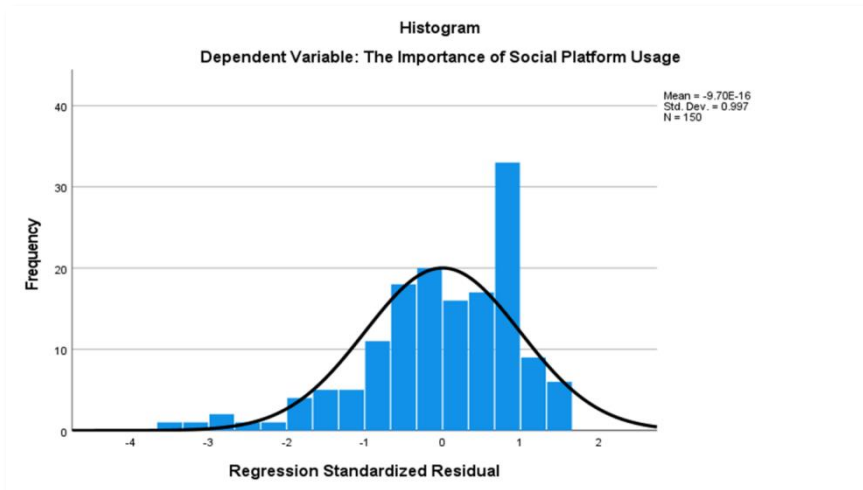
Table 38: Anova (Benefits of social commerce and importance of platform usage)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.542	1	1.542	5.501	.020 ^b
	Residual	41.480	148	0.280		
	Total	43.022	149			
a. Dependent Variable: SocPlatf						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Benefits						

Table 39: Coefficients (Benefits of social commerce and importance of platform usage)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	3.831	0.250		15.328	0.000	3.337	4.325
	Benefits	0.131	0.056	0.189	2.345	0.020	0.021	0.242
a. Dependent Variable: SocPlatf								

Figure 7: The importance of platform use in social commerce



Appendix 2: Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on the importance of trust, social support and platform usage as drivers of social commerce for small business owners in South Africa. To that end, you are asked complete a survey about your awareness and usage of social commerce platforms in your business. This will help us better understand how small businesses in South African can leverage social commerce as a tool to improve their business performance and should take no more than 20 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your participation is anonymous and only aggregated data will be reported. By completing the survey, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

The following prerequisites for participation in the research apply: you must be (1) 18 years and older; (2) you must own or manage a small business of between 2 and 50 employees, and (3) you must be operating in the Gauteng area and(4) you must be aware of social commerce (The use of online or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, to buy and sell products and services).

Researcher name: Kershnee Kallee
Email: Kershnee.kallee@gmail.com
Phone: 0718860765

Research Supervisor: Professor Alet Erasmus
Email: erasmusa@gibs.co.za
Phone: 0827842467

Dear respondent,

Please affirm that you are eligible to participate in this survey by completing the following screening questions:

	1	2
1. Are you 18 years and older?	Yes	No
2. Are you a small business owner? (2 – 50 employees)	Yes	No
3. Are you operating in the Gauteng Area?	Yes	No
4. Are you aware of social commerce? (The use of online or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, to buy and sell products and services)	Yes	No

If all the answers to the above questions are YES, then proceed with the following sections.

Please complete every question. There are no right or wrong answers!

Section A

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Does your business have social media pages?	Yes	No				
2. Does your business have a social commerce site or an online shop that make use of social media?	Yes	No				
3. How many years of social media/ social commerce experience do you have?	less than 1 year	1 to 3 years	4 to 6 years	7 to 9 years	10 years+	

Section B: The benefits of social commerce

Social commerce: The use of online or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, to buy and sell products and services)

The following applies when answering the questions:

1 = Not at all aware 2 = Slightly aware 3 = Somewhat aware 4 = Moderately aware 5 = Very aware

Questions	Not at all aware	Slightly aware	Somewhat aware	Moderately aware	Very aware
How aware are you of the following potential benefits of social commerce?					
1. Social commerce holds potential benefits for my business	1	2	3	4	5
2. Social commerce allows me to offer a range/ variety of products through my social commerce site to attract more customers	1	2	3	4	5
3. Social commerce allows me to offer products that I cannot always have in my physical geographic area	1	2	3	4	5
4. Social commerce is a valuable platform to advertise my products and/or business	1	2	3	4	5
5. Social commerce is a more affordable way of advertising my business versus traditional advertising methods which cost a lot more	1	2	3	4	5
6. Social media platforms can be optimised to generate new business ideas to expand and grow my business	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: The importance of trust in social commerce

The following applies when answering the questions:

1 = Not important at all 2 = Low importance 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very important

Questions	Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
How important are the following in terms of gaining consumer trust in social commerce?					
7. Our company should gain consumers' trust on our social commerce platforms	1	2	3	4	5
8. Privacy settings are required on my social commerce sites to enhance consumers' trust	1	2	3	4	5
9. Keeping my promises to my online customers to secure their trust in my business	1	2	3	4	5
10. Having safe and secure payment method options are required to enhance consumers' trust	1	2	3	4	5
11. Allowing my customers to freely express themselves on my social platforms to win their trust	1	2	3	4	5
12. A differentiated range of products are required online to boost consumers' trust in my business	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Importance of social support in social commerce

The following applies when answering the questions:

1 = Not important at all 2 = Low importance 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very important

Questions	Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
How important are the following to keep customers interested and loyal, and to lure consumers to your social commerce platform?					
13. Connecting with my customers on social commerce platforms	1	2	3	4	5
14. Encouraging customers' feedback	1	2	3	4	5
15. Engaging with customers by responding to their feedback and comments on social commerce	1	2	3	4	5
16. Updating social commerce platforms regularly with relevant information	1	2	3	4	5
17. Offer emotional help and support on my social commerce platforms	1	2	3	4	5

Section E: The importance of social platform usage

The following applies when answering the questions:

1 = Not important at all 2 = Low importance 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very important

Please answer all the questions concerning	Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
How important are the following in terms of social platform usage?					
18. Selecting the appropriate social commerce platform to use for my business communication.	1	2	3	4	5

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19. That my social commerce site is linked to a social media site or company website to facilitate consumers' understanding of my business	1	2	3	4	5
20. To have a "shop now" or "click through" link included to make it easier for customers to get to know my business	1	2	3	4	5
21. That my social commerce site is practical and easy to use	1	2	3	4	5
22. That I offer a personal and customized approach to my social commerce site to keep my customers interested	1	2	3	4	5
23. There is a feedback/ discussion tab on the social media platform for real time discussion among customers about my business operations	1	2	3	4	5
24. That the social commerce site is compatible with different devices/ web applications to ensure that I reach as many consumers possible					

Appendix 3: Ethical clearance

Dear kershnee Kallee,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards