SOCIAL PRESENCE, TRUST, AND SOCIAL COMMERCE PURCHASE INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Lacking the presence of human and social elements is claimed one major weakness that is hindering the growth of e-commerce. The emergence of social commerce (SC) might help ameliorate this situation. Social commerce is a new evolution of e-commerce that combines the commercial and social activities by deploying social technologies into e-commerce sites. Social commerce reintroduces the social aspect of shopping to e-commerce, increasing the degree of social presences in online environment. Drawing upon the social presence theory, this study theorizes the nature of social aspect in online SC marketplace by proposing a set of three social presence variables. These variables are then hypothesized to have positive impacts on trusting beliefs which in turn result in online purchase behaviors. The research model is examined via data collected from a typical e-commerce site in China. Our findings suggest that social presence factors grounded in social technologies contribute significantly to the building of the trustworthy online exchanging relationships. In doing so, this paper confirms the positive role of social aspect in shaping online purchase behaviors, providing a theoretical evidence for the fusion of social and commercial activities. Finally, this paper introduces a new perspective of e-commerce and calls more attention to this new phenomenon.

Keywords: Social commerce, Social presence, Social commerce marketplaces, Trust, Purchase intention.

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