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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**AUGMENTING SOCIAL COMMERCE ACCEPTANCE THROUGH AN ALL-INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL COMMERCE DRIVERS. EVIDENCE FROM THE HOTEL INDUSTRY**Forbes Makudza<sup>a\*</sup>, Maxwell Sandada<sup>b</sup>, David D. Madzikanda<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup>Manicaland State University of Applied Sciences<sup>b</sup>University of Zimbabwe\*Corresponding Author E-mail: [forbesmakudza@gmail.com](mailto:forbesmakudza@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the differential effect of social commerce drivers on social commerce acceptance in the hotel industry. The study was driven by the need to elevate the usage of social networks from mere communication tools to business platforms that can be used for trade and commerce. In developing social commerce drivers, the study examined and unified nine previous theories of technology adoption. A positivist, quantitative methodology was adopted in this study. Data was analysed using a structural equation modelling (SEM) procedure. The study confirmed that all the five drivers namely, utility, simplicity, intrinsic, social and infrastructural, were statistically significant in driving social commerce acceptance. The most driving force was the infrastructural driver which entails availability of hardware, software and support systems. The study therefore concluded that the all-inclusive approach to social commerce drivers adopted in this study explains 58% of variance in social commerce acceptance. Thus, the study recommends the enhancement of social commerce acceptance through effective manipulation of the social commerce acceptance drivers.

## KEYWORDS

Social Commerce, Social Media, Social Network, Technology Adoption.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the internet and digital technologies such as smart phones and tablets enabled marketers to target their customers on a one-on-one basis. That wide arena of business is widely known as electronic commerce. However, the recent emergency of Web 2.0 applications transferred the focus of marketers from one-on-one marketing to community based marketing as consumer buying decision is influenced by others on the social platform (Bhat & Singh, 2018; Hajli, Sims, Zadeh & Richard, 2017; Liang & Turban, 2011). Thus, the social interactions of consumers on the internet led to the emergency of a new business model called social commerce (Cizreliogulla, Uwah, Bayigot, 2020; Mendoza-Tello, Mora, Pujol-López & Lytras, 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2012). Liang and Turban (2012) define social commerce as the delivery of business activities and transactions via social media environment, and mostly using Web 2.0 applications.

Social commerce usage in the hotel industry recorded a notable growth over the last decade the world over. Millions of hotel users the world over interact on social commerce platforms such as Facebook, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube (Saravanakumar & Lakshmi, 2016; Pew Research Institute, 2019). Travelers frequent these sites for information reviews, rating and information search. Banoobhai-Anwar and Keating (2019) also confirmed a notable increase in the usage of social commerce in the hotel business and found out that hotel operators have notably been busy on Facebook to provide latest information on new offers, promotions and best deals.

However, Duan, et al. (2016) note that although social commerce was widely used in the hotel industry on a global scale, the situation was a little different on the African plane. Ngqabuko (2020) notes that the usage of social commerce in other parts of Africa has been detracted by low adoption rates of smart phones. The same notion was supported by Bubake (2021) who reiterates that poor internet connectivity and low disposable income affected the effective adoption of social commerce in Africa.

POTRAZ (2020) reported a low internet penetration rate of 59.9% in Zimbabwe, whilst Technomag (2020) indicated that social media penetration in Zimbabwe was as low as 16.53%. These statistics indicate a noteworthy research problem that acceptance and usage of social networks in Zimbabwe was still low, and thus the need to interrogate the causes. This was worrisome because in other lands social commerce had increased usage rate, and revenue by up to 70% in the hotel industry (Vuolle, 2010).

The main theoretical contribution of the study lies in the development of a logical model that reconciles predictions of social commerce acceptance among competing theories. In terms of practical contribution of the study, many corporates do not know which factors drive consumers to participate in social commerce (Kaur, 2016; Sekaran and Bougie, 2015; Gatautis and Mediausiene, 2014). Thus, the development of drivers of social commerce (utility driver, simplicity driver, social driver, infrastructural driver, intrinsic driver) in this study closes that gap and

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ensures that resources are correctly utilized using target marketing.

This study therefore aims to examine the overarching drivers of social commerce acceptance using the evidence from the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is one African state which has recorded a dragging pace towards acceptance of social commercialisation as consumers generally are keener to use the brick-and-mortar systems of business operations. In trying to close the chasm, this study consolidates and unifies nine previously known models of social commerce acceptance, so as to develop a robust, holistic model of social commerce drivers.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Social commerce acceptance

Social commerce acceptance refers to the extent to which online social trade has been adopted as a way of life by users (Rouibah, 2017). It shows the rate at which consumers of products that are sold on the social platform respond favourably or unfavourably (Farivar, Yuan & Turel, 2016; Rouiba, 2017). The reasoning from Farivar et al. (2016) indicates that social commerce acceptance is twofold. It can be received well, leading to adoption; or it can be received negatively leading to social commerce rejection. Rouibah (2017) highlights that ever since e-commerce and digitalisation started, the main thrust of marketing has been to attract user participation. The views of Rouibah (2017) indicate that when companies engage in social commerce, their main goal is for consumers to adopt it and accept it as a good medium for business.

Social media acceptance and usage reports indicate that Twitter was widely used in the early days of social network development and was very popular among white collar jobs (Malikula, 2021). In recent years, individual users have also clinched to and adopted the relatively newer platforms of social media such as Instagram and Snapchat (Makudza, Mugarisanwa & Siziba, 2020). A wide and significant churning behaviour has been noticed from Facebook to Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat. However, Facebook remains appealing among adults and new social media fans (Alhabash & Mengyan, 2017; Bubake, 2021). The same notion was supported by Pew Research Centre (2019) which noted that beginning year 2019 Reddit gained considerable acceptance across the globe. Most social platforms which gained acceptance included Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube and WhatsApp.

### 2.2 Social commerce in the hotel industry

With increased need to reach out to their customers, the hotel industry and the entire tourism sector have had a cling to social commercialization in the past decade. Yoong and Lian (2019) note that social media has taken the hotel operation by a storm as one of the important platforms to market their facilities and establish relationships with customers. The same sentiments were echoed by Yoong and Lian (2019) who also noted a significant increase in the usage of social commerce in the hotel industry.

A closer analysis into the hotel industry done by Yoong and Lian (2019) indicates that in the hotel industry, social media platforms which were mainly used by hoteliers included Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Travelers would frequent these sites for information reviews, rating and information search. Banoobhai-Anwar and Keating (2019) also confirmed a notable increase in the usage of social commerce in the hotel business and found out that hotel operators have notably been busy on Facebook to provide latest information on new offers, promotions and best deals.

Cizreliogulla, Uwah, Bayigot (2020) also inveterate the same notion in their study that the hotel industry has been earmarked by operators who embraced social commerce. Cizreliogulla et al. (2020) estimate that about 85% of hotels have used social media for marketing purposes. Facebook and Twitter were also found to be the two most useful social media channels for marketing purposes in the hospitality industry.

Duan, et al. (2016) suggest that hotels need to actively embrace the concept of social networks and user-generated content to monitor reviews and manage online reputation, as faceless reviewers are rapidly becoming the travel opinion leaders of the electronic age. The study results of Duan, et al. (2016) indicate that more previous reviews lead to more future reviews. So, a poor marketing strategy of social reviews might affect the organisation negatively if consumers spread negative electronic word of mouth communications (Makudza et al., 2020).

### 2.3 Social review sites in the hotel industry

TripAdvisor is rated among the most successful social networking/virtual community websites in hospitality industry as it facilitates the reviewing

of most hotels around the world and brings together individuals in discussion forums, making it one of the most well-known websites in the world (Benea, 2014; Buhalis & Law, 2018). It is one of the first websites that customers go to before deciding between a wide range of products (Benea, 2014; Buhalis & Law, 2018).

The severity of reviewers' sites in the hotel industry was highlighted by Benea (2014) who found out that 4 out of 9 hotels had private blogs whilst 5 out of 9 consider TripAdvisor and holidaycheck.com as social commerce channels which serve for rating, reviews and feedback. Duan et al. (2016) indicate that TripAdvisor attracts millions of users globally as they search for hotels and accommodations, holiday destinations and holiday activities.

Yelp is another social review site in the hotels industry. It connects customers with hoteliers and other great local businesses (Cizreliogulla, et al., 2020). In addition to this, the platform offers a rating service. Users can create profiles to rate the service of the hotels as well as leave a review of their experience (Cizreliogulla et al., 2020). The site thus promote social sharing, social buying and social interaction on a social platform.

### 2.4 Social commerce acceptance drivers

Social commerce acceptance drivers refer to direct determinants of social commerce adoption. This relates to the factors that motivate consumers to see the need to use social commerce buying and selling platforms (Malikula, 2021). According to Makudza et al. (2020), when there is no need for social commerce usage, consumer's usage intention dwindles. Therefore, for social commerce to be acceptable as a way of life, it is imperative to synthesise its drivers in a bid to drive usage need.

#### 2.4.1 Theoretical drivers of social commerce acceptance

Social commerce is a subset of electronic commerce; therefore, basic theories used to explain e-commerce adoption are also used to understand consumers' adoption of social commerce (Friedrich, 2015; Malikula, 2021; Maulborough & Technal, 2020; Yahia, et al., 2018). Several attempts were made to develop models that capture and predict usage and adoption of digital technologies; including social commerce. Key among these was the theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991). The TRA attempts to explain the interactive relationship between beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviour. It posits that an individual's behaviour is driven by his or her intention to perform behaviour, whereas behavioural intention depends on consumer's subjective norms and attitudes.

Ajzen (1991) furthered the TRA by adding another driving component to the TRA: perceived behavioural control. This extension was made to cater for the factors that are beyond the person's control but affect a person's intentions or behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Tlou, 2009). The extension borders on the revelation by Ajzen (1991) that behaviour is a function of motivation (intention) and ability (behavioural control).

Technology acceptance model (TAM) was also developed to explain users' acceptance drivers of an IT system. The model explains why users accept or reject technology and in so doing, the theory uses the TRA model as it believes that behavioural intention predicts usage behaviour. TAM posits that one's actual use of a technology system is driven directly or indirectly by the user's behavioural intentions, attitude, perceived usefulness of the system, and perceived ease of the system. TAM also proposes that external factors drive intention and actual use through mediated effects on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. TAM has since been extended to TAM 2 and TAM 3 (Davis, 1989; Friedrich, 2015; Marandu, Makudza & Ngwenya, 2019; Park et al, 2007).

Since the current study is on social commerce, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) propounded by Bandura (1986) contributes immensely. The SCT goes beyond the work of Ajzen's TPB and Davis' TAM, TAM 2 and TAM 3 in the sense that the former assumes that there are only unidirectional causal relationships among the major variables in their models. The SCT includes environmental drivers, personal drivers (in the form of cognitive factors, affective factors), and behaviours which are determined reciprocally. If someone has ability (cognitive) or some competencies in using technology that can drive that person's behaviour towards the adoption of such technology. If the same individual successfully interacts with social commerce technology, that will add back to influencing their cognitive perceptions (Compeau & Higgins, 1995; Li, 2014; Sharma & Mishra, 2014).

The theory of motivational model (MM) also contributes to the discussion of the drivers of social acceptance drivers. It relates that there are primarily two sources of motivation or drivers that shape behaviour of

users. These two are intrinsic and extrinsic sources. According to Calson and Rowenn (2014) and Sharma and Mishra (2014), extrinsic motivation is when a user is motivated to perform an activity because there are perceived benefits or outcomes that are beyond the mere completion of the task; whereas intrinsic motivation is a drive from within that is associated with the results of using technology.

The Model of PC Utilization (MPCU) also aids toward a holistic understanding of the social commerce acceptance drivers. The theory is based on how consumers use technology using a personal computer (PC) if availed but not mandatory for it to be used (Li, 2014; Thompson et al., 1991). According to Thompson et al. (1991), the acceptance drivers of such technology are attitudes, social norms, habits and the expected consequences of behaviour.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) has four key drivers of acceptance. According to Williams and Dwivedi (2015) the UTAUT acceptance drivers are Performance expectancy- the degree to which the user expects that using the system will help him or her attain gains in job performance. Effort expectancy- is the degree of ease of access and use of ICTs or digital resources. Social influence- the degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe that he or she should use the new system and Facilitating conditions- the extent to which users of technology receive or perceive that they receive support from the organisation's information and communication technology. The UTAUT model also identifies four significant moderators in the model. These four are gender, experience, age and voluntariness of use (Agbatogum, 2013; Bothma & Cant, 2011; Wu et al., 2008).

**2.5 Gap analysis of social commerce acceptance drivers**

The previous models were mainly focusing on technology acceptance and

usage behaviour in general. None of the models examined was initially tested on social commerce acceptance specifically. Friedrich (2015)'s recommendation was mainly used that social commerce is a subset of electronic commerce; therefore, basic theories used to explain e-commerce adoption are also used to understand consumers' adoption of social commerce.

There are diverse views and positions in social commerce that may call for additional theoretical perspectives. Wang and Zhang (2012) indicate that the multiplicity of social shoppers' motivations call for a different theoretical base than the typical TAM study or any models rooted in the theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour. While marketing studies use different perspectives and/or approaches to investigating social commerce, social commerce researchers are similarly encouraged to use diverse perspectives, assumptions, and approaches to enrich our theoretical understanding (Yoong & Lian, 2019).

It is against that background that this research aims to go beyond the work of Venkatesh et al. (2003) and all preceding researchers of technology adoption by testing a new hybrid research model which closes the gap by incorporating and amalgamating drivers of social commerce acceptance from previous scholars. The new model would be tested specifically on the acceptance of social commerce and the model presents social commerce acceptance drivers.

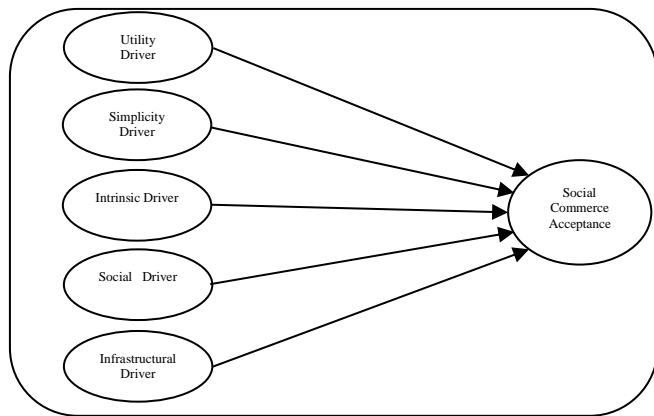
**2.6 An all-inclusive conceptual approach to social commerce drivers**

The conceptual framework of this study was mainly premised on the harmonisation of previous drivers of adoption. This study has a unique contribution of developing these specific drivers for the social commerce business environment. Table 1 shows the key drivers of the conceptual model, and the contribution from previous models on the drivers of acceptance.

**Table 1: Conceptual framework's social commerce acceptance drivers and their contributing theories**

Social Commerce Acceptance Drivers	Description	Sub-determinant	The parent model
<b>Utility Driver (UD)</b>	Motivating or discouraging perception by consumers of the value or benefits they enjoy from using social commerce.	Performance expectancy	UTAUT
		Perceived usefulness	TAM/ TAM2/ TPB
		Extrinsic motivation	MM
		Job-fit	MPCU
		Relative advantage	IDT
		Outcome expectations	SCT
<b>Simplicity Driver (SD)</b>	The degree of simplicity or difficulty associated with using social commerce	Effort Expectancy	UTAUT
		Perceived ease of use	TAM/TAM2
		Complexity	MPCU
		Ease of use	IDT
<b>Social Driver (SD)</b>	The degree to which an individual's behaviour to use social commerce is affected by others and the environment	Social Influence	UTAUT
		Subjective norm	TRA, TAM2, TPB/TPB
		Social factors	MPCU
		Image	IDT
<b>Infrastructural Driver (IC)</b>	The degree of availability and affordability of hardware, software and support systems of social commerce	Facilitating Conditions	UTAUT
		Perceived behavioural use	TPB
		Facilitating conditions	MPCU
		Compatibility	IDT
<b>Intrinsic Driver (IC)</b>	The judgment of one's ability and drive to use social commerce to accomplish a particular job or task	Self-Efficacy	SCT
		Intrinsic Motivation	MM

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model for the study.



**Figure 1:** The conceptual model

## 2.7 The conceptual model

The conceptual model has five social commerce acceptance drivers. These are the determinants of social commerce acceptance. They predict the extent to which consumers would adopt social commerce. The model acknowledges that not all five drivers should be present for consumers to adopt social commerce. However, for social commerce to be easily accepted by consumers, the study hypothesizes that all the five drivers should have a positive strong impact. This means that the social platform should present more value to consumers (utility), it should be user friendly (Simplicity), the socio-cultural factors should be supportive (social), whilst the individual's personal drive should also be pro-usage (intrinsic) and the hardware, software and support systems must be easily obtainable (infrastructural).

The study further assumes that not all social commerce drivers should have the same impact. This is because consumers come from different socio-cultural backgrounds where beliefs and norms vary (social driver). At the same time due to subliminal perception, consumers are affected by selective distortion, selective attention and selective retention which further affects their absolute threshold and differential threshold. Therefore, consumers have different perceptions of the value and simplicity of social commerce platforms (intrinsic, utility and simplicity drivers).

We also make a theoretical assumption that not all consumers are exposed to the same digital devices. This is especially true of Africa, and Zimbabwe where internet connectivity, smart phones and other digital devices may not be as fast as in the established economies. Even in the same national boundary, some areas have better digital infrastructure than others (rural areas versus urban cities, for example). Therefore, the effect of facilitating conditions among consumers vary from one consumer to the other (infrastructural driver).

### 2.7.1 Utility Driver

Utility driver refers to the motivating or discouraging perceptions, by consumers, of the value or benefits they (will) enjoy from using social commerce. In this regard, consumers would use social commerce if they perceive that the use of social commerce presents some value to them. In the conceptual model, value is calculated as benefits less costs (benefits - cost [B - C = V]). Cost in this case does not only relate to monetary measures only, but also include search costs and psychic costs.

Monetary costs include the relative perception of the price of the social commerce products or services and the costs of using social commerce (data charges, cost of digital devices, and so on). Search costs refer to consumers' perception of exhaustiveness of pre-purchase, work in searching for online solutions and comparing alternatives. Psychic costs relate to the stress of having to think about a social commerce transaction. Examples of psychic costs may include guilt, retreat, shame, fear, frustration. Benefits which feed into the model include ubiquity, convenience, speed of product acquisition, social shopping, product comparability, recommender systems among others.

Empirical findings also support the notion that when there is perceived value, consumers tend to adopt the new technology. Wu et al. (2008) found out that perceived benefits of using technology had a positive influence towards consumers' behavioural intention. Bothma and Cant (2011) also confirmed the results of Wu et al. (2008) since they also found a strong,

positive association between perceived benefits and acceptance of technology.

Research work of Ngqabuko (2020) on how social commerce was adopted in Nigeria shows that perceived value was significantly correlated with behavioural intention to use social media. Similarly, Rowland and Rowland (2021) found out that 86.5% of all respondents agreed that they would use social media if it presents more benefits to them. Rowland and Rowland (2021)'s study therefore determines the level of expected adoption of digital social commerce platforms by the respondents if there is perceived utility.

Therefore, the study hypothesises that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Utility driver positively impacts on the acceptance of social commerce.*

### 2.7.2 Simplicity Driver

Simplicity driver refers to the degree of simplicity or difficulty associated with using social commerce. This relates to the perceived degree of friendliness of social commerce platforms. The conceptual model postulates that complicated systems which are too taxing for consumers to use deter effective acceptance of social commerce. Social commerce platforms that are easy to navigate, easy to search for information, easy to compare brands and easy to complete purchases drive consumers to adopt social commerce.

Empirical work also supports that user friendly systems are easy to adopt. In a cross-cultural study of IT adoption, Bubake (2021) found out that effortless IT systems were more preferred regardless of culture or sub cultural groups. That was in line with the study results of Maulborough and Technal (2020) where the effort to use a system was significantly correlated with behavioural intention (BI) at 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). It was then concluded that user friendly and easy to understand systems were more appealing.

Using a sample of students, Marchewka, Liu and Kostiwa (2017) found out that students agreed that digital tools which were easy to use drove students to become skilful and was easy for them to learn. Similarly, using the UTAUT model, Thomas, Singh and Gaffar (2013) predicted social media adoption and came to the same conclusion as earlier studies, they revealed in their study that there is a positive correlation between simple to use systems and intention, as well as acceptance of social media.

Therefore, we hypothesise that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Simplicity driver positively impacts on the acceptance of social commerce*

### 2.7.3 Intrinsic Driver

In this research model, the intrinsic driver refers to the judgment and attitude of one's ability and drive towards using social commerce to accomplish a particular job or task. It is an individual's overall affective reaction to using a system and reflects the feelings of favourableness or unfavourableness regarding using the technology. Consumers vary from individual to individual and the inherent personal attributes affect the acceptance of social commerce. Some consumers are early adopters and innovators, who are risk takers and are more likely to try social commerce even when no one is using it. Others are late adopters, late majority and risk averse. They wait for other consumers to use the system and analyse first the consequences of adoption by early adopters and innovators, before they adopt social commerce.

Though most empirical studies have not crystallised the aspect of individual attributes on consumer's digital behaviour, a classical study by Davies (1989) found that an individual's attitude towards new technology was statistically significant in influencing technology adoption. Other studies such as one by Kallioja, Louho and Oittinen (2006) also confirmed that what a consumer does in his personal capacity have an effect on intention to use technology. Their study further revealed that consumers are not social and environmental marionettes who are tossed from one end to the other without their own thought. Therefore, in their individual capacities, the study found consumers to be rational beings.

Other studies carried out by Majanja and Dulle (2011) and Khumalo (2019), on the adoption of social media in Tanzania and digital resources in South Africa respectively, also confirmed that personal factors are very important in influencing adoption and use of technology through cognitive thinking and rationalisation of available options. This is in support of earlier findings of Davis et al. (1989) and Kallioja et al. (2006) who had also found personal feelings towards technology to have a strong effect on technology use intention.



Therefore, the study predicts that acceptance of social commerce is affected by an individual's personal factors. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Intrinsic driver positively impacts on the acceptance of social commerce*

#### 2.7.4 Social Driver

The social driver is the fourth determinant of the conceptual model. In this model, the social driver refers to the degree to which an individual's behaviour to use social commerce is affected by others and the environment. It is the individual's perception of the role of the society, community and culture towards social commerce usage. This driver of social commerce has all to do with the influence that the significant others have on social consumers. Some direct social influencers include the family, friends, acquaintances, workmates, religion, noble people in the environment, reference groups and opinion leaders.

Al-adwan (2018) carried out a study to examine the framework for social commerce purchase intention. His study concluded that trust is a key ingredient for consumers to have an intention to buy. Trust was found to be enhanced by social interactions, and the study highlighted that social influence should be on the website, when interacting with the seller and when socialising with other social consumers. The same notion was supported by a Malaysian study by Hashim, Nor and Janor (2016) who found out that social influence of fellow entrepreneurs significantly affected usage of social media by other entrepreneurs.

Farivar, Yuan and Turel (2016) further supports a direct positive association between social commerce and social support. They concluded that consumers do not operate in a vacuum but are affected by others and they also affect others. This affects their intention to use technological systems. However, although many scholars, discussed here, have found social influence to be positively associated with adoption of social commerce. Yahiaa, Al-Neamab and Kerbacheb (2018) found out that social interactions with the social commerce vendors decrease trust and lower the chances of adoption. This implies that their study found an inverse, though significant association between acceptance and social influence.

The study therefore presumes that the social driver has a direct impact on consumers' level of social commerce acceptance. If the society supports digitalization, consumers are more likely to adopt social commerce and faster than communities which are anti-social commerce and digitization. It is against that background that we predict that:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Social driver positively impacts on the acceptance of social commerce*

#### 2.7.5 Infrastructural Driver

The fifth (*not in any order of importance*) social commerce acceptance driver is referred in the conceptual model as the infrastructural driver. Infrastructural driver is the degree of availability and affordability of hardware and software aspects of social commerce. Availability of smartphones, reliable internet connectivity and social support promote easy acceptance of social commerce by consumers. Infrastructural driver also encompasses the perception that consumers have regarding technical support from companies that run social platforms.

The same notion as the one adopted in this study is empirically supported. Rowland and Rowland (2021) found out that the success of any institution is extremely determined by the effectiveness and efficiency of the ICT infrastructure within that particular institution. This was also agreed by Buarki et al. (2011), who studied adoption of digital marketing in higher learning institutions, that higher learning institutions need to provide students with access to applications and equipment such as computers, software and databases to ensure they can easily enhance their digital marketing skills and improve their technological usage.

Using a survey research design, Maulborough and Technal (2020) found out that the lack of infrastructure such as fast Internet and other required computer hardware in Bangladesh was a significant deterrent to adoption and use of digital resources. Thomas, Singh and Gaffar (2013) used the UTAUT model to try and predict mobile commerce adoption. They found out that the facilitating conditions significantly affect behavioural intention even when the effects of performance expectancy and effort expectancy on behavioural intention are included.

We therefore assume that availability of social commerce infrastructure hardware, software and support systems predict the level of acceptance of social commerce as a way of life. Conversely, the study also suggests that poor social commerce infrastructure deter acceptance of social commerce. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

*H<sub>5</sub>: Infrastructural driver positively impacts on the acceptance of social commerce*

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study followed a positivist research philosophy by taking the notion that the reality of the determinants of social commerce acceptance are known and can be quantified. Guided by the research philosophy adopted, an explanatory research design was adopted so as to measure causality between social commerce acceptance drivers and social commerce acceptance. The study followed a quantitative approach through the use of structured questionnaires and quantified codes.

A deductive research approach was followed in this study, by starting from a more general ideology of social commercialisation to more specific area of social commerce acceptance and drivers. Previous theories were synthesised, and the current study tested the synthesised theory, in line with the confines of the deductive research approach (Saunders et al., 2015).

The target population for this study was made up of all consumers of star rated hotel services in Zimbabwe. Hotel ratings was governed by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority [ZTA] (2018) categorisation. This makes the target population infinite. According to Morgan (1970), the minimum sample size for an infinite population is 384 respondents at 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval. However, Saunders et al. (2009:220) highlight that a positivist quantitative research should have adjusted sample size to factor in for non-responses. To that end the sample size for the study was adjusted to 492 respondents. Data was collected using an e-poll controlled survey. The study maintained good ethical standards throughout the research period.

### 4. RESULTS

The study received and validated 411 responses. The demographic distribution of respondents is shown in Table 2.

Gender	%	Age	%	Qualification	
Male	50.9	18 to 25 years	10.0	Certificate	10.2
Female	44.0	26 to 35 years	61.3	Degree	28.0
Missing	5.1	36 to 45 years	24.1	Diploma	21.4
		46 to 55 years	2.4	High School	24.8
		Above 55 years	2.2	Post graduate degree	15.6

The sample had both males and females with confirmed male respondents dominating the sample. Young adults aged between 26 to 35 years formulated the majority of the response group with a minimum representation from the elderly aged above 55 years. The majority of respondents claimed to be degree holders. In essence the sample was gender, age and qualification diversified.

#### 4.1 Social commerce usage

The study found out that the widely used social platforms, in the order of popularity, were: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Flickr, Google+. The majority of respondents (70.6%) access social platforms using smart phones. Others they access social platforms using computers (21.7%), tablets (4.6%), phablets (2.4%) and non-smart phones (0.7%). In terms of the length of time respondents had been using social networks, the majority spent between 9 to 12 years. This indicates that the study managed to tap into some consumers who have been using social networks since their formation.

Specifically for the social networks in the hotel industry, the widely used platforms, in the order of popularity, were: TripAdvisor, Bookings.com, Hotels.com, iRecommend and Yelp. On average, respondents indicate that they spend 5 hours, 4 minutes per day on social networks (mean = 5.06 hours), whilst they spend an average of 1 hour 22 minutes (mean 1.36 hours) on hotel-specific social platforms. Respondents also indicate that they use hotel-specific social commerce platforms for making bookings, hotel search, information search, ratings, recommendations, referrals, reservations, reviews, sharing information with others, and shopping.

**4.2 The measurement Model**

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in AMOS® to examine the divergent and convergent validity, as well as to examine the measurement model. An analysis of the reliability of the instrument was

also carried out. The CFA results indicated a good model fit (CMIN = 547.32, df = 314, P= 0.00, CMIN/DF = 1.74, GFI = 0.910, CFI = 0.971, RMSEA = 0.043). In line with Hair et al (2010), these model fit statistics confirm that the measurement model was a good model for analysis. The model was therefore worth using in this study. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Convergent and Reliability Statistics					
Factors	Item	Standard Loading	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Utility Driver	Social networks are useful in the hotel industry	0.858	0.940	0.950949	0.79516
	The available social network platforms increase my chances of getting the best hotel services	0.906			
	Use of social commerce enables me to explore hotels quickly	0.891			
	If I use social commerce, my chances of getting the best hotel deal are improved	0.861			
	Social commerce helps me to get value for money on hotel packages	0.94			
Simplicity Driver	Social commerce is easy to use in the hotel industry	0.901	0.929	0.929018	0.723857
	Social commerce is simple to understand	0.866			
	Interactions on social commerce are effortless	0.831			
	I have no problems using social commerce on my phone	0.807			
	Buying hotel services on social networks is straightforward	0.846			
Social Driver	My family supports the use of social networks for hotel services	0.796	0.927	0.928225	0.683328
	My superiors at work encourage me to use social commerce	0.794			
	My peers support social commerce usage in the hotel industry	0.854			
	I gain respect from my workmates if I use social networks	0.858			
	My community, where I come from, is supportive of the use of social network technologies	0.849			
	I feel I have enough social support towards using social commerce	0.806			
Infrastructure Driver	I have access to internet connection that allows me quick connection to social networks	0.68	0.877	0.87849	0.592512
	I am well skilled in using social networks	0.835			
	I have a digital gadget that is compatible with social networks	0.818			
	The hotel industry has support services on social networks to assist when I need help on their social platforms	0.778			
	I have uninterrupted power source at work	0.727			
Intrinsic Driver	I can use social networks	0.739	0.903	0.904934	0.656395
	I have good knowledge of computer use	0.808			
	I have abilities to share information on social networks	0.875			
	I have abilities to compare offerings from different hotels using social networks	0.78			
	I know how to make hotel reservations using social networks	0.842			

Table 3 shows that indicators were closely related (convergent validity) and thus were measuring the underlying factors. This was proven by high factor loadings for all the latent variables of the study. All factor loadings exceeded the inimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010). Reliability was also highly regarded as all coefficients for the cronbach alpha and composite realibility were above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, the AVE for the study’s latent variables were 0.59 and above. This exceeded the minimum cut off point stated by Hair et al (2010) of 0.5.

Table 4 shows statistics for the discriminant validity.

Table 4: Discriminant validity					
	Utility	Simplicity	Social	Infrastructure	Intrinsic
Utility	<b>0.892</b>				
Simplicity	0.028	<b>0.851</b>			
Social	0.102	0.104	<b>0.827</b>		
Infrastructure	0.057	0.462	0.060	<b>0.770</b>	
Intrinsic	0.069	0.36	-0.114	0.471	<b>0.810</b>

Results in Table 4 demonstrate evidence for discriminant validity. The square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) was higher than the correlations between the latent factors. Guided by Hair et al. (2010), the study concluded that each latent variable was measuring its own unique attributes.

The study also tested multicollinearity effect using collinearity test statistics. The study found out that all tolerance values were greater than 0.2. According to Laed (2017) if tolerance values are above 0.20, the model has no multicollinearity problems. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all the variables were lower than 2. According to Laed (2017) the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) should be less than 5.0. If it is higher than 5, then the model has multi collinearity problems. Therefore, using Laed (2017), the study concluded that there were no multi collinearity issues among the study variables.

**4.3 The structural model**

To test the causality between social commerce acceptance drivers and social commerce, the structural equation model (SEM) was used. Figure 2 presents the findings.

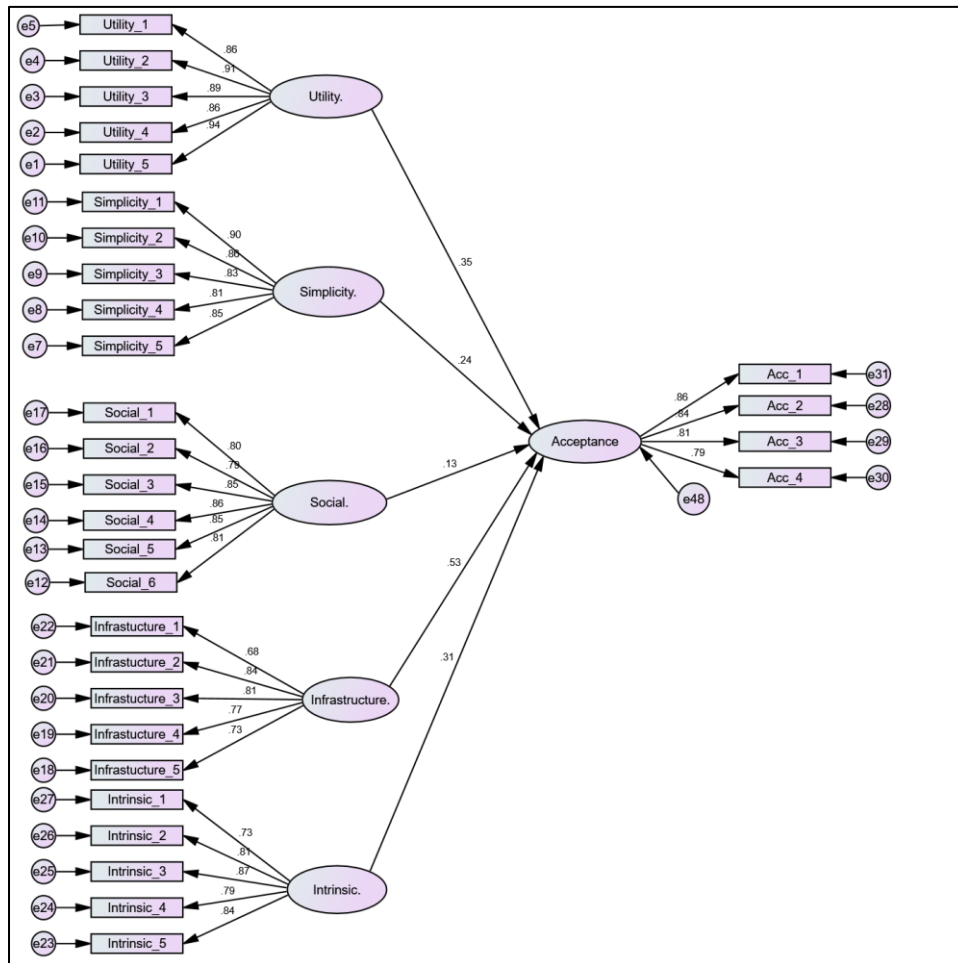


Figure 2: Path Diagram

The model fit statistics for the structural model in Figure 2 were favourable and all were within acceptable regions (CMIN = 1075.09, df = 400, P= 0.00, CMIN/DF = 2.69, CFI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.064). The coefficient of determination of 0.58 means that the model variables managed to explain 58% of the factors that influence social commerce acceptance.

Comparing the current results with previous models shows that the current model surpasses the former in predictive ability. Venkatesh et al. (2003) indicate that earlier theories were explaining only 30-50% variance in the adoption behaviour. Table 5 shows the significance levels for the path associations.

Table 5: Significance levels for the path associations							
			Standardized Coefficients	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Acceptance	<---	Utility	.353	.018	8.552	0.000	Supported
Acceptance	<---	Simplicity	.242	.021	5.973	0.000	Supported
Acceptance	<---	Social	.127	.017	3.196	0.001	Supported
Acceptance	<---	Infrastructure	.527	.026	10.579	0.000	Supported
Acceptance	<---	Intrinsic	.314	.029	7.395	0.000	Supported

5. DISCUSSION

Table 5 shows that all the hypothesised associations were supported. This means that social commerce acceptance is predicted by utility, simplicity, social, infrastructure and intrinsic drivers. A closer look at the standardised coefficients shows that not all drivers of social commerce impact social commerce acceptance at the same wave length. The highest predictor of social commerce was the infrastructure driver ( $\beta = 0.527$ ;  $P = 0.00$ ). This follows that for social commerce to gain popularity, internet connectivity and accessibility should be improved, social commerce compatible gadgets should be made available and support services on social networks should be enhanced. The same conclusion was reached in related studies that when hardware, software and support systems are present, acceptance of technology is enhanced (Buarki et al., 2011; Rowland & Rowland, 2021; Maulborough & Technal, 2020).

Utility driver was found to be positively, and directly impacting on social commerce acceptance ( $\beta = 0.353$ ;  $P = 0.00$ ). In essence that conclusion means that social networks are useful in general sense, and more specifically are useful in the hotel industry. The same results also means that for consumers to accept social commerce they should perceive the

platform as an enabler to hotel exploration, enhances chances of getting best services, and helps in getting value for money. Empirical evidence also supports that conclusion. Wu et al. (2008), Bothma and Cant (2011) and Ngqabuko (2020) all confirmed that when there is perceived value, consumer acceptance is enhanced.

The intrinsic driver also proved true as a determinant of social commerce acceptance ( $\beta = 0.314$ ;  $P = 0.00$ ). This means that personal factors are key in enhancing usage of social business. The consumer must have the skills and ability to use social networks and this includes good knowledge of computer and smart phone usage. Social commerce is more of buying and selling on social platforms, so consumers should also have the personal aptitudes so share, compare and make payments using social networks. The more favourable the personal intrinsic factors, the more chances that a consumer adopt social commerce as a way of life (Davies, 1989; Kallioja et al., 2006; Majanja & Dulle, 2011; Khumalo, 2019).

The hypothesis which stated that simplicity impacts on social commerce acceptance was accepted ( $\beta = 0.242$ ;  $P = 0.00$ ). This means that if consumers perceive social commerce as simple to use, they are more likely to adopt it. Businesses which run social commerce models should therefore ensure that their systems are easy to use and to understand.

They must be compatible with most electronic devices in an effortless and straight forward manner. Bubake (2021) found out that effortless IT systems were more preferred regardless of culture or sub cultural groups.

The social driver recorded the least impact of 12.7% on social commerce acceptance, however the association was statistically significant ( $P = 0.001$ ). This therefore follows that to augment social commerce acceptance, the society plays a significant role. The family, superiors, peers, workmates, community should all offer good social support towards social commerce acceptance. Farivar, Yuan and Turel (2016) support the conclusion of this study by indicating that consumers do not operate in a vacuum but are affected by others and they also affect others on a social platform.

## 6. MANAGERIAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Social commerce usage can be augmented through offering support services to consumers. This calls for the development of easy-to-use software and hardware system. Companies need to offer social support on the social platforms. Consumers adopt social commerce if it presents value to them. Therefore, there is need to minimise social commerce costs (monetary, search and psychic), and to enhance benefits such as convenient sharing, buying and comparing on social platforms. There may be need for behaviour change commercials so as to unfreeze the status quo of some rigid societies. Behaviour change commercial are important because the study found out that the society has a significant impact on adoption of social commerce.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was conducted during a Covid-19 pandemic. Most hotel users and travellers were under lockdown and governments had imposed travel restrictions. Therefore, the study faced a limitation in classifying hotel users from a pool of respondents who ordinarily were not using hotels at the time of the survey. To counter the limitation, the questionnaire had screening questions that would validate that responses received were from a previous or current hotel user. In addition, an online survey was adopted since mail intercept or person administered surveys were not feasible. The model tested in this study has never been tested before, pausing limitations of model adaptability and integrity in various geographical situations.

Future studies may want to replicate the model presented in this study to enhance its robustness. There is also an impending need to fuse social commerce acceptance and consumer decision making so as to develop a robust model of social commerce acceptance and consumer usage behaviour.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that consumers principally use smart phones when accessing social platforms. The main social platforms used include WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In the hotel industry, the widely used social commerce platforms include TripAdvisor, Bookings.com, Hotels.com and iRecommend. The study further concluded that social commerce acceptance can be augmented by the five social commerce acceptance drivers presented in the conceptual model namely; utility, simplicity, intrinsic, social and infrastructural drivers. The predictive power of the social commerce acceptance drivers was found to be 58%.

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