Social Commerce and Sustainable Consumption: A Systematic Review of International Studies

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Abstract

In the context of social commerce emerging as a transformative trend in the digital economy, understanding its influence on sustainable consumption behavior has become increasingly important. This study conducts a systematic review of 2,038 peer-reviewed articles published between 2001 and 2025 to analyze the relationship between social commerce and sustainable consumption. By integrating a meta-textual review approach with the PRISMA protocol, the research systematically examines publication trends, analytical methods, theoretical foundations, and commonly investigated mediating variables. In addition, a bibliometric analysis—using keyword co-occurrence mapping supported by VOSviewer —was employed to identify influential topics, thematic clusters, and research gaps. The findings reveal that the majority of studies are concentrated in developed economies such as China, the United States, and South Korea, with Vietnam accounting for only one publication. Quantitative techniques, particularly regression and factor analysis, dominate the methodological landscape, while advanced methods such as PLS-SEM remain underutilized. Furthermore, perceptual variables such as "perceived value" and "satisfaction" receive limited attention despite their critical role in explaining sustainable consumption behavior on social commerce platforms. This study recommends expanding research in emerging markets, strengthening the application of advanced analytical techniques, and incorporating ethical and social dimensions into future models to foster both theoretical advancement and practical solutions for promoting sustainable consumption in the digital era.

Keywords: *social commerce, sustainable consumption, bibliometric analysis, PRISMA, PLS-SEM.*

1. Introduction

Social commerce has emerged as a transformative trend in the global digital economy, as social networking platforms become increasingly integrated with e-commerce to deliver convenient, personalized, and highly interactive shopping experiences for consumers (Gupta et al., 2024). Beyond enhancing customer satisfaction, social commerce creates new business opportunities by leveraging user data, enabling viral content dissemination, and employing community-based marketing strategies (Leong et al., 2024). Furthermore, the rapid growth of mobile internet, digital payment systems, and social media has fueled the expansion of social commerce in many countries, including developing economies (Hossain & Kim, 2020).

Amid the growing urgency of sustainable consumption—driven by pressures from climate change, resource depletion, and ethical consumption demands—the role of social commerce extends beyond stimulating purchasing behavior. It also has the potential to influence consumers' awareness, attitudes, and responsible consumption practices. Through online communities, product reviews, livestreaming, and user-generated content, social commerce can serve as a channel to promote environmentally and socially friendly consumption behaviors.

However, there remains a lack of systematic reviews that clarify how social commerce influences sustainable consumption from theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives. Therefore, this study seeks to synthesize, systematize, and analyze scholarly works published over the past eight years that examine the relationship between social commerce and sustainable consumption behavior.

2. Objectives

The paper focuses on three main objectives:

(1) To synthesize the research methods and variables employed in analyzing the relationship between social commerce and sustainable consumption;

(2) To identify the theoretical foundations underpinning previous studies;

(3) To propose research questions and future directions to guide scholars in advancing this field.

The following section presents the literature review methodology. Subsequent sections analyze the content of the selected studies, discuss the key findings, identify limitations, and propose directions for future research.

3. Materials and Methods
3.1. Publication Trends

The approach adopted in this study is the meta-textual review method, which enables the identification and extraction of relevant information from published research while systematically evaluating the existing body of literature (Tranfield et al., 2003). This method is designed to achieve three main objectives:

(i) To evaluate high-quality scholarly articles directly related to consumer engagement through social media marketing activities;

(ii) To develop an integrated analytical framework that provides a comprehensive perspective on the impact of social media marketing on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption;

(iii) To identify gaps in the current research and propose potential directions for future studies.

To accomplish Objective 1, the study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which allows for accurate and reliable analysis of peer-reviewed works, following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol (Liberati et al., 2009). PRISMA is a structured review framework comprising a four-stage flow diagram: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of final studies in the analysis. PRISMA was chosen for its comprehensiveness and its ability to ensure high consistency across all stages of the literature synthesis process.

The review process consists of four main steps:

(1) Establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria;

(2) Searching for and selecting high-quality, relevant studies;

(3) Systematically evaluating the selected literature;

(4) Presenting the results and conducting a synthesis analysis.

The sample search and document identification strategy involves three main activities:

(a) Identifying keywords relevant to the research topic;

(b) Assessing the relevance of the retrieved documents;

(c) Evaluating the quality of the selected studies.

Data were collected from the reputable multidisciplinary database Scopus, which has become increasingly popular in academia for its comprehensiveness and extensive coverage.

To achieve Objectives 2 and 3, the study applies bibliometric analysis—a widely used tool for assessing and exploring the evolution of scientific knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021). This method provides an objective and comprehensive overview of the development of a research field over a given period by performing quantitative statistical analysis on data extracted from academic databases, including information on authors, citation counts, keywords, and journal titles (Van Raan, 2014).

According to Van Eck and Waltman (2010), depending on the type of data utilized, bibliometric analysis can be implemented through five main techniques: citation analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling analysis, co-occurrence analysis, and co-authorship analysis. Each technique has its own merits, and the choice depends on the specific research objectives. Among these, keyword co-occurrence analysis is recognized as the most common method in empirical investigations of the structure and developmental trends of a research field (Backhaus, 2011). Therefore, this dissertation adopts keyword co-occurrence analysis to conduct the bibliometric study, supported by VOSviewer software version 1.6.20.

Specifically, the author searched for publications related to the key concepts of the study—namely, social commerce, behavioral intention, and sustainable consumption—within the SCOPUS database, using the following query structure: ("social commerce" OR "s-commerce" OR "social shopping") OR ("consumer

behavior" OR "purchase intention" OR "behavioral intention") AND ("sustainable consumption" OR "responsible consumption" OR "eco-friendly consumption").

From the initial search process, a total of 2,530 documents relevant to the research topic were retrieved. These documents were then screened based on inclusion criteria, namely: (i) relevance to the research field, and (ii) publication language being English. After this filtering step, 2,038 documents remained, published between 2001 and 2025, as illustrated in Figure 1.
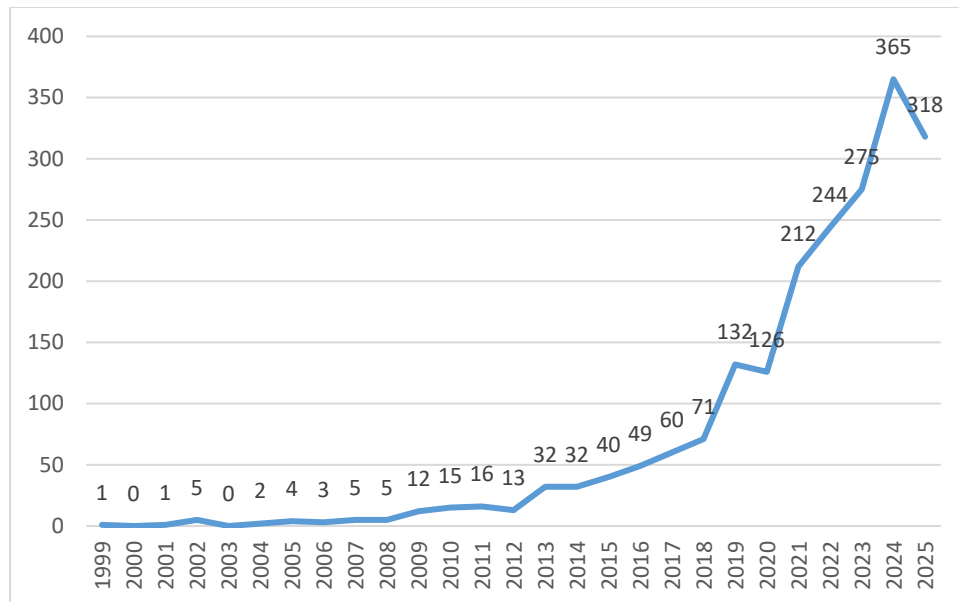
Figure 1. Number of Publications from 2001–2025

3.2. Meta-Textual Approach

In the field of social commerce and sustainable consumption behavior research, various theories have been employed to explain the psychological, social, and technological factors influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. Table 1 presents seven representative theories commonly applied in this domain. From the systematic review of 2,038 studies, we found that foundational frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Signaling Theory, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Technology Impact Theory were the most frequently adopted, accounting for nearly 70% of all publications. This prevalence reflects a modern approach to explaining sustainable consumption behavior under the influence of social commerce—where consumers are shaped not only by psychological and social factors (TPB, Signaling) but also by the interactive capabilities, user experiences, and perceived usefulness of technology (TAM, Technology Impact). The growing emphasis on integrating behavioral and technological theories underscores the urgent need to gain a deeper understanding of how consumer engagement with social commerce platforms is formed and sustained, particularly in the context of promoting sustainable consumption.

Table 1. Previously Applied Theories

No.	Theory	No. of Studies	Role and Application in Research
1	Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) – Ajzen (1991)	456	Explains consumption intentions based on attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control; widely applied in research on green and responsible consumption behavior.
2	Signaling Theory	370	Explains how businesses convey sustainability-related information through social commerce (e.g., eco-labels, certifications, ethical commitments) to build trust and influence purchasing decisions.
3	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) – Davis (1989)	356	Explains why consumers adopt social commerce platforms based on perceived usefulness and ease of use.
4	Technology Impact Theory	244	Analyzes the impact of digital technologies (e.g., livestreaming, QR codes, user-generated content) on perceptions and sustainable consumption behavior.
5	Social Exchange Theory	262	Explains consumption behavior as a cost–benefit exchange process, in which green behavior occurs when consumers perceive social benefits (e.g., prestige, recognition, community).
6	Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)	204	Examines motivations for using social media (e.g., entertainment, information, social connection) and how these motivations influence sustainable consumption behavior through social commerce.
7	Relationship Marketing Theory	146	Emphasizes the role of engagement, loyalty, and perceived value in building long-term relationships between brands and consumers, particularly through social commerce platforms.

Source: Authors

Although social commerce is experiencing rapid growth in Vietnam, only one out of the 2,038 reviewed studies focuses on the Vietnamese context, revealing a significant gap in the field. This underscores the urgent need to expand research in emerging economies such as Vietnam—where digital consumption behavior, livestream selling, and community interaction are becoming dominant trends. Strengthening research in this context would not only contribute to the global theory of sustainable consumption via social media but also provide practical evidence for domestic businesses in developing sustainable marketing strategies.

Table 2. Countries Covered in the Research

Region / Country	No. of Studies	Percentage (%)	Research Focus Notes
China	481	23.6016	Leads social commerce research; focuses on consumer behavior and domestic platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu.
United States	297	14.5731	Focuses on Facebook and Instagram; emphasizes behavior, technology, and green consumption.
South Korea	169	8.2924	Highlights the role of KOLs, livestreaming, and social commerce in ethical consumption.
India	155	7.6055	Examines young consumer behavior, social virality, and mobile commerce.
Malaysia	114	5.5937	Focuses on trust, technology, and consumer attitudes.
Vietnam	1	0.0491	Primarily investigates consumer engagement and repurchase behavior through livestreaming.
Europe (UK, Germany, Italy, etc.)	255	12.5123	Emphasizes ethical consumption and green brand campaigns.
Australia & New Zealand	84	4.1217	Highlights emotional and community factors in social commerce.
Other countries (Brazil, UAE, Canada, etc.)	481	23.6016	Includes single-country studies or cross-national comparisons.

Source: Authors

The synthesis of 2,038 studies reveals that the majority employ quantitative methods, with various forms of regression (250 studies) and factor analysis (246 studies) being the most common. Among these, only 10 studies apply SEM/PLS-SEM, indicating that although this technique is widely recognized, it does not hold absolute dominance. Qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, observation, and netnography are also used but in relatively limited numbers. Additionally, several advanced techniques—such as sentiment analysis, Google Vision AI, and Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA)—appear sporadically, reflecting methodological diversity but also suggesting that these tools remain underutilized in the field.

Table 3. Methods Used in the Reviewed Studies

| Data Analysis Technique	No. of Studies
Regression (OLS, multilevel regression, Ctree, Panel VAR, mixed-effects, etc.)	250
Confirmatory / Exploratory Factor Analysis (CFA / EFA)	246
Correlation Analysis	86
Content Analysis	43
In-depth Interview	32
Qualitative Observation	32
Analysis of Covariance / Variance (ANCOVA / ANOVA)	32
Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID)	21
Netnography	21
Smart PLS	16
Sentiment Analysis	14
Kruskal–Wallis Test	14
Principal Component Analysis (PCA)	14
Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA)	11
Google Vision AI	11
Cluster Analysis	11
Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA)	11
Mediation Analysis	11
Latent Profile Analysis (LPA)	11
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) / PLS-SEM	10
Others	1141

Source: Authors

Table 4 shows that mediating variables such as trust, engagement, and attitude are among the most frequently employed in existing studies.

Table 4. Mediating Variables Used

| Mediating Variable	No. of Studies	Notes
Trust	26	A common mediator in brand–consumer relationship research.
Engagement	22	Considered the main bridge between social networking sites (SNS) and consumer behavior.
Attitude	18	Mediates the relationship between digital experience and behavioral intention.
Social Value	12	Highlights the role of community in sustainable purchasing behavior.
Perceived Value	5	Rarely used, mainly in consumer experience studies.
Satisfaction	4	Often overlooked in social commerce behavior models—requires further investigation.
Perceived Environmental Benefits	3	Focused on sustainable consumption aspects.
Brand Identification	3	Emphasizes brand recognition in the digital social environment.
Personal Meaning	2	Associated with deeper awareness of responsible consumption.
Perceived Risk	1	Rarely appears but plays a moderating role in purchase decisions.
Others	1,894	No mediating variables included.

Source: Authors

4. Results and Discussion
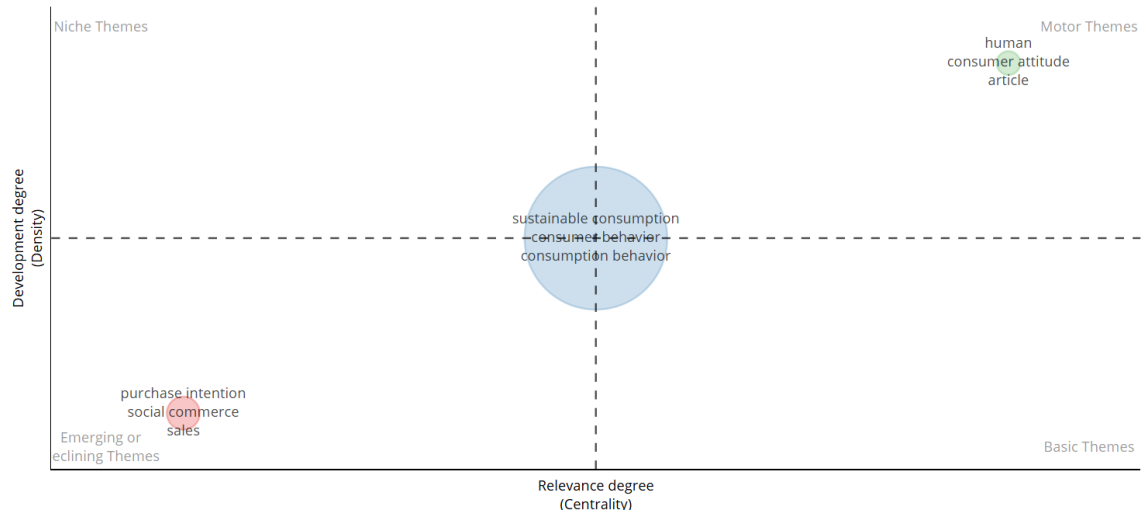
Figure 2. Thematic Strategy Map

Figure 2 presents the thematic strategy map of studies related to social commerce, purchase intention, and sustainable consumption. First, in the upper-right quadrant are the motor themes, which include human, consumer attitude, and article. These themes are both highly relevant and well-developed, playing a central role in driving advancements in the research field. Second, at the center of the map are the basic themes, such as sustainable consumption, consumer behavior, and consumption behavior. These topics exhibit high relevance but moderate levels of development, reflecting their core role in providing the theoretical foundations and research models within the field. Third, in the lower-left quadrant are the emerging themes, which include purchase intention, social commerce, and sales. These topics have both low relevance and low development, indicating that they are still in the formative stage or are only beginning to attract scholarly attention. The research gap clearly lies in these emerging themes—particularly social commerce and purchase intention—which have not yet been extensively explored in direct connection with sustainable consumption. Meanwhile, the rapid post-COVID-19 growth of social commerce and the heightened awareness of responsible consumption create substantial potential for integrating these two research directions. Deeper exploration of these relationships would contribute significantly to both theoretical advancement and practical applications in the field.
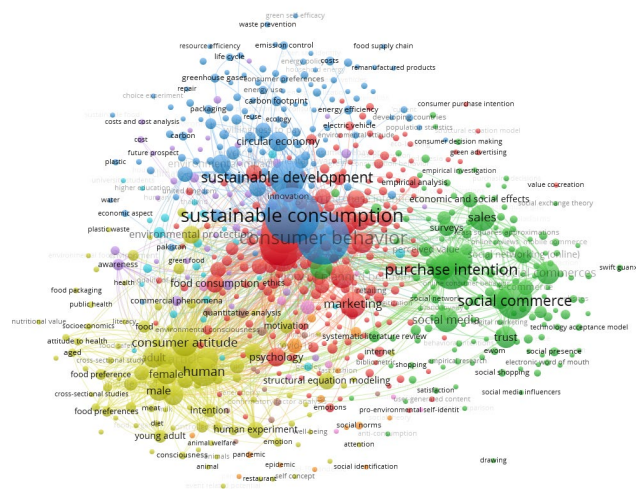
Figure 3. Keyword Co-occurrence Network Map in the Reviewed Studies

Figure 3 illustrates the science mapping of the keyword co-occurrence network in the reviewed studies. In this map, the node size represents the frequency of keyword occurrence, the thickness and number of links indicate the degree of connectivity with other keywords, and the colors denote thematic clusters.

At the center of the network are highly influential and strongly connected keywords such as "sustainable consumption", "consumer behavior", "purchase intention", "social commerce", and "trust". These central nodes connect to multiple subtopics and reflect the main research trends in the field. Structural analysis identifies four prominent thematic clusters:

Blue Cluster – Focused on sustainable consumption and environmental concerns, with keywords such as "sustainable consumption", "sustainable development", "environmental protection", and "green consumption". This is the academic core, reflecting the long-standing interest in sustainability and environmentally friendly consumption solutions.

Red Cluster – Related to purchase intention and consumer behavior in the digital environment, including keywords such as "purchase intention", "social media", "commerce", and "perceived value". This cluster highlights interest in the effects of psychological factors, perceived value, and social media communication on purchase decisions, though its link to sustainable consumption remains limited.

Green Cluster – Centered on social commerce and trust, featuring keywords such as "social commerce", "trust", "social media influencers", and "electronic word of mouth". Studies in this cluster emphasize digital platforms, social media, and consumer satisfaction, yet the connection with sustainable consumption remains fragmented.

Yellow Cluster – Addresses consumer attitudes and demographic factors, including "consumer attitude", "human", "age", "gender", and "food preferences". This cluster has the potential to serve as an intermediary link between sustainable consumption and social commerce research, but it has not been deeply explored.

Post-COVID-19 trends show a marked increase in keywords related to "social commerce", "trust", and "purchase intention", reflecting the strong shift toward online shopping and social commerce. Meanwhile, environmental keywords such as "carbon footprint" and "green consumption" continue to attract attention but have yet to be fully integrated into the digital commerce context. This underscores substantial research potential in bridging sustainable consumption and social commerce perspectives.

Although research on social commerce and sustainable consumption is expanding, substantial gaps remain that must be addressed to develop a comprehensive and practice-oriented academic foundation.

From a geographical perspective, most existing studies focus on developed countries or large economies such as China, the United States, South Korea, and India, whereas Vietnam—an emerging market experiencing a rapid boom in social commerce—has only one recorded study. This highlights a shortage of empirical evidence in the local context, raising the risk of overlooking cultural, consumer behavior, and technological readiness factors specific to Vietnam. Therefore, expanding research in the Vietnamese market is essential to generate policy and strategic implications that are better aligned with domestic realities.

In terms of research methodology, most studies employ basic quantitative techniques such as linear regression or factor analysis. However, the application rate of PLS-SEM—a powerful method for analyzing multidimensional behaviors and complex relationships—stands at only 10 studies. PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for testing theoretical models related to social commerce and sustainable consumption. Future research should employ this method more extensively and combine it with qualitative approaches (e.g., in-depth interviews, netnography) to explore foundational factors such as cultural values, ethical motivations, and social expectations.

From a theoretical and modeling standpoint, current research largely focuses on familiar mediators such as engagement, trust, and attitude. Yet perceptual variables such as perceived value (5 studies) and satisfaction (4 studies) are rarely incorporated, despite their pivotal role in explaining sustainable consumption behavior on social commerce platforms—where emotional experiences and personalized interactions strongly influence consumer decisions. Future models should therefore broaden the range of observed variables to include perceptual, experiential, and social interaction factors.

Finally, the sustainable consumption dimension remains underemphasized in many studies, which often approach the topic from technological or marketing perspectives without sufficiently addressing foundational factors such as environmental awareness, social responsibility, or ethical motivation. In the context of Vietnam's ongoing green development strategy, upcoming research should more strongly integrate

these dimensions into theoretical models to generate practical solutions that promote sustainable consumption through social commerce.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive and systematic review of 2,038 peer-reviewed articles published between 2001 and 2025 to examine how social commerce contributes to sustainable consumption behavior. By integrating the PRISMA protocol with a meta-textual and bibliometric analysis, the research offers a holistic understanding of publication trends, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches that have shaped this growing field.

The findings reveal several key insights. First, social commerce has evolved from a marketing tool into a transformative ecosystem that influences consumer values, attitudes, and behaviors toward sustainability. However, the literature remains geographically and methodologically unbalanced, with the majority of studies concentrated in developed economies such as China, the United States, and South Korea, while emerging markets like Vietnam are significantly under-represented. Second, the theoretical landscape is dominated by traditional behavioral and technology-oriented frameworks such as TPB and TAM, whereas ethical, cultural, and social dimensions of sustainability remain insufficiently explored. Third, quantitative methods—especially regression and factor analysis—still prevail, while advanced techniques such as PLS-SEM, sentiment analysis, and data-driven modeling are used only sparingly, indicating ample room for methodological advancement.

From a conceptual perspective, mediating variables such as trust, engagement, and attitude are frequently analyzed, yet perceived value and satisfaction—critical determinants of sustainable digital consumption—receive limited attention. The integration of perceptual and emotional factors into future models will be essential to understanding how social commerce fosters responsible and long-term consumer behavior. Furthermore, future studies should expand cross-cultural comparisons and include qualitative approaches such as netnography or mixed-method designs to capture contextual nuances.

In conclusion, this review underscores the transformative potential of social commerce in shaping sustainable consumption patterns, but also highlights substantial gaps that call for deeper theoretical, methodological, and contextual diversification. For emerging markets like Vietnam, future research should aim to build a context-sensitive framework that aligns digital innovation with ethical consumption and sustainable development goals. Such efforts will not only advance academic understanding but also support businesses and policymakers in leveraging social commerce as a driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

6. Acknowledgements

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