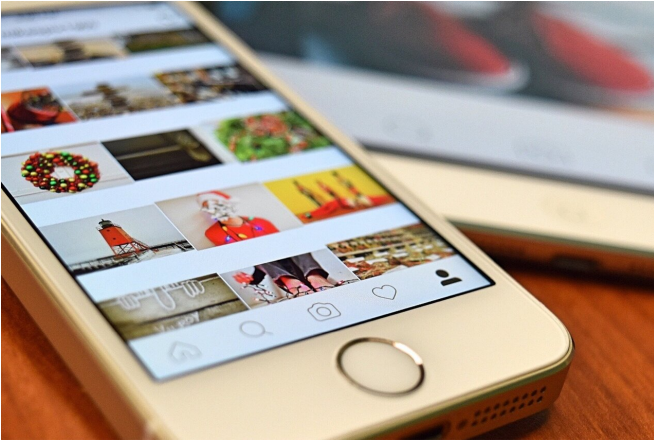


Online commerce and social networks: Is Facebook the storefront of the future?

4 March 2021, by David Bradley



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Online shopping has been with us for many years. The World Wide Web opened up to the commercial world back in the mid-1990s. However, the web itself has been displaced to a large degree by social networking and online life for many exists almost exclusively on these apps and sites rather than the broader internet. As such, commercial concerns hoping to keep pace with constant change must adapt to take advantage of social networking in the same way that bricks-and-mortar shops had to adapt to the emergence of web rivals. Could the social network be the new shopping mall?

Melanie Wiese of the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, discusses the prospects in the *International Journal of Business Information Systems*. She has investigated how quickly users are taking to the online marketplace of the biggest international social networking system, Facebook and considering the moderating role of trust in this environment. Completed surveys from almost 400 uses in South Africa provide the raw data for her analysis.

Fundamentally, Wiese's results show that it is perceived enjoyment and usefulness that are the most important factors determining whether or not a Facebook user will make a purchase through this system. She found that while privacy risk and [social norms](#) were not significant influences. Indeed, among the Facebook users surveyed, the majority were more trusting of shopping through Facebook than more conventional [online shopping](#). Her findings could guide those hoping to sell their wares on Facebook helping them to improve their marketing strategies.

The alignment of [social networking](#) and shopping has been a possibility for many years, perhaps first mentioned in the research literature in 2010, but hinted at long before that.

"Shopping on social networks presents an opportunity for users to complete transactions within the social network's environment, while it provides brands the opportunity to meet consumers in their space," says Wiese. She adds that researchers and marketers alike need to quick to respond to changes in this fast-moving online environment if they are to make credible and timely predictions. There needs to be a sense of urgency, she suggests, as otherwise cutting edge research quickly becomes out-dated historical artifact rather than forward looking.

More information: Melanie Wiese. Shopping on social networks: is this the storefront of the future, *International Journal of Business Information Systems* (2021). [DOI: 10.1504/IJBIS.2021.113280](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBIS.2021.113280)

Provided by Inderscience

APA citation: Online commerce and social networks: Is Facebook the storefront of the future? (2021, March 4) retrieved 28 June 2022 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2021-03-online-commerce-social-networks-facebook.html>

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