Chapter 19

Social Commerce and Metaverse in a New Virtual World:
Exploring Women's Adoption Intentions

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ABSTRACT

Social commerce platforms are used for a variety of purposes including networking, shopping, and purchasing goods and services from others, while metaverse platform enables users to explore virtual 3D worlds and interact with other users in these environments. Although there are multiple benefits to embracing social commerce and metaverse platforms, regrettably these platforms sometimes lead to harassment, trolling, or abuse. Women face the risk of cyberbullying, cyberstalking, sexual harassment, graphic imagery, and hate speech while engaging in activities on social commerce or metaverse platforms. There are various studies available that have examined impulse buying behavior and attitudes toward social commerce or metaverse, but hardly any study is available that studied the risk and social support

aspects about the adoption of these new emerging virtual platforms. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill the research gap. It aims to study the influence of perceived risk and social support on women's adoption intentions toward social commerce and metaverse platforms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Virtual reality advancements are expected to give rise to an entirely new digital environment that may be used for a variety of personal and business purposes (Baranauskas & Raišienė, 2021). This has resulted in the emergence of social commerce and meta-universe (metaverse) platforms (Alotaibi et al., 2019; Anderson & Rainie, 2022). In many ways, social commerce and the future metaverse platforms would be very similar to the current reality, and they may even replace some of our current physical activities such as hanging out with friends, offline shopping, building social connections, etc. (Allam et al., 2022). Social commerce typically involves social media marketing, customer reviews, user-generated content, and other forms of online collaboration (Cheung et al., 2022). The Indian social commerce sector is predicted to rise to $84 billion in worth by the year 2030 (Statista, 2019). On the other hand, metaverse, which denotes as a "parallel universe" or "beyond universe," is an engrossing virtual world in which people may connect by creating their own virtual avatars. In the year 2021, the metaphor gained momentum after the corporation was renamed as Meta by the CEO of Facebook (Das, 2022). These virtual platforms are created in such a way that the body and mind would be inept to make a clear distinction between the virtual and the real environment (Devrim & Düzce, 2022; Hamurcu, 2022). Companies are also nowadays using these platforms to create virtual tours, host virtual events, offer virtual customer service, increase brand awareness, interactive customer experiences, engage with customers, and drive sales (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Mai, 2022; Uktolseja & Furinto, 2022).

Social commerce and metaverse platforms are increasingly popular ways for people to buy, sell, interact, collaborate, and build their own experiences (Buhalis et al., 2022; Cao et al., 2021) but unfortunately, they can also be a breeding ground for verbal abuse and harassment including abuse against women (Das, 2022; Krishnasai, 2022). Many users mainly women have raised major concerns about trolling, cyberbullying, and abusive language on the social commerce platform (Al-Adhaileh et al., 2022; Bargavi, 2022; Al-ameedi et al., 2022). On the other hand, the metaverse also has its share of indulgences in racist insults, cybercrime, sexual harassment, and violation of personal space, etc. (Krishnasai, 2022; Mishra, 2022). The international meta-universe, whose revenue is expected to reach $800 billion by the year 2024, is

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