



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Facebook Commerce Issues in Thailand and Precautionary Benchmarks

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ABSTRACT

This research proposes precautionary benchmarks for addressing Facebook purchasing issues. Motivated by the increasing reliance on e-commerce and the prevalence of online purchasing problems in Thailand, this study adopts qualitative methodologies. It begins with in-depth interviews to gather data from two distinct groups of buyers: "experienced" frequent buyers who have never encountered issues, and "inexperienced" buyers who have faced problems. With narrative analysis and analytical methods integrating the customer journey, decision-making process, and hierarchical decomposition, key insights and precautionary measures are identified. The findings indicate that experienced buyers tend to directly search for products, thoroughly investigate sellers, compare with other platforms, and prefer pre-payment methods. However, inexperienced buyers often respond to ads or direct sales without detailed checks, focus on low prices, and use both pre/post-payment methods. The hierarchical decomposition classifies Facebook purchasing issues into three main sub-issues: shipping delays, incorrect products/characteristics, and shipment absences, further categorized into seven causes. The synthesis from systematic variation and induction approaches yields preventive measures for buyers, such as verifying seller credibility, checking product details, and selecting secure payments. Additionally, the study offers suggestions to improve Facebook's system to enhance buyer confidence. The comprehensive knowledge from this research can be disseminated for public benefit.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic commerce or e-commerce has been rapidly expanding globally, including in Thailand (Alam and Rahman, 2022; Gu et al., 2021), notably accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020. The pandemic led to movement restrictions, pushing societies towards the "New Normal" and making e-commerce a crucial alternative to traditional shopping. Additionally, the surge in social media usage has significantly boosted buying and selling on these platforms, also known as social commerce (s-commerce), further fueling e-commerce growth (Hirankasi and Chutipha, 2021).

A 2021 study on Thai consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic identified Facebook as the leading platform for social commerce, comprising 86% of online purchases (Statista Research Department, 2021). This mirrors the Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA) survey findings, which noted businesses' shift towards s-commerce as their main distribution channel amid

the pandemic, largely attributed to reduced startup and operational costs. Specifically, Facebook emerged as the most preferred platform, representing 65.5% of this shift (Electronic Transactions Development Agency, 2021).

Contrastingly, data from the Online Complaint Center from January to December 2021 (Online Complaint Center, 2021) shows that consumers filed 54,348 complaints, mainly about online shopping, with 37,584 cases averaging 3,132 monthly complaints. Most issues arose post-purchase: 47.7% involved orders not received, 30.6% concerned products not matching their ads or standards, 4.6% were about damaged goods, 0.8% involved delayed deliveries, and 1.2% were related to products violating legal regulations. Additionally, regarding platforms, the majority of complaints, at 82.1%, were related to Facebook purchases. Websites followed at 4.9%, Instagram at 4.7%, e-Marketplaces at 3.6%, and Twitter at 1.7%.

Amid the rising popularity and subsequent increase in complaints about Facebook commerce, this research aims to explore consumer buying behaviors on the platform. It seeks to understand the complexities of the Facebook shopping process through collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing data using a blend of qualitative research methods, including narrative analysis, systematic variation, and induction. Key issues such as shipping delays, incorrect product descriptions, and missing shipments are identified through hierarchical decomposition, and delved into their root causes. Finally, actionable guidelines for safer Facebook shopping are developed including recommendations to Facebook for enhancements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "Social Commerce" (s-commerce) was first popularized by Yahoo! Japan in 2005-2006 to describe online sharing of product information and reviews. Gaining traction from 2010, s-commerce, a subset of e-commerce, merges social media and online business, significantly impacting online marketing and trade (Saundage and Lee, 2011; Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). It leverages social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to enhance online purchasing, integrating social features into commerce (Kim Sanghyun, 2013; Smith et al., 2015; GenuineVC, 2006). S-commerce fosters interaction and content generation, adding value for consumers and sellers, and influences pre-purchase evaluation, shopping decisions, and post-purchase behavior (Hajli et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2017).

Hirankasi and Chutipha (2021) identified five characteristics of s-commerce as follows:

Peer-to-peer sales platform enable users to buy and sell products through websites and apps, where users register, list items, and communicate directly for transactions, e.g., Etsy, Pinterest, and Facebook Marketplace.

Conversational commerce allows direct transactions via chat platforms initially designed for messaging, like Facebook Messenger or Instagram, facilitating product inquiries, recommendations, and completing purchases within the chat.

Social media forums and groups are venues for trading products within social media groups or threads, where members can list items, discuss, and transact, enhancing product and service information exchange.

Live broadcasts/streaming and temporary content offer product purchases during live video streams on social platforms, featuring exclusive deals, with real-time seller interaction. Temporary content like FB Stories promotes products briefly, urging quick customer decisions.

Electronic payments on social posts allow for direct payments within the post via features like Facebook Pay and Twitter Buy, simplifying the buying process directly on the platform.

Purchasing on Facebook in non-metropolitan areas during COVID-19 highlighted trust issues (Alam and Rahman, 2022). Studies show consumer hesitancy towards online shopping stems from confidence deficits (Lee and Turban, 2001; Stouthuysen et al., 2018). Specifically, many prefer cash on delivery for Facebook purchases due to seller mistrust (Rahman et al., 2018; Awashreh et al., 2024). Trust influences buying on Facebook, with likes on product images and brand pages by friends significantly affecting attitudes. Increased likes boost interest in Facebook purchases, though the validity of likes as satisfaction indicators is debated due to potential misrepresentation. Mutual friends liking a brand's page on Facebook also boosts consumer trust and purchase likelihood, though concerns about the authenticity of these likes exist (Suraworachet et al., 2012). Trust is crucial for repurchase intentions, notably on Facebook Live, where seller honesty perceived through live streaming enhances transaction security (Laosuraphon and Nuangjamnong, 2022; Prasongthan et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

This section begins by defining the population and samples, then proceeds to describe the qualitative analysis methods employed.

Population and Samples

In this research, the population consists of individuals who purchased products via Facebook during the late COVID-19 pandemic, spanning from late 2022 to mid-2023. The sampling method employed is purposive sampling. Additionally, the samples are divided into two distinct groups, as follows:

Group 1: Experienced buyers are those who frequently buy on Facebook and have not faced any issues, totaling nine individuals, each of whom makes at least four purchases per month.

Group 2: Inexperienced buyers are those who have suffered some issues for their Facebook purchases, totaling eight individuals. They are considered unsophisticated and dissatisfied.

To explore the qualitative aspects, this research incorporates in-depth and semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews offer a profound avenue for participants to express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences in detail, aiming to extract deep insights from individuals possessing relevant expertise (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews facilitate structured yet adaptable conversations, utilizing key questions as a guide but allowing for adjustments based on the flow of dialogue (Longhurst, 2009).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Regarding the qualitative data analysis derived from the interviews, it primarily follows a narrative analysis approach. This method is applied so as to understand the consumer decision-making process and the customer journey. As for the data analysis related to Facebook purchases, modern systematic methods along with the inductive approach are tools to address purchasing issues as well as extract insights and produce guidelines for preventing those issues.

Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis entails identifying patterns to craft new stories that account for context and individuals' unique experiences. It involves content analysis and the creation of narratives from raw data. This method branches into deduction, where established theories are tested against data in a top-down fashion, and induction, which draws broader conclusions from specific data to form new theories, employing a bottom-up approach. This research will mainly utilize the inductive method for qualitative data analysis.

The Consumer decision-making process and the customer journey

Consumer decision-making is a five-step purchasing process (Stankevich, 2016; Engel et al., 1986) depicted in Figure 1. It consists of problem/need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. The consumer decision-making process helps businesses explain and predict consumer behavior, making it essential for marketing and related strategies (Butler and Peppard, 1998; Darley et al., 2010).

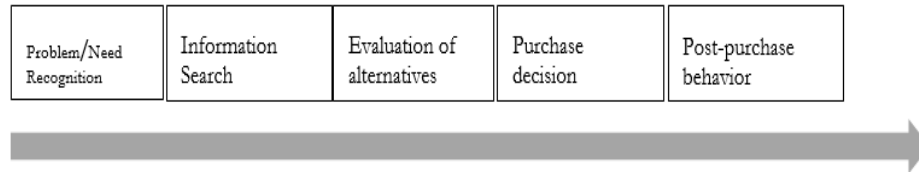


Figure 1. The consumer decision-making process.

While the customer journey describes the customer's experience across various different touchpoints (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) explaining the nature of interactions between customers and products, it often does not follow a linear structure like the consumer decision-making process. The customer journey also involves a variety of channels, revealing emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses (Wolny and Charoensuksai, 2014). Figure 2 compares the differences between the consumer decision-making process model and customer journey.

Consumer decision-making model	Customer journey
Consists of sub-steps that consumers go through to make purchase decisions	Relates to every touchpoint and channel through which customers interact during their purchasing journey
Has a linear structure	Has a non-linear structure
Reflects cognitive stimuli	Reflects cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stimuli

Figure 2. Differences between the consumer decision-making model and the customer journey.

Modern systematic methods

Modern systematic methods, initially developed for new product creation, stress the importance of ongoing testing and assessment to navigate through varying and often conflicting requirements (Leenders et al., 2007). This research adopts two fundamental principles: hierarchical decomposition and systematic variation, each elaborated upon as follows.

Hierarchical decomposition is a method that breaks down complex problems into smaller, manageable sub-problems, making it easier to pinpoint their origins and solutions. By categorizing these sub-problems at different levels, it also helps identify specific functions or features stemming from the main characteristics of a product. In this study, hierarchical decomposition is used to systematically identify key issues encountered by Facebook buyers.

Systematic variation, on the other hand, entails exploring and gathering various problem-solving strategies to address each identified sub-problem, offering multiple solutions. These solutions are then integrated to develop a comprehensive strategy for tackling the main problem. Within the scope of this research, systematic variation is applied to develop precautionary measures aimed at enhancing the safety of future Facebook shoppers.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section discusses analytical findings from interviews with two groups of buyers: experienced and inexperienced. It first applies the consumer decision-making process and customer journey to analyze Facebook purchasing behavior in each group. Then, hierarchical decomposition is used to identify the range of issues faced by buyers. Lastly, it synthesizes and summarizes precautionary guidelines for Facebook commerce, derived from employing systematic variation and induction methods.

Purchasing Behavior Analysis by the Consumer Decision-making and Customer Journey

Based on the application of the consumer decision-making process and customer journey to the Facebook commerce experience, consumer's purchasing behavior on Facebook can be categorized into five phases, that is, the needs recognition, information search, decision making, purchase, and post-purchase phases. Also, since there are two groups of buyers, experienced and inexperienced, some activities in each phase can be similar and different. Figure 3 shows the activities of the experienced and inexperienced buyer groups in each phase of their purchasing behavior, as described in detail as follows.

Phase 1: Need recognition

In this phase, both groups of buyers become aware of products and stores through two different types of actions, active and passive awareness, as follows.

For active awareness, experienced buyers search for product or store information directly by themselves in the Facebook search box. They may choose to follow or receive notifications and usually visit seller profiles for a period of time. This allows them to observe the store's behavior before seeking more detailed information whereas inexperienced buyers, though search for the product or store information the same way, choose not to follow, receive notifications, nor observe the store's behavior before searching for more details next.

Experienced buyers often recognize needs passively, noticing products and stores via ads on their Facebook news feeds or through friends' recommendations, both online and offline. They typically buy from Facebook pages run by Thai individuals. Inexperienced buyers, while also noticing ads on their news feeds, do not necessarily see shared or friend-recommended posts. They may receive direct sales promotion messages from sellers. Primarily attracted to low-priced items, these buyers do not differentiate between stores managed by Thai or Chinese.

Phase 2: Information search

In the second phase, after choosing stores, both buyer groups seek extra information to evaluate the stores' credibility, considering seller information and customer feedback, as illustrated in Figure 3. Inexperienced buyers generally do not examine as carefully as experienced ones. The detailed issues encountered in this information search phase to assess stores' credibility are outlined below.

Sellers' popularity: For Facebook Page stores, both buyer groups gauge popularity through likes and followers. For personal Facebook Profiles, it is based on friends and post reactions. Yet, these popularity metrics may not be reliable. Experienced buyers know high numbers could be fake, while low numbers might just show the store is new, not untrustworthy.

Moreover, a large variance in likes per post may indicate unreliability. Inexperienced buyers, less worried about fake likes or inconsistent reactions, often attribute this to common Facebook advertising practices. Both groups recognize sellers' popularity as just one of many factors to consider. However, unlike experienced buyers, inexperienced ones prioritize affordability over popularity and other factors.

Need Recognition >	Information Search >	Decision Making >	Purchase >	Post-Purchase
Experienced Buyers Who Frequently Purchase and Have Never Encountered Any Issues.				
<u>Active Awareness</u> Exploring products and stores of desire by themselves Following stores of interest to monitor their activities <u>Passive Awareness</u> Getting product information through Thai Facebook page feed Recommendations of Facebook stores' pages from others	<u>Seller information</u> Seller's popularity Detailed shipment record Alternative sales channels Live sales streaming Past Fraud records Following seller's posting and sharing Sources of posted product images <u>Customers information</u> Post-purchase comments on Facebook Post-purchase comments on other sources	Exploring detailed product information Comparing quality and price Communicating with the seller via chat	Making the purchase order on Facebook Receiving the order summary with total purchase amount from seller Paying in full before the delivery	Receiving a tracking number from seller Waiting to receive the goods by a specified timeframe Inspecting the received items; no issues found.
Inexperienced Buyers Who Have Encountered Some Issues in Their Facebook Purchases.				
<u>Active Awareness</u> Exploring products and stores of desire by themselves <u>Passive Awareness</u> Getting product information through Thai or Chinese Facebook page feed	<u>Seller information</u> Lower product price than other online sources Seller's popularity Past shipment records Following seller's posting and sharing Seller's response speed <u>Customers information</u> Post-purchase comments on Facebook	Exploring detailed product information Comparing quality and price Communicating with the seller via chat or email	Making the purchase order on Facebook and external links Receiving the order summary with total purchase amount from seller Pay in full before and after delivery	Receive a tracking number from seller Waiting to receive the goods within or beyond a specified timeframe Inspecting the received items and encountering some issues

Figure 3. Activities of each buyer group in each phase of Facebook purchasing behavior.

Shipment record: Experienced buyers strictly verify shipment records, including checking tracking numbers against shipping companies' systems to confirm authenticity and assess delivery service quality, aiming to prevent late deliveries and ensure protection against transit damages. In contrast, inexperienced buyers might also review delivery records but less thoroughly, often not verifying tracking numbers as carefully or evaluating the delivery service's performance in depth.

Alternative sales channels: Experienced buyers assess sellers' presence on other platforms like Instagram or Line Official Account and their activities there as a way to confirm the sellers' legitimacy. For Line OA, they add the seller as a friend to review shipment-related posts, akin to verifying shipment records on Facebook by checking tracking numbers and post frequency. Inexperienced buyers, however, usually overlook these additional sales channels.

Live sales streaming: Experienced buyers view sellers' live sales streaming or Facebook Live as a credibility boost by allowing them to see the seller's real identity and products live. They also evaluate live stream aspects like viewer count, aiming for at least 100 viewers, and viewer comments to gauge the customer feedback. Inexperienced buyers, however, usually do not factor in live streaming when considering purchases.

Sellers' fraud history: When encountering unfamiliar sellers, expert buyers perform a background check for any fraud or dishonesty, including verifying the authenticity of the seller's profile picture and activity. They might also seek credit information or transaction history to strengthen confidence in the seller's reliability. Additionally, they check for the seller's inclusion on blacklist databases like blacklistseller.com to assess potential risks.

Activity and content sharing: Experienced buyers examine sellers' posting frequency and content, seeing regular updates on products and promotions as signs of credibility. They pay close attention to post details and promotional content. Inexperienced buyers, however, overlook the depth of posting habits and content, focusing less on the specifics or comments.

Sources of posted product images: Experienced buyers verify various pictures and images used by the sellers, including page images, profile pictures, and product images, to check if they have been copied from elsewhere, such as performing an image search on Google.

Post-purchase comments on Facebook: Experienced buyers assess product accuracy from previous customers, checking if items match the seller's advertisements. They review ratings on product quality, usability, sales process, and store service, typically favoring 3-to-4 star stores. Inexperienced buyers, however, may simply skim through Facebook comments.

Post-purchase comments from other sources: Besides customer feedback from previous purchases on Facebook, experienced buyers will also search for and read additional comments about the sellers from other reputable sources. This includes comments on Instagram or reviews on popular online forums such as Pantip.com, a highly regarded platform for diverse opinions. In contrast, inexperienced buyers do not pay attention on this aspect.

Prompt seller response: Inexperienced buyers believe that a quick response from the seller signifies trustworthiness and boosts confidence in making a purchase while, in this regard, experienced buyers do not specifically consider this.

Phase 3: During decision-making process

In the decision-making phase, after verifying the seller's credibility, experienced buyers examine product details, comparing quality and prices across sellers on Facebook and platforms like Shopee or Lazada. They then contact sellers via Facebook Messenger for information on product availability, delivery times, and payment conditions. With complete information, they move to the purchase phase.

In contrast, inexperienced buyers prioritize product prices, comparing quality within similar price ranges but not emphasizing quality as much as experienced buyers do. They often contact sellers via alternative channels like external links or email, rather than FB Messenger.

Phase 4: Purchase

In this phase, after choosing a seller and product, the buyer places an order, specifying details like quantity, color, size, or model. The seller then outlines the order, total cost, and payment method for the buyer. Experienced buyers typically pay before delivery via bank transfer or Meta Pay, avoiding the "Cash on Delivery (COD)" option. They then send payment proof to the seller for confirmation.

Conversely, inexperienced buyers purchase on Facebook and through external links. Like experienced buyers, they use pre-payment methods but may also choose COD, believing it reduces fraud risk.

Phase 5: Post-purchase

In the post-purchase phase, experienced buyers typically receive order confirmations, payment details, delivery estimates, and tracking numbers, often receiving their orders within the expected timeframe and without issues. In contrast, inexperienced buyers might experience delays or absence of tracking information, leading to late or undelivered products. They also occasionally receive items that don't match the advertised descriptions.

After examining the purchasing behavior on Facebook across both buyer groups through all five phases, the next step involves using hierarchical decomposition to classify potential purchasing issues within Facebook commerce.

Categorizing Facebook Purchasing Issues by Hierarchical Decomposition

In this section, a hierarchical decomposition approach is applied to interviewed data for analyzing purchasing issues encountered on Facebook commerce. These issues can be decomposed into three hierarchical levels, as illustrated in Figure 4, with the following details.

Inexperienced buyers' purchasing issues with Facebook commerce constitute the first level of the hierarchy. These are categorized into three main groups at level 2: Shipping Delay, Incorrect Product/Inaccurate Characteristics, and Shipment Absence.

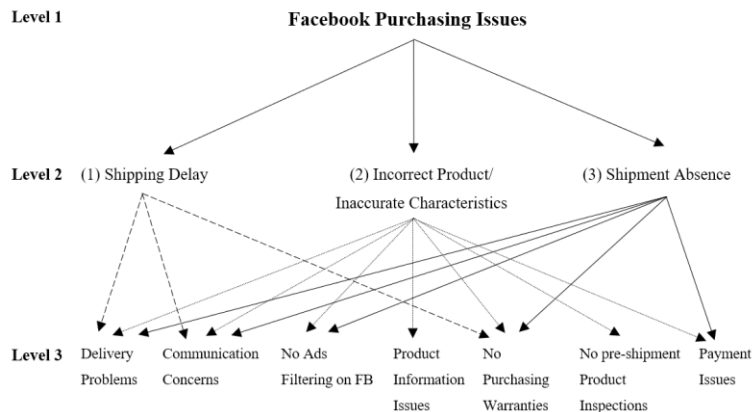


Figure 4. Hierarchical decomposition of Facebook purchasing issues.

At level 3 of the hierarchy, problems from level 2 are broken down into specific causes, identifying seven dimensions: delivery issues, communication concerns, no ads filtering on Facebook, product information issues, no purchasing warranties, no pre-shipment product inspections, and payment issues, detailed in Figure 4. The connections between these level 3 causes and their effects on level 2 issues are elaborated for each level 2 category as follows.

Incorrect products/inaccurate characteristics

Receiving incorrect products or items not matching their advertised characteristics can be attributed to a range of factors, including delivery problems, communication issues, no ads filtering of Facebook, misleading product information, absence of purchasing warranties, failure to inspect products before shipping, and complications related to payment methods.

For example, products, especially perishable goods, may deteriorate during extended shipping times, leading to a discrepancy between received and expected item condition. Furthermore, the lack of

prompt and relevant communication from sellers, coupled with Facebook's functionality that allows sellers to ignore incoming calls, often leaves buyers' inquiries unresolved. This forces buyers to make decisions based on insufficient information, resulting in purchases that do not meet their expectations.

The problem is exacerbated by Facebook's lack of advertisement filtering, enabling sellers to promote exaggerated or misleading ads, particularly from foreign pages outside legal jurisdiction. This issue, combined with unclear or incomplete product information from sellers, further misleads buyers. Additionally, the absence of explicit purchasing warranties means buyers have little recourse if the delivered items do not match their descriptions. Pre-shipping inspections by sellers, if neglected, also contribute to the issue. Payment methods, especially cash on delivery, present another challenge; buyers can only evaluate the accuracy of products after payment, at which point delivery personnel disclaim responsibility for discrepancies, leaving buyers to directly address complaints with sellers.

Shipment absence

At level 2 of the hierarchical decomposition, shipment absence in Facebook commerce is primarily driven by factors such as delivery challenges, communication gaps, absence of ad filtering on Facebook, lack of purchasing warranties, and issues with payment methods.

Specific causes include sellers not issuing tracking numbers, potentially to conceal not dispatching items or due to theft by delivery personnel. Claims of delivery delays attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic or sudden shop closures leave buyers without their purchased items. Additionally, Facebook's feature allowing sellers to block calls exacerbates communication problems, preventing buyers from obtaining crucial information about their orders.

The credibility of sellers' Facebook pages, often judged by the number of likes and reactions, can mislead buyers due to the platform's lack of advertisement filtering, resulting in purchases from unreliable sellers. The absence of purchasing warranties further complicates accountability, making it difficult for buyers to claim undelivered goods.

Cash on delivery, even though perceived as a safe payment method, can unfortunately lead to fraud where buyers, instructed by fake delivery personnel, transfer payment for goods supposedly left at a specific spot. Upon return, they find the goods missing but the payment already made, resulting in financial loss without receiving their orders.

Precautionary Benchmark for Facebook Purchasing

Developing precautionary benchmarks for Facebook purchasing issues employs a robust methodology that merges systematic variation with inductive approaches. This method compiles data from analyzing Facebook purchasing behavior, using tools such as consumer decision-making processes, customer journeys, and hierarchical decomposition, to synthesize actionable precautionary guidelines for consumers to consider before making purchasing decisions on Facebook, as follows:

Verify the seller's credibility

Consumers are encouraged to carefully evaluate a seller's credibility and reputation using a comprehensive approach. This involves not just reading comments and reviews on Facebook and other platforms but also examining the seller's online activities. Key aspects involve analyzing likes, assessing product image quality, and checking seller ratings, including star counts across platforms. Such detailed scrutiny offers insights into the seller's reliability and dedication to customers, showing a well-rounded view of the seller's trustworthiness.

Consumers should also favor sellers who provide quick and structured responses to inquiries or concerns. A seller's responsiveness signifies their dedication to customers and suggests a proactive stance in resolving issues. Such direct engagement builds trust and transparency, reassuring consumers that their concerns are promptly and effectively addressed.

Additionally, consumers can enhance their purchasing confidence by investigating a seller's history for any fraud or misconduct. For unfamiliar stores or before a purchase, thorough research on Google, engaging in forums like Pantip for consumer insights, or consulting reputable blacklists such as <https://www.blacklistseller.com> is crucial. These steps offer a fuller picture of a seller's reputation and practices, greatly boosting decision-making confidence before completing a purchase.

Verify product information, shipment, and other purchase terms

Before making a purchase, consumers are advised to meticulously review the seller's terms and conditions. This review should encompass vital information like delivery procedures, return policies, and warranties. Concurrently, it's critical for consumers to examine product specifics, including size, color, material, condition, and other details, alongside examining the product images shared by the seller. To further boost their confidence in the purchase, consumers are encouraged to request video clips or initiate video calls with the seller for a real-time view of the product, thereby verifying its condition and confirming the seller's inventory status.

Select secure payment channels

During the payment phase, buyers should choose secure and reputable payment methods, with credit cards often being the best option. Credit cards with strong security features offer extra protection against fraud and unauthorized transactions. It is also crucial to verify that the payment website uses a secure connection, which can be identified by icons indicating encrypted data transfers in the browser's URL bar. These symbols reassure that financial information is safeguarded against unauthorized access, enhancing the transaction's security.

Observe and exercise caution in cases of suspicion

This cautious use of common sense is not just a personal safeguard but a vital contribution to the broader landscape of online security. As consumers actively exercise caution, they collectively play a role in fortifying the digital space against a spectrum of fraudulent activities. The prevalence of online shopping scams, especially on popular platforms like Facebook, necessitates an informed and discerning consumer base. By recognizing the red flags in advertisements—discrepancies between price and product features, or unusually low prices with extravagant specifications—consumers become a crucial line of defense against the deceptive practices of selling counterfeit or expired items. This collaborative effort strengthens the resilience of Facebook or even digital commerce, promoting an environment where trust is upheld, and users can engage with confidence in the authenticity of their online transactions.

Safeguard personal privacy

Consumers should exercise caution in disclosing personal information and avoid providing unrelated details to sellers. It is essential to review and configure privacy settings across platforms, controlling access to personal data to minimize the risk of fraud. Regularly updating these settings empowers individuals to navigate the digital landscape securely, enhancing personal security and contributing to collective resilience against fraudulent practices online.

This research extends beyond providing precautionary benchmarks for consumers to suggest actionable steps for the Facebook platform to improve safety and trustworthiness. These measures aim to foster a more secure and transparent social commerce environment:

A robust filtering system for business pages and product advertisements is recommended to enhance user safety. This system would inspect pages and ads, filtering out those that do not meet set standards, thereby reducing the risk of scams and fraudulent activities on the platform.

Utilizing page uptime and posting frequency can serve as reliable indicators of a page's credibility. By evaluating how long a page has been active (uptime) and the regularity of its posts (posting frequency), Facebook can identify and promote more trustworthy pages. This approach contributes to a more reliable social commerce experience by highlighting pages with a consistent and long-term presence.

Implementing mechanisms to verify product images ensures consumer confidence in product accuracy, enhancing marketplace transparency. It is essential to authenticate product images used by sellers, ensuring they are genuine and not sourced from other platforms.

CONCLUSION

This research has carefully presented precautionary benchmarks aimed at averting potential issues in the process of purchasing products through Facebook commerce. Employing a qualitative research method, the study conducted in-depth interviews with two distinct buyer groups — experienced buyers without prior issues and inexperienced buyers who encountered problems. Data collection spanned between the late 2022 and the early 2023, and the analytical tools encompassed consumer decision-making and customer journeys, providing insights into the purchasing behavior of each buyer group on Facebook.

Hierarchical decomposition was then utilized to categorize issues in the Facebook purchasing process. This involved delineating Facebook Purchasing Issues as the first level, further subdivided into three subgroups: shipping delays, incorrect product/inaccurate characteristics, and shipment absence. The third level delved into seven aspects, considered as the underlying causes of higher-level issues, encompassing delivery-related, communication concerns, lack of advertisement filtering on Facebook, product information-related, lack of purchasing warranties, pre-shipping product inspections, and payment-related issues.

Regarding knowledge synthesis, modern systematic and inductive methods were employed, yielding five primary precautionary benchmarks for preventing issues in Facebook purchases. These benchmarks include verifying the seller's credibility, product information, shipment and other purchase terms, selecting secure payment channels, observing and exercising caution in suspicious situations, and safeguarding personal privacy. Additionally, recommendations for enhancing Facebook's platform were proposed to bolster user confidence in purchasing products through business Facebook pages. The research findings will be disseminated publicly for future reference.

For future research endeavors, qualitative aspects suggest the exploration of interviews with sellers and engagement with government agencies involved in online product purchases. Furthermore, qualitative research could involve the collection and analysis of articles related to Facebook commerce for comparison with the present interview-based findings. On the quantitative side, investigations into factors influencing susceptibility to Facebook commerce could be conducted and contrasted with results from qualitative research methodologies.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

CL: co-conceived the idea, co-designed the project, co-performed the experiments, and mainly wrote the manuscript.

BW: provided some ideas for methodology, co-wrote the manuscript.

PS: co-conceived the idea, co-designed the project, co-performed the experiments, and co-wrote the manuscript.

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