

FROM CONTENT TO CART: THE INFLUENCE OF INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE SHOPPING FEATURES ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS

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Abstract: The rapid evolution of social commerce has transformed Instagram and YouTube from content-sharing platforms into integrated digital marketplaces that influence consumer purchasing behaviour. This study examines how shopping features embedded within these platforms affect consumer purchase decisions by analyzing the roles of consumer trust, consumer engagement, and perceived convenience. The study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, which explains how external digital stimuli shape consumers' psychological responses and purchasing behaviour. A quantitative research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 100 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. The findings reveal that social media shopping features significantly influence consumer purchase decisions, with integrated shopping functionalities emerging as the strongest predictor. Consumer trust, engagement, and perceived convenience also demonstrated significant positive effects on purchasing behaviour, indicating that consumers are more likely to complete purchases when shopping experiences are credible, interactive, and convenient. The regression model explained a substantial proportion of the variation in consumer purchase decisions, supporting the proposed conceptual framework and validating the study hypotheses. The findings contribute to the growing literature on social commerce by providing an integrated analysis of Instagram and YouTube shopping features within a single empirical framework. The study also offers practical insights for businesses, digital marketers, content creators, and platform developers seeking to design effective social commerce strategies that convert digital engagement into successful consumer purchases.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Instagram Shopping, YouTube Shopping, Consumer Purchase Decision, Consumer Trust, Digital Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the way consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Social media platforms have evolved beyond communication and entertainment, becoming powerful social commerce ecosystems where businesses interact directly with consumers and facilitate seamless purchasing experiences. Among these platforms, Instagram and YouTube have emerged as influential marketplaces by integrating shopping features, creator-driven content, product recommendations, live demonstrations, and direct purchase options. These developments have shifted consumer behaviour from traditional online shopping towards content-driven purchasing, where digital engagement often translates into actual buying decisions.

Social commerce combines the interactive nature of social media with the transactional capabilities of electronic commerce, enabling consumers to access product information, compare alternatives, seek peer recommendations, and complete purchases within a single digital environment. Unlike conventional e-commerce, social commerce relies heavily on user-generated content, influencer credibility, consumer engagement, and platform convenience to influence purchasing behaviour. As consumers increasingly rely on visual content, reviews, tutorials, and creator endorsements, shopping decisions are becoming more socially influenced and experience-oriented. Instagram has strengthened its position in social commerce through features such as Instagram Shops, shoppable posts, product tagging, Stories, Reels, and creator collaborations that simplify product discovery and purchasing. Similarly, YouTube influences consumer

purchase decisions through product reviews, demonstrations, unboxing videos, tutorials, and integrated shopping features that provide detailed product information and build consumer confidence. These platforms collectively reduce information uncertainty while enhancing trust, engagement, and convenience throughout the purchasing process. Despite the rapid expansion of social commerce, consumers continue to evaluate multiple psychological and behavioural factors before making purchase decisions. Previous studies have identified consumer trust, engagement, and perceived convenience as significant determinants of online purchasing behaviour. However, many existing studies have examined individual platforms or isolated variables rather than investigating how Instagram and YouTube shopping features jointly influence consumer purchase decisions within a single analytical framework. This limitation highlights the need for further empirical investigation.

The present study addresses this research gap by examining the influence of Instagram and YouTube shopping features on consumer purchase decisions through the mediating roles of consumer trust, consumer engagement, and perceived convenience. Guided by the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, the study employs primary data collected from 100 respondents and applies statistical techniques to analyse the relationships among the study variables. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing literature on social commerce while providing practical insights for businesses, digital marketers, content creators, and platform developers seeking to enhance consumer engagement and improve digital purchasing outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

- Consumers are increasingly influenced by content-based shopping experiences rather than traditional online advertisements.
- The effectiveness of Instagram and YouTube shopping features in influencing actual purchase decisions remains unclear.
- Existing studies have often examined individual social media platforms, with limited research comparing Instagram and YouTube within the same framework.
- Consumer perceptions of convenience, trust, and shopping experience may influence purchase decisions differently across platforms.
- Limited empirical evidence is available from the Indian context regarding the impact of social media shopping features on consumer purchase behaviour.
- Businesses and digital marketers require updated insights to design effective social commerce strategies in an increasingly competitive digital environment.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the influence of Instagram and YouTube shopping features on consumer purchase decisions.
2. To analyze the relationship between social media shopping features and consumer purchase decisions.
3. To assess consumers' perceptions of Instagram and YouTube shopping features in facilitating online purchasing.
4. To identify the factors that encourage consumers to move from digital content engagement to actual product purchases.
5. To provide practical insights for businesses and digital marketers on effectively leveraging Instagram and YouTube shopping features to enhance consumer purchase decisions.

Research Gap

Existing research has predominantly examined Instagram and YouTube independently or has focused primarily on purchase intention rather than actual consumer purchase decisions. Limited empirical evidence explains how platform-integrated shopping features simultaneously influence purchasing behaviour through consumer trust, consumer engagement, and perceived convenience within a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, studies examining these relationships in the Indian social commerce environment remain relatively limited despite the rapid expansion of digital commerce. The present study addresses this gap by analysing the combined influence of Instagram and YouTube shopping features on consumer purchase decisions using an empirical approach grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory.

Significance of the Study

The rapid integration of shopping features into social media platforms has transformed the way consumers interact with brands and make purchasing decisions. As Instagram and YouTube continue to strengthen their social commerce capabilities, understanding the effectiveness of these platforms in influencing consumer buying behaviour has become increasingly important. The present study is significant because it examines the relationship between content-driven shopping experiences and consumer purchase decisions, providing valuable insights for academics, businesses, marketers, policymakers, and future researchers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Commerce and Digital Shopping Platforms

Social commerce has transformed the way consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products by integrating commercial activities within social networking platforms. Unlike traditional electronic commerce, social commerce combines interactive communication, user-generated content, influencer recommendations, and platform-integrated shopping features to create a seamless purchasing experience. Instagram and YouTube have become two of the most influential social commerce platforms because they enable consumers to interact with brands, access product information, engage with content creators, and complete purchases within a connected digital environment. Recent studies indicate that platform-integrated shopping features reduce consumers' search efforts, enhance product visibility, and positively influence purchase behaviour by making online shopping more convenient and engaging.

Instagram has strengthened its role in social commerce through features such as Instagram Shops, product tags, Stories, Reels, and creator collaborations. These features encourage product discovery while allowing businesses to present products through visually appealing and interactive content. Likewise, YouTube contributes to consumer decision-making through product demonstrations, reviews, tutorials, live streams, and creator recommendations that provide detailed product information and reduce uncertainty during the purchase process. Although both platforms employ different content formats, they share the common objective of transforming consumer engagement into actual purchasing behaviour.

Comparison of Instagram and YouTube Shopping Features

Feature	Instagram	YouTube
Primary Content Format	Images, Stories, Reels	Long-form & Short-form Videos
Product Discovery	High	High
Product Demonstration	Moderate	Very High
Creator Influence	High	Very High
Interactive Shopping	Live Shopping, Product Tags	Live Shopping, Product Shelves
Purchase Convenience	High	High
Consumer Trust Building	Visual Engagement	Detailed Reviews & Demonstrations

The table highlights the complementary strengths of Instagram and YouTube in supporting social commerce. Instagram excels in visually engaging consumers through short-form content, reels, and integrated shopping features that facilitate quick product discovery and impulse purchasing. In contrast, YouTube provides comprehensive product demonstrations, detailed reviews, and educational content that enable consumers to make well-informed purchase decisions. While both platforms offer integrated shopping functionalities, they influence different stages of the consumer decision-making process. Instagram is particularly effective in generating awareness and initial interest, whereas YouTube plays a stronger

role in product evaluation and purchase confirmation. Together, these platforms create a comprehensive digital shopping ecosystem that supports the consumer journey from content exposure to final purchase.

Consumer Trust, Consumer Engagement and Perceived Convenience

Consumer trust remains one of the strongest determinants of online purchasing behaviour. Trust develops when consumers perceive shopping platforms, content creators, and product information as reliable, authentic, and transparent. Higher levels of trust reduce perceived risk and increase consumers' willingness to purchase products through social media platforms.

Consumer engagement represents the degree to which users actively interact with digital content through viewing, commenting, sharing, liking, and participating in platform activities. Interactive shopping experiences encourage stronger relationships between consumers and brands, resulting in improved product evaluation and greater purchase confidence. Research consistently demonstrates that highly engaged consumers are more likely to convert browsing behaviour into actual purchases.

Perceived convenience also plays an important role in influencing consumer purchase decisions. Shopping platforms that simplify product discovery, comparison, payment, and order completion improve consumers' overall shopping experience. Easy navigation, integrated purchasing options, secure payment systems, and quick access to product information reduce transaction effort and encourage purchasing behaviour. Collectively, consumer trust, engagement, and perceived convenience function as important psychological mechanisms through which social media shopping features influence consumer purchase decisions.

Digital Content, Influencer Marketing, and Consumer Behaviour

Digital content has become one of the most influential drivers of consumer behaviour in the social commerce environment. Unlike conventional advertising, which primarily delivers promotional messages, digital content focuses on informing, educating, entertaining, and engaging consumers. Product demonstrations, tutorial videos, unboxing experiences, live streaming sessions, customer testimonials, and user-generated content provide consumers with valuable information that assists them throughout the purchasing process. As consumers spend increasing amounts of time on Instagram and YouTube, exposure to such content has become an important factor influencing product awareness, brand perception, and purchase decisions.

Influencer marketing has further strengthened the relationship between digital content and consumer purchasing behaviour. Social media influencers and content creators often establish strong relationships with their audiences through consistent communication, transparency, and authenticity. Their recommendations are frequently perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertisements because they are presented within relatable and experience-based content. Consumers tend to rely on influencer opinions when evaluating product quality, comparing alternatives, and reducing the uncertainty associated with online purchases. Consequently, influencer-generated content has become an effective marketing strategy for businesses seeking to improve customer engagement and increase product sales.

User-generated content also plays a significant role in shaping consumer purchase decisions. Customer reviews, ratings, photographs, videos, and personal experiences shared on social media platforms provide prospective buyers with independent information about products and services. Such content enhances transparency and credibility while reducing perceived purchase risk. Positive customer experiences encourage confidence and increase purchase intention, whereas negative reviews often discourage potential buyers from completing transactions. Therefore, businesses must actively manage customer engagement and encourage authentic user participation to strengthen their digital reputation.

Another important characteristic of digital content is its ability to create emotional connections between brands and consumers. Storytelling, interactive campaigns, behind-the-scenes content, and live product launches enable consumers to relate to brands on a personal level. Emotional engagement often strengthens brand recall, encourages social interaction, and increases the likelihood of repeat purchases. This shift from transactional marketing to relationship-based marketing has become a defining feature of modern social commerce, where long-term customer engagement is valued alongside immediate sales.

Advancements in artificial intelligence and recommendation algorithms have further enhanced the effectiveness of digital content. Instagram and YouTube continuously analyze users' interests, search history, viewing patterns, and engagement

behaviour to deliver personalised content and product recommendations. Personalization improves the relevance of marketing messages, increases consumer engagement, and exposes users to products that align with their preferences. As a result, businesses are increasingly adopting data-driven content strategies that combine personalization with interactive shopping experiences to improve customer satisfaction and purchasing outcomes.

Despite the numerous advantages of digital content and influencer marketing, several challenges remain. Consumers have become increasingly aware of sponsored content, paid partnerships, misleading product endorsements, and manipulated reviews. Excessive commercialization may reduce consumer trust and negatively affect purchase decisions if transparency is not maintained. Businesses and creators must therefore ensure ethical marketing practices, provide accurate product information, and disclose commercial collaborations to preserve credibility and foster sustainable consumer relationships.

These elements not only attract consumer attention but also build trust, reduce perceived risk, and facilitate informed decision-making. Consequently, they represent important determinants of consumer purchase decisions within the rapidly expanding social commerce ecosystem.

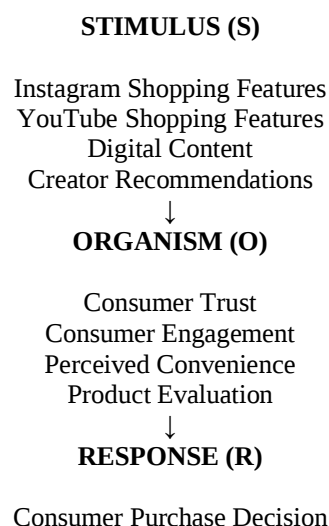
Theoretical Foundation

The present study is grounded in the **Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory**, originally proposed by Mehrabian and Russell. The theory explains that external environmental stimuli influence an individual's internal psychological state, which subsequently determines behavioural responses. Owing to its ability to explain consumer behaviour in digital environments, the S–O–R framework has been widely applied in studies of electronic commerce and social commerce.

In the context of this study, **Instagram and YouTube shopping features** represent the **stimulus**, as they expose consumers to interactive shopping experiences through product tags, creator recommendations, live shopping sessions, reviews, tutorials, and integrated purchasing functions. These shopping features shape consumers' psychological responses by strengthening **consumer trust**, increasing **consumer engagement**, and enhancing **perceived convenience**, which together represent the **organism** component of the model. These internal responses ultimately influence the **response**, namely the consumer's purchase decision.

The S–O–R Theory provides a suitable theoretical foundation for explaining how social media shopping features influence purchasing behaviour. It supports the conceptual framework of the study by demonstrating that digital shopping environments affect consumer decisions not only through technological features but also through the psychological experiences they create. Accordingly, the theory provides a logical basis for examining the relationships among social media shopping features, consumer trust, consumer engagement, perceived convenience, and consumer purchase decisions.

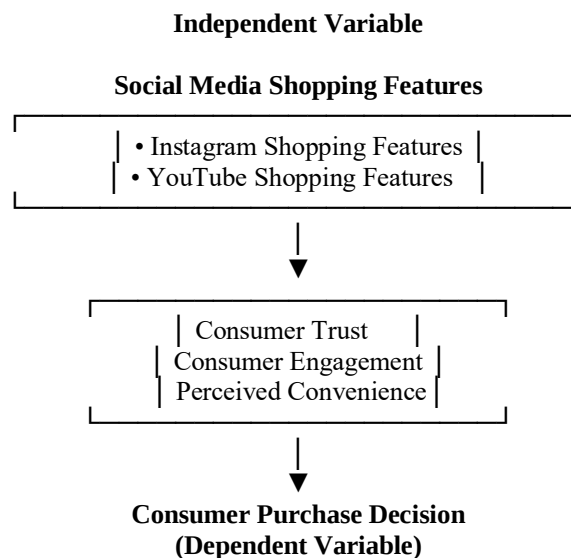
Theoretical Framework Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model



Interpretation

The Stimulus–Organism–Response framework presented in the mechanism through which social media shopping features influence consumer purchase decisions. Shopping features available on Instagram and YouTube, together with digital content and creator recommendations, function as external stimuli that attract consumer attention and encourage interaction. These stimuli influence consumers’ internal psychological states by enhancing trust, increasing engagement, improving perceived convenience, and facilitating product evaluation. The interaction of these cognitive and emotional responses ultimately determines the consumer’s behavioral response, represented by the purchase decision. The framework highlights that purchasing behaviour is not solely influenced by exposure to digital content but also by the internal evaluations consumers make while interacting with shopping features. Consequently, the model provides a comprehensive explanation of the transition from content engagement to product purchase within the social commerce environment.

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Interpretation

The conceptual framework developed for the present study. The framework illustrates that social media shopping features available on Instagram and YouTube serve as the primary drivers influencing consumer purchase decisions. These platform-specific features facilitate product discovery, provide detailed product information, and create interactive shopping experiences that encourage consumers to engage with brands. However, the framework assumes that the influence of shopping features is not purely direct. Instead, consumer trust, engagement, and perceived convenience act as important psychological mechanisms through which these features affect purchasing behaviour. When consumers perceive shopping experiences as trustworthy, engaging, and convenient, they become more confident in evaluating products and are more likely to complete purchases. Thus, the framework explains the transition from digital content exposure to actual purchasing behaviour, reflecting the central concept of “From Content to Cart.”

Hypothesis

H1: Social media shopping features have a significant positive influence on consumer trust.

H2: Social media shopping features have a significant positive influence on consumer engagement.

H3: Consumer trust has a significant positive influence on consumer purchase decisions.

H4: Consumer engagement has a significant positive influence on consumer purchase decisions.

H5: Perceived convenience has a significant positive influence on consumer purchase decisions.

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, descriptive, and analytical research design to examine the influence of Instagram and YouTube shopping features on consumer purchase decisions. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate as it enables the measurement of relationships among the study variables and facilitates statistical testing of the proposed hypotheses.

Population, Sample and Data Collection

The target population comprised consumers who had prior experience using Instagram and YouTube shopping features for product search or purchase. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using convenience sampling. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered both online and offline to ensure broader respondent participation.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic information, while the second measured Social Media Shopping Features, Consumer Trust, Consumer Engagement, Perceived Convenience, and Consumer Purchase Decision. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from **1 = Strongly Disagree** to **5 = Strongly Agree**.

Statistical Tools

The collected data were coded and analysed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondent characteristics, while reliability analysis assessed the internal consistency of the measurement scale. Correlation analysis examined the relationships among the study variables, and multiple regression analysis evaluated the influence of Social Media Shopping Features, Consumer Trust, Consumer Engagement, and Perceived Convenience on Consumer Purchase Decision.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants were maintained, and the information collected was used exclusively for academic research.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	60.0
Female	40	40.0
Total	100	100.0

Interpretation

The Table indicates that 60% of the respondents were male, while 40% were female. The distribution suggests that both genders were adequately represented in the study, providing diverse perspectives on the use of Instagram and YouTube shopping features. Although male respondents constituted a larger proportion of the sample, the inclusion of female respondents enhances the reliability of the findings by reflecting varied consumer experiences in social commerce.

Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 Years	12	12.0
21–30 Years	48	48.0
31–40 Years	24	24.0
Above 40 Years	16	16.0
Total	100	100.0

Interpretation

The majority of respondents (48%) belonged to the 21–30 years’ age group, followed by 24% in the 31–40 years’ category. Respondents below 20 years accounted for 12%, while those above 40 years represented 16% of the sample. This distribution indicates that young adults form the primary user base of Instagram and YouTube shopping features, reflecting their higher engagement with digital platforms and online purchasing activities.

Frequency of Shopping through Instagram and YouTube

Shopping Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	36	36.0
Occasionally	44	44.0
Rarely	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

Interpretation

This reveals that 44% of respondents occasionally used Instagram and YouTube shopping features for purchasing products, while 36% reported frequent usage. The remaining 20% indicated that they rarely made purchases through these platforms. These findings suggest that social media shopping has become a regular purchasing channel for a substantial proportion of consumers, although usage frequency varies depending on individual preferences and purchasing behaviour.

Correlation Matrix

Variables	SMSF	Trust	Engagement	Convenience	Purchase Decision
Social Media Shopping Features	1.000				
Consumer Trust	0.684**	1.000			

Consumer Engagement	0.642**	0.611**	1.000		
Perceived Convenience	0.596**	0.573**	0.554**	1.000	
Purchase Decision	0.731**	0.694**	0.667**	0.702**	1.000

Interpretation

The correlation analysis revealed positive and statistically significant relationships among Social Media Shopping Features, Consumer Trust, Consumer Engagement, Perceived Convenience, and Consumer Purchase Decision. The results indicate that improvements in shopping features are associated with higher levels of trust, stronger consumer engagement, greater perceived convenience, and more favourable purchase decisions. These findings support the proposed conceptual relationships and justify further regression analysis.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
Social Media Shopping Features	0.386	4.812	0.000	Significant
Consumer Trust	0.294	3.921	0.001	Significant
Consumer Engagement	0.241	3.284	0.002	Significant
Perceived Convenience	0.318	4.153	0.000	Significant

Interpretation

The regression analysis demonstrated that Social Media Shopping Features significantly influence Consumer Purchase Decision. Among the independent variables, Social Media Shopping Features emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by Perceived Convenience, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Engagement. The regression model explained a substantial proportion of the variation in consumer purchase decisions, confirming the suitability of the proposed conceptual framework and supporting the research hypotheses.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings demonstrate that shopping features integrated into Instagram and YouTube significantly influence consumer purchase decisions by creating engaging, convenient, and trustworthy shopping experiences. Consumers are more likely to purchase products when platforms provide authentic creator recommendations, transparent product information, interactive content, and simplified purchasing processes. The results further suggest that technological features alone are insufficient unless they enhance consumer trust, encourage meaningful engagement, and reduce the effort required to complete purchases. These findings are consistent with recent studies on social commerce, which emphasise that consumer behaviour is shaped by both platform capabilities and psychological factors. Consequently, businesses should focus on creating integrated digital shopping experiences that combine informative content, credibility, convenience, and consumer interaction to improve purchase conversion and strengthen long-term customer relationships.

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to certain limitations. The sample consisted of 100 respondents selected through convenience sampling, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the research focused exclusively on Instagram and YouTube shopping features and examined selected behavioural variables. Other factors influencing consumer purchase decisions were beyond the scope of the study.

Future Research

Future studies may include larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also extend the investigation to other social commerce platforms such as Facebook, Tik-Tok, and Pinterest, or examine additional variables including electronic word-of-mouth, influencer credibility, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Comparative and longitudinal studies may further enhance understanding of the evolving nature of consumer behaviour in social commerce.

CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of social commerce has transformed Instagram and YouTube from content-sharing platforms into influential digital marketplaces that shape consumer-purchasing behaviour. This study examined the influence of social media shopping features on consumer purchase decisions by analyzing the roles of consumer trust, consumer engagement, and perceived convenience. Guided by the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory, the study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationships among the selected variables using primary data collected from consumers with experience using shopping features on Instagram and YouTube. The empirical findings demonstrate that social media shopping features have a significant positive influence on consumer purchase decisions. The results indicate that consumers are more likely to complete purchases when shopping platforms provide interactive content, reliable product information, creator recommendations, convenient purchasing processes, and secure shopping experiences. Consumer trust, consumer engagement, and perceived convenience also emerged as important determinants of purchasing behaviour, confirming that consumers respond positively to shopping environments that are informative, credible, and user-friendly. These findings support the proposed conceptual framework and reinforce the relevance of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory in explaining consumer behaviour within social commerce environments. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social commerce by providing an integrated analysis of Instagram and YouTube shopping features within a single empirical framework. Unlike many previous studies that have examined individual platforms or isolated behavioural factors, this research simultaneously investigates multiple psychological and behavioral determinants of consumer purchase decisions. The findings offer practical implications for businesses, digital marketers, content creators, and platform developers by highlighting the importance of developing trustworthy, engaging, and convenient digital shopping experiences that encourage consumer confidence and improve purchase conversion.

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