THE RISE OF FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE IN INDONESIA: TRENDS, NEGOTIATION DYNAMICS, AND DIGITAL COMMERCE SHIFTS

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Abstract:

The rapid expansion of Facebook Marketplace has redefined the landscape of digital commerce in Indonesia, serving as a low-barrier platform that facilitates informal buying and selling activities. In the context of increasing internet penetration and the widespread adoption of online shopping—exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—this platform has become an essential medium for everyday economic transactions. This study explores the dynamics of negotiation and communicative behavior among Indonesian users of Facebook Marketplace, with particular attention to broader shifts in consumer interaction patterns within digital environments. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological methodology, this research focuses on the lived experiences of two experienced users selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and naturalistic observation, and analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following the analytical framework of Miles and Huberman. The findings indicate that negotiation practices on Facebook Marketplace constitute strategic and performative acts, heavily influenced by users' digital literacy, impression management strategies, and responsiveness to social cues. Informants engaged in storytelling, employed multiple accounts, utilized emotional appeals, and adopted persuasive linguistic techniques to shape negotiation outcomes. These practices are interpreted through Goffman's dramaturgical theory, wherein interactions are seen as performances alternating between front-stage and back-stage behavior. Despite the absence of physical presence, users rely on digital semiotics—such as emojis, tone modulation in text, and contextual signaling—to convey intentions and cultivate trust. This research contributes to the understanding of digital negotiation in Southeast Asian social commerce contexts, highlighting the ways in which platforms like Facebook Marketplace foster novel forms of economic participation, digital communication, and self-presentation.

Keywords: *Facebook, marketplace, negotiation, digital commerce*

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated advancement of internet technology in recent decades has fundamentally reshaped human activity, with digital platforms now mediating a wide spectrum of everyday practices—from work and education to financial services and consumption patterns. In particular, the proliferation of online shopping has transformed consumer behavior globally, and this transformation is especially evident in Indonesia. What was once a novel activity has now become deeply embedded in daily life, spanning not only urban populations but increasingly reaching consumers in rural areas (Adibah & Sufiati, 2024; Wibasuri et al., 2023; Yahya & Sugiyanto, 2020). This behavioral shift encompasses diverse demographic segments, indicating a broad-based adaptation to digital transactional ecosystems.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a critical inflection point, drastically accelerating the adoption of online commerce platforms. Lockdown measures and social distancing mandates prompted a surge in digital consumption practices, pushing both businesses and consumers toward remote, app-based transactions (Kulsum et al., 2020). In response, e-commerce platforms intensified their competition, deploying innovative marketing strategies—particularly through social media—to attract and retain customers (Gupta et al., 2023; Imelda Novita Susiang et al., 2023). These developments foreground the importance of social commerce, wherein digital networks serve not only as communication channels but also as commercial infrastructures.

Within this ecosystem, the concept of the *marketplace*—defined as a virtual locus where goods and services are exchanged—has expanded. Contemporary marketplaces do not merely mimic physical markets but have evolved into integrated digital environments that support real-time interaction, user feedback, and algorithmic targeting (Anggriani Saputri et al., 2023). Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook increasingly serve as *hybrid spaces* where the boundaries between communication, marketing, and commerce are fluid (Dwivedi et al., 2021). These platforms allow for direct seller-buyer engagement, often without intermediary oversight or face-to-face negotiation, thereby transforming conventional business dynamics.

Among these, Facebook has emerged as a particularly influential platform in Indonesia's digital economy. As of October 2023, Facebook recorded approximately 198.3 million Indonesian users—equivalent to 70% of the national population—according to Databoks (2023), citing data from NapoleonCat. Recognizing its commercial potential, Facebook launched the Marketplace feature in 2007, which has since evolved into a popular platform for informal buying and selling (Afif Ridha et al., 2023; Andika et al., 2021). Notably, Indonesia is now ranked as the third-largest user base of Facebook Marketplace globally, with around 140 million active users—trailing only India and the United States. The platform's user-friendly design, integration with social networking features, and low barrier to entry have contributed to this widespread adoption.

Unlike conventional classified advertising platforms such as OLX Indonesia, which rely primarily on static listings and minimal in-app interaction, Facebook Marketplace supports dynamic communication via integrated messaging tools. This embedded communication infrastructure not only simplifies transactions but also enables a unique form of digital negotiation, where trust and persuasion are mediated through textual and visual cues. Although platforms like OLX average approximately three million monthly users, their limited interactional features render them less effective in fostering spontaneous buyer-seller engagement (Vience & Sastrosubroto, 2020). Furthermore, to mitigate risks of fraud and enhance user accountability, Facebook enforces minimum age requirements—allowing only users aged 18 and above to access Marketplace services (Todorov, 2024).

The phenomenon of negotiation within Facebook Marketplace thus presents a fertile ground for academic inquiry, particularly regarding the performative and strategic dimensions of digital communication. Scholars have begun to examine how users navigate interpersonal trust, impression management, and persuasive tactics in online spaces where non-verbal cues are absent (Piranda et al., 2022; Patterson et al., 2023). These interactions mark a departure from traditional marketplaces, where proximity and physical interaction serve as trust-building mechanisms. In contrast, digital environments require users to rely on semiotic tools—such as emojis, tone modulation, and narrative framing—to achieve consensus and manage reputational risk (Cruijsen et al., 2019).

Based on the foregoing context, this study investigates the negotiation processes that occur within Facebook Marketplace in Indonesia. It aims to examine how communicative interactions between buyers and sellers are structured, the extent to which users employ specific persuasive strategies, and how trust is

constructed in the absence of physical co-presence. Furthermore, the study situates these practices within a broader sociotechnical framework, seeking to contribute new insights into how digital marketplaces facilitate economic participation, interpersonal negotiation, and symbolic interaction in contemporary Southeast Asian contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Negotiation is widely conceptualized as a dynamic communicative interaction involving two or more parties who hold differing goals and viewpoints, yet seek a mutually agreeable resolution (Choi & Yang, 2024). Within the commercial context—particularly buyer–seller relationships—negotiation functions not merely as a transactional formality but as a mechanism for interest alignment and conflict resolution. It is shaped by both verbal articulation and non-verbal cues, enhancing mutual comprehension and facilitating decision-making (Carnevale & Pruit, 2003). Thus, negotiation can be understood as a complex interplay of rational deliberation, social performance, and contextual adaptation.

The literature emphasizes that successful negotiation necessitates parity between the involved parties, cultivating a climate of reciprocal respect and dialogical openness. Several determinants—such as communication proficiency, market intelligence, and product knowledge—are consistently cited as foundational to effective negotiation outcomes. These elements underpin the formation of trust and interpersonal rapport, which are essential in producing cooperative and sustainable transactional agreements (Heunis et al., 2024). Such dynamics are especially pertinent in digital marketplaces, where interactions are mediated through text and visual symbols rather than face-to-face engagement.

Negotiation strategies, according to Ahearne et al. (2022), can be broadly classified into four typologies:

1. Win–Win Strategy:

   This integrative approach prioritizes mutual benefit and long-term relational gains. It involves transparent communication, empathetic understanding of stakeholder needs, and the generation of innovative compromises that satisfy both sides.

2. Win–Lose Strategy:

   Characterized by competitive bargaining, this approach aims at maximizing individual gain, often at the cost of the other party. While potentially

advantageous in the short term, it risks undermining trust and future collaboration.

3. Lose–Lose Strategy:

   Typically resulting from communication breakdowns or rigid posturing, this scenario reflects negotiation failure—wherein both parties incur losses. It underscores the need for adaptability and effective interpersonal engagement.

4. Lose–Win Strategy:

   In this scenario, one party yields to the demands of the other, often as a strategic concession. While it may result in immediate imbalance, it can build goodwill and open avenues for future benefit.

The setting and atmosphere of negotiation are equally pivotal. A conducive environment—marked by emotional intelligence, transparency, and shared norms—can significantly enhance communication efficacy and conflict resolution. In digitally mediated interactions, such psychological and relational cues are conveyed through textual tone, emojis, timing, and framing of messages.

The evolution of digital platforms, particularly Facebook, has expanded the scope and modality of such negotiations. Established in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and colleagues, Facebook evolved from a Harvard-exclusive network into a global social media infrastructure, open to users aged 13 and older since 2006 (Qasrawi & Karasneh, 2022). Core features such as the *News Feed* (introduced in 2006), and later, *Facebook Messenger*, facilitated multidimensional interaction, allowing users to maintain personal and professional relationships regardless of geographic barriers (Liljekvist et al., 2021; Kevin & K Jason Kaufman, 2008).

The launch of Facebook Marketplace marked a pivotal shift in the platform's trajectory—from a communication hub to a functional e-commerce environment. This feature allows users to list products and services, communicate with prospective buyers, and complete transactions—thereby democratizing commerce for individuals and small enterprises with minimal marketing budgets (Solanki, 2023). Facebook's utility has extended to educational and collaborative domains as well, with features such as group chats and file sharing enhancing digital learning environments (Kaushik & Kumar, 2024).

A defining feature of Facebook Marketplace is its *embedded chat functionality*, which enables real-time buyer–seller communication. Tools such as emojis, stickers, and voice notes serve as expressive devices, enriching the negotiation

process by adding emotional and symbolic depth (Konrad et al., 2020). Moreover, Facebook's implementation of end-to-end encryption reinforces transactional trust by ensuring secure communication channels. These affordances transform the nature of marketplace negotiations, as users substitute physical interaction with digital performance and narrative persuasion.

Marketplace also incorporates mechanisms such as *product categories, user ratings, and review systems*, which enhance buyer confidence and provide sellers with reputational capital. These community-driven evaluations shape user decision-making and establish norms of accountability within the platform. Negotiations facilitated through these features are not merely utilitarian but are socially contextualized, involving complex exchanges of information, persuasion, and relational cues (Pavlou & Geven, 2004).

In this way, Facebook Marketplace emerges as a digitally mediated *economic stage*, facilitating real-time trade that mirrors the dynamics of traditional markets, while simultaneously introducing affordances specific to digital environments. With options ranging from property sales to service offerings, and integrated security protocols, the platform enables users to navigate commerce with increased convenience and reduced friction. This supports both micro-entrepreneurship and broader consumer participation, allowing access to diverse goods and audiences beyond geographical constraints.

Parallel developments in Southeast Asia further illustrate this shift. The rise of platforms such as Tokopedia, Lazada, and TikTok Shop reflects a growing preference for low-cost, flexible e-commerce. Users are drawn to platforms that offer embedded negotiation tools, logistical support, and satisfaction guarantees (Hipólito et al., 2025). Within this context, Facebook Marketplace—particularly since its redesign in 2016—has grown rapidly, adding seller management tools, search filters, and customizable interfaces to enhance usability and interaction quality.

Despite this progress, a gap remains in the literature regarding *how negotiation is performed in social commerce environments*, particularly in Indonesia. While much has been studied about formal e-commerce, the informal, user-driven economy within platforms like Facebook Marketplace is comparatively under-explored. This research therefore seeks to fill this void by applying negotiation theory and dramaturgical analysis to the communicative interactions observed in Facebook Marketplace, contributing both theoretically and empirically to the understanding of digital transactional behavior.

METHOD

This study is anchored in a constructivist research paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed through human interaction and subjective experience. Such a paradigm emphasizes the interpretive understanding of meaning embedded within social behavior, especially in the realm of digitally mediated interactions. Guided by this perspective, the present study aims to explore the lived experiences of users engaging in buyer–seller negotiations on Facebook Marketplace. The focus is on understanding how interpersonal communication influences negotiation outcomes and how individual interpretations shape transactional behavior in virtual environments.

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative approach utilizing phenomenology as its methodological framework. Phenomenology is particularly suitable for analyzing subjective experiences and extracting the *essence* of phenomena as lived by participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This design is appropriate for unpacking the nuances of digital negotiation, as it allows the researcher to delve into participants' perceptions and meanings attributed to their interactions. Phenomenological research does not impose strict requirements on sample size; a limited number of informants can be justified if they offer depth and insight (Moustakas, 1994).

Sampling Technique and Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants who meet specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria for informants were as follows:

1. Actively use the Facebook Marketplace feature

2. Have engaged in negotiation on the platform

3. Possess experience in both buying and selling roles

4. Apply explicit negotiation strategies during transactions

Two informants were selected:

1. Abc, an active user since 2020, recognized for their consistent involvement and sophisticated negotiation practices.

2. Xyz, a seasoned user since 2018, noted for employing strategic approaches to achieve optimal transactional outcomes.

These participants were expected to contribute rich, experiential data relevant to the communicative and strategic aspects of digital negotiation.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through a combination of semi-structured in-depth interviews and naturalistic observation, adhering to the tradition of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews enabled the exploration of internal perspectives and reasoning behind negotiation behavior, while observations captured interactional dynamics within the Facebook Marketplace environment.

The research was conducted in the following sequential phases:

1. Planning Phase: Identification of qualified informants and development of interview guidelines.

2. Field Phase: Execution of interviews via video call and direct observation of user interactions within the Marketplace chat feature.

3. Documentation Phase: Recording, transcribing, and organizing qualitative data for analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

The analysis employed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2019) model, consisting of three systematic stages:
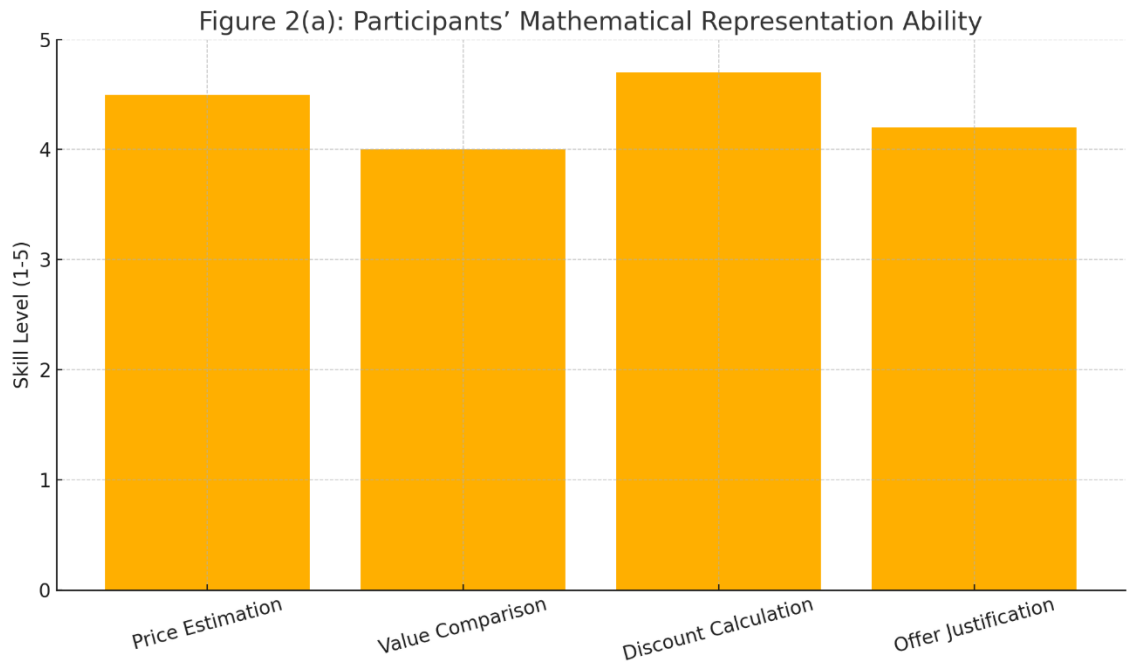
1. Data Reduction

   Initial coding was applied to transcripts and field notes to distill essential patterns and eliminate redundant or irrelevant data. The reduction process emphasized thematic consistency with research objectives.
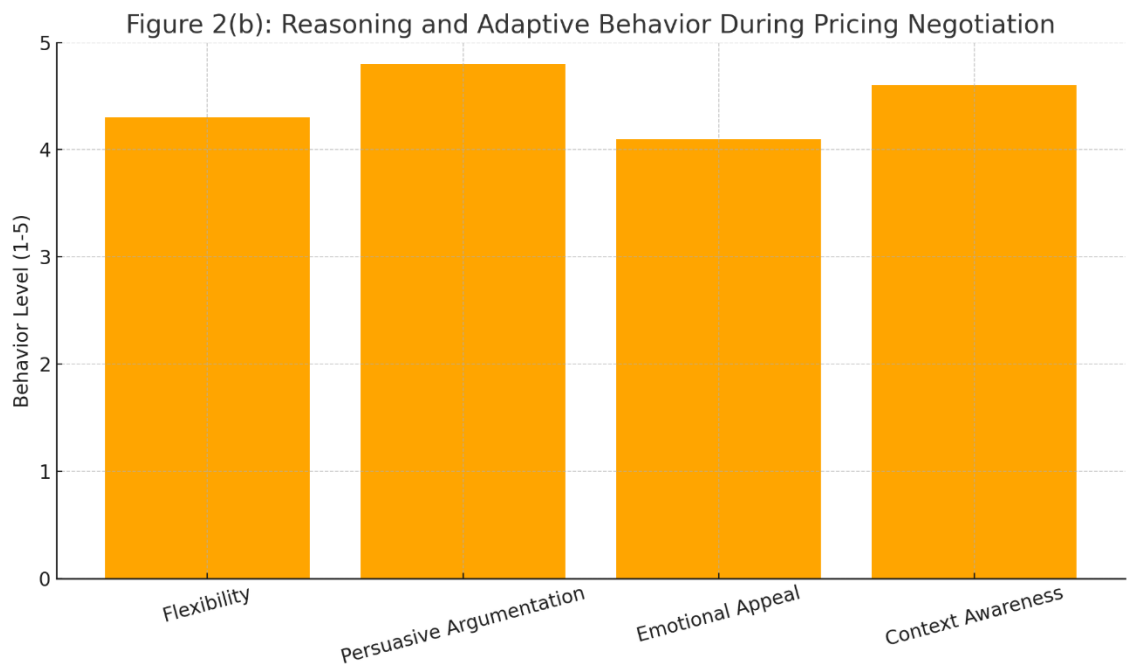
2. Data Display

   Key findings were organized into visual and narrative formats (see Table 1 and Figures 1–2) to clarify relationships among concepts. Thematic matrices and flow diagrams were used to map negotiation strategies and interactional outcomes.

   a. *Figure 2(a)* illustrates participants' mathematical representation ability within the negotiation context.

Figure 2(a): Participants' Mathematical Representation Ability

b. *Figure 2(b)* outlines reasoning and adaptive behavior during pricing negotiation.

Figure 2(b): Reasoning and Adaptive Behavior During Pricing Negotiation

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Analytical themes were continuously revised in response to new evidence. Conclusions were confirmed through iterative comparison and member checking, ensuring internal validity.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical integrity, the study followed established protocols concerning informed consent, confidentiality, and participant autonomy. Informants were briefed on the purpose, scope, and implications of the study, and their verbal consent was obtained prior to data collection. Identifiers were anonymized to protect participant privacy.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was applied through multiple data sources and methods—namely, cross-verifying interview data with real-time observations (Denzin & S, 2018; Patton, 1987). This methodological rigor mitigates subjectivity and enhances the scientific legitimacy of qualitative inquiry. Additionally, reflexivity was maintained throughout the study, with the researcher critically examining personal assumptions and potential biases that might influence interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research design integrates philosophical, methodological, and ethical dimensions in a coherent framework suitable for exploring complex human behavior in digital commercial settings. By adopting a phenomenological lens, this study offers a nuanced understanding of digital negotiation processes within Facebook Marketplace and contributes empirical insight to the growing body of knowledge in social commerce and online interaction studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cognitive and Strategic Competence in Digital Negotiation

As visualized in Figure 2(a), both participants—Abc and Xyz—demonstrated high proficiency in *mathematical representation ability*, notably in estimating fair prices, calculating potential discounts, and evaluating item value. These cognitive abilities are essential in forming negotiation logic and counterarguments. Complementarily, Figure 2(b) indicates strong *adaptive reasoning skills*, including contextual interpretation and persuasive communication. These results support Cruijsen et al. (2019), who argue that trust and decision-making in digital

commerce are significantly shaped by the ability to assess risks and frame rational offers under informational asymmetry.

Furthermore, unlike the predominantly economic models found in formal e-commerce platforms (e.g., Shopee or Tokopedia), the Facebook Marketplace environment necessitates users to act as both calculators and storytellers. This aligns with Patterson et al. (2023), who identified narrative framing as a dominant strategy in informal commerce settings where no fixed pricing structure exists.

Negotiation as Staged Performance: The Goffmanian Lens Revisited

Drawing from Goffman's dramaturgical theory, the findings confirm that Facebook Marketplace negotiations function as a *public performance*, where the front stage is composed of curated textual exchanges and the back stage involves cognitive rehearsals, emotional regulation, and strategy development. Participants exhibited role fluidity, selectively enacting empathy, urgency, or expertise to influence outcomes.

This echoes findings by Piranda et al. (2022), who observed that digital negotiations are often performative rather than purely transactional, with users mobilizing identities to craft persuasive impressions. Abc's use of emotionally appealing narratives—such as presenting herself as buying a phone for her nephew—mirrors the performative empathy described in Piranda's study, reinforcing that negotiation success depends as much on narrative as on numbers.

Moreover, Xyz's use of multiple accounts to disrupt seller cognition extends Piranda's conclusion by highlighting how users exploit platform affordances—such as anonymity and account multiplicity—as dramaturgical tools. This behavior underscores how digital environments enable expanded identity experimentation, unlike face-to-face markets with more stable social cues and reputational constraints.

Emotion, Persuasion, and the Logic of Trust in Informal Platforms

This study confirms and extends the findings of Kulsum et al. (2020), who reported that the COVID-19 pandemic intensified informal digital trade while also reshaping norms of buyer–seller communication. The current findings show that even as commerce becomes digitized, human interaction remains at its core—albeit through new modalities such as emojis, delays, and text tone.

Participants relied heavily on emotionally strategic language to construct authenticity and trustworthiness, validating prior claims by Cruijsen et al. (2019) that trust in informal digital transactions is often built through *soft signals* rather

than institutional mechanisms (e.g., payment escrow, buyer protection). In such a trust-deficient space, *communication becomes the guarantee*, and language is weaponized to secure favorable deals.

Compared to platforms like OLX, as noted in Vience & Sastrosubroto (2020), Facebook Marketplace's integrated messaging and social profile features offer a richer communicative interface that supports impression construction. The possibility to display mutual friends, group affiliations, and even reactions to posts supplements textual interaction with subtle social cues—creating a quasi-relational layer of trust.

Marketplace as a Learning Environment and Psychological Arena

Unlike the structured and rating-driven marketplaces discussed in Gupta et al. (2023) and Solanki (2023), Facebook Marketplace is self-taught and improvisational. Participants evolve through trial and error, with failed transactions functioning as critical feedback loops. Abc and Xyz, through reflection on unsuccessful interactions, refined their negotiation tactics, confirming Lincoln & Guba's (1985) assertion that *naturalistic environments are fertile grounds for experiential learning*.

This learning curve is not purely cognitive but psychological. The findings reveal how users consciously manage role tension—balancing between their offline self-image and their online performance persona. This was particularly evident in Abc, who had to abandon her natural politeness in favor of assertiveness, illustrating what Goffman termed *role conflict*. New users, unaware of these performance codes, are likely to experience role failure, placing them at a structural disadvantage during interactions.

Strategic Identity Modulation and Platform-Specific Literacies

The use of strategic identity by participants—whether through occupational framing, emotional narratives, or multiple accounts—reveals the centrality of impression management in digital negotiation. These results build upon and go beyond the conclusions of Dwivedi et al. (2021), who emphasized the marketing potential of Facebook but did not delve into the *micro-performative behaviors* of its users in negotiation contexts.

The findings also provide empirical depth to Anggriani Saputri et al. (2023), who highlighted the blurred lines between commercial and communicative functions in social platforms. In practice, participants must acquire a form of platform-specific literacy, mastering the nuances of digital paralanguage (e.g.,

emoji use, punctuation, text timing) to perform effectively. This kind of literacy is distinct from general digital literacy and involves a deep understanding of platform affordances, audience perception, and socio-cultural expectations within the negotiation arena.

In the landscape of existing literature, this study makes a significant contribution by offering a more nuanced conceptualization of informal negotiation practices within digital marketplaces, particularly on platforms such as Facebook Marketplace. Unlike previous research in formal e-commerce contexts—which often focuses on platform-based trust mechanisms, incentive structures, and transactional efficiency—this study foregrounds the *emotional, performative, and improvisational* dimensions of negotiation as central to understanding user behavior in informal digital environments.

It complements the work of Kulsum et al. (2020) on digital adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic by demonstrating not only how users shifted toward online commerce, but also how they adapted their communicative strategies to navigate interpersonal dynamics within these new transactional spaces. The findings also extend the insights of Piranda et al. (2022), who emphasize the role of storytelling in social commerce; this study reveals how narrative becomes a deliberate strategic tool for evoking empathy, enhancing persuasion, and shaping negotiation outcomes.

Furthermore, the study reinforces Patterson et al. (2023), whose research highlights the significance of *impression-based trust formation* in digital interactions. The current findings show how users actively manage impressions through textual tone, strategic silence, emoji usage, and profile cues—effectively substituting for non-verbal indicators of trust found in face-to-face negotiation. In parallel, this study supports the conclusions of Cruijsen et al. (2019) by illustrating that communication quality—not technological safeguards alone—is pivotal in mitigating risk and fostering credible exchanges in informal e-marketplaces.

This research is positioned at the intersection of digital communication, consumer behavior, and the sociology of online interaction. It adds theoretical depth to the study of negotiation in social commerce by framing Facebook Marketplace not merely as a transactional interface, but as a *dramaturgical space*—where users perform identities, regulate emotional display, and engage in socially embedded, strategically managed interactions.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that what was initially anticipated in the Introduction—namely, that negotiation within Facebook Marketplace is a socially embedded, communicative, and performative process—has been substantiated by the empirical findings discussed in the Results and Discussion section. Through a qualitative, phenomenological lens, the research has illuminated how users navigate transactional spaces not merely as economic actors but as strategic social performers. Drawing upon Erving Goffman's dramaturgical framework, the study reveals that digital negotiation is intricately shaped by role enactment, impression management, and communicative adaptability.

The lived experiences of participants, Abc and Xyz, exemplify how negotiation outcomes are contingent upon users' ability to construct trust, perform credibility, and engage in context-sensitive communication. Success in negotiation, therefore, is less a function of rigid economic logic and more a reflection of interpersonal literacy—manifested through persuasive storytelling, emotional framing, and flexible persona management. Despite the absence of face-to-face interaction, users demonstrate a remarkable capacity to simulate emotional presence and social intention via digital tools such as textual tone, emojis, profile narratives, and strategic silence.

These insights underscore the significance of Facebook Marketplace not only as a space for low-cost commerce but also as a socio-cultural microcosm where identity, emotion, and negotiation coalesce. The platform's informality, coupled with its communicative affordances, enables users to engage in spontaneous yet purposeful interactions, transforming routine transactions into symbolic performances of self.

Looking forward, the findings open promising avenues for future inquiry and practical application. Further research may explore how negotiation behavior evolves across different sociocultural demographics, or how algorithmic design influences user trust and strategic behavior in peer-to-peer commerce. Additionally, practical implementations—such as user education modules on digital negotiation skills, or the integration of contextual communication cues in platform interfaces—can be developed to empower users and enhance the ethicality and efficiency of informal e-commerce ecosystems.

The study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on digital interaction in informal economies, demonstrating that success in online marketplaces is predicated not only on price or product, but on the ability to perform, communicate, and connect within complex, digitally mediated environments.

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