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## The Social-to-Consumption Conversion Mechanism in Social E-Commerce

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### Abstract

The mutual convertibility between social and consumption contexts represents a crucial characteristic of social commerce; however, this interchange has not received adequate attention in extant research on social commerce adoption behavior. The introduction of the social-consumption transition concept effectively addresses this research deficiency. Social-consumption transition denotes the process through which users shift from a social context to a consumption context. Grounded in boundary theory, a systematic analysis of the antecedents and facilitation mechanisms of social-consumption transition from both community and user perspectives holds promise for constructing a novel theory that captures the distinctive attributes of social commerce, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of social commerce adoption behavior, and providing actionable recommendations for facilitating social-consumption transition. The research agenda encompasses four specific dimensions: (1) the conceptualization and scope of social-consumption transition in social commerce; (2) the impact of community boundary integration provisions on integrated social boundaries and social-consumption transition; (3) the influence of user boundary segmentation preferences on integrated social boundaries and social-consumption transition; and (4) the moderating role of community boundary customization climate in the relationship between integrated social boundaries and social-consumption transition.

### Full Text

### Preamble

#### Social-to-Consumption Transition Mechanism in Social Commerce

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## Abstract

The ability for users to transition between social and consumption contexts represents a critical feature of social commerce. However, these transitions have been largely overlooked in current research on social commerce adoption behavior. The concept of social-to-consumption transition effectively addresses this research gap. Social-to-consumption transition refers to the process by which users shift from a social context to a consumption context. Drawing on boundary theory, this study systematically analyzes the influencing factors and promotion mechanisms of social-to-consumption transition from both community and user perspectives, aiming to construct a new theory that captures the distinctive characteristics of social commerce. This approach will enable a more comprehensive understanding of social commerce adoption behavior and provide practical recommendations for facilitating social-to-consumption transitions. The research specifically addresses four aspects: (1) the connotation and extension of social-to-consumption transition in social commerce; (2) the impact of community integration supplies on integrated social boundary creation and social-to-consumption transition; (3) the influence of users' boundary segmentation preference on integrated social boundary creation and social-to-consumption transition; and (4) the moderating effect of community boundary customized climate on the relationship between integrated social boundary creation and social-to-consumption transition.

**Keywords:** social commerce adoption; social-to-consumption transition; community integration supplies; users' boundary segmentation preference; community boundary customized climate

## 1. Problem Statement

As demographic dividends diminish and retail channels penetrate deeper into lower-tier markets, traditional e-commerce models are encountering traffic bottlenecks. Opening new traffic channels and creating novel customer acquisition methods have become common challenges for conventional e-commerce platforms. As an emerging economic model that leverages "social networks" as its primary traffic source, social commerce is spearheading innovation in e-commerce paradigms and has gained significant traction among venture capitalists despite the capital winter during economic downturns. In January 2018 alone, social commerce companies such as Wudi Shopkeeper, Youhao Dongxi, SEE Xiaodianpu, Sibubao, and Aikucun announced new funding rounds, mostly exceeding 100 million yuan. Experts project that IT enterprises will invest nearly \$50 billion annually in social commerce by 2023 (Kim, Sun, & Kim, 2013).

Social commerce, inherently equipped with social relationship chains, not only alleviates trust issues prevalent in traditional e-commerce (Zhang & Song, 2017) but also enables user 裂变 (fission) and reaches demographics inaccessible to conventional e-commerce. Capitalizing on these potential advantages, traditional e-commerce platforms (e.g., JD.com, Taobao, Dangdang) have begun deploying

social retail as a new retail format. Meanwhile, social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, Tencent, and Sina Weibo have also ventured into e-commerce. Despite its promising prospects (Stephen & Galak, 2012; Stephen & Toubia, 2010; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009), the “social dreams” of traditional e-commerce platforms and the “e-commerce dreams” of social platforms have experienced considerable setbacks. For instance, Alipay, as one of Alibaba’s social networking initiatives, has repeatedly attempted to pursue a social route. However, both Alipay’s Circle feature and its Five Blessings campaign generated more criticism than breakthroughs. Similarly, the closure of Tencent’s Paipai.com reveals that the integration of social media and e-commerce is far from seamless. Consequently, promoting consumer adoption behavior in social commerce has become a focal concern for both academia and industry.

Social commerce adoption refers to consumers’ behaviors or intentions to participate in various stages of social commerce (Friedrich, 2016). Existing research on social commerce adoption primarily focuses on two dimensions: social participation and social shopping (Farivar, Yuan, & Turel, 2016; Hajli & Lin, 2015; Zhang, Barnes, Zhao, & Zhang, 2018), while neglecting the mutual transitions between social and consumption contexts. The interconversion between social traffic and online shopping traffic constitutes both the prerequisite for social commerce’s existence and its fundamental distinction from traditional e-commerce and social networks. In reality, social traffic and shopping traffic exhibit significant differences, making their interconversion far from trivial. For example, Alipay functions primarily as a payment tool; even when users add each other as friends to exchange Five Blessings, they rarely use Alipay to communicate and share life experiences. Although social network 裂变 (fission) enables faster information dissemination, users’ adoption of consumption information remains influenced by numerous other factors (Perren & Kozinets, 2018; Trusov, Bodapati, & Bucklin, 2010).

Based on this analysis, this study focuses on the process by which social commerce users transition from social contexts to consumption contexts, proposes the concept of social-to-consumption transition, and constructs a theoretical model of the social-to-consumption transition mechanism to provide theoretical guidance for promoting user adoption behavior in social commerce. Specifically, building upon existing social commerce adoption research and drawing on boundary theory (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000), which has been widely applied in work-family relationship studies, this study defines the process of users transitioning from social contexts to consumption contexts as social-to-consumption transition from a “role transition” perspective. The theoretical model examines social-to-consumption transition from three dimensions: community integration supplies, user boundary segmentation preference, and community boundary customized climate.

## 2.1 What Is Social Commerce and Social Commerce Adoption Behavior?

Social commerce is a highly complex business model, with scholars from different fields offering varying perspectives based on their disciplinary lenses. From an information systems perspective, some scholars define social commerce as providing e-commerce activities and transactions through social media in Web 2.0 environments (Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011). From a marketing perspective, Stephen and Toubia (2010) define social commerce as a form of social media that enables consumers to participate in online communities, online sales, and online product services.

Overall, previous definitions of social commerce can be broadly categorized into two types. The first views social commerce as a business model characterized by “achieving online shopping traffic based on social traffic,” namely the “social + e-commerce model” (Liang et al., 2011; Stephen & Toubia, 2010; Sturiale & Scuderi, 2013; Wang & Zhang, 2012; Yadav, De Valck, Hennig-Thurau, Hoffman, & Spann, 2013; Zhou, Zhang, & Zimmermann, 2013). The second considers social commerce as a business model that enhances consumer stickiness and guides purchases through social interactions based on online shopping traffic, namely the “e-commerce + social model” (Baghdadi, 2013; Kim & Park, 2013; Kim & Srivastava, 2007). Despite the lack of consensus on definitions, scholars widely agree that social commerce comprises two fundamental elements: social media and commercial activities (Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011; Yadav et al., 2013). Notably, the translation of “social commerce” in Chinese academic and practical circles is not uniform. Academia predominantly translates it as “socialized e-commerce” (Chen & Wang, 2016a; Liu & Zhang, 2017) or “socialized business” (Lu et al., 2015; Yang & Tao, 2015; Zhang & Lu, 2014), while practitioners more commonly use “social commerce.” Given that “social commerce” more intuitively reflects the connotation of the term, this study adopts the practitioners’ translation.

Since the first formal study on social commerce was published in 2009 (Stuth & Mancuso, 2011), social commerce has gradually emerged as a new research field, with considerable attention devoted to user behaviors and behavioral intentions on social commerce platforms. Researchers define social commerce adoption as consumers’ behaviors or intentions to participate in various stages of social commerce (Friedrich, 2016). Previous studies have primarily categorized social commerce adoption into two broad types: social participation and social shopping (Akman & Mishra, 2017; Baethge, Klier, & Klier, 2016; Farivar et al., 2016; Ko, 2017; Sullivan & Kim, 2018; Wang, 2017). Social participation refers to social behaviors such as sharing, forwarding, commenting, recommending, and interacting on social commerce platforms (Ko, 2017; Turban, Li, Ho, & Liang, 2011; Zhang et al., 2018). Social shopping represents consumer purchasing behaviors based on social networks or social commerce platforms (Chen & Shen, 2015; Hsiao, Lin, Wang, Lu, & Yu, 2010).

## 2.2 Research Status on Influencing Factors of Social Commerce Adoption Behavior

Given that social commerce adoption is a complex process involving numerous behaviors, previous research on its influencing factors remains fragmented. According to its definition (Friedrich, 2016), social commerce adoption exhibits three-level attributes. First, it is a form of consumer behavior. Second, because social interaction constitutes the prerequisite for social commerce and its implementation relies on Web 2.0 technologies, social commerce adoption possesses both social attributes and technology usage attributes. Based on this analysis, previous studies have predominantly employed individual behavior theories, social relationship theories, and technology acceptance theories to analyze influencing factors of social commerce adoption.

### (1) Influencing Factors Based on Individual Behavior Theories

Existing research has extensively explored influencing factors of social commerce adoption based on individual behavior theories. Studies grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action have found that users' attitudes toward social commerce websites/platforms and perceived subjective norms constitute important factors affecting social commerce adoption behavior (Hung, Hung, Chang, & Tsai, 2015). Research based on Stimulus-Organism-Response theory has revealed that different features of the social commerce environment (functionality, perceived interactivity, etc.) can be viewed as stimuli that jointly influence users' psychological states, thereby affecting their shopping behaviors and other social participation intentions (Leong, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2017; Lin, Yan, Chen, & Luo, 2017; Gao, Li, & Ke, 2017; Zhang, Lu, & Yan, 2017). Additionally, scholars have explored relevant influencing factors based on Cue Utilization Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Goal-Directed Behavior Theory.

### (2) Influencing Factors Based on Social Relationship Theories

Sociality represents a crucial feature distinguishing social commerce from traditional e-commerce (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013; Sigala, 2017). Consequently, numerous empirical studies have examined influencing factors of social commerce adoption based on social relationship theories. Research grounded in Social Support Theory has found that social support (including informational and emotional support) can enhance users' intentions to adopt and use social commerce platforms (Farivar & Yuan, 2014; Meymand, Ahmadzadeh, & Omid, 2016; Sheikh, Islam, Rana, Hameed, & Saeed, 2017). Studies based on Trust Transfer Theory have discovered that in social commerce websites/platforms, trust can transfer from the community to product suppliers or from community members to the community itself (Lal, 2017; Sigala, 2017; Chen & Wang, 2016a; Fang & Zhou, 2017). Research based on Social Presence Theory has shown that social presence can strengthen perceived social support and social influence, thereby enhancing purchase intentions (Zhang, Lu, Gupta, & Zhao, 2014; Lu et al., 2015). Furthermore, some scholars have explored influencing factors of social commerce adoption based on Social Capital Theory, Commitment-Trust Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Constraint Theory,

and Strong-Weak Tie Theory.

### **(3) Influencing Factors Based on Technology Acceptance Theories**

Since social commerce requires Web 2.0 technologies to facilitate interactions that support consumer purchasing of products and services (Turban & Liang, 2011), technology acceptance theories are frequently employed to explain and predict social commerce adoption. Research based on the Technology Acceptance Model has found that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in social commerce websites can improve attitudes toward social commerce adoption, thereby promoting adoption behavior (Hajli, 2013; Chen & Wang, 2016b). Studies grounded in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology have revealed that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit can positively influence behavioral intentions toward social commerce, subsequently increasing actual usage behavior (Gatautis & Medziausiene, 2014; Sheikh et al., 2017). Research based on Uses and Gratifications Theory has found that personal benefit incentives and community incentives can promote social sharing intentions, with this effect varying by content type, and that social capital focus significantly moderates the relationship between personal incentives and business information sharing intentions (Fu, Wu, & Cho, 2017). Meanwhile, some studies have analyzed influencing factors of social commerce adoption based on Flow Theory and Task-Technology Fit Theory.

## **2.3 Research Gaps and Future Directions**

Despite extensive discussions on social commerce adoption, research on social commerce and its adoption behavior remains in its preliminary stages, with numerous aspects requiring further investigation.

### **(1) Focusing on Role Transitions in Social Commerce Adoption Behavior**

Existing research, based on social commerce's two fundamental functions (social and shopping), has primarily examined users' social participation and social shopping behaviors. However, these studies merely extend social network research and traditional e-commerce research into the social commerce context, failing to fully capture the distinctive attributes of social commerce (Liu & Zhang, 2017). Current research offers limited understanding of consumers' transition psychology from social needs to commercial needs in social commerce (Liu, Li, & Wang, 2017). Researchers have called for future studies to expand existing research themes on social commerce adoption (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Some studies have attempted to preliminarily explore reasons why customers switch from e-commerce platforms to social commerce platforms for shopping, building upon existing customer switching behavior research (Li & Ku, 2017). The switching perspective can help us understand both the advantages of social commerce and the process of social commerce adoption behavior. The prerequisite for social commerce's existence lies in the organic integration of social media

and e-commerce—namely, achieving mutual conversion between social traffic and online shopping traffic. However, social and consumption represent two significantly different roles. How do users in social commerce contexts manage the relationship between social and consumption roles and achieve mutual transitions between them? This question represents both a distinctive issue of social commerce and a critical factor determining its success. Given its significant theoretical and practical value, focusing on the mutual transitions between social and consumption roles in social commerce adoption behavior will constitute an important future research direction.

## **(2) Constructing New Theories that Capture the Exclusive Characteristics of Social Commerce Adoption Behavior**

As a novel and rapidly evolving research field, social commerce studies have predominantly borrowed theories from social network research, e-commerce research, and technology adoption research to explain and predict social commerce adoption behavior. However, these theories are insufficient to provide accurate and complete explanations. Consequently, researchers have called for future studies to adopt or construct new theories that better capture the exclusive characteristics of social commerce to explain and predict users' social commerce adoption behavior (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014; Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Hong, Sha, & Li, 2015; Yang & Tao, 2015), and have actively explored this direction (Kozlenkova, Palmatier, Fang, Xiao, & Huang, 2017). Based on the analysis of these research trends, this study proposes that constructing new social commerce adoption behavior theories from the perspective of social and consumption role transitions holds considerable promise.

## **3. Theoretical Foundation and Research Framework**

Building upon existing social commerce adoption research, this study draws on boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) to propose the concept of social-to-consumption transition from a “role transition” perspective. It further explores the promotion mechanisms of social-to-consumption transition from three dimensions—community integration supplies, user boundary segmentation preference, and community boundary customized climate—to provide new theoretical guidance for promoting user adoption behavior in social commerce. Specifically, this study focuses on two key questions: (1) What is the connotation of social-to-consumption transition, and how can it be measured? (2) How can social-to-consumption transition be facilitated?

### **3.1 Theoretical Foundation**

Because understanding and managing life as a whole is difficult, people tend to divide life into distinct domains, each referred to as a life domain. When playing different roles across various domains, individuals follow different rules, cultures, mindsets, and behavioral patterns. To better simplify and organize the environment surrounding each role, people create corresponding boundaries around

each domain. Boundaries primarily include four types: physical boundaries, temporal boundaries, social boundaries, and psychological boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000). Permeability and flexibility constitute two fundamental attributes of boundaries. Permeability refers to the degree to which activities from other domains are allowed to enter (Hall & Richter, 1989). Flexibility refers to the extent to which individuals can cognitively or behaviorally detach from the current domain to meet the demands of another domain (Clark, 2000). Permeability and flexibility jointly determine boundary characteristics. Boundaries with high permeability and high flexibility are integrated boundaries, whereas those with low permeability and low flexibility are segmented boundaries.

Domains and boundaries are, to some extent, products of individual self-creation, and boundary creation and maintenance are influenced by both individual and environmental factors (Pinto & Maia, 2015). As boundary crossers, individuals exhibit different psychological and behavioral characteristics when creating and altering domain boundaries to fulfill role obligations (Kosseck, Ruderman, Braddy, & Hannum, 2012). Some individuals prefer to clearly distinguish emotions, attitudes, and behaviors across domains, thus favoring the establishment of segmented boundaries. Others may prefer to simultaneously or in the same context attend to multiple domain roles, thus favoring integrated boundaries. Segmentation preference and integration preference actually represent two ends of a continuum (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Another important factor influencing individual boundary management is situational strength. The creation of individual domain boundaries and role transitions are embedded in social domains and specific contexts rich in history, culture, and norms. A strong situation emerges when everyone shares a consistent understanding of what constitutes appropriate behavior and acts accordingly. Strong situations, in turn, promote the emergence of these appropriate behaviors. In short, social norms significantly influence role transitions, and such influence can render individual boundary management preferences less important (Kosseck, Demarr, & Noe, 1999).

People daily cross multiple domain boundaries and act according to the demands and norms of each domain. This phenomenon of shifting from one domain to another in terms of cognition, physical presence, and behavior is called role transition (Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, & Bulger, 2010). Segmented boundaries, by delimiting domains, enable individuals to better concentrate on the dominant domain within a certain timeframe without dispersing attention to other domains. However, creating and maintaining segmented boundaries complicates transitions from one domain to another. When real life is divided into different domains, inter-domain differences often become increasingly solidified and intensified, potentially making transitions between multiple roles difficult (Clark, 2000). In contrast, establishing and maintaining integrated boundaries helps reduce role transition difficulties and facilitates role transitions.

In summary, boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) proposes: Proposition 1—individuals' boundary management preferences influence the creation and

maintenance of their role boundaries, with stronger segmentation preferences leading to less inclination to create and maintain integrated boundaries; Proposition 2—situational strength influences the creation and maintenance of individual role boundaries, with individual management preferences becoming less important in strong situations; and Proposition 3—integrated boundaries (high permeability-high flexibility) facilitate role transitions. These propositions have been extensively tested and validated in work-family relationship research (Ferguson, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2015; Kim & Hollensbe, 2017; Matthews et al., 2010; Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2011; Tennakoon, Da Silveira, & Taras, 2013).

### 3.2 Research Propositions

#### **(1) Study 1: The Connotation and Extension of Social-to-Consumption Transition in Social Commerce**

User demands in online socializing and online consumption differ significantly. Online socializing primarily satisfies users' needs to maintain and develop relationships, whereas online consumption fulfills shopping or consumption experience needs. The existence of these demand differences leads people to create corresponding boundaries around online socializing and online consumption (Ashforth et al., 2000). While boundary creation and maintenance can simplify and organize the environment surrounding online socializing and consumption, they also complicate transitions from social contexts to consumption contexts. Not all potential users are willing to encounter consumption information in social contexts, and even when they do, they may not be willing to leave the social context to shop (Trusov et al., 2010). How to facilitate users in breaking through boundaries between online socializing and online consumption, allowing consumption information to enter social contexts and successfully completing the transition from social to consumption contexts, represents a pressing practical problem for social commerce.

This study begins by analyzing differences between online socializing and online consumption, proposes the concept of social-to-consumption transition based on boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000) to describe the role transition process from social contexts to consumption contexts, and conducts in-depth analysis of the connotation and extension of social-to-consumption transition from both cognitive and behavioral perspectives. This research will also develop effective measurement tools by combining qualitative and quantitative research methods.

#### **(2) Study 2: The Influence of Community Integration Supplies on Integrated Social Boundary and Social-to-Consumption Transition**

Organizational boundary management supplies include both segmentation supplies and integration supplies. Organizational boundary segmentation supplies refer to “boundary management measures provided by organizations to support employees in separating work from non-work domains” (Kreiner, 2006). Extensive empirical research has demonstrated that organizational boundary segmentation supplies can effectively reduce work-family interaction (Chen, Powell, & Greenhaus, 2009; Johnson, Worthington, Gredecki, & Wilks-Riley, 2016; Köffer,

Junglas, Chiperi, & Niehaves, 2014; Yun, Kettinger, & Lee, 2012; Ma, Xie, & Tang, 2014). These studies suggest that organizational boundary segmentation supplies help employees create segmented work-family boundaries, thereby ensuring balanced work and family development. Considering that segmentation and integration actually represent two ends of a continuum, with high segmentation implying low integration (Ashforth et al., 2000), organizational boundary integration supplies may promote the creation of integrated work-family role boundaries. Empirical research has also shown that supervisory family support (a type of organizational boundary integration supply) positively correlates with work boundary flexibility (Ferguson et al., 2015). Based on this evidence, this study infers that community integration supplies can facilitate users in creating integrated social boundaries. Following previous research (Kreiner, 2006), we define community integration supplies as management measures provided by communities to support users in creating integrated social boundaries (high permeability-high flexibility).

Boundary theory posits that boundary characteristics are key factors affecting role transitions, with higher boundary integration leading to more frequent role transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000). This viewpoint has been tested and supported by numerous empirical studies. For instance, Matthews et al. (2010) found that stronger work boundary flexibility capability and stronger family flexibility willingness both lead to more frequent work-family transitions. Winkel and Clayton (2010) also discovered that boundary flexibility capability and willingness are important factors affecting cross-domain role transitions. Integrated social boundaries, characterized by high permeability and flexibility, not only allow consumption-related information and activities to enter social contexts but also enable users to cognitively or behaviorally detach from social contexts to meet consumption needs, thereby significantly reducing transition difficulties from social to consumption contexts.

Furthermore, research has found that perceived norms regarding availability through communication tools (a type of organizational boundary integration supply) positively correlate with work-related communication tool use (a form of family-work transition) (Richardson & Benbunan-Fich, 2011), and that organizational segmentation supplies negatively correlate with employees' frequency of using communication tools for work at home (Park et al., 2011). These findings suggest that community integration supplies may promote social-to-consumption transition. In summary, this study proposes:

**Hypothesis 1:** Community integration supplies can facilitate users in creating integrated social boundaries, thereby increasing social-to-consumption transition.

### **(3) Study 3: The Influence of User Boundary Segmentation Preference on Integrated Social Boundary and Social-to-Consumption Transition**

Boundary segmentation preference describes individuals' expectations regarding the segmentation of multiple roles (Kreiner, 2006). According to boundary

theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), individuals' segmentation preferences hinder the creation and maintenance of integrated role boundaries—a viewpoint that has received preliminary empirical support in work-family research (Kim & Hollensbe, 2017). Therefore, boundary segmentation preference (the expectation of separating consumption-related activities from social contexts) may hinder users from creating and maintaining integrated social boundaries. As previously discussed, creating integrated social boundaries constitutes a key factor in achieving social-to-consumption transition. Consequently, we have reason to infer that boundary segmentation preference may reduce social-to-consumption transition by hindering integrated social boundary creation. Additionally, previous research has preliminarily explored the relationship between boundary management preferences and role transitions, finding that work-family segmentation preference negatively correlates with work-related communication tool use during non-work time (a form of family-work transition) (Park et al., 2011; Tennakoon et al., 2013; Xie, Ma, Zhou, & Tang, 2018). These findings suggest that boundary segmentation preference may reduce social-to-consumption transition. In summary, this study proposes:

**Hypothesis 2:** Boundary segmentation preference hinders users from creating integrated social boundaries, thereby reducing social-to-consumption transition.

According to boundary theory, in strong situations, individuals' management preferences become less important for boundary creation and maintenance (Ashforth et al., 2000). Recent research indicates that organizational boundary segmentation supplies can moderate the relationship between university counselors' work-family segmentation preference and work-nonwork conflict, with the positive effect of segmentation preference on work-nonwork conflict being weaker when organizational boundary segmentation supplies are high (Ma, Xie, Ma, & Zhang, 2017). Considering that segmentation and integration represent two ends of a continuum (Ashforth et al., 2000), organizational boundary segmentation supplies should moderate the subsequent effects of work-family segmentation preference. Drawing on this logic, when community integration supplies are strong, the negative effect of users' boundary segmentation preference on integrated social boundary creation may also be weaker. Building on Hypothesis 2, this study proposes:

**Hypothesis 3:** Community integration supplies can weaken the negative effect of user boundary segmentation preference on integrated social boundary creation, thereby mitigating the hindering effect of user boundary segmentation preference on social-to-consumption transition.

#### **(4) Study 4: The Moderating Effect of Community Boundary Customized Climate on the Relationship Between Integrated Social Boundary and Social-to-Consumption Transition**

Previous research has found that organizational culture identification and social atmosphere perception significantly impact social commerce user behavior (Sun, Lu, & Wei, 2016; Zhang & Lu, 2014). Based on these findings, this study focuses on examining the influence and mechanism of commu-

nity boundary customized climate on the relationship between integrated social boundary and social-to-consumption transition. Following previous research (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012), community boundary customized climate in social commerce refers to a community atmosphere that technologically and emotionally encourages users to create social boundaries according to their preferred methods. In communities with strong boundary customized climate, users can create and maintain preferred role boundary forms based on their boundary management preferences, likely perceiving integrated social boundary creation as an autonomous behavior that better satisfies shopping needs, thereby generating more frequent social-to-consumption transitions. Kossek and Lautsch (2012) explicitly proposed that organizational climate supporting work-family boundary customization is an important moderating factor affecting the relationship between actual work-family boundaries and work-family interaction. In summary, this study proposes:

**Hypothesis 4:** Community boundary customized climate can strengthen the promoting effect of integrated social boundary on social-to-consumption transition.

Previous research has suggested that organizational climate supporting work-family boundary customization can moderate the relationship between actual work-family boundaries and work-family interaction because it can enhance employees' boundary control sense (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Boundary control sense represents individuals' psychological interpretation of whether they can control the boundary forms of multiple roles and constitutes a key resource for helping individuals achieve synergistic development of multiple roles (Kossek et al., 2012). In communities supporting boundary customization, users have high autonomy and flexibility in allocating resources such as time and energy when coordinating social-consumption role relationships. They can create and maintain social-consumption boundary forms according to their boundary management preferences, thereby obtaining high boundary control sense. Boundary control sense represents an evaluation of the role boundary creation process. Higher boundary control sense reflects higher autonomous motivation when creating role boundaries (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998, 1999). Individuals with higher boundary control sense have stronger self-identity, perceive more resources, and can better utilize these resources (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Therefore, under integrated social boundaries, users with higher boundary control sense are more likely to view consumption information entering social contexts as resources and better adopt this information to achieve social-to-consumption transition. Building on Hypothesis 4, this study proposes:

**Hypothesis 5:** Community boundary customized climate can strengthen the promoting effect of integrated social boundary on social-to-consumption transition by increasing users' boundary control sense.

#### 4. Theoretical Construction and Innovation

Accompanied by the rapid development and innovation of Web 2.0 and social media technologies, social commerce has experienced vigorous growth as a new business model over the past decade. According to the “2018 China Social Commerce Industry Development Report,” China’s social commerce market size is projected to exceed one trillion yuan by 2020. The Party Central Committee and the State Council have gained clear strategic understanding of social commerce development and have initiated the formulation of relevant industry standards and business norms. Investigating the mechanisms underlying consumer social commerce adoption behavior holds significant practical importance.

The ability for social and consumption contexts to transition between each other represents a critical feature of social commerce. However, previous research on consumer social commerce adoption behavior has predominantly focused on users’ behaviors and intentions within either social or consumption contexts separately, emphasizing the mechanisms of social participation and social shopping while lacking investigation of cross-context behaviors and intentions. This limitation hinders the revelation of the complete psychological and behavioral picture of consumers in social commerce contexts and is detrimental to management practice. To fill this research gap, this study draws on boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000) to analyze social commerce adoption behavior from a novel perspective, pioneering the concept of social-to-consumption transition to describe the role transition process from social contexts to consumption contexts, and constructs a theoretical model of the social-to-consumption transition mechanism from both community and user perspectives (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

The model posits that creating integrated social boundaries is a prerequisite for achieving social-to-consumption transition. Drawing on boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000; Clark, 2000), integrated social boundaries not only allow consumption information and activities to enter social contexts but also enable users to cognitively or behaviorally detach from social contexts to meet consumption needs. Previous research indicates that more integrated boundaries facilitate easier role transitions (Matthews et al., 2010; Winkel & Clayton, 2010). Integrated social boundaries can increase users’ opportunities to encounter consumption information while reducing transition difficulties from social to consumption contexts. Therefore, creating and maintaining integrated social boundaries constitutes a necessary condition for promoting social-to-consumption transition.

The creation of integrated social boundaries will be influenced by community integration supplies. Community integration supplies refer to management measures provided by communities to support users in creating integrated social boundaries, primarily including boundary integration convenience, boundary integration norms, and cross-domain support. Boundary integration convenience refers to the technical ease with which communities provide for creating integrated social boundaries. Enhancing boundary integration convenience can

effectively reduce psychological and technical difficulties users face when creating integrated social boundaries, thereby promoting integrated social boundary creation. Boundary integration norms refer to conventional standards among community members regarding integrated social boundary creation. Research has shown that perceived subjective norms regarding social commerce can predict users' social commerce adoption intentions and behaviors (Hung et al., 2015). When boundary integration norm perception is strong, users may be more inclined to create integrated social boundaries to maintain high community identification. Cross-domain support refers to informational and emotional support related to shopping that users perceive from the community or group members. Previous empirical research has demonstrated that social support can enhance users' social commerce usage intentions (Farivar & Yuan, 2014; Sheikh et al., 2017). Stronger cross-domain support perception leads users to be more inclined to create integrated social boundaries.

User boundary segmentation preference represents another important factor affecting integrated social boundary creation. Previous research has shown that individuals' segmentation preferences hinder the creation and maintenance of integrated role boundaries (Kim & Hollensbe, 2017). In social commerce contexts, boundary segmentation preference refers to users' expectations of separating consumption-related activities from social contexts. Stronger user boundary segmentation preference leads to less inclination to create integrated social boundaries. Additionally, considering that strong situations can moderate the effect of management preferences on boundary creation and maintenance (Ashforth et al., 2000), this study proposes that community integration supplies can weaken the negative effect of user boundary segmentation preference on integrated social boundary creation.

Although creating integrated social boundaries is a necessary condition for social-to-consumption transition, its promoting effect on social-to-consumption transition will be moderated by community boundary customized climate. In social commerce contexts, community boundary customized climate refers to a community atmosphere that technologically and emotionally encourages users to create social boundaries according to their preferred methods. Community boundary customized climate can help users obtain community boundary management supplies that match their boundary management preferences. In communities with strong boundary customized climate, users can create and maintain social-consumption boundary forms according to their boundary management preferences, thereby obtaining high boundary control sense. Individuals with higher boundary control sense have stronger self-identity, perceive more resources, and can better utilize these resources (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). Therefore, they are more likely to leverage the convenience brought by integrated social boundaries, thereby generating more social-to-consumption transitions.

The expected findings of this theoretical model hold important theoretical significance. First, focusing on cross-context transition issues in social commerce and pioneering the concept of social-to-consumption transition, along with in-depth

exploration of its influencing factors and promotion mechanisms, can not only provide new perspectives for understanding social commerce adoption behavior but also potentially construct new theories that capture social commerce's distinctive characteristics, open new research themes, and further advance social commerce research. Moreover, applying boundary theory to social commerce research can advance and expand boundary theory research. Early on, boundary theory was commonly used to explain role transitions between work and family in real life (Xie et al., 2018; Ma, Xie, Tang, Shen, & Zhang, 2016). In recent years, increasing scholars have begun examining work-private social boundary management on social networking sites (Hoffmann & Suphan, 2016; Olliermalaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013). This study's exploration of social-to-consumption transition in social commerce can not only further promote online boundary theory research but also potentially break through the existing research scope of boundary theory, thereby deepening and expanding it.

Furthermore, the expected findings of this theoretical model can provide theoretical guidance and recommendations for social commerce websites and merchants to promote users' social commerce adoption behavior. First, the model suggests that community integration supplies can not only promote social-to-consumption transition by helping users create integrated social boundaries but also weaken the negative effects of user boundary segmentation preference on integrated social boundary creation and social-to-consumption transition. This implies that social commerce websites and merchants can promote user social-to-consumption transition by providing community integration supplies (e.g., boundary integration convenience, boundary integration norms). Second, the model proposes that community boundary customized climate can strengthen the promoting effect of integrated social boundaries on social-to-consumption transition. The expected findings can provide both effective and feasible recommendations for social commerce websites and merchants to promote users' social-to-consumption transition from the perspective of community boundary customized climate.

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XIE Julan: Proposed research propositions and framework; drafted and revised the manuscript

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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