

Mapping the Evidence Landscape of Platform-Based E-Commerce Innovation: A PRISMA-ScR Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Today, e-commerce innovation comes from platforms as well as social commerce, group purchasing, Consumer-to-Manufacturer (C2M) models, and platform ecosystems, but the evidence is scattered across disciplines and contexts. Characteristics and findings from the studies, platform and stakeholder context, theoretical perspective, research methodology, geographic scope, and gaps in evidence were mapped in this scoping review. PRISMA-ScR and Population-Concept-Context framework were used in the search process and SciSpace Deep Search, SciSpace Full-Text Search, and Google Scholar yielded 2,602 records. A total of 2158 records were screened after the removal of the 444 duplicate records; 61 reports were sought, 49 full texts were assessed, 28 were excluded for documented reasons and 21 sources were included. The studies included were mainly journal articles, mainly focusing on the country of China, analytical modelling and case-study research, all published between 2013 and 2025. The theory of platform ecosystems and C2M were the most widely discussed topics, and topics like sustainability, governance, policy, cross-cultural consumer evidence and emerging-market contexts were all relatively under-researched. The review features a clear evidence map and suggests geographic, methodological, theoretical and contextual priorities for future research.

Keywords: Scoping review; e-commerce platforms; evidence mapping; research gaps; platform ecosystems

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

In recent years, e-commerce has experienced significant structural change, including group purchasing, social commerce, and Consumer-to-Manufacturer (C2M) business models, which have reshaped the buyer-seller relationship, product customization and supply chain coordination (Lyu et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). This is also in line with the perspective of platform-markets, which indicates that network externalities, multi-sided platforms, and platforms' management and governance are important determinants of participation and growth (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Tiwana et al., 2010).

Despite this current interest, evidence is still fragmented within the fields of operations research, information systems, supply-chain management, marketing and strategic management. There is also large variation in studies

in terms of platform context, theoretical background, focus on stakeholders, geographical context, and research design. The fragmentation makes it hard to determine the overall evidence base and identifies areas that have been well developed and others that are under-researched (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Munn et al., 2018).

A scoping review is suitable because it can systematically map the scope, nature and extent of a variety of evidence; map the concepts and methodological approaches; and identify knowledge gaps without computing a pooled effect estimate (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018). This review follows the PRISMA-ScR guide (Tricco et al., 2018) to create a transparent evidence map of platform-based e-commerce innovation and prioritize future empirical study.

Objectives

This scoping review is designed to map the evidence landscape rather than explain the detailed mechanisms through which platform innovations create value. It addresses four objectives:

RO1. Map the types, publication characteristics, and platform or business-model contexts represented in the evidence base.

RO2. Identify the theoretical frameworks and conceptual lenses applied across the included evidence.

RO3. Chart research designs, methodological approaches, populations or platforms studied, and geographic coverage.

RO4. Identify under-researched contexts and develop an evidence-based future research agenda.

The review answers the following question: What evidence is available about platform-based e-commerce innovation, and how is evidence distributed across study types, contexts, theories, and methods, geographies, and stakeholders, and platform models?

METHODS

Review Design and Eligibility

This scoping review was conducted in line with PRISMA-ScR guidance and the scoping-review methods (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010; Tricco et al., 2018). The Population-Concept-Context framework was used to determine eligibility for the studies published between January 2010 and September 2026 in English or Chinese that were included in the study of platform e-commerce (Munn et al., 2018).

Eligibility was operationalized by using the Population-Concept-Context framework as displayed in Table 1. The sources examined were e-commerce platforms or stakeholders on platform-based business model innovation such as social commerce, group purchasing, C2M or ecosystem-based business model. Journal articles, indexed conference papers, book chapters and academic 'grey' literature were taken into consideration. Excluded were purely technical studies, sources that did not have retrievable full text, editorials, news reports and opinion pieces. No formal quality appraisal was used as an exclusion criterion, as mapping the breadth and characteristics of the evidence was not aimed at estimating the effects of interventions (Munn et al., 2018).

Table 1. Population-Concept-Context Eligibility Framework

Element	Definition	Operationalization
Population	E-commerce platforms and stakeholders, including buyers, sellers, manufacturers, and complementors.	Digital marketplace platforms; purely offline or brick-and-mortar contexts excluded.

Concept	Platform-based business-model innovation, including social commerce, group-purchasing, C2M, and ecosystem-oriented models.	Evidence had to address at least one focal platform model, theoretical lens, research context, or evidence gap relevant to platform innovation.
Context	Digital-economy settings globally.	No restriction on country, sector, firm size, or platform type.

Information Sources, Search Strategy, Source Selection, and Data Synthesis

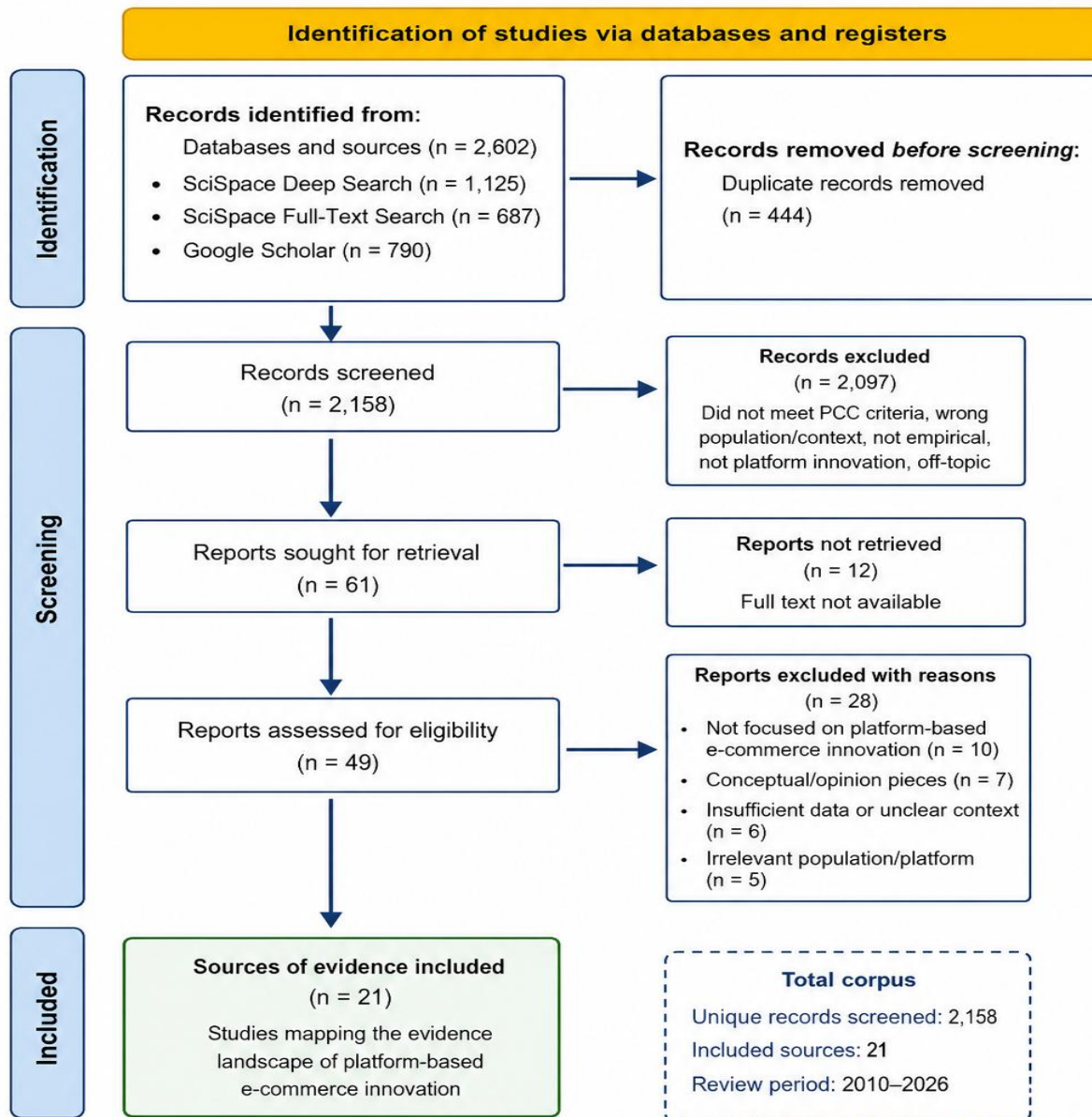
Scispace Deep Search, Scispace Full-Text Search and Google Scholar were used for searches between June and September 2026. The sources were chosen because they had the full text discovery and broad interdisciplinary capabilities that were helpful when the topic was emerging and related to business, information systems, operations and supply chains. Coverage is a limit of SciSpace and Google Scholar as discovery tools and not a full replacement for curated bibliographic databases.

The basic English search query was: ("e-commerce platform" OR "digital commerce platform" OR "platform ecosystem" OR "social commerce" OR "group purchasing" OR "consumer-to-manufacturer" OR C2M) AND (innovation OR "business model innovation" OR "value creation" OR governance OR sustainability). For e-commerce platform, platform ecosystem, social commerce, community group purchasing, consumer-to-manufacturer, business-model innovation, value creation, governance and sustainability, equivalent Chinese-language terms were used. Searches included January 2010–September 2026 and English or Chinese language sources. There were 1125 results from SciSpace Deep Search, 687 results from SciSpace Full-Text Search and 790 results from Google Scholar. Results were downloaded in a common screening file, and duplicate items were determined by title, author, year and, if present, digital object identifier.

Screening was carried out in two phases. Titles and abstracts were independently reviewed by two members of the review team for adherence to the PCC criteria. Potentially relevant records were then fully text assessed. When there were discrepancies at any of these steps, they were settled by discussion and if necessary, by verifying with the third author. Agreements were made by consensus without calculating the interrater coefficient. 2,158 unique records were screened, of which 2,097 were excluded at the title and abstract screening. 61 reports were requested for retrieval, 12 were not retrieved and 49 were retrieved and assessed in full. Twenty-eight reports were excluded due to their lack of attention to platform-based e-commerce innovation ($n = 10$), opinion or conceptual report ($n = 7$), insufficient data or unclear context ($n = 6$), and irrelevant population or platform ($n = 5$). Twenty-one sources were included in the final evidence base.

A standardised data-charting form was created and continually improved. The reviewers documented the citation information, year of publication, type of source, country of first author affiliation, platform or business-model context, researcher/stakeholder/population focus, theoretical perspective, research design, primary research topic, primary contribution, and identified evidence gap for each source included. Data were recorded by one reviewer and verified by another who reviewed each item against the complete text. Any disagreements were settled by consensus. The charted data was summarised using frequencies, cross tabulations and descriptive evidence maps. A causal effect estimation or meta-analysis was not conducted (Levac et al., 2010; Munn et al., 2018).

The PCC boundary was chosen to be quite specific, hence the change from 2,602 identified records to 21 records containing sources. Most records pertained to general online retail, technical system design, digital marketing (except platform-business) or other topics that were not related to the concept of the review. Further losses were due to duplication, lack of full text, and full text exclusion criteria. It is important to view the final corpus therefore as a map of evidence of platform innovations that is eligible for the analysis rather than a census of all e-commerce research.



Note. PCC = Population–Concept–Context. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram based on Tricco et al. (2018).

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram for source of evidence selection (adapted from Tricco et al., 2018)

RESULTS

Selection of Sources of Evidence

The search results resulted in finding 2602 records of which 1125 were found using SciSpace Deep Search, 687 using SciSpace Full-Text Search, and 790 using Google Scholar. There were 2,158 records that were screened for title and abstract, after 444 duplicates were eliminated. Of these, 2,097 were not retrieved, and 61 reports were sought. No reports were found for 12 of the reports, so 49 full texts were evaluated for eligibility. 28 were excluded with reasons reported in Figure 1 and 21 sources provided evidence for the map. These figures are consistently reported in the abstract, methods, results and PRISMA-ScR flowchart.

Characteristics of Included Sources

The 21 sources that were included were published between 2013 and 2025, with most of the sources published after 2023 (Figure 2), showing a recent increase in platform-based e-commerce innovation research. There were 18 journal articles, 2 conference papers and 1 book chapter or other academic source.

**Distribution of Included Sources by Concept and Publication Year
(PRISMA-ScR Scoping Review, n=21)**

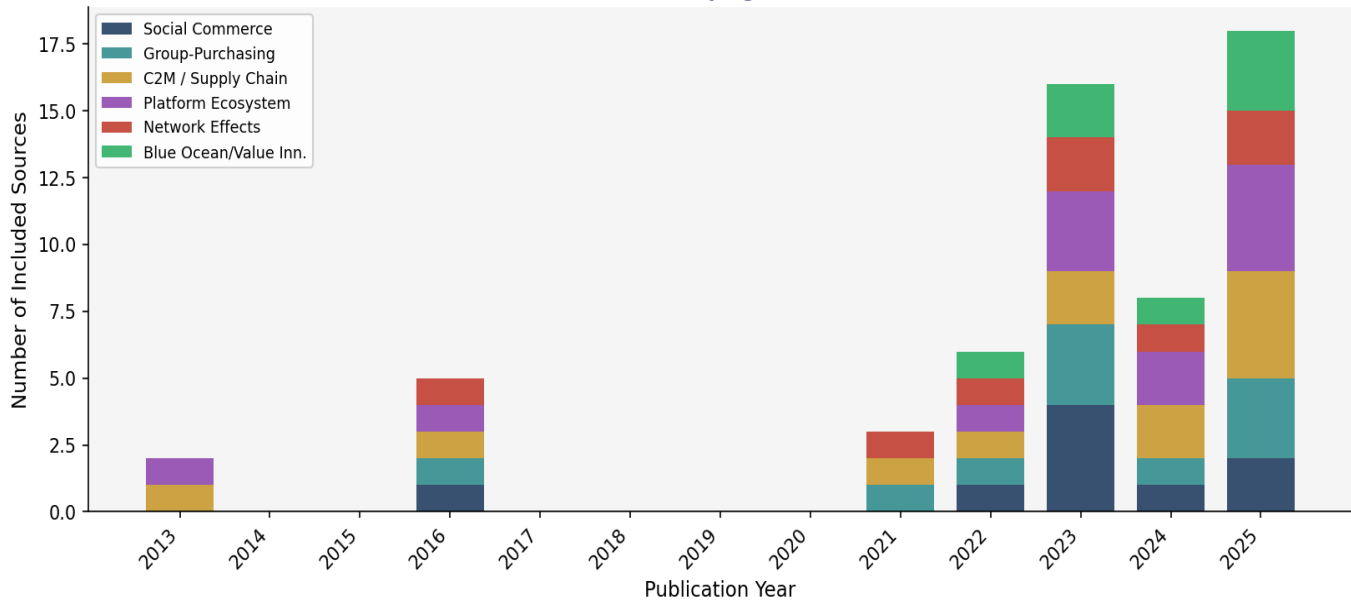


Figure 2. Distribution of included sources by concept and publication year (n = 21)

This emphasis on journal articles suggests that the mapped evidence has emerged primarily in published journal articles, with few conference and book-based contributions.

Geographic coverage is also incomplete, with about 57% of the included sources having first authors in China and the evidence from other Asian settings, Europe, the USA, Africa and Latin America are relatively limited (Figure 3). This concentration emphasizes the importance of more cross-country evidence and evidence from emerging markets.

**Geographic Distribution of Included Sources
by First-Author Affiliation (n=21)**

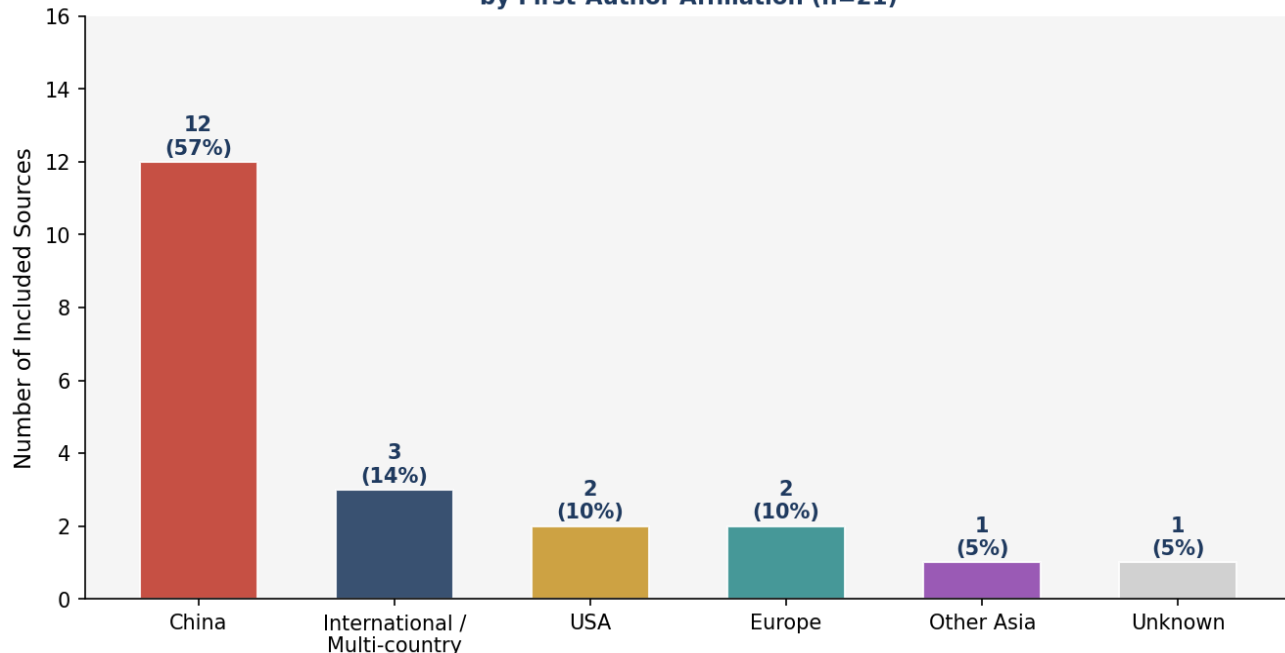


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of included sources by first-author affiliation (n = 21)

Evidence Map and Theoretical Coverage

The evidence map reflects the highest number of cases in platform ecosystem and in C2M contexts, with the latter receiving special attention between 2023 and 2025 (Figure 4). This is consistent with the research findings

of C2M competition, platform-mediated supply chain, and restructuring of the ecosystem (Lyu et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). Figure 5 indicates that Platform Ecosystem Theory and Value Co-creation have the widest coverage of the concepts, while the Network Effects Theory and Blue Ocean/Value Innovation are narrower. The maps show that ecosystem and supply-chain perspectives are more prevalent together, but several strategic perspectives are not adequately represented systematically.

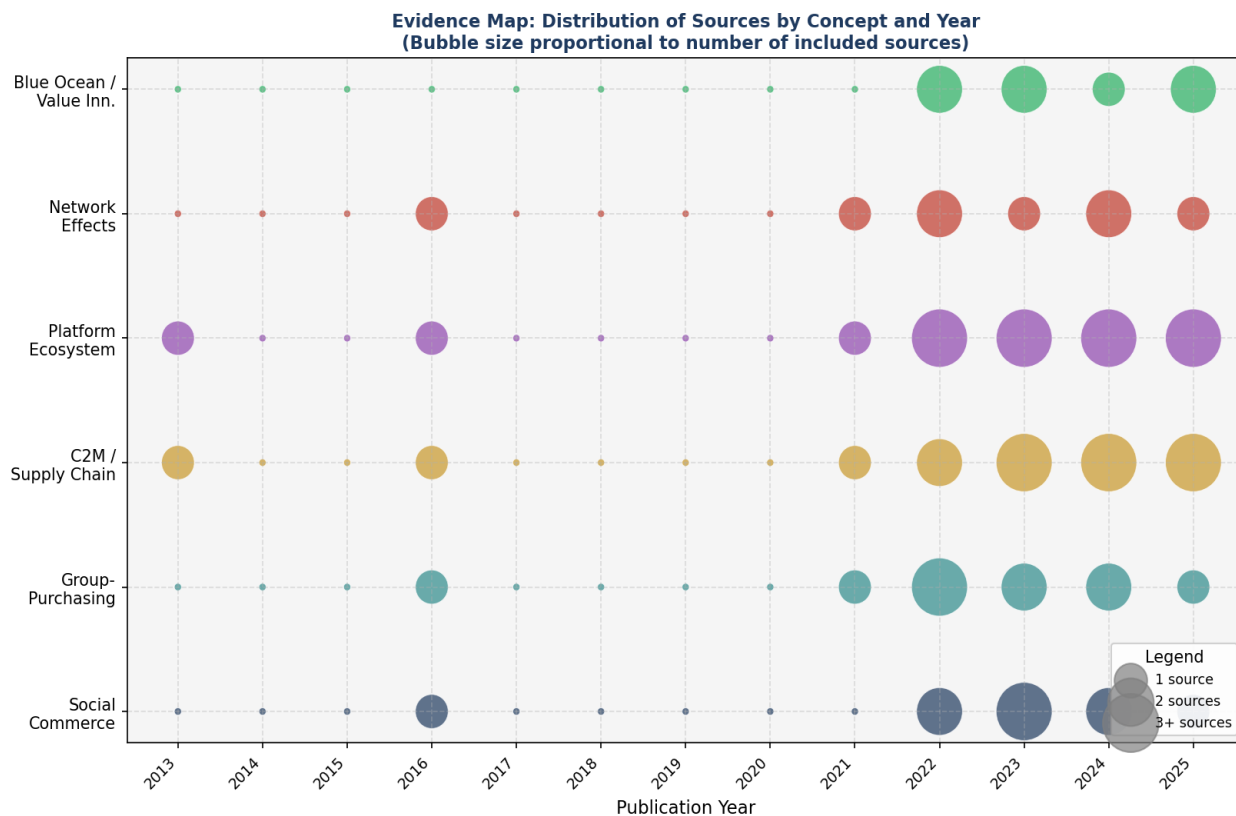


Figure 4. Evidence map of included sources by research concept and year published

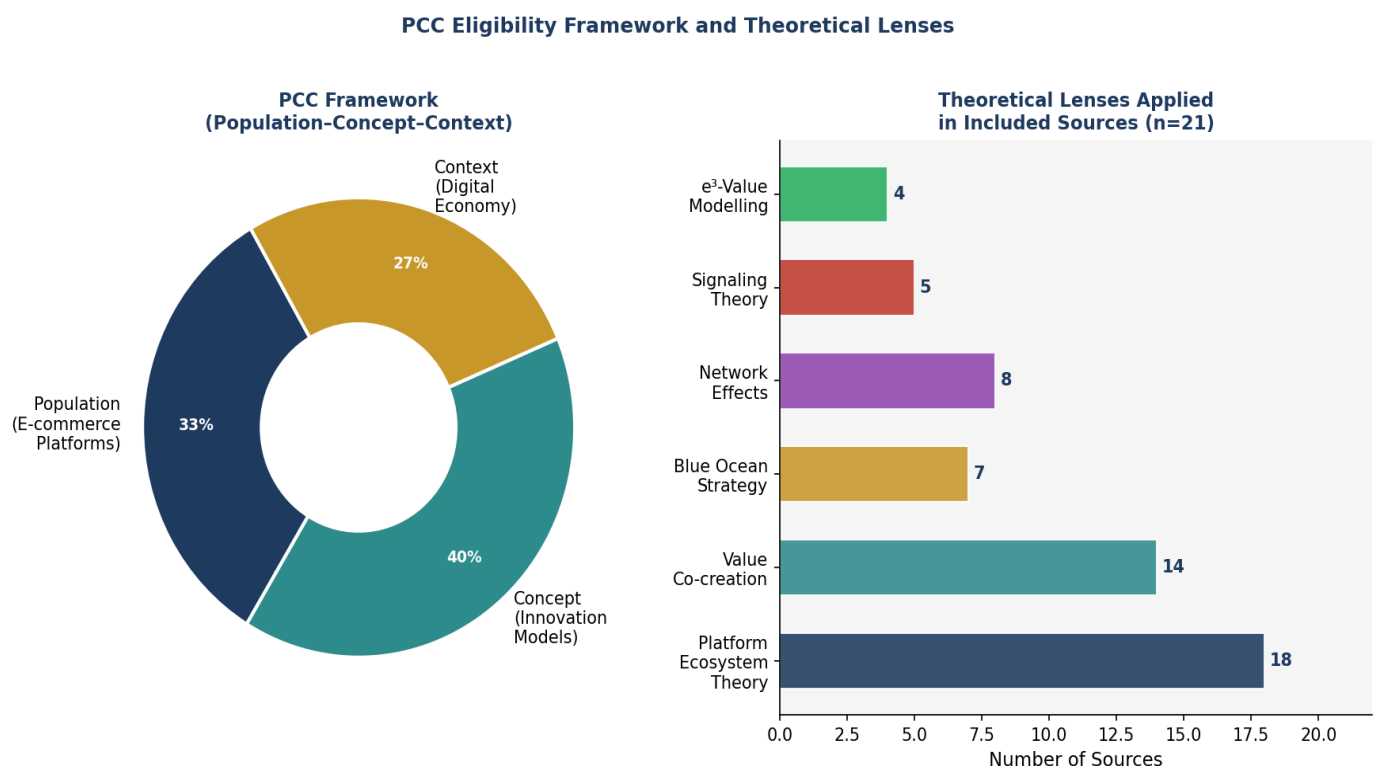


Figure 5. Distribution of theoretical lenses across included sources (n = 21)

The evidence related to the ecosystem is composed of research on platforms, digitally coordinated supply chains, and roles of manufacturers within the ecosystem (Liu et al., 2016; Zhang, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). While network-effects research is supported by solid explanations of network externalities and two-sided platform markets (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Rochet & Tirole, 2003), Blue Ocean Strategy is not always as explicit as it should be given its relevance to value innovation and market-space creation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

Research Designs, Sources, and Platform Contexts

Quality of the evidence base is inconsistent. Eight studies used analytical modelling, seven used case-study or qualitative designs, three used empirical or survey designs, and three adopted theoretical or conceptual approaches (Figure 6). The analysis of group-purchasing, pricing, customization, and C2M competition is primarily conducted analytically in the literature, such as in Cao & Li (2021), Lyu et al. (2023), and Wang & Ma (2023). Platform business models, rural e-commerce, and platform-specific business models, along with platform ecosystems and manufacturer integration were more frequently discussed in the context of case-based research (Li et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2016; Tang, 2025). Knowledge regarding platform configurations over time and in various institutional contexts remains limited, and comparative, empirical and longitudinal studies are still absent.

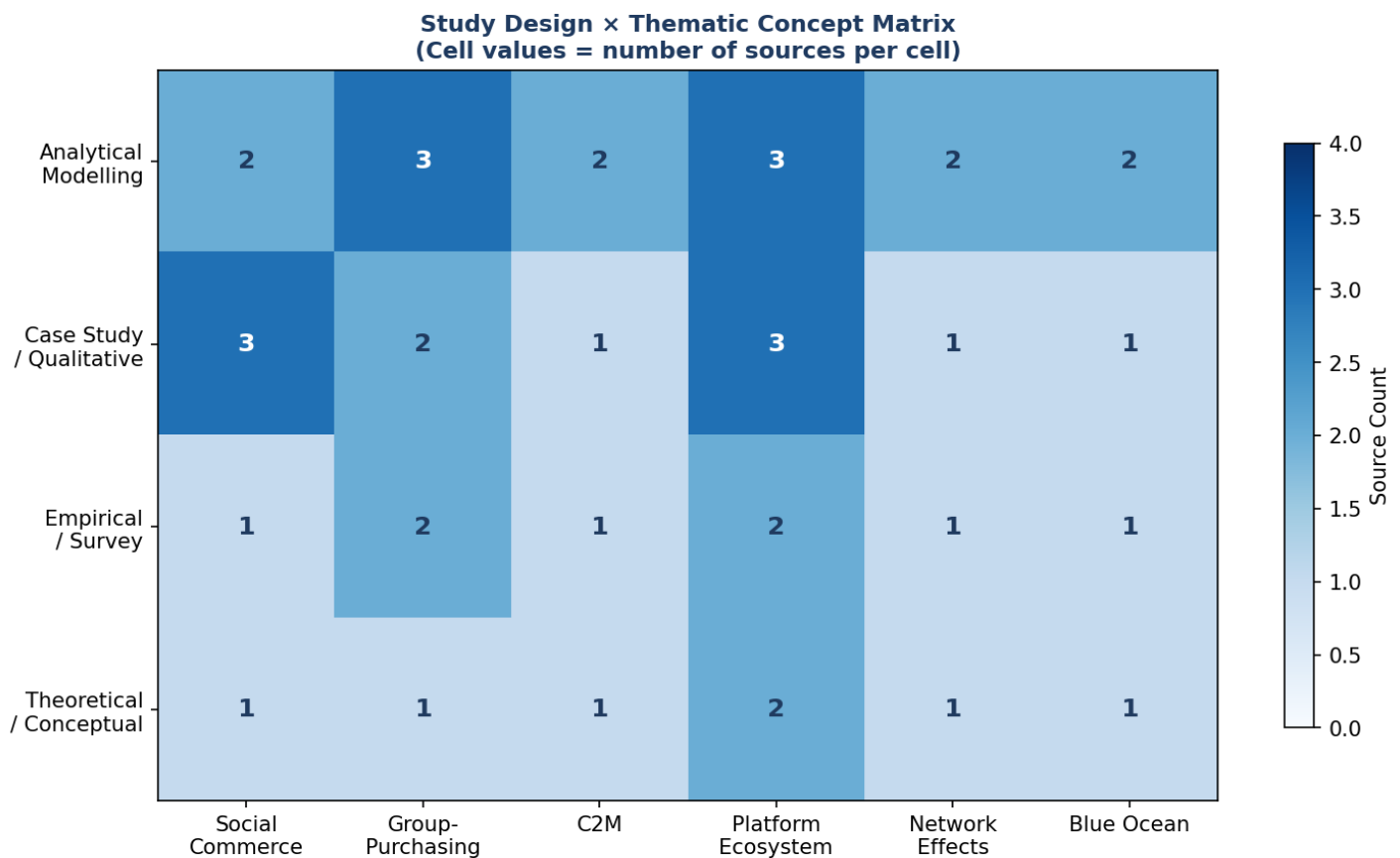


Figure 6. Study-design matrix across research concepts

Table 2 shows the 21 sources included in the study according to year, focal context, research design, and main contribution. The table is not intended to provide a detailed causal synthesis of findings, but rather as an evidence-mapping tool to illustrate the variety of platforms and study designs. The sources included highlight C2M and platform-ecosystems settings, followed by social commerce and group-purchasing as summarized in Table 2. These patterns are intended to represent the relative depth of evidence with each platform context, but do not reflect co-occurrence of the two in the literature.

The stakeholders are covered by manufacturers, platform operators, consumers, small businesses, complementors and those who are involved in rural commerce. In contrast, the relationship between

manufacturer-platforms and platform cases in China is much more well-documented, including through research on the relationships between Tao-Factory and Pinduoduo, and between the major Chinese e-commerce platforms and platform cases (Li et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2016; Zhang, 2025). The experiences of vulnerable consumers, small-platform operators, and those operating in emerging markets outside of China are still under-represented, further underscoring the necessity to reach broader population and contextual coverage.

Table 2. Charting Summary of Included Sources (n = 21)

Source	Year	Context / Concept	Design	Mapped Contribution
Dai et al. (2013)	2013	C2M; platform ecosystem	Case study	Online designer platforms and co-design
Orman (2016)	2016	Social commerce; network effects	Empirical	Trust networks and information diffusion
Liu et al. (2016)	2016	C2M; platform ecosystem	Case study	Tao-Factory and manufacturer integration
Cao & Li (2021)	2021	Group-purchasing	Analytical	Continuous price-decreasing group buying
Hu et al. (2021)	2021	Group-purchasing; platform ecosystem	Analytical	Platform-mediated group-buying pricing
Weng & Zheng (2022)	2022	Social commerce; platform ecosystem	Empirical	Value co-creation through social interaction
Wei et al. (2022)	2022	Group-purchasing; network effects	Analytical	Heterogeneous group-buying auction
Cai et al. (2023)	2023	Social commerce; platform ecosystem	Analytical	Creator-economy social retailing
Hu et al. (2023)	2023	Group-purchasing; platform ecosystem	Analytical	Platform governance and group-purchasing
Lyu et al. (2023)	2023	C2M; brand competition	Analytical	C2M strategy under brand competition
Wang & Ma (2023)	2023	C2M; signaling theory	Analytical	Customization and quality signaling
Sun et al. (2023)	2023	Blue Ocean; platform ecosystem	Case study	Digital platform strategy
Uchańska-Bieniusiewicz (2024)	2024	Platform ecosystem; Blue Ocean	Case study	Sustainability in ultra-fast models
Dymenko & Kolesnyk (2024)	2024	Platform ecosystem; Blue Ocean	Theoretical	Own-brand platform development
Zhang et al. (2024)	2024	C2M; platform ecosystem	Theoretical	Personalized product-service systems

Chen et al. (2024)	2024	Network effects; social commerce	Empirical	Asymmetric network effects
Zhang (2025)	2025	C2M; supply chain; ecosystem	Case study	Chinese e-commerce platform comparison
Zhou et al. (2025)	2025	Platform ecosystem; social commerce	Theoretical	S2b2C platform roles
Wang (2025)	2025	Blue Ocean; C2M	Case study	Maternal and child e-commerce
Tang (2025)	2025	Social commerce; platform ecosystem	Case study	Rural live-streaming e-commerce
Li et al. (2025)	2025	Group-purchasing; C2M; ecosystem	Case study	Pinduoduo and agricultural integration

Evidence Gap Map

Figure 7 is an evidence-gap map that crosstabs the substantive topic domains with the focal platform concepts. The biggest gaps lie in sustainability, governance and policy, and consumer behaviour across various platforms, as well as evidence from emerging markets outside of China. The gaps do not result from the view that the phenomena they are supposed to represent are unimportant, but rather from the view of them as absences or thin areas in the mapped corpus.

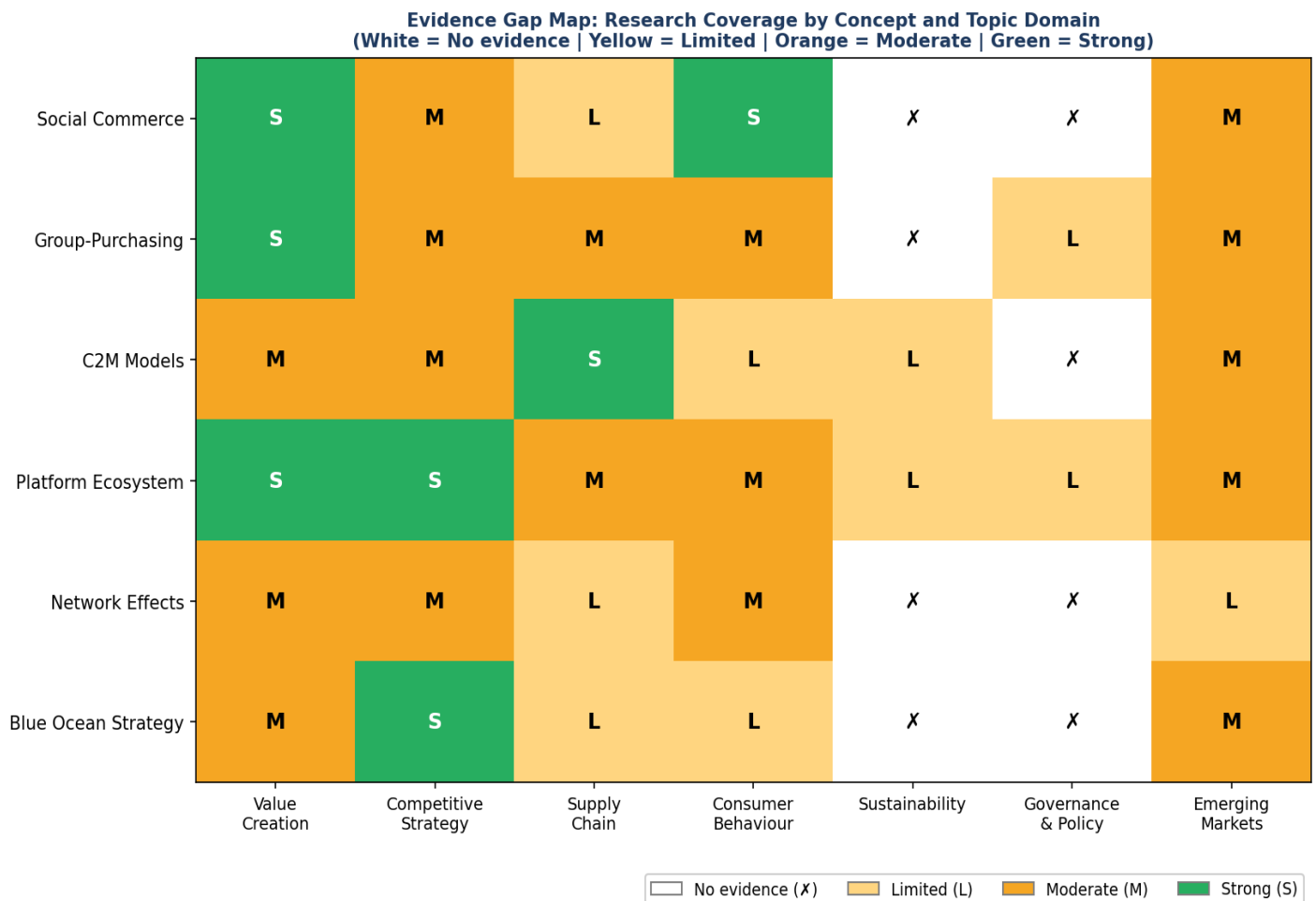


Figure 7. Evidence-gap map across platform concepts and topic domains

The evidence around sustainability is particularly lacking with only a few of the included sources explicitly discussing sustainability, such as Uchańska-Bieniusiewicz (2024). The governance and policy aspects are also underrepresented in the empirical e-commerce studies included, although platform-governance scholarship has been developed (Iansiti & Levien, 2004). The Chinese presence is still not well documented in other parts of the world, especially in Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America.

DISCUSSION

The mapped evidence suggests that platform-based e-commerce innovation is a young and growing domain, mainly journal-based, geographically concentrated in China and methodologically dominated by analytical modelling and case-studies. Theories with the best theoretical coverage are Platform Ecosystem Theory and Value Co-creation, with less coverage in other geographies, stakeholder groups, sustainability topics, governance issues and policy settings. The purpose of scoping reviews is to contribute to the understanding of the magnitude and scope of the existing evidence and identify research gaps that warrant further investigation, so these patterns are of particular importance (Munn et al., 2018; Tricco et al., 2018).

The central finding is that of the concentration and the lack of evidence. The test of platform ecosystem and C2M research require Chinese cases, which is essential for testing platform business models in other institutional and cultural environments. The small number of longitudinal and mixed method designs also limits understanding of platform evolution and long-term outcomes of stakeholders. Constructs from ecosystem, network-effects, value co-creation and strategic perspectives need to be tested in other contexts in future empirical studies (Eisenmann et al., 2006; Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Tiwana et al., 2010).

The evidence map also aids in the integration of the theory to a higher degree. While the concept of value innovation and market creation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005) is relevant, it does not seem to be discussed as often as network-effects and ecosystem views in the mapped corpus. Comparative applications might be undertaken to see if such explanations are still valuable in different environments, across different platforms, stakeholder groups.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are a few limitations to this review. Resources used in the search were SciSpace and Google Scholar, which do not have the same coverage and ranking as curated bibliographic databases and can be easily produced and updated over time. Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, Government Reports, Industry documents and other languages other than English and Chinese were not systematically searched in the review. Evidence may thus be lacking. The small final corpus is due to the narrow PCC criteria and narrow inference. Another challenge is the heterogeneity of the design of the evidence included and the strong focus on the Chinese context, both of which limit transferability to other institutional contexts. Long-term platform survival, regulatory impacts and impacts to stakeholders are less well documented, as most studies are recent.

There should be a future update that adds Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and appropriate regional databases and archives all search logs and compares database-specific yield. Further studies could also be conducted on a comparative, longitudinal, mixed-method, and larger empirical design of the emerging digital marketplaces in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other Asian markets. More stakeholder engagement required for consumers, complementors, small-platform operators, rural communities and lower income groups. These are the priority topics related to platform governance, data ownership, algorithmic transparency, sustainability and policy responses (Iansiti & Levien, 2004; Tiwana et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

The evidence of e-commerce innovation on platforms is expanding but is still geographically, contextually, theoretically and methodologically focused. Platform ecosystems, C2M models, manufacturer-platform coordination and digitally mediated market interactions are the main areas of focus in the 21 sources included. The evidence is scant in non-Chinese contexts, across a variety of stakeholder groups, for sustainability,

governance and policy, and long-term social and regulatory impacts (Liu et al., 2016; Lyu et al., 2023; Zhang, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). While the concept of network externalities, two-sided markets, and platform evolution provides useful foundations, they need to be tested in a broader range of platforms and geographic environments (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Tiwana et al., 2010). The review outlines the distribution, concentration and gaps of evidence available, to be followed by a focused agenda for comparative, longitudinal, cross-cultural and policy-oriented research. The contribution of this is an evidence map of the field, rather than a mechanism-focused systematic review or a bibliometric analysis of the structure of publications.

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Declarations

There was no external funding for this scoping review. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare. There was no need for ethics approval as the study was based on published literature. The charting form, screening decisions and documentation of search are available on reasonable requests from the corresponding author.

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