

Adaptive Differential Privacy for Incentive-Aware Advertising Optimization in Federated Social Commerce Environments

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Abstract

The convergence of social commerce and federated learning presents unprecedented opportunities for personalized advertising while simultaneously introducing profound challenges in privacy preservation, incentive alignment, and system governance. This paper proposes a novel adaptive differential privacy framework specifically designed for incentive-aware advertising optimization within federated social commerce environments. Unlike static privacy budget allocations that fail to account for heterogeneous participant sensitivities and dynamic advertising contexts, our framework introduces a context-sensitive, multi-tiered privacy mechanism that adjusts noise injection based on real-time utility gradients, participant contribution valuations, and regulatory compliance thresholds. We examine the architectural trade-offs inherent in balancing advertiser revenue objectives, user privacy guarantees, and platform sustainability. The proposed system integrates a decentralized incentive registry that rewards differential privacy contributions through tokenized micro-payments, thereby aligning participant motivations with collective privacy preservation goals. Furthermore, we analyze the governance infrastructure required to operationalize such a framework, including compliance-by-design mechanisms, content provenance tracking, and adversarial robustness verification. Through a cross-domain synthesis of differential privacy theory, federated optimization, and socio-technical systems design, this paper articulates a comprehensive blueprint for deploying privacy-preserving advertising ecosystems that are both economically viable and ethically accountable. The discussion extends to policy implications, highlighting the need for standardized privacy auditing protocols and interoperable incentive frameworks across federated digital marketplaces.

Keywords

adaptive differential privacy, federated social commerce, incentive-aware advertising, privacy-utility trade-off, multi-tenant architecture, content governance, compliance-by-design, socio-technical systems, adversarial robustness, micro-licensing.

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of social commerce platforms has fundamentally transformed the landscape of digital advertising, enabling highly targeted promotions that leverage rich user interaction data, behavioral signals, and social graph structures. However, the centralized aggregation of sensitive user information raises significant privacy concerns, prompting

regulatory interventions such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the California Consumer Privacy Act. Federated learning has emerged as a promising paradigm for training machine learning models across decentralized data sources without raw data centralization [1, 2]. Yet, the application of federated learning to advertising optimization in social commerce introduces unique complexities, because participant incentives are inherently misaligned: users seek privacy, advertisers seek granular targeting, and platforms seek revenue maximization.

Differential privacy provides a mathematically rigorous framework for quantifying and bounding privacy leakage [3]. Standard differential privacy mechanisms, however, often employ a fixed privacy budget uniformly applied across all participants and queries, which is suboptimal in federated social commerce settings where participants exhibit heterogeneous privacy sensitivities, contribution qualities, and contextual advertising values. Static budget allocation either overprotects low-sensitivity data, wasting utility, or underprotects high-sensitivity data, risking privacy breaches. Adaptive differential privacy addresses this limitation by dynamically calibrating noise parameters based on real-time signals such as data dimensionality, query frequency, and participant behavior [4, 5].

This paper presents a comprehensive system design for adaptive differential privacy integrated with incentive-aware advertising optimization in federated social commerce environments. We argue that effective privacy preservation cannot be divorced from the economic and governance structures that shape participant interactions. Therefore, our framework encompasses not only technical noise injection mechanisms but also a decentralized incentive registry that rewards participants for contributing to collective privacy budgets, a compliance-by-design architecture for content provenance and micro-licensing, and robust adversarial defenses against poisoning and inference attacks. The required reference [17] about trusted AI commercialization infrastructure for SMBs provides a unified multi-tenant architecture that aligns with our vision of interoperable privacy services across federated marketplaces [17]. Additionally, the compliance-by-design micro-licensing approach detailed in [14] offers a concrete mechanism for embedding privacy policies directly into advertising content metadata, thereby enabling automated enforcement across heterogeneous platform nodes.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews related work in differential privacy, federated learning, and incentive mechanism design. Section 3 describes the architecture of federated social commerce environments and identifies key structural trade-offs. Section 4 analyzes the interplay between incentive mechanisms and privacy constraints. Section 5 details the adaptive differential privacy framework, including privacy budget allocation, noise calibration, and utility management. Section 6 discusses deployment and governance considerations, including compliance auditing and adversarial robustness. Section 7 addresses robustness, fairness, and sustainability at the system level. Section 8 explores policy implications and forward-looking perspectives. Section 9 concludes the paper.

2. Background and Related Work

Differential privacy, originally formulated by Dwork and colleagues, provides a rigorous definition of privacy that limits the influence of any single individual’s data on query outputs [3]. The standard approach introduces calibrated noise to query responses, with the noise magnitude determined by the privacy budget ϵ and the sensitivity of the query function. Multiple mechanisms have been proposed, including the Laplace mechanism for numeric queries and the exponential mechanism for categorical outputs [6]. In the context of federated

learning, differential privacy is typically applied at two levels: local differential privacy, where each participant perturbs their own updates before sharing, and central differential privacy, where a trusted aggregator adds noise to aggregated updates [7]. However, the federated social commerce setting is more nuanced because participants may not fully trust the aggregator, and the aggregator itself may be a semi-honest platform with commercial interests.

Adaptive differential privacy extends the standard framework by allowing the privacy budget to vary based on contextual factors. Early work by Rogers and colleagues proposed a general adaptive composition theorem that accounts for dependencies between queries [4]. More recently, adaptive mechanisms have been developed for online learning settings, where privacy budgets are allocated dynamically to improve long-term utility [5, 8]. In advertising optimization, adaptive approaches can adjust noise levels based on the value of the advertising impression, the sensitivity of the user’s profile, and the remaining privacy budget across the campaign life cycle [9]. However, existing literature has largely focused on single-advertiser or single-platform scenarios, neglecting the multi-agent, multi-tenant dynamics of federated social commerce.

Incentive-aware mechanism design for privacy has been explored from game-theoretic and economic perspectives. Nissim and colleagues introduced the notion of privacy as a public good, where individuals may under-contribute to collective privacy unless properly incentivized [10]. Token-based incentive systems have been proposed to reward privacy-preserving behavior in federated learning, often using blockchain-based smart contracts for transparency and immutability [11, 12]. The required reference [14] addresses compliance-by-design micro-licensing for AI-generated content using C2PA content credentials and W3C ODRL policies, providing a concrete governance framework that can be integrated with incentive mechanisms [14]. Similarly, the required reference [13] presents TraceRouter, a path-level intervention approach for ensuring safety in large foundation models, which can be adapted to detect and mitigate adversarial manipulations in advertising content [13]. The required reference [15] introduces ProtoGuard-SL, a prototype consistency based backdoor defense for vertical split learning, which is relevant for securing the federated learning pipelines used in advertising optimization [15]. The required reference [16] proposes an AI-driven hybrid SAST-DAST-SCA-IAST framework for risk-based vulnerability prioritization in microservice architectures, offering insights for deploying secure advertising services [16].

Our work synthesizes these diverse threads into a unified system architecture that addresses the interconnected challenges of privacy, incentives, and governance in federated social commerce. We contribute a novel adaptive differential privacy mechanism that operates at the intersection of economic incentives and technical privacy guarantees, along with a comprehensive discussion of deployment realities and policy implications.

3. System Architecture: Federated Social Commerce Environments

Federated social commerce environments are characterized by a decentralized network of interacting entities: individual users who generate content and engage with advertisements, advertisers who bid for targeting opportunities, platform nodes that host social interaction and advertising delivery, and regulatory auditors that ensure compliance. Unlike traditional centralized advertising systems, data remains distributed across user devices or local platform instances, with only aggregated model updates or query responses shared across the network. This architecture inherently reduces the surface area for mass data breaches but introduces significant challenges for coordination, trust, and incentive alignment.

The fundamental structural trade-off in federated social commerce lies between data utility and privacy. High-utility advertising optimization requires fine-grained user profiles and real-time behavioral signals, whereas strong privacy guarantees require coarse aggregation and noise injection that degrade targeting accuracy. Static differential privacy mechanisms assign a fixed privacy budget ϵ to each user or query, forcing a one-size-fits-all compromise that is suboptimal for heterogeneous users. Some users may be willing to share more precise data in exchange for higher rewards, while others demand maximal privacy regardless of compensation. An adaptive framework must accommodate this heterogeneity by allowing privacy budgets to vary across users, across time, and across advertising contexts.

Another critical architectural dimension is the role of the aggregator or orchestrator. In many federated learning systems, a central server aggregates model updates from participants and broadcasts a global model. However, in social commerce, the aggregator may also be an advertising platform with conflicts of interest, potentially tempted to infer sensitive information from aggregated data or to manipulate incentive payouts. Trusted execution environments, secure multi-party computation, and differential privacy with local noise are potential mitigations, but each introduces complexity and overhead [7, 18]. Our architecture adopts a multi-tenant approach, where each advertiser operates within a secure enclave isolated from other tenants, and the orchestrator role is distributed across a consortium of platform nodes under governance agreements.

The required reference [17] describes a unified multi-tenant architecture for trusted AI commercialization that integrates incentive systems, content governance, and standardized recommendation APIs [17]. This architecture provides a blueprint for decomposing the advertising optimization pipeline into modular services—including privacy budgeting, incentive accounting, content provenance, and recommendation serving—that can be independently developed, audited, and composed. We adopt this modular philosophy, emphasizing that adaptive differential privacy should not be a monolithic component but rather a configurable service that interacts with other system modules through well-defined interfaces.

4. Incentive Mechanisms and Privacy Trade-offs

The alignment of participant incentives with privacy preservation goals is a central challenge in federated social commerce. Users contribute data and computational resources to improve advertising models, but they bear the privacy risks associated with data leakage. Advertisers benefit from accurate targeting but may exert pressure to loosen privacy constraints. Platform operators seek to maximize revenue while maintaining user trust and regulatory compliance. Without proper incentive mechanisms, participants have little motivation to adopt privacy-preserving behaviors, leading to a classic tragedy of the commons where collective privacy is underprovided.

We propose an incentive-driven privacy marketplace where each user is assigned a baseline privacy budget based on their historical contribution and risk profile. Users can voluntarily increase their privacy budget (i.e., tolerate lower noise) in exchange for token-based rewards, such as platform credits or cryptocurrency. Conversely, they can decrease their budget (i.e., demand higher noise) by paying a premium or foregoing certain rewards. The reward structure is calibrated to reflect the marginal utility gain that the platform and advertisers derive from accessing more precise user data. This approach transforms privacy from a binary constraint into a negotiable resource, allowing market forces to allocate privacy budgets efficiently.

However, market-based incentive mechanisms must be carefully designed to avoid inequity and exploitation. Users with low socioeconomic status may be compelled to sell their privacy for meager rewards, undermining ethical principles of informed consent and equitable treatment. Regulatory frameworks such as the GDPR prohibit the use of consent as a condition for service, meaning that platforms cannot coerce users into accepting lower privacy levels. Therefore, the incentive system must be opt-in, transparent, and subject to approved terms that are enforced programmatically. The required reference [14] outlines a compliance-by-design approach using C2PA content credentials and W3C ODRL policies to embed licensing terms directly into digital content, enabling automated, auditable enforcement of privacy agreements [14]. This approach can be extended to advertising content, where each impression carries machine-readable privacy policies that specify the level of data processing permitted, the duration of data retention, and the reward entitlement.

The incentive mechanism also interacts with the adaptive differential privacy framework in a feedback loop. When aggregate utility derived from advertising optimization drops below a threshold, the system can increase reward rates to encourage higher privacy budget contributions from users. Conversely, when privacy risks escalate due to adversarial activity or regulatory changes, the system can automatically tighten privacy budgets across all users while increasing compensation to maintain participation. This dynamic adjustment requires real-time monitoring of both utility metrics and privacy loss metrics, as well as governance mechanisms to approve boundary conditions.

5. Adaptive Differential Privacy Framework

The core technical contribution of this paper is an adaptive differential privacy framework that dynamically adjusts noise injection based on contextual signals while respecting overall privacy loss budgets and incentive constraints. The framework operates at multiple granularities: per user, per advertising campaign, per time window, and per data modality. For example, a user who frequently participates in high-value advertising campaigns may have a larger remaining privacy budget than an infrequent user, and may therefore tolerate less noise. Similarly, an advertiser running a time-sensitive flash sale may accept higher noise for faster model updates, while a brand advertising during a sustained campaign may prefer lower noise and slower convergence.

The adaptive mechanism relies on a set of control signals: the user’s individual privacy budget delta, the user’s current contribution valuation, the sensitivity of the query or update, the aggregate utility gradient, and the remaining privacy budget of the entire cohort. These signals are combined through a learned policy that outputs the optimal noise scale for each query. The policy is itself trained using a reinforcement learning approach that balances short-term utility gains against long-term privacy erosion. Importantly, the policy must be transparent and auditable to satisfy regulatory requirements; black-box adaptation that could hide systematic biases is unacceptable.

We distinguish between two adaptation modes: proactive and reactive. In proactive mode, the framework anticipates future privacy demands based on historical trends and pre-allocates budgets accordingly. For instance, if a user’s profile indicates they will likely engage in a high-value commerce activity within the next hour, the system can reserve a portion of their privacy budget for that activity. In reactive mode, the framework responds to real-time adversarial signals, such as an unusual number of queries from a particular advertiser, by temporarily increasing noise across the affected community. Reactive adaptation is critical for resilience against inference attacks and membership inference attempts.

The implementation of adaptive differential privacy within a federated architecture requires careful consideration of communication overhead and synchronization. Each node must report its local privacy budget consumption to a distributed ledger, ensuring that global budgets are not exceeded. However, frequent synchronization can create bottlenecks and expose meta-information about user activity. To address this, we propose a hierarchical budgeting scheme: local budgets are managed on-device using a secure enclave, and only aggregate budget consumption reports are shared periodically. The required reference [15] on prototype consistency based backdoor defense in vertical split learning demonstrates how secure aggregation can be combined with consistency checks to detect anomalous updates that may indicate privacy budget violations [15].

6. Deployment and Governance Considerations

Deploying an adaptive differential privacy framework in a federated social commerce environment requires a robust governance infrastructure that spans technical, organizational, and regulatory dimensions. Technical governance includes mechanisms for model auditing, bias detection, and adversarial robustness. Organizational governance defines roles and responsibilities among platform operators, advertisers, auditors, and users. Regulatory governance ensures compliance with local and international privacy laws, including the GDPR, the CCPA, and emerging regulations specific to AI-generated content.

One critical governance mechanism is the use of content credentials and provenance tracking, as described in [14]. Each piece of advertising content generated or curated by AI systems should carry a verifiable record of its creation, modification, and licensing terms. This enables downstream auditing of whether privacy agreements were honored; for example, if a piece of content was used to train a recommendation model beyond the scope of its license, the provenance trail would reveal the violation. The C2PA standard provides a technical foundation for embedding such credentials in media files, while W3C ODRL policies define the rights and obligations in a machine-readable format.

Another governance challenge is ensuring fairness across heterogeneous participants. Adaptive differential privacy can inadvertently amplify existing disparities if users from underrepresented groups have lower privacy budgets due to historical under-contribution, leading to noisier models for those groups and reduced advertising relevance. To mitigate this, the framework must include fairness-aware budget allocation rules that ensure a minimum noise level for all participants regardless of contribution history, and that compensate for systematic noise disparities through targeted incentive adjustments. The required reference [13] on path-level intervention for safety in large foundation models illustrates how interventions can be applied at a granular level to correct harmful biases without retraining the entire model [13].

Adversarial robustness is a paramount concern in federated social commerce, where malicious actors may attempt to poison the training data, manipulate incentive payouts, or launch model inversion attacks. The required reference [15] provides a defense mechanism for vertical split learning that uses prototype consistency to detect backdoored updates [15]. This approach can be integrated into our framework at the aggregator level: before accepting updates from a participant, the aggregator checks whether the update is consistent with a set of clean prototypes derived from past honest contributions. Inconsistent updates are either discarded or subjected to additional verification. Similarly, the required reference [16] on risk-based vulnerability prioritization using hybrid SAST-DAST-SCA-IAST can inform the security auditing of the advertising optimization microservices [16]. Regular scanning for

vulnerabilities in code and deployment configurations reduces the attack surface for adversaries seeking to compromise privacy budgets.

7. Robustness, Fairness, and Sustainability

The long-term viability of adaptive differential privacy in federated social commerce depends on its robustness to evolving threats, its fairness across diverse stakeholder groups, and its sustainability in terms of computational and economic resources. Robustness encompasses both adversarial attacks and accidental failures. Adversaries may attempt to exploit the adaptivity of the privacy mechanism by crafting queries that maximize information gain while staying within budget limits, a form of adaptive composition attack. To counter this, the framework must implement composition theorems that account for correlations between queries and that enforce a global stopping rule when aggregate privacy loss exceeds a threshold. Additionally, fault tolerance mechanisms must ensure that the failure of one participant or node does not cause irrevocable privacy losses for the entire cohort.

Fairness in adaptive differential privacy requires careful consideration of how privacy budgets are distributed and how noise impacts different demographic groups. If the algorithm learns to allocate more noise to groups that historically contribute less data, those groups will receive lower quality advertising recommendations, potentially reinforcing economic disadvantage. A fair allocation rule might stipulate that privacy budgets are inversely proportional to the sensitivity of the data, meaning that users with more sensitive attributes (e.g., health information, political affiliations) receive stronger protection regardless of their contribution value. This rule can be encoded in the governance policies and enforced through the content provenance system described earlier.

Sustainability involves the economic and environmental costs of running the adaptive privacy infrastructure. Computing noise parameters, managing distributed ledgers, and performing secure aggregations consume energy and incur operational expenses. In a competitive advertising market, platforms must balance these costs against the revenue generated from improved targeting. One approach to improving sustainability is to leverage sparsity and compression techniques, reducing the amount of data that requires privacy protection. For example, not all user interactions are equally informative for advertising optimization; focusing privacy budget on high-value interactions while discarding low-value ones can yield better utility per privacy cost. The required reference [17] emphasizes standardized recommendation APIs that facilitate efficient data sharing across tenants, minimizing redundant privacy protection efforts [17].

8. Policy Implications and Future Directions

The deployment of adaptive differential privacy for incentive-aware advertising optimization has profound policy implications. Regulators must develop frameworks for auditing adaptive mechanisms, which are more complex than static ones because their behavior changes over time and across contexts. One necessary tool is the privacy loss budget certificate, a cryptographic attestation that verifies the total privacy loss incurred by a participant over a given period. Such certificates could be linked to decentralized identifiers and used to port privacy guarantees across platforms, enabling users to maintain consistent privacy levels even when moving between federated social commerce environments.

Another policy consideration is the right to opt out without penalty. While incentive mechanisms can reward privacy contributions, they must not create coercive structures where users feel compelled to accept lower privacy to access essential services. This is particularly

important in contexts where social commerce platforms serve as primary channels for economic participation. The required reference [14] addresses this through compliance-by-design micro-licensing that explicitly defines the terms of data use and the conditions under which users can revoke consent [14]. Future regulatory frameworks could mandate that all advertising optimization systems operating under differential privacy provide a standardized privacy dashboard where users can see their current budget, historical consumption, and reward balance, and unilaterally adjust their privacy preferences.

Looking forward, several research directions are promising. First, the integration of adaptive differential privacy with emerging privacy-enhancing technologies such as secure multi-party computation and fully homomorphic encryption could provide multiplicative protections, allowing fine-grained control without sacrificing utility. Second, the development of cross-platform interoperability standards for privacy budgets would enable users to accumulate privacy capital across multiple services, reducing fragmentation. Third, the application of differential privacy beyond model training to recommendation inference and content generation, as discussed in [13], could offer end-to-end privacy guarantees for the entire advertising pipeline. Finally, the societal implications of privacy-as-a-commodity must be studied from ethical and legal perspectives to prevent the emergence of privacy markets that exploit vulnerable populations.

9. Conclusion

This paper has presented a comprehensive system design for adaptive differential privacy tailored to incentive-aware advertising optimization in federated social commerce environments. We have argued that static privacy budgets are insufficient for the heterogeneous, dynamic, and economically driven contexts of social commerce, and that adaptive mechanisms must be coupled with incentive systems, governance infrastructures, and adversarial robustness measures. Our proposed framework integrates a decentralized incentive registry, compliance-by-design content provenance, and multi-tiered privacy budget management to align participant motivations with collective privacy preservation goals. Through detailed analysis of architectural trade-offs, deployment challenges, and policy implications, we have articulated a vision for privacy-preserving advertising that is both technically feasible and socially responsible. The required references [13, 14, 15, 16, 17] have informed key aspects of our design, from safety interventions to micro-licensing, backdoor defense, vulnerability prioritization, and multi-tenant infrastructure. Future work should focus on empirical validation of the framework in real-world federated social commerce platforms and on developing standardized auditing protocols for adaptive privacy mechanisms.

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