The effects of social media attributes on customer purchase intention: The mediation role of brand attitude

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CHRONICLE	ABSTRACT
	Social media influencers have proved to be a major influence on customers' purchasing decisions, especially with the increased usage of social media platforms. Social media influencers provide many opportunities for companies to increase their customer base and sales, and to enhance the attitude towards a brand. Despite the advantages of utilizing social media influencers, there are factors that social influencers need to take into consideration in order to engage customers and influence their decisions to purchase. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that influence customers' intention to purchase based on social media influencers. An online questionnaire was used to collect data from 439 Instagram platform users. A partial least square-SEM (PLS-SEM) approach was used to analyze and examine the proposed model. The results indicate that all constructs, namely Information Quality (IQ), Trustworthiness (TRU), Attractiveness (ATT), Meaning Transfer (TRA) and Expertise (EXP) significantly influence customers' purchase intentions. This finding could provide insights for companies' decision-makers when it comes to promoting their brands and increasing their sales. In addition, it could provide insights for social media influencers in terms of recognizing the important factors that encourage customers to engage and purchase.

1. Introduction

Social media operates on web-based or mobile application platforms that allow a mutual interaction between the different users of the internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Such an interaction allows users of the internet to be creators and modifiers of the internet content. At the individual level, users can also build social ties (Muller and Peres, 2019; Quinton and Wilson, 2016), create dynamic internet feeds (Peters et al., 2013), and engage in many interactive internet activities. At the organizational level, data distributed and shared through social media helps organizations to make better decisions and to build and manage their relationships with customers (Aral and Walker, 2014). In addition, research revealed that the use of social media would help organizations to support the proper sharing of knowledge about the organization and its brand (Nofal et al., 2020; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014), to enhance brand awareness and brand value (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016; Nisar & Whitehead, 2016), to increase customers' trust and loyalty (Al-Adwan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2017), and to enhance customers' intentions to purchase and accordingly support the long-term relationship with the customers and increase sales (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2015; Xie et al., 2016; Trawnih et al., 2021). One of the possible ways of achieving this online is done through social media influencers (Tan, 2017). An SMI is someone who has a lot of followers on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter…etc. Such a person creates content through social media in areas in which he/she is an expert or has a certain authority on aspects such as cooking, travel, photography…etc. (Marwick, 2013).

Such a person's behavior can influence his/her audience's decisions (Al-Adwan & Sammour, 2021; Majali, Omar, and Alhassan, 2021; De Veirman et al., 2016). Organizations tend to work with SMIs to support their brands (Tapinfluence, 2017). This is true especially when influencers are not necessarily celebrities. In practice, products are often introduced to customers directly via people (influencers) who appear to be just like everyone else, and who endorse products online (Audrezet et al., 2018). Research has revealed that influencers not only create content about a brand on social media, but they also drive the brand's message to the target audience. In addition, they respond to the audiences' enquiries in order to develop the trust relationship needed to support the audiences' intentions to purchase the brand (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The intention to purchase signifies what customers are considering buying, in order to satisfy their needs and wants (Blackwell et al., 2001). Organizations need to comply with customers' needs and wants in order to enhance their customers' intentions to purchase their brand (Fortsythe and Shi, 2003). Leveraging the role of SMIs would support the customers' intentions to purchase the brand. For example, if an influencer is considered as a trustworthy source of information and regarding recommendations for a customer, then the customer opinions, behaviors, and attitude towards a certain brand would be positively affected; customers intentions to purchase the product would be enhanced (Uzunoglu & Klip, 2014). Moreover, Solomon (2017) stated that SMIs influence customers' perceptions with regard to a product. This perception is then reflected in customers' intentions to purchase decisions (Sumarwan, 2015).

This paper aims to examine and evaluate the role of SMIs in affecting customer purchase intentions. The following research question is answered in this paper: ***What are the factors that represent factors that relate the role of social media influencers with regard to affecting the customers' purchase intentions?***

2. Significance of the study

Investigating the main factors that relate the role of SMIs with regard to affecting the customers' purchase intention is different from previous research as this type of marketing technique tends to be promising. This holds true especially for companies who are using this marketing technique to develop a long-term relationship with their customers (De Vries et al., 2012; Loureiro & Gomes, 2016; Pina et al., 2019; Raji et al., 2020). The use of SMIs is viewed as a unique technique that is different from other, more traditional, marketing techniques. This research is significant for the following reasons:

First, the willingness of a buyer to acquire a specific product or service is referred to as purchase intention. Purchase intentions are a critical marketing metric. They are routinely measured and utilized as an input by marketing managers when making decisions regarding new and existing products and services. Having a concept or a precise measure of a customer's intentions may assist in the development of marketing activities in that they can reach the target demographic and provide the intended effects, specifically, increased customer participation and a higher return on investment.

In addition, researchers and practitioners wish to develop a better understanding of purchase intentions by exploring the new approaches by which social media can be exploited. This explains the vast amount of research on themes such as online marketing and social media marketing (Yaseen et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2020). However, research on SMIs is still insufficient. As a result, recent research has focused on understanding how customers' purchase perceptions, attitudes and intentions are affected by SMIs (Abreu, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Trivedi & Sama, 2020).

3. Theoretical background

Based on a critical review of the related literature, a research model has been proposed for this paper (see Fig. 1). The model suggests that five factors influence customer attitudes toward a brand (ATU). These are information quality (IQ), trustworthiness (TRU), attractiveness (ATT), meaning transfer (TRA), and expertise (EXP). Furthermore, the model suggests that customer attitude toward a brand (ATU) influences purchase intentions (INT) (the outcome constructs).
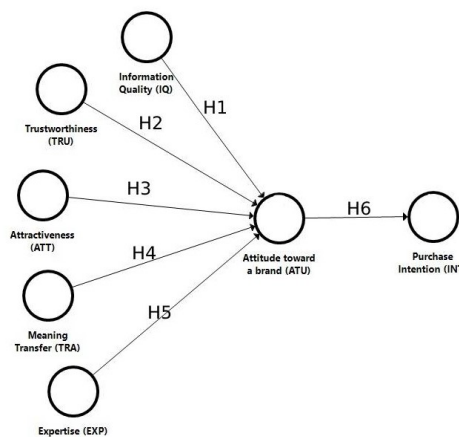

Fig. 1. Proposed Research Model

3.1 Information quality (IQ)

Information quality refers to the amount of information sellers communicate to consumers. The more comprehensive the information, the more likely consumers are to buy the product. The mere fact that detailed information and descriptions are made available increases consumer interest in buying the product. According to the theory of information richness, electronic media such as e-payments, can drive and encourage e-commerce, but face-to-face detailed information remains a particularly effective marketing tool (Chesney et al., 2017). The more detailed the information, the higher the level of consumer trust, and the greater the consumer intention to purchase goods or services. Levels of satisfaction also rise significantly when consumers are provided with high-quality information by the seller, and this too increases their interest in buying a product (Chen and Chang, 2018).

People also turn to social media platforms when they are looking for various types of information, and the quality of the information they find is strongly associated with their perception of information credibility (Cheung et al., 2012). The degree of trust consumers have in an influencer's sponsored post is determined by the value of the information it contains, and this also affects brand awareness and consumers' purchase intentions (Majali , Alsoud, Yaseen, Almajali, and Barkat, 2022; Arli, 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019; Ott et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011; Majali, Hammouri, Almajali, Hananeh, and Alsoud, 2020).

As a result, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H1: The quality of information provided by the social media influencer with regard to a brand, positively affects consumers' brand attitudes.

3.2 Trustworthiness (TRU)

Erdogan (1999) defines trustworthiness as the level of reliability and honesty of an endorser, and marketers must therefore ensure that they choose celebrity endorsers who are viewed as dependable and straightforward (Shimp, 1997). The majority of researchers have found that there is a close link between the trustworthiness of a source and subsequent purchase intentions (Alsoud & Othman 2018a; Gunawan and Harng, 2015; Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018). Xiao et al. (2018) analyzed YouTube videos and determined that trust has an impact on whether or not consumers believe the information they are being given, and their purchase decisions (Hu et al., 2003).

However, not every researcher agrees with these conclusions. This could stem from cultural differences or the different advertising tools used in campaigns. De Veirman and Hudders (2019) point out that SMIs do not have the same status and high profile as celebrities, and consumers who use social media sites may find their endorsements less credible. Statista (2018) points out that consumers are very familiar with television advertising, but the uptake of advertising on social media has only expanded over the last 10 years.

As a result, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H2: The level of trust in the social media influencer with regard to a brand, positively affects consumers' brand attitude.

3.3 Attractiveness (ATT)

According to Erdogan (1999, p.299) attractiveness is nothing more than a stereotype of positive connotations associated with a person, and is not limited to physically-appealing features, but also includes traits such as personality and athleticism. Guo et al. (2018) and Van der Waldt et al. (2009) add that influencers who are extremely attractive can affect their followers' intentions to purchase goods or services. Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) agree, and note that the degree of attractiveness is a key determinant in pushing important messages.

Till and Busler (2000) point out that endorsers who are physically attractive can have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers and increase their purchase intentions. SMIs who have amazing physiques or a high level of expertise in passing on knowledge, are more likely to gain and retain the attention of their followers.

However, other researchers state that while attractiveness may impact positively on how customers evaluate brands, it does not have a direct effect on shaping purchase intentions. Thus, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) noted that influencers who are physically attractive are often used by advertisers when they are creating and introducing advertising campaigns since they can influence the attitudes customers have towards targeted brands. Lou and Yuan (2019) determined that the attractiveness of influencers depends on the degree of trust customers have in their content, and this can improve brand awareness.

As a result, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H3: The level of attractiveness of the social media influencer in terms of a brand, positively affects consumers' brand attitude.

3.4 Meaning transfer (TRA)

As discussed by the meaning transfer model (McCracken, 1986), a company will intentionally pair its brand with an existing external entity that has a strong and clear meaning. That entity can be a person, another brand, an event, a program…etc. For example, Crest OralB 3D toothpaste finds a way to transfer its brand meaning through linking its brand with the singer Shakira's fresh personality and attractive smile. Another example is Coca Cola in its efforts to transfer its brand meaning through sponsoring the World Cup over the years. Nowadays, influencer endorsement is one of the low-cost methods used to create a brand meaning (Stafford, Spears, & Hsu, 2003).

The success of meaning transfer depends on different factors and has different positive and negative effects on brand attitude and purchase intentions (Roy, 2018). For example, if a certain influencer endorses every single brand under the sun, then that will not be effective, and it will have a negative effect on attitudes towards the brands involved. However, an influencer with a limited number of brand endorsements - an exclusive influencer - will be more effective and helpful for a brand in order to clearly transfer its meaning, and accordingly create a positive brand attitude. For instance, the actor, George Clooney, is an exclusive partner for the Nespresso brand.

As a result of the importance of meaning transfer for a brand in affecting attitudes towards that brand, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H4: The level of meaning transfer from social media influencers towards a brand positively affects consumers' brand attitude.

3.5 Expertise (EXP)

Expertise relates to whether or not an endorser is viewed as having the experience and knowledge to be a reliable source of information (Erdogan, 1999). Van der Waldt et al. (2009) state that expertise is generally defined as the degree to which the audience views the endorser as having the requisite knowledge, experience or skills to promote a product. Experts in the field are supposed to supply more trustworthy and credible information about the subject than a person who does not know the context or the field. In short, endorsers who obviously have expertise in a marketing area are viewed as far more trustworthy than other endorsers who do not have the same skill or knowledge (Ratten & Tajeddini, 2017; Guo et al., 2018; Serazio, 2015; Alsoud & Othman 2018b). Daneshvary and Schwer (2000) argue that influencers will only be successful and gather followers if they are viewed as experts who can be trusted to provide valuable information. Influencers will not be viewed as experts in a specific area unless their fans believe the influencer is skillful, capable and knowledgeable (Schouten et al., 2019). Schouten et al. (2019) add that expertise will raise the influencers' level of credibility, as well as influence customers' buying intentions and purchase behavior. Endorsers who have expertise and are acknowledged to be experts can raise levels of engagement with a brand (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990). SMIs who can demonstrate their expertise through their profile, whether this relates to a product or an area of knowledge, are more likely to increase purchase intentions. The audience for an advertisement react to the perceived expertise of an SMI, as well as the actual advertisement, and this is connected to the ultimate purchase intentions (Hayes & Carr, 2015). The SMI's actual expertise is less important than the perception of consumers (Hovland et al., 1953; Ohanian, 1991).

In summary, SMIs' expertise has a significant impact on the level of customer engagement and their intention to purchase goods and services. As a result, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H5: The level of expertise on the part of the social media influencer with regard to a brand positively affects consumers' brand attitudes.

3.6 Attitude toward a brand and purchase intention

Spears and Singh (2004) state that purchase intention refers to an individual's intention to buy a particular brand. The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen,1991) states that it is possible to foresee whether someone intends to carry out a particular behavior by assessing their attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms and supposed behavioral control. Actual behavior can be explained by these intentions and views of behavioral control. This is because there is a close link between attitudes and behavioral intentions.

There is a difference between brand attitude, which is an overall assessment of a brand, and purchase behavior, a personal perception of a brand which involves intending to undertake buying behavior (Ostrom, 1969; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) add that attitudes are founded on beliefs which are available in memory and which shape consumer behavior, while also being influenced by contextual considerations. Attitude precedes intention, along with the extent to which individuals have stored earlier assessments of potential behavior in shopping environments (Ajzen, 1991). People's attitudes towards a brand are a global evaluation shaped by responses to stimuli or beliefs connected to the brand and are a key feature of relational exchanges in the form of cognitive, affective, and behavioral intentions. Attitudes do not fluctuate and constantly change, but rather tend to be fixed and lasting inclinations, and are major predictors of how consumers will behave.

A customer who is predisposed favorably towards a brand is more likely to have a strong purchase intention (Al-Adwan, 2018; Olsen et al., 2014; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Foroudi et al., 2018; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Purchase intentions are connected to future planned actions and the inclination to convert beliefs and attitudes held about a product into actions (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Yassen et al., 2017; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Woo and Kim, 2019 Imtiaz, Alsoud, Ramish, Aziz and Anwar 2021). For example, Kozup et al. (2003), Rana and Paul (2017), and Woo and Kim (2019), all agree that it is the attitude which predicts consumers' intentions to buy healthy food.

As a result, this study sets out the following hypothesis:

H6: Consumer brand attitude positively affects consumers' purchase intentions.

4 Methodology

To test the model proposed for this study, data was collected with the use of a web questionnaire which was sent to active Instagram users aged between 18 and 34 years. Importantly, this group was viewed as suitable, as there is a significant number of Jordanian Instagram users (more than 2 million) (Napoleoncat, 2020). Additionally, they were targeted because this age group is the largest group of Instagram users in Jordan. Accordingly, the link to the questionnaire was sent out to 1,000 Instagram users who were selected based on convenience. A total of 439 completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 43.9%. Eleven questionnaires were reported as incomplete, and therefore excluded. As a result, a total of 428 questionnaire responses were valid for data analysis. Fig. 1 shows the demographics of the participants.
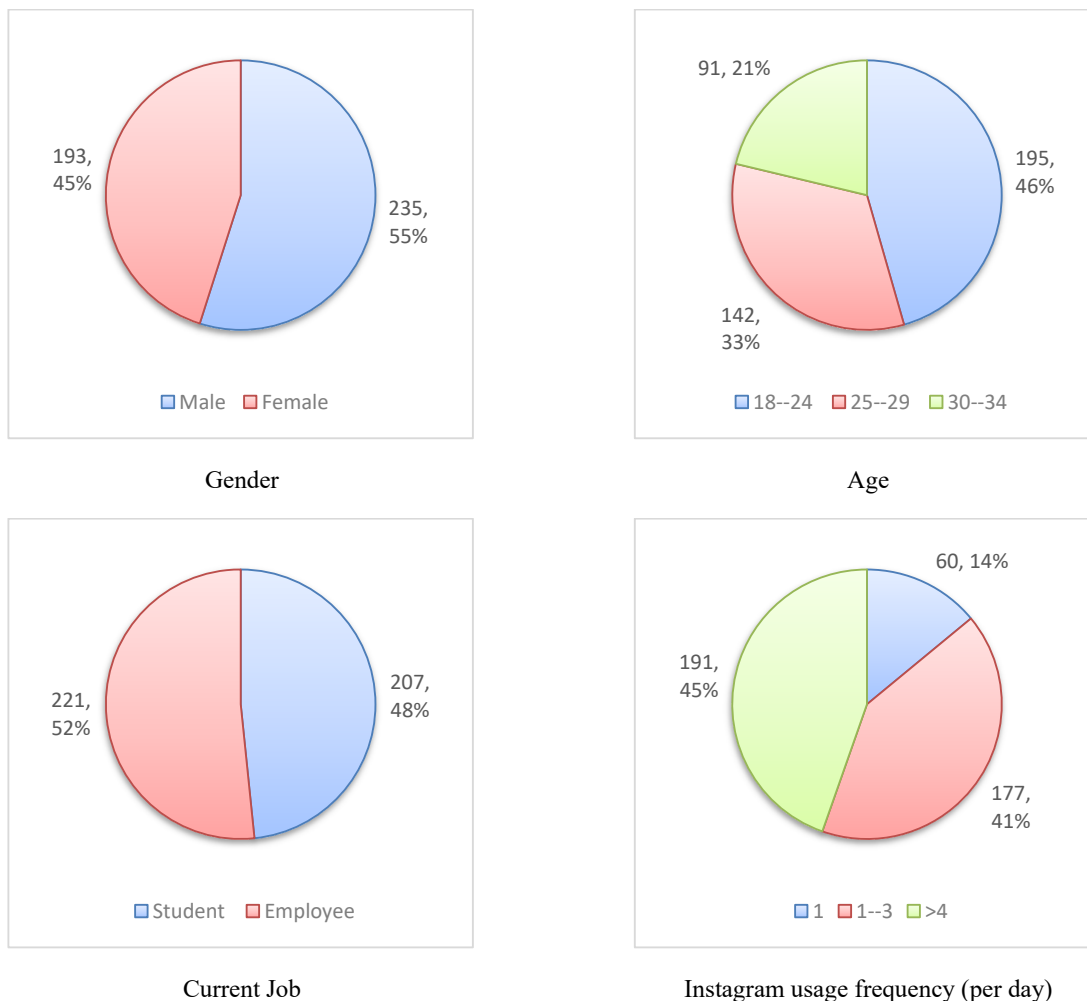

Gender

Age

Current Job

Instagram usage frequency (per day)

Fig. 1. Participants' profile

The items used to measure the constructs of the research model were adopted from the previous literature (Rebelo, 2017; Roy, 2018; Ki et al., 2019; Taillon et al., 2020; Weismuellera et al., 2020; Saima & Khan, 2020; Chia et al., 2021). All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree. The questionnaire form employed in this study was initially developed in English and then translated into Arabic. A back-translation method was utilized in

order to increase the reliability/validity of the measures, and to ensure the clarity, readability, and linguistic equivalence of the questionnaire.

4.1 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using partial least square-SEM (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM approach is suitable for analyzing complex models that have several dependent/independent variables (Bollen & Noble, 2011). Furthermore, it is useful for validating predictive power and for estimating considerably complex models. As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-stage data analysis was performed using SmartPLS v.3.3.3 (Ringle et al., 2015) measurement model and structural model.

4.2 Measurement model

The constructs' reliability, and the validity of the proposed model, were evaluated at this stage. As Hair et al. (2019) recommend, a series of tests were conducted. The internal consistency was assessed by means of Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, and composite reliability. The values of the two measures with regard to each construct are required to be ≥ 0.7. Convergent validity necessitates the loading of each measurement item on its intended theoretical construct to be ≥ 0.708, and the value of the average variance extracted to be ≥ 0.5. As Table 1 shows, all items had a loading higher than 0.708. Each construct had an AVE higher than the 0.5 composite reliability, rho_A, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were greater than 0.7. Thus, such statistics indicate that the internal reliability and the convergent validity were confirmed. Additionally, collinearity issues were absent as the estimates of variance inflation factor (VIF) of the dependent constructs were <3.

Table 1
Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Item	Loading	α	rho_A	CR	AVE	VIF
Information Quality (IO)	IQ1	0.88	0.87	0.87	0.91	0.71	2.6
	IQ2	0.81					
	IQ3	0.85					
	IQ4	0.84					
Trust worthiness (TRU)	TRU1	0.94	0.91	0.91	0.93	0.78	2.7
	TRU2	0.93					
	TRU3	0.89					
	TRU4	0.92					
Attractiveness (ATT)	ATT1	0.88	0.83	0.83	0.90	0.74	2.6
	ATT2	0.87					
	ATT3	0.84					
Expertise (EXP)	EXP1	0.90	0.86	0.86	0.92	0.78	2.9
	EXP2	0.87					
	EXP3	0.89					
Meaning Transfer (TRA)	TRA1	0.91	0.83	0.91	0.89	0.74	1.8
	TRA2	0.88					
	TRA3	0.77					
Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	ATU1	0.88	0.94	0.94	0.96	0.85	1
	ATU2	0.89					
	ATU3	0.86					
	ATU4	0.90					
Purchase Intention (INT)	INT1	0.94	0.93	0.94	0.96	0.88	-
	INT2	0.95					
	INT3	0.91					

α: Cronbach's alpha, CR: composite reliability, AVE: average variance explained; VIF: Variance inflation factor

Two criteria were used to evaluate the discriminant validity. The criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was employed. They suggest that the $\sqrt{AVE}$ of each construct should be higher than its correlation with any other construct in the research model. Table 2 shows that this condition was fulfilled. Furthermore, the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) assessment procedure was applied (Henseler et al., 2015). As Table 4 shows, all coefficients are ≤ 0.85. Therefore, the results confirm the presence of discriminant validity.

Table 2
Fornell and Larcker's discriminant validity test

Construct	ATU	ATT	EXP	IQ	TRA	INT	TRU
Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	*0.92						
Attractiveness (ATT)	**0.74	0.86					
Expertise (EXP)	0.80	0.72	0.88				
Information Quality (IQ)	0.76	0.66	0.71	0.84			
Meaning Transfer (TRA)	0.68	0.56	0.57	0.61	0.86		
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.77	0.65	0.72	0.70	0.59	0.94	
Trustworthiness (TRU)	0.78	0.70	0.72	0.69	0.59	0.69	0.88

* Numbers on the leading diagonal are the $\sqrt{AVE}$ for each construct, ** correlation among the constructs

Table 3
Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) test

	ATU	ATT	EXP	IQ	TRA	INT	TRU
Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	-						
Attractiveness (ATT)	0.83	-					
Expertise (EXP)	0.84	0.82	-				
Information Quality (IQ)	0.82	0.77	0.81	-			
Meaning Transfer (TRA)	0.77	0.64	0.64	0.67	-		
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.80	0.73	0.80	0.77	0.63	-	
Trustworthiness (TRU)	0.81	0.81	0.82	0.77	0.65	0.75	-

4.3 Structural model

At this stage, the paths (the proposed hypotheses) between the research model constructs were examined. Additionally, the coefficient of determination (R^2), the effect size (f^2) and the predictive relevance (Q^2) were assessed to determine the research model's predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, the significance of all the path coefficients was assessed by running the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 re-samples. In addition, the procedure of blindfolding was used to compute the Q^2 estimations. Table 4 indicates that all the dependent variables acquire a Q^2 estimate higher than 0, and the R^2 are > 0.25, implying that the research model demonstrates satisfactory predictive accuracy.

Table 4
Predictive accuracy estimations

Dependent construct	Q^2	R^2
Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.684	0.815
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.529	0.603

The effect size (f^2) was calculated to assess the strength of each independent variable in explaining the dependent variables. As Table 5 indicates, all the independent variables possessed an adequate effect size. Specifically, based on Cohen (1988), ATT, EXP, IQ, TRA, and TRU had a moderate effect size. Moreover, ATU had a substantial effect size on INT.

Table 5
Effect size assessment

Path	f^2	T Statistics	P Values
Attitude toward a brand (ATU) → Purchase Intention (INT)	1.52	6.28	0.000
Attractiveness (ATT) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.065	2.68	0.007
Expertise (EXP) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.107	2.60	0.009
Information Quality (IQ) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.116	3.06	0.002
Meaning Transfer (TRA) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.086	2.78	0.006
Trustworthiness (TRU) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.112	2.81	0.005

In addition, ATU explained 60.3% (R^2= 0.603) of the variance in INT, IQ, TRU, ATT, TRA, and EXP explained a total of 81.5% (R^2= 0.815) of the variance in ATU. These explanatory powers are considered moderate and substantial respectively (Chin, 1998).

The results of the path analysis demonstrated that all hypotheses were supported. Specifically, as Fig. 3 and Table 6 show, IQ, TRU, ATT and TRA were regarded as important determinants of ATU, as all had significant and positive effects on ATU. While EXP (β = 0.24, *p* value < 0.001) was the strongest predictor of ATU, ATT was the weakest (β = 0.176, *p* value <0.001). Additionally, ATU (β = 0.776, *p* value < 0.001) had a significant positive influence on INT.

Table 6
Summary of hypotheses testing

| Path	β	T Statistics	P Values
Attitude toward a brand (ATU) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.776	32.88	0.000
Attractiveness (ATT) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.176	4.72	0.000
Expertise (EXP) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.24	5.37	0.000
Information Quality (IQ) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.235	6.23	0.000
Meaning Transfer (TRA) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.169	5.79	0.000
Trustworthiness (TRU) → Attitude toward a brand (ATU)	0.237	5.65	0.000
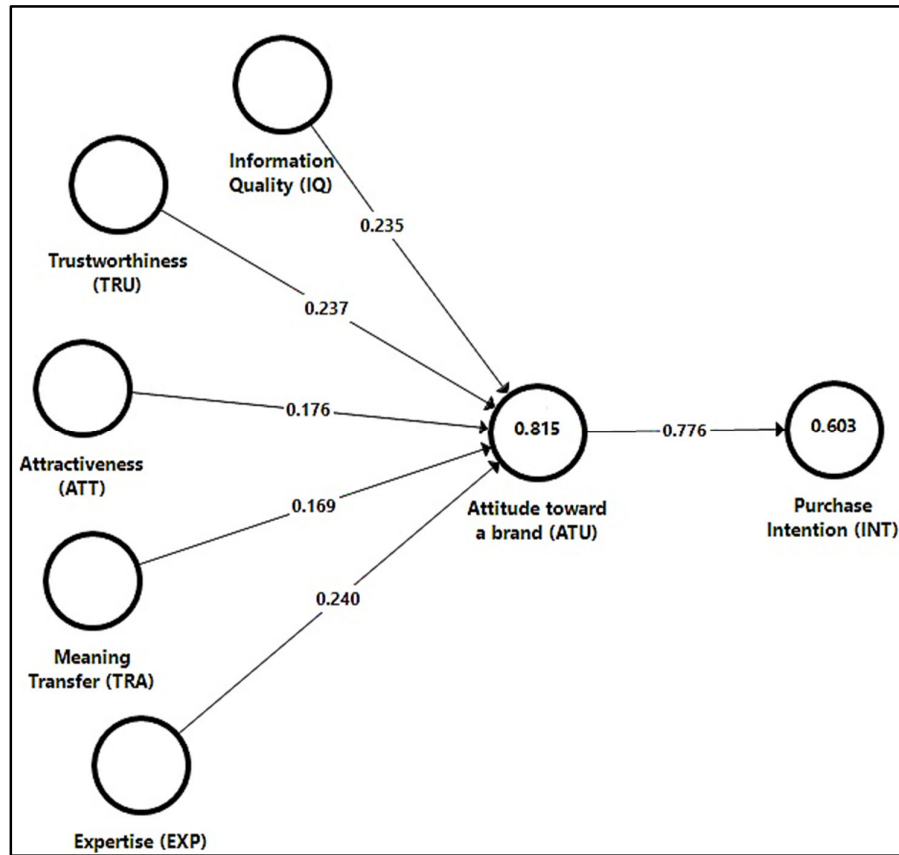
Fig. 3. Structural model

Finally, the indirect effects of the dependent variables through ATU on INT were evaluated. As Table 7 indicates, all the indirect effects were significant. This implies that the positive effects of EXP, ATT, IQ, TRA, and TRU are carried through ATU to INT.

Table 7
Indirect effect assessment

Path	β	T Statistics	P Values
Attractiveness (ATT) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.137	4.76	0.000
Expertise (EXP) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.187	5.26	0.000
Information Quality (IQ) -> Purchase Intention (INT)	0.182	6.10	0.000
Meaning Transfer (TRA) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.131	5.70	0.000
Trustworthiness (TRU) → Purchase Intention (INT)	0.184	5.49	0.000

5. Discussion

The current study is conducted to investigate the factors that affect SMIs to influence consumers' behavior towards brands and their intention to purchase. The findings of the empirical analysis shed light on a set of interesting and new insights, specifically those findings related to the influence of Expertise (EX) and Attractiveness (ATT). The results show that Expertise (EX) is found to be the strongest determinant of attitude towards a brand (ATB). While this is consistent with previous research (i.e., Weismuellera et al., 2020), it is against another (i.e., Saima and Khan, 2020). This finding illustrates that the greater experience that social influencers have (e.g., having bought the product, using the product, results of using the product), the more customers' attitude brand will be perceived positively, which will lead to positive effects on purchase intentions. This implies that influencers have a critical role to play in inspiring and motivating customers in terms of recognizing the brand and having a purchase intention. Therefore, H5 is supported. Although Attractiveness (ATT) is found to positively influence ATB, it has the weakest effect ($\beta = 0.176$, p value <0.001). ATT indicates that the attention of the audience is drawn to the outward appearance of the SMI or his/her proficiency in knowledge transfer. This is consistent with previous research (i.e., Weismuellera et al., 2020; Chia et al., 2021). The construct of Information Quality (IQ) is found to be among the key enablers of purchase intention through attitudes towards a brand. Such a finding is consistent with those of Lou and Yuan (2019), but in contrast to those of Saima and Khan (2020). This means that customers who perceive a high level of information

quality are more likely to develop a favorable attitude toward a brand, and subsequently their intentions to purchase. Customers strongly believe that the existence of the quality of available information regarding the products/services plays a critical role in increasing customers' intentions with regard to the brand and their purchase intentions. IQ including a detailed description about the product, the usage, and the benefits that motivate customers to purchase. Therefore, H1 is supported. Trustworthiness (TW) is also found to be a critical predictor of attitude toward a brand (ATB). While TW directly and significantly influences ATB, it also indirectly influences PE through ATB. Such a finding is consistent with previous work (i.e., Rebelo, 2017; Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018; Pop et al., 2021). This indicates that the more customers trust influencers (i.e., in terms of their information experience), the more likely they are to have a positive attitude with regard to the brand. Therefore, H2 is supported. Furthermore, consumers' attitude towards a brand is positively related to the meaning transfer (TRA) of SMIs. This implies that greater customer purchase intentions is significantly influenced by the ways in which SMIs deliver smooth and direct information which endorses the brand to the customers.

This research showed that customers are more willing to accept suggestions with regard to brands recommended by SMIs whom they perceive as having a similarity to themselves, or those they respect. A number of studies have found that consumer attitudes and behaviors are significantly influenced by information from what is seen as a credible source (Hovland et al., 1953). This source credibility hypothesis suggests that if an endorser is viewed as being trustworthy and attractive, and is believed to know what they are talking about (expertise), their endorsement will have a positive effect on the audience (Ohanian, 1991; Solomon, 1996). Furthermore, Amos et al. (2008) Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) and Phua et al. (2018) argue that the three most credible sources for consumers are brand attitudes, responses to an advertisement, and purchase intentions. Finally, the findings indicate that the attitude towards a brand positively influences purchase intentions. This finding is supported by the previous literature (Foroudi et al., 2018). This suggests that the more positive an attitude is towards a brand, the greater will be the intention to purchase. Therefore, H6 is supported.

6. Research Implications

The current study offers valuable findings that can be used by companies to utilize SMIs effectively in order to motivate customers to recognize a brand and purchase the company's products/services. The findings demonstrate that expertise is a crucial factor that fosters customers' intentions towards the brand. Thus, it is essential to improve customers' perceptions with regard to specific brands by employing effective content, and delivering appropriate messages to customers on the benefits and the advantages of the promoted brand. The information quality of SMIs can be demonstrated through different social media platforms and websites. This creates a positive impact in terms of the brand, and enhances customers' perceptions towards the intention to purchase. Accordingly, SMIs should be experienced in developing creative content that is simple, using various means to attract the attention of an increasing number of customers. On the other hand, if they lack experience, it will be difficult for customers to perceive the benefits of the brand, and they will be discouraged from making a purchase.

Social influencers are found to be vital in driving customers' intentions to purchase. Thus, it is apparent that the companies are responsible for choosing the appropriate influencers to promote their brand in an effective and creative manner. Additionally, companies should consider involving SMIs, especially those who have positive experience with the brand, as they have an important role to play in convincing other customers to purchase. Furthermore, social media platforms also have a central role to play in improving the engagement of influencers with the customers. Moreover, companies can enhance customer loyalty by offering special offers or discounts and praising their engagement when they purchase through SMIs.

7. Conclusion and future work

The main aim of this study is to examine the factors that influence customers' intentions to purchase through SMIs. The empirical results of this study indicate that all constructs, namely Information Quality (IQ), Trustworthiness (TRU), Attractiveness (ATT), Meaning Transfer (TRA) and Expertise (EXP) show positive direct effects on attitude towards a brand (ATU) and substantially with regard to purchase intentions (INT). The findings of this study shed light on the key factors that determine customers' perceptions towards a brand, and thus provide valuable insights that can be used by companies and SMIs to increase customer engagement. Specifically, special attention should be directed toward the role of SMIs in developing a simple content that draws customer attention, and enhances the quality of information, to develop a trust towards the brand, as these aspects show how they encourage customers' intentions to purchase. Several limitations have been identified in this research which indicate future research directions. Firstly, this research collected data from a relatively small number of consumers Therefore, increasing the sample size may lead to greater generalization. Secondly, further research should consider extending the proposed model by including individual characteristics and industry type dimensions. Furthermore, using a mixed method approach to study the factors influencing consumers' purchase intentions through SMIs could contribute to an understanding of the detailed relationship between SMIs and customers' intentions to purchase.

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