

PRIMARY RESEARCH

From trust to purchase: How influencer authenticity and credibility bridge the gap, moderated by emotional attachment and homophily

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Keywords

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Received: 27 May 2024**Accepted:** 12 September 2024**Published:** 23 December 2024**Abstract**

This study aim to examine trust in social media influencers, influencers authenticity, influencers credibility, homophily, emotional attachment and online purchase intention among Jordanian social media users who purchase products online, by incorporating the Similarity Attraction Theory (SAT). Using Google Forms, an online survey was conducted to gather data from 445 respondents in Jordan. Data was gathered using a convenience sample technique. The suggested hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS version 4. The results showed a significant and positive relationship among trust in social media influencers, influencer authenticity and influencer credibility. The findings also revealed a significant and positive moderating effect of homophily on trust in social media influencers, as well as influencer authenticity and credibility. Also, the study found a negative mediating effect of influencer authenticity between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention, as well as influencer credibility between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention. Lastly, the results indicated a negative moderating effect of emotional attachment on influencer authenticity, and online purchase intention, as well as positive moderation between credibility and online purchase intention. As far as the researchers are aware, no study has examined the moderating influence of homophily between the credibility of the post and trust in SMIs in the Jordanian setting by integrating the SAT. Additionally, using the post's legitimacy and authenticity as mediators, this innovative study investigated the association between online purchase intention and trust in SMIs.

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INTRODUCTION

Every day brings society one step closer to the digital age. These days, people hardly ever put down their laptops and cellphones. Social media platforms are now widely used for marketing since checking and scrolling through them has become a habit (Zaman et al., 2024). The main reason for social media's widespread use is that it has developed into a novel tool for influencing people's opinions, feelings, and attitudes (Cheah et al., 2024), and because of its expansion, SMIs have emerged (Abdulaziz et al., 2024). According to Ki et al. (2023), Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are independent third parties made up of "regular people" who use social media posts, blogs, and short videos to influence public opinion. People also prefer to shop online rather than in physi-

cal stores due to the convenience of the Internet (Figeac & Favre, 2023). Social media channels have drawn millions of users across multiple platforms over the past 20 years. People use social media to generate information and conduct searches (Cheah et al., 2024; Pop et al., 2022). The dynamics between brands and consumers have changed as a result of the ubiquitous connectedness made possible by social media, which has altered the position of consumers in relation to traditional power structures. Content published within social media groups is likely to be trusted and relied upon by consumers.

Online purchase intention has presented significant, game-changing issues for businesses as a result of the growth of the Internet. In 2025, 80% of people worldwide will be in-

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ternet users, according to data from Internet World Stats (Naderer et al., 2022). This demonstrates the vast potential of internet trading. Online trading has expanded significantly over the last 20 years (Balaban et al., 2022). Global internet sales are expected to reach 6,230 billion US dollars in 2025, up from 4,400 billion US dollars in 2020, according to Almahdi et al. (2022). In Jordan, Instagram has the highest number of active social media users, following by Facebook and YouTube (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021). Because Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook are three of the largest social networks in Jordan, they are therefore taken into account for this study. Several well-known individuals have become influential members of internet forums and dependable counsellors for their followers (Singh et al., 2020). Influencers are found in many different industries, such as fashion, healthcare, travel, beauty products, food, technology, and more (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Figeac & Favre, 2023; Ki et al., 2023; Pop et al., 2022). Social media influencers account for approximately 81% of the overall volume of influencer marketing (Zaman et al., 2024).

Furthermore, to their messaging being authentic (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023), consumers view influencers as reliable sources with whom they can identify. Influencers' efficacy is not solely based on their follower count; it also depends on the quality of their connections with their followers (Lee et al., 2025; Zniva et al., 2023) and the extent to which followers develop an emotional bond with them because of their similarities. People trust influencers when they have a desire for a product or service, and they may purchase it based on the advice they receive (Singer et al., 2023). Marketers are increasingly using SMIs to share product-related information with customers due to their vast customer outreach capabilities (Chen et al., 2023; Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). Influencer marketing may therefore be helpful for companies trying to grow their clientele by building genuine, lasting relationships with clients (Arnesson, 2023; Balaban & Szabolcs, 2022).

By influencing attitudes and preferences via social media, SMIs go beyond simple lifestyle sharing and play a crucial role in directing consumer choices (Zaman et al., 2024). SMIs are at the forefront of reliable advertising channels because they skillfully select promotional material that appeals to their audience while retaining authenticity and credibility. This approach frequently makes their recommendations more trustworthy than standard advertising (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024). Remarkably, influencer marketing has grown significantly; in 2025, its valuation reached \$22 billion, indicating its growing importance now allocate funds in modern marketing tactics (Ki et al., 2023). Further-

more, many firms now allocate funds in their marketing budgets expressly for influencer collaborations, highlighting a shift in strategy towards using these alliances to boost profitability and visibility (Chen & Yang, 2023; Pop et al., 2022). Recent research, however, shows a concerning drop in influencers' perceived legitimacy and authenticity, which makes it difficult for companies to determine the actual effects and profits of sponsored content (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021; Naderer et al., 2022). This breakdown of trust is frequently connected to some influencers' inclination to promote products without critical evaluation, placing financial gain ahead of the integrity of their message (Almahdi et al., 2022; Balaban et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have shown how social media marketing initiatives significantly impact customers' intentions to make purchases (Rahayu et al., 2024; Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). Considering social media's enormous popularity, scholars and marketers have examined social media, online marketing, and celebrity endorsement in great detail (Sesar et al., 2022). However, there are limited studies on SMI marketing, particularly in the Indian setting, and even fewer have investigated how SMIs affect consumers' intentions to make online purchases. However, these studies have not considered the moderating effect of homophily and emotional attachment in influencer marketing or the mediating function that influencer authenticity and trustworthiness play in influencing customers' intentions to make an online purchase. Similarity Attraction Theory (SAT), which predicts interpersonal connections based on interaction partners' attitude similarity, can be used to better understand the efficacy of homophily (Yang et al., 2025). SAT has recently been used to explain how vloggers' health-related homophily affects their propensity to buy sustainable food (Van Hoya & Turban, 2015). Due to the absence of existing material, research on the efficient use of SMIs in marketing strategies is still ongoing. The traits of SMIs that predict purchase intention in the presence of emotional attachment remain understudied and insufficiently explored, whereas only a few studies have examined emotional attachment to SMIs and how this results greater perceived influence.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Trust in Social Media Influencers

Social media platforms have grown in popularity over the past ten years, which has accelerated the emergence of SMIs who have established a reputation for promoting goods and services. Social media influencers are a new class of unaffiliated third-party endorsers who use blogs, videos, posts,

and other social media platforms to influence the opinions of their audience, according to (Singh et al., 2020). In contrast to mainstream celebrities, SMIs' success is largely dependent on the content they share with their followers and the acceptance of that content rather than on attractive personalities. If the content is not well received, SMIs risk losing any sway they may have over their followers. Consequently, several studies have examined how SMIs impact followers' decisions and intentions (Almahdi et al., 2022; Balaban et al., 2022; Chen & Yang, 2023; Naderer et al., 2022; Pop et al., 2022). From the perspective of the consumer, followers' confidence in the influencer results in positive outcomes when they make decisions (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021).

A crucial component supporting the effectiveness of SMIs is authenticity, which includes the perceived uniqueness, originality, and sincerity of the influencer's content and persona (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2024; Zaman et al., 2024). According to Chen et al. (2023), authenticity is demonstrated by a narrative that combines the influencer's own life experiences with product recommendations, fostering a sincere bond with followers. Since followers are more interested and responsive to influencers who express themselves truthfully and provide candid and distinctive viewpoints, this genuine connection is essential. In the influencer-follower connection, credibility is also crucial (Rahayu et al., 2024). Credibility is essentially about how the audience views the influencer and is defined as the judgment made by viewers about the communicator's dependability (Sesar et al., 2022). It entails assessing the authority and knowledge of the influencer, which has a significant impact on acceptance and purchase intention (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022; Santiago & Serralha, 2022). Trust in SMIs' is largely determined by influencer's credibility, which is essential for building trust in them (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Saima & Khan, 2020). On the other hand, a lack of authenticity, which is typified by inconsistent behavior and endorsements from outside sources, can seriously erode followers' trust in SMI and reduce their credibility and authenticity. Consequently, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1: Trust in social media influencers has impact on influencer authenticity.

H2: Trust in social media influencers has impact on influencer credibility.

The Moderating Effect of Homophily

According to Abdulaziz et al. (2024), homophily is "the extent to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like." Interaction experiences are significantly impacted by the consumer's opinion of oth-

ers. It has been acknowledged that homophily can improve the efficacy of communication (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). Interaction between individuals will be more effective the more alike they are. Similarity is used as a synonym or form of homophily in a number of studies. According to Figeac and Favre (2023), similarity is defined as "a match in demographic characteristics or in psychographic traits." Similarities between the source and the recipient in the instance of vlogs, have been shown to promote connections and interactions, strengthen links, increase affective bonding, and enhance interpersonal relationships (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). According to the idea of homophily, people like to hang out with people who are thought to share their beliefs and social standing (Santiago & Serralha, 2022). The academic research on interaction has been the primary source of homophily. Social contexts including social commerce, brand blogging service landscapes, and social nexus are where homophily was first mentioned in marketing literature (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Figeac & Favre, 2023; Ladhari et al., 2020; Santiago & Serralha, 2022; Shoenberger & Kim, 2023).

According to Ladhari et al. (2020), homophily significantly affects people's opinions, and these opinions are probably influenced by the recommendations of reviewers who are similar to them. According to SAT, people are more attracted to and at ease with those who share similar interests and characteristics. According to Lin et al. (2012), people who are similar are more likely to interact with and like one another. This hypothesis has been used more often to online interactions between people and influencers (Van Hoya & Turban, 2015). According to Lee et al. (2025), similarity is a powerful building block for establishing connections and trust online. People are more drawn to influencers who have similar experiences, attitudes, and a sense of belonging. People build relationships with social media influencers, especially those with whom they can relate (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Cheah et al., 2024). Researchers have used this theory to examine vloggers (Chen and Yang, 2023), higher levels of follower engagement (Singer et al., 2023), and the perceived similarity of users in chatbots Ki et al. (2023), are all examined by researchers using this theory. Particularly, the theoretical framework of SAT is a crucial tool for comprehending the effectiveness of homophily. Because it supports the efficacy of homophily in a variety of domains, including social media influencer (Arnesson, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Chen & Yang, 2023; Figeac & Favre, 2023), SAT has been widely applied (Lin et al., 2012). The extent to which a person believes that another person shares their social background is known as background homophily. The degree to which a person be-

believes that another person shares their morals and values is known as value homophily. When someone believes that another person has comparable physical traits, this is known as appearance homophily. Previous studies have shown that attitude homophily is a key factor in predicting the endorsement of social influencers (Chen et al., 2023; Ladhari et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the moderating impact of homophily on trust in social media influencers and influencer authenticity and credibility. Consequently, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H3: Homophily has moderating impact on trust in social media influencers and influencer authenticity.

H4: Homophily has moderating impact on trust in social media influencers and influencer credibility.

The mediating Effect of Influencer Authenticity

An influencer's ability to get customers to buy products they feature on Instagram is probably greatly influenced by how authentic they are perceived to be (Lee et al., 2025). During the digital revolution, authenticity has become a prominent term. Customers have started looking for "authentic" companies and "authentic" brand material, maybe in an effort to highlight their own "authentic" social standing and character. According to Arnesson (2023) and Singer et al. (2023), consumers may use their impressions of a brand's authenticity to try to curate their own social standing and image by purchasing goods endorsed by individuals or companies that support their own external self-presentation (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). The credibility of a company and reputation (Balaban & Szabolcs, 2022) as well as the efficacy of advertising (Zniva et al., 2023) have all been connected to perceived authenticity. Indeed, authentic advertising may improve attitudes and purchase intentions (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023), decrease skepticism (Lee et al., 2025), and potentially encourage prosocial behavior (Arnesson, 2023).

Audiences respond strongly to authenticity, which builds relatability and trust (Almahdi et al., 2022). Authenticity is crucial to the success of influencer trust because of the substantial impact this sincere connection may have on consumer attitudes and behaviors (Chen & Yang, 2023; Pop et al., 2022). Consumers are more likely to follow suggestions from influencers they believe to be genuine than those they are just familiar with, according to Khan et al. (2024). This idea is supported by Abdulaziz et al. (2024); Ki et al. (2023), who show that authenticity significantly increases consumers' purchase intentions and emphasizes its crucial role in influencer marketing. Various conceptualizations of authenticity have been studied in various contexts, including

sincerity (Singh et al., 2020), objective authenticity (AlFarraj et al., 2021), truth or reality (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021), perceived genuineness (Almahdi et al., 2022), and originality (Naderer et al., 2022). Since authenticity perception is subjective, it is influenced by environmental cues (Pop et al., 2022). Perceived authenticity, as used in this study, refers to how authentic or real an influencer appears to a customer. According to the most recent research on authenticity in the context of consumer behavior, perceived authenticity is defined as whether the influencer is regarded as genuine, truthful, and real (Khan et al., 2024; Zaman et al., 2024). Consequently, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H5: Influencer authenticity has mediating role among trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention.

The mediating Effect of Influencer Credibility

People's perception of an online information source's neutrality, impartiality, accuracy, sincerity, and factual foundation determines how credible a message is (Saima & Khan, 2020). According to Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) and Santiago and Serralha (2022), trust creates the legitimacy of information, which in turn affects customer attitudes and the efficacy of marketing messages. Influencers' information is thought to be more trustworthy than traditional sources (Sesar et al., 2022). Furthermore, information obtained from weak ties were perceived as less credible (Rahayu et al., 2024). Companies therefore seek to establish trust in influencers to boost the legitimacy of the message conveyed through them (AlFarraj et al., 2021) and ensure that the online post is better received, increasing its effectiveness (Shan et al., 2020). Prior research has demonstrated that a person's level of trust in SMIs positively impacts the message's plausibility. Based on the observation that followers on social networks frequently purchase goods or services that influencers advocate, it is a form of online marketing (Rahayu et al., 2024; Sesar et al., 2022). Almahdi et al. (2022) define influencers as "opinion leaders of the new digital century" who shape followers' attitudes towards a particular product or brand. Influencers' strength stems from modern consumers' attitudes, which favor brands and products that reflects social identity (Pop et al., 2022), which are now widely promoted through social media networks. Influencer marketing has become a popular marketing tactic, and businesses claim that it is improving their financial performance (Chen & Yang, 2023; Figeac & Favre, 2023).

Rahayu et al. (2024), credibility was defined as having several aspects related to "one's ability (expertise) and willingness (trustworthiness) to stay true to performance-enhancing credentials". Perceived credibility appears to be

a construct (Cheah et al., 2024; Zniva et al., 2023). Because this decision rests in the hearts and minds of the recipients, it is impossible to determine whether a particular piece of information is universally accepted as credible (Figeac & Favre, 2023; Ki et al., 2023). The development of material and information in traditional media platforms that reached a broad audience in the previous several decades was limited to those who were fortunate enough to have strong financial standing and sound legal judgement (Arnesson, 2023; Sesar et al., 2022). These days, digital advancements remove these obstacles, so according to (Santiago & Serralha, 2022), anyone can use the internet and social media to broadcast messages to a large public community without the need for authority or incurring excessive expenses and risks in order to accomplish the goal or convey the message (Naderer et al., 2022; Pop et al., 2022). In the context of conventional trust in SMI, it has also been discovered that an endorser's credibility mediates the relationship between an endorser's attributes and customers' purchase intentions (Abdulaziz et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2023). Thus, it is postulated that the associations between an influencer's trust and purchase intentions will also be mediated by the influencer's credibility. Consequently, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H6: Influencer credibility has mediating role among trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention.

The Moderating Effect of Emotional Attachment

A target-specific, emotionally charged link between a person and another person or thing is known as emotional attachment (Zaman et al., 2024). The literature provides strong evidence that consumers may form emotional bonds with brands (Rahayu et al., 2024). Stronger attachments are linked to more intense emotions of love, devotion, unity, and compassion. The concept of emotional attachment has been widely applied and researched in relation to parent-child relationships. It is acknowledged in the literature on consumer behavior that people form emotional bonds with brands, celebrities, locations, and material goods (Ladhari et al., 2020). The term "human brand," Doan (2020), refers to any well-known individual who is the focus of a marketing communication campaign. Actors, musicians, politicians, and media personalities are all included (Dastane, 2020). According to Indiani and Fahik (2020), a consumer is more likely to develop a strong attachment to a human brand when it meets their desires for relatedness or autonomy. Vloggers and other social media influencers give their personal opinions about goods and their life. Viewers see the way it is presented as informal and genuine (Khan et al., 2020). Through likes, comments, shares, and retweets, they

communicate with their audience. Users of social media perceive themselves as psychologically close to online celebrities. They believe that vloggers are disclosing secrets or private information (Ladhari et al., 2020). Even though such connections and distances are often parasocial in nature and one-sided in character.

Authenticity is frequently understood to be intimately associated with concepts such as realness and truthfulness (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021; Saima & Khan, 2020). In the context of marketing, an authentic influencer frequently offers facts about the business or product being pushed that are grounded in authenticity and reality (AlFarraj et al., 2021). According to Naseri et al. (2021), an influencer's competence, sincerity, candor, originality, and visibility are some characteristics of authenticity. Skills and comprehension are linked to expertise (Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022). The bond between individuals and others around them is known as attachment (Naderer et al., 2022; Pop et al., 2022). Furthermore, psychology is where attachment theory first emerged. First of all, it is a connection made between two people based on their prior relationship-building experiences (Sesar et al., 2022). Customers' emotional connection to influencers can be linked to marketing (Arnesson, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Figeac & Favre, 2023). Due of the technical and psychological advantages that each party experiences, attachment frequently develops as a result of compatibility (Ki et al., 2023; Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). According to research on celebrity attachment, it occurs when intensely negative emotions characterize the beginning of a connection, as opposed to opportunities for attachment growth. Similarly, Singer et al. (2023) discovered in their study of brand accessories that the attachment is significantly constant in favorably beneficial situations. In social media marketing, it is impossible to overestimate the significance of emotional attachment for follower-influencer interaction. Purchase intention is a behavioral result of emotional attachment to celebrities (Zniva et al., 2023). According to Cheah et al. (2024), followers are emotionally invested in the content provided by digital influencers. Because new followers believe that the opinions of their older followers are reliable, personal interactions are formed between influencers and followers (Rahayu et al., 2024). Perceived influence is strongly shaped by these favorable emotions and strong emotional bonds between followers and influencers, although this area remains underexplored in influencer marketing research. Consequently, the following is postulated:

H7: Emotional attachment has moderating role among influencer authenticity and online purchase intention.

H8: Emotional attachment has moderating role among influ-

encer credibility and online purchase intention. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1 and is based

on relevant literature.

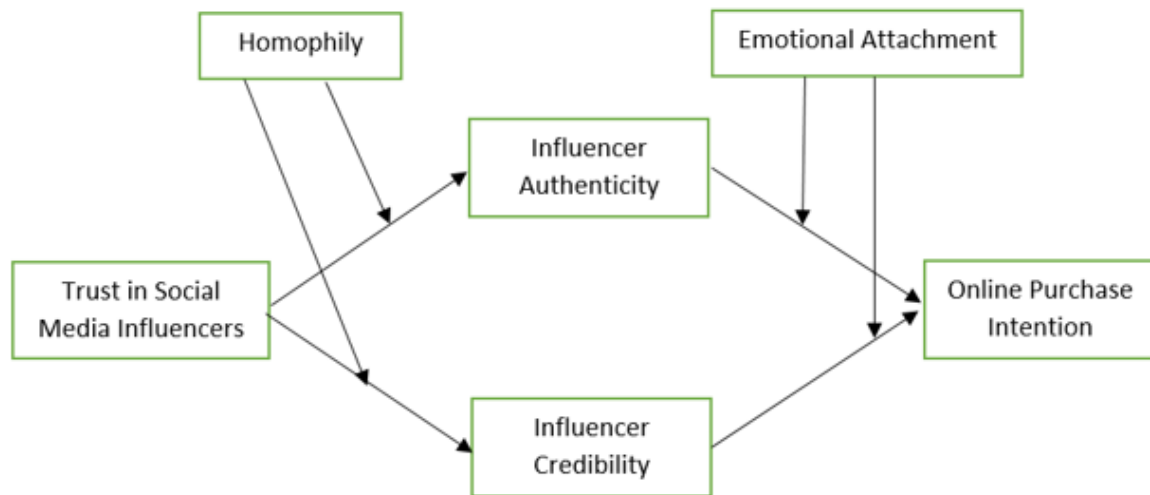


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Sampling Technique

To gather data, the questionnaire was designed and distributed online via Google forms. Links to an anonymous online survey were given to Jordanian consumers, who were then requested to reply using a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. Only people who make purchases online and utilize social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube received it. In addition to asking respondents to list one or two of their favorite social media influencers, a filter question was used to find out if they make purchases online and if they have followed any influencers on the social media sites they have used. The primary data was collected using a convenience sample technique (Omair, 2025). The survey was divided into two sections, Section A and B. Section A contained demographic information. Similarly, Section B included items related to the constructs used in the study. Because 445 respondents were valid and adhered to SMIs, only those 445 replies were processed further for data analysis out of the 490 questionnaires that were given, 460 of which were received, and 45 of which were rejected for being improperly or incompletely filled out. Consequently, approximately 90% of respondents completed the questionnaire.

Scales

Using a five-point Likert scale, the survey collected data on respondents' demographics, online habits, the degree of homophily between viewers and their favorite vlogger, the vlogger's perceived popularity and level of expertise, and

how frequently they purchase goods that the vlogger recommends. Apart from actual purchase behavior for the suggested product, all constructs are assessed using multi-item measures. Trust in social media influencers was measured by four-item scale adapted by Khan et al. (2024). Influencer's authenticity was measured by three-item scale adapted by Zniva et al. (2023). Influencer's credibility was measured by 3-item scale adapted by Sesar et al. (2022). Homophily was measured by four-item scale adapted by Khan et al. (2024). Emotional attachment was measured by five-item scale adapted by Zaman et al. (2024). Purchase intention was measured by three-item scale adapted by Khan et al. (2024). All the constructs had Cronbach's alpha (α) values greater than 0.80, as seen in Table 2. According to the findings, it surpasses the 0.7 internal consistency reliability value (Hair et al., 2024). In the analysis phase, due to inadequate loading, a few items measuring social media influencers trust were removed.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents Demographics

Of the 445 valid responses obtained for this study, 490 questionnaires were initially distributed. The demographic details of the research participants were displayed in Table 1. The table shows that 66% of participants were male and 34% were female. The education level of participants showed that high education accounted for 44%, intermediate education 32% and other 24%. The age of participants was as follows: 20-40 years (49%), less than 20 years 33% and more than 50 years 18%. Regarding occupation, 55% were stu-

dents, non-working participants were 29% and employed participation were 16%. In terms of social media usage, daily users accounted for 53%, monthly users 32%, and oc-

casional users 15%. For time spent on social media was distributed as follows: 8-10 hours (41%), more than 10 hours (28%), 3-6 hours (22%), and less than 1 hour (9%).

TABLE 1. Sample profile

Demographics	Categories	Percentage
Gender	Male	66%
	Female	34%
Education	High level	44%
	Intermediate	32%
	Others	24%
Age	Less than 20 years	33%
	20-40 years	49%
	More than 50 years	18%
Occupation	Students	55%
	Job holders	16%
	Non-working	29%
Frequency of SMU	Daily	53%
	Monthly	32%
	Occasionally	15%
Time sped on SMU	Less than 1 hours	9%
	3-6 hours	22
	8-10 hours	41%
	More than 10 hours	28%

Measurement Model

The statistical tool SmartPLS 4 was used to evaluate the paths in the structural model. PLS-SEM was used for data analysis because it is a more appropriate statistical approach, especially for handling small sample sizes and analyzing the correlations between the latent variables (Hair et al., 2024). In order to address the potential for common method bias brought on by the cross-sectional design employed in this study. Because it does not exceed 50%, the common method bias (41.3%) in the response database indicates that the bias level is within acceptable limits.

This study used Composite Reliability (CR), Average Vari-

ance Extracted (AVE), rho A, Cronbach's Alpha (CA), and loadings of every factor to test both the reliability and validity of the measurement model, as shown in Table 2. The PLS model's item loadings for all constructs exceeded 0.70. Consequently, each item's loading exceeds the ideal criterion of 0.70 Hair et al. (2024), demonstrating acceptable internal consistency. Both the composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values were above the cutoff point of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2024). Furthermore, each construct's AVE (which ranged from 0.644 to 0.820) was higher than the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2024).

TABLE 2. Validity, reliability and AVE results

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Rho-a	Composite Reliability	AVE
Trust in Social Media Influencers	TSMI1	0.860	0.815	0.823	0.878	0.644
	TSMI2	0.750				
	TSMI3	0.757				
	TSMI4	0.838				
Influencers Authenticity	IA1	0.919	0.870	0.872	0.921	0.794
	IA2	0.903				
	IA3	0.851				

Cont.....

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Rho-a	Composite Reliability	AVE
Influencers Credibility	IC1	0.788	0.722	0.745	0.844	0.645
	IC2	0.862				
	IC3	0.848				
Homophily	HP1	0.865	0.927	0.929	0.948	0.821
	HP2	0.912				
	HP3	0.924				
	HP4	0.922				
Emotional Attachment	EA1	0.909	0.945	0.949	0.958	0.820
	EA2	0.899				
	EA3	0.907				
	EA4	0.910				
	EA5	0.902				
Online Purchase Intention	OPI1	0.908	0.851	0.866	0.909	0.769
	OPI2	0.832				
	OPI3	0.890				

The Fornell–Larcker criterion was used to evaluate the discriminant validity of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square roots of the constructs' AVEs, as determined by the Fornell–Larcker criterion, were HO (0.906), OPI (0.877), IC (0.803), IA (0.891) and TSMI (0.803), all of which were

higher than the correlation values between each construct and every other variable in Table 3. According to the proposed Fornell–Larcker criterion by Hair et al. (2024), discriminant validity was thus achieved. Consequently, all construct demonstrated adequate discriminant validity.

TABLE 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Emotional Attachment	0.906					
Homophily	0.765	0.906				
Influencers Authenticity	0.648	0.670	0.891			
Influencers Credibility	0.760	0.669	0.640	0.803		
Online Purchase Intention	0.762	0.754	0.461	0.618	0.877	
Trust in Social Media Influencers	0.387	0.441	0.600	0.550	0.438	0.803

In order to verify the multi-collinearity problem in the data, the current study additionally calculated the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The model fit was then confirmed using the Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) val-

ues, and a value of 0.073 was found. Additionally, as shown in Table 4, Hair et al. (2024) noted that an SRMR value below the 0.08 threshold is considered a satisfactory fit index.

TABLE 4. R-Square and SRMR results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	SRMR
Influencers Authenticity	0.564	0.562	0.073
Influencers Credibility	0.528	0.526	
Online Purchase Intention	0.589	0.585	

Structural Model

The structural model then included eight hypotheses, which were tested for significance using a bootstrapping technique with SmartPLS 4 at 5,000 sub-samples (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The online purchase intention had R² values of 0.589,

influencer's credibility 0.528, and influencer's authenticity value 0.564 respectively. This suggests that trust in social media influencer's accounts for 58.9% of the variance in online purchase intention. As a result, this coefficient of determination ought to be deemed sufficient for the current inves-

tigation (Table 4). Hair et al. (2024) asserts that acceptable R2 values must be greater than 0.1. H1 and H2 were corroborated by the PLS-SEM results shown in Table 5, which showed that Trust in social media influencers has a significant positive impact on influencer authenticity ($t = 7.696$, $\beta = 0.378$, $p < 0.001$) and influencer credibility ($t = 8.650$, $\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$). The bootstrapping technique was used to examine the moderating effect of homophily on trust in social media influencers, as well as influencer authenticity ($t = 2.796$, $\beta = 0.132$, $p < 0.005$) and credibility ($t = 3.021$, $\beta = 0.118$, $p < 0.003$), at 5,000 resamples H3 and H4. The bootstrapping technique was used to examine the mediating ef-

fect of influencer authenticity between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention ($t = 2.024$, $\beta = -0.033$, $p < 0.05$), as well as influencer credibility between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention ($t = 2.072$, $\beta = 0.039$, $p < 0.05$), at 5,000 resamples H5 and H6. Lastly, the bootstrapping technique was used to examine the moderating effect of emotional attachment on influencer authenticity ($t = 7.010$, $\beta = -0.318$, $p < 0.001$), and online purchase intention, as well as moderation between credibility and online purchase intention ($t = 2.237$, $\beta = 0.146$, $p < 0.05$), H7 and H8.

TABLE 5. Structural model result

Effects	Hypothesis	Relationships	β	<i>T</i> Statistics	<i>p</i> Values
Direct	H1	TSMI -> IA	0.378	7.696	0.000
	H2	TSMI -> IC	0.316	8.650	0.000
Moderating	H3	HP*TSMI -> IA	0.132	2.796	0.005
	H4	HP*TSMI -> IC	0.118	3.021	0.003
Mediating	H5	TSMI -> IA -> OPI	-0.033	2.024	0.044
	H6	TSMI -> IC -> OPI	0.039	2.072	0.039
Moderating	H7	EA*IA -> OPI	-0.318	7.010	0.000
	H8	EA*IC -> OPI	0.146	2.237	0.027

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The rise of influencers creates a public space where they may share their thoughts, feelings, and messages to build strong relationships and inspire followers to identify with them (Schouten et al., 2020). This study examines, via the lens of similarity-attraction theory, how homophily enhances the connection between influencers' credibility and trust in social media influencers. With an emphasis on time spent, authenticity evaluation, and interpersonal relationships, this study investigates how followers interact with influencers. The findings demonstrate a connection between influencer's credibility, influencer's authenticity, online purchase intention, trust in SMIs, homophily and emotional attachment. The results show that trust in social media influencers has a significant positive impact on influencer authenticity and influencer credibility, aligning with studies by Khan et al. (2024), Lee et al. (2025) and Rahayu et al., (2024). The moderating effect of homophily on trust in social media influencers, as well as influencer authenticity and credibility, consistent with research by Cheah et al. (2024), Singer et al. (2023), and Zaman et al. (2024). The mediating effect of influencer authenticity between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention, consistent with the findings of Shoenberger & Kim, (2023) and Zniva et al.

(2023), as well as influencer credibility between trust in social media influencers and online purchase intention consistent with the findings of Cheah et al., (2024) and Khan et al. (2024).

Lastly, the moderating effect of emotional attachment on influencer authenticity consistent with the findings of Chen & Yang (2023), Naderer et al. (2022) and Sesar et al. (2022), and online purchase intention, as well as moderation between credibility and online purchase intention consistent with the findings of Pop et al. (2022) and Santiago & Serralha (2022). In contrast to some earlier studies, which suggests that customers concentrate on the content of the influencer's social media posts rather than their appearance and personality. This implies that consumers will be more inclined to interact with the content shared by social media influencers as long as they perceive them to be knowledgeable and appealing. As a result, they will be more inclined to buy the dermatology products that these reliable influencers recommend. In other words, when Jordanian consumers are making the decision to purchase dermatology products, they are more likely to view influencers who have a physical appeal and a positive experience with the products as reliable sources of information (Arnesson, 2023; Chen et al., 2023). The results corroborate the findings of earlier research on this influence.

Collectively, these studies provide a rich area for comparing various contexts and standing points from both mature and emerging markets, all this research corroborate the empirical findings of this study. These aspects are further evaluated to confirm the study's findings.

Theoretical implications

There are several theoretical implications of the paper. First, by using SAT, only a few studies in Jordan have examined the impact of SMI marketing (Lin et al., 2012). By showing that followers are more likely to be drawn to SMIs who share their values and tastes, homophily supports the SAT. This phenomena clarifies how the idea shows up in the digital sphere through online purchases and carefully chosen content, going beyond offline interactions. Therefore, this study adds to the body of literature by highlighting the moderating function of homophily, which enhances the connection between SMIs and the post's credibility and provides insights that may persuade influencers to use more potent persuasive techniques. The results demonstrated that trust in SMIs has a significant positive impact on customers' inclinations to make online purchases. Since few studies have examined the effect of SMIs on consumers' online purchasing behavior, this study demonstrates that followers' trust is crucial for any online shopping (Ladhari et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020). The credibility of the influencer's message is also directly impacted by trust in them (Bidabadi Amin et al., 2021), suggesting that trust is the cornerstone that establishes dependability for any post made by the influencers on a social media platform. Furthermore, this study clarified the significance of information credibility in this process by determining the mediating role performed by the post's credibility, which offers the mechanism by which the influencer's dependability affects consumers' judgements. This strong theoretical foundation helps to explain the significance of influencer marketing and how it affects online consumer behavior. It challenges established assumptions and creates new opportunities for investigation into the conditional factors affecting influencer marketing effectiveness.

Practical implications

Additionally, this study has several useful implications for marketing managers and practitioners seeking to optimize influencer marketing strategies. Positive experiences, online purchases, and higher sales are all facilitated by trust in Social Media Influencers (SMIs), which is correlated with trust in e-commerce platforms. Influencers with reliable material and the capacity to provide helpful product knowledge should be given priority by managers. Transparency in com-

munication is emphasized as a cost-effective way to reach a larger audience, particularly through social networking. The study highlights the moderating effect of homophily and exhorts marketers to adjust their tactics in light of the similarities between influencers and followers. It promotes the use of influencers in branding initiatives and urges companies to make investments based on factors beyond basic metrics, such as perceived attractiveness, knowledge, uniqueness, homophily, and interactivity. The preservation of authenticity by influencers and the ethical development of trust in SMIs by managers and politicians are among the recommendations. The study's overall findings emphasize the significance of genuine and educational material, influencers' modesty, and managers' and legislators' cooperation to have an ethical influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Marketing managers should take note of the ramifications of this study. SMIs may be a powerful force for social media brand endorsements and a reliable tool for businesses when it comes to creating social media marketing campaigns because social media influencers have the ability to impact their followers' purchasing intentions. According to this study, SMIs' traits enable them to build relationships with their followers, which in turn allows them some influence over their followers' buying inclinations. In order for followers and SMIs to understand the value of seeking out influencers who will promote their products, brands should also consider the significance of specific attributes (such as authenticity and credibility) that aid in fostering relationships. Brands should make sure that the SMIs they choose possess these particular qualities when creating promotional initiatives. Because of their attitudinal attachment to SMIs, followers are much more influenced by SMIs, so it is crucial for brands to review these requirements. In light of these findings, brands should specifically seek out influencers who have this impact on their audience in order to develop and execute effective strategies.

Limitations and directions for future research

Future research could examine and overcome some of the limitations of this study. The data collected were cross-sectional in nature because the study was carried out during a single time period. Future studies may examine the impact of perceived influence on attitudinal loyalty on purchase intentions using longitudinal data. Second, a convenience sampling technique was employed; to generalize the findings, future researchers could aim for a bigger sample size and a more effective sampling technique. Future studies should also examine additional antecedents of SMI trust. However, the study's drawback is that it only collected data

from three influencers; hence, more generalizable conclusions would be obtained if data were collected from the followers of more than four influencers. Furthermore, given that this study uses a quantitative methodology, future research could make a significant contribution by using a more qualitative methodology and speaking with marketing managers to learn about their perspectives on the importance of influencer credibility, authenticity, and online purchase intention. Future research might also examine other possible models of moderated mediation, such as skepticism, eWOM,

and envy that may have an impact on the interaction between the influencer and their followers. Lastly, we had to base the study variables on the normal literature on advertising endorsements because there is a dearth of research on influencer marketing. However, this study is expected to contribute to the development of this emerging field. There is a significant opportunity for future study to expand the set of parameters analyzed here, thereby increasing their relevance to the evolving influencer marketing context.

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