

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS' (SMI'S) CONTENT VALUE IN INFLUENCING CUSTOMER ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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—Abstract—

Brands increasingly utilize SMIs to promote their products/services at a lower price than if they hired a celebrity. Through social media and SMIs, these brands can communicate a more customized and targeted message to a specific audience, resulting in a greater reach and response from the appropriate audience. In this regard, the value and quality of content produced by SMIs are crucial. Using data from 156 respondents/social media users from Saudi Arabia, this study investigates the role of SMI-generated content in generating outcomes such as attitudes toward sponsored content and purchase intent. In addition, the mediating role of attitude toward sponsored content and the moderating role of prior product/service experience are examined. The study contributes to the literature by evaluating a comprehensive framework of the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing by combining measures of content quality and their influence on consumer outcomes.

Keywords: Social media influencers, influencer marketing, content value, sponsored content, purchase intention

1. INTRODUCTION

The marketing teams of brands are always finding new ways to reach consumers, to make them aware of the brand to achieve the ultimate goal, which is the final purchase of the products by the consumers. For that matter, brands develop marketing strategies

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and make advertising efforts to inform the consumers about the benefits associated with their offered products and services in the most appealing and informative way, which can lead to the development of consumers' intention to engage with that brand and purchase their offered products and services. Purchase intention is "a consumer's conscious plan or intention to make an effort to purchase a product" (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Apart from traditional advertising strategies, the ever-increasing proliferation of social media platforms in people's daily lives has also created new avenues for brands to advertise their products and services. Not only are social media platforms being used as e-commerce channels, with brands showcasing and advertising their offerings directly through their official accounts, but brands have also recognized the potential of third-party content creators, also known as social media influencers. Social media influencers (SMIs) are "Multiplatform high-profile Internet microcelebrities who accumulate a following on social media and/or blogs through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles and monetize their following by endorsing brands for a fee (i.e., paid eWOM)" (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). From this definition, it can be identified that SMIs are highly popular among their followers which is why they are termed as "microcelebrities." They gain popularity in terms of a high number of followers and reach due to their valuable and relatable content regarding a particular field or area (Yuan & Lou, 2020). These SMIs create content around their personal lives and preferences, which resonates with the general public on a personal level, unlike a celebrity who seems distant and with whom people feel no connection.

Moreover, based on the domain of their content, these SMIs are also involved in advertising and promoting brands for which they are compensated. Therefore, content creation has grown vast and is now considered a proper profession (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Brands increasingly use these SMIs to promote their products/services at a lower cost than they would have to pay a celebrity (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Through social media and SMIs, these brands can communicate a more customized and targeted message to a specific audience, allowing for more reach and response by the right audience (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021). Their followers regard the content produced by SMIs as authentic and influential.

For this reason, SMIs are sometimes referred to as opinion leaders, as their followers highly value their suggestions, recommendations, and opinions (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018). Brands capitalize on this powerful aspect of SMIs as opinion leaders to promote their products and services. Moreover, people generally feel connected or related to an SMI because they get to interact with the content posted by SMIs. The followers can give positive or negative feedback after trying the product or based on their prior experience with the product/service which is being advertised (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021). So, this two-way communication channel also adds to a feeling of relatability and connectedness that a common man does not feel with a celebrity endorsing a product/service through traditional media.

The value and quality of the content produced by SMIs also play a crucial role. In contrast to traditional marketing campaigns, the content produced by social media influencers is typically unscripted, and brands allow these influencers to be creative with their content to attract the greatest number of people (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021). Consequently, the quality and value of sponsored content by SMIs also affect consumer outcomes. One definition of SMI taps into influencer-generated content's role in shaping consumer attitudes. According to Freberg et al. (2011) SMIs "represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media." (p. 90). This study also focuses on the value of SMI-generated content, particularly the entertainment and informative value, and investigates its role in generating outcomes such as attitude towards sponsored content and purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Thus, this study contributes to the literature by testing a comprehensive framework of social media influencer marketing effectiveness by combining content quality measures and their consequent influence on consumer outcomes.

The present study is organized in a standard format. The next section reviews prior research regarding multiple constructs of the study, such as content value, attitude toward advertised content, and purchase intention. A conceptual framework follows the review. Next, the methodology used to conduct the study is reported, including the details about measurement tools, sampling techniques, and data collection methods. Further, the findings of the analysis are reported, followed by the discussion of the results in terms of theoretical contributions, practical and managerial implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future researchers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Advertising through social media influencers

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy involving promoting a brand, product or service through popular personalities known as influencers or opinion leaders (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). More commonly, social media influencers (SMIs) are part of the general public. However, they use skills and knowledge to utilize social media platforms to gather a following around a particular niche or category in which they have expertise or knowledge (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). The followers or fans of these influencers keep them on a pedestal and regard their opinion as important because they believe the influencer to have sufficient knowledge and experience in that particular domain. Therefore any suggestion and/or opinion provided by the social media influencers on their platforms influences the followers to act or behave in a certain manner (Hudders, De Jans, & De Veirman, 2021). Simply put, the SMIs' opinion shapes the followers' opinion, attitude, and decision-making, which is why they are also called opinion leaders (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018). The marketing teams of brands have realized the impact of SMIs on their

followers and are, therefore, more and more interested in capitalizing on their potential to reach the brand's target audience in a more powerful and influential way than traditional marketing techniques (Tafesse & Wood, 2021).

Consequently, the field and domain of SMIs have evolved significantly over the years and are now considered a profession, which has resulted in an enormous increase in the number of SMIs and the recognition of the marketing potential of SMIs (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) and Yuan and Lou (2020) are just a few of the studies that have investigated the effectiveness and impact of influencer marketing in various contexts. Most of these studies have focused on the significance of follower count and audience size in determining the efficacy of influencer marketing. Several studies have also emphasized the significance of source credibility. However, the literature lacks a framework that investigates the value and quality of the content to determine its influence on consumer attitude and purchasing behavior. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by empirically testing a framework that considers the factors related to content quality to assess their influence on followers in terms of attitude and purchase intent.

2.2 Content Value

Social media influencers' greatest strength is their ability to generate creative and engaging content within their expertise. This content may be a blog post, images, or pre-recorded or live videos (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020; Ozgen & Mahmoudian, 2021). While discussing the competencies of SMIs in generating the content, Enke and Borchers (2021) mentioned that "SMIs "have learned technical production and project management skills; they possess knowledge on social media genres such as tutorials, hauls, Let's Plays, challenges or product tests; they can identify topics that are relevant to their audiences; and they have a feeling for changing fashions and trends in their communities and on social media" (p. 264). In addition to the creation of content, SMIs are also skilled in the efficient distribution of that content. "... they strategically use hashtags and mentions to link their posts to specific discourses and users on the platform, they carefully select thumbnails and post titles to attract attention to their posts, and they develop release schedules to publish their posts at attractive and predictable times" (Enke & Borchers, 2021). This very strength and ability of SMIs encourage brands to collaborate with SMIs to promote their products/services. Through SMIs' content-creating capabilities, brands can communicate their message to many targeted audiences (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). They capitalize on the follower base of SMIs and their role as opinion leaders and subject matter experts, thus, giving rise to increasing production of sponsored content. Sponsored content is "the intentional incorporation of brands, products, or persuasive messages into traditionally noncommercial, editorial content" (Müller & Christandl, 2019). The influence of SMIs can result in the formation of followers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and even

behavior. (Weismueller et al., 2020). Previous marketing research indicates that the value of the advertised content also plays an important role in generating favorable outcomes, such as the development of positive attitudes and purchase intention (Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sheth & Usley, 2007). Aggad and Ahmad (2021) took the data from 510 respondents from Saudi Arabia and found that SMI-generated content significantly influences consumers' purchase intention. According to Ducoffe (1996), the value of the advertisement is determined by the informativeness and entertainment quality of the advertised message. The consumer's perception regarding the value of the message translates into their attitude toward the advertisement (Ducoffe, 1996). Numerous past studies have also investigated the role of disclosure by the SMI regarding the sponsored content in determining consumers' attitudes toward the sponsored content, attitudes toward the SMI, and purchase behavior. If a social media influencer (SMI) does not disclose sponsorship and its followers identify paid content, it creates a sense of mistrust among the followers, which can have negative consequences (Müller & Christandl, 2019). The informativeness of the advertised message refers to the "ability to provide information about alternative products to boost consumers' purchase satisfaction" (Lou & Yuan, 2019). If the perception of people towards a piece of information is that the provided information is useful, they will tend to interact more with that information. The usefulness or the informative value of the content produced by SMI is shown to have a positive relationship with purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2018). Moreover, suppose the followers believe that the content shared by the SMI about a particular product/service is based on the SMI's prior experience with that product/service. In that case, they view the information as even more useful, influencing their attitude toward the content and their intention to purchase the promoted brand's product/service (Xue, Lee, & Mu, 2018). The following hypothesis is proposed based on the evidence provided in the literature

H1: The informative value of SMI-generated content is significantly associated with attitude towards sponsored content.

H2: The informative value of SMI-generated content is significantly associated with purchase/Visit intention.

On the other hand, the advertised message's entertainment quality refers to the content's ability to entertain and engage the consumers. Entertainment quality, sometimes referred to as the hedonic value of content produced by SMI, is in line with the hedonic motivation of people to use social media platforms (Dzogbenuku, Doe, & Amoako, 2022). Nowadays, almost all social media users, at some level, utilize these platforms to get rid of their daily stress and to be entertained. The short video-type content called "reels" is gaining popularity because it provides users with entertaining content and does not take up much time, as these short videos are usually less than a minute long. SMIs, through their analysis, know what their target audience wants to see; therefore, they

produce the content that gets them the maximum views, reach and engagement. The more entertaining the content, the more likely people will engage with that post (Dzoghbenuku, Doe, & Amoako, 2022). This practice has gained so much popularity, and statistics and analytics have clearly shown that this is the "bestselling" content type. Therefore, marketers have also tapped into this area and realized that using SMIs to create entertaining sponsored content will result in more engagement, increasing the likelihood of users engaging with the advertised brand (Jones & Glynn, 2019). So, the strategic match between consumers' needs for entertainment and the content produced by SMIs can be fruitful for the brands regarding consumer outcomes, including attitude towards the sponsored content and purchase intention (Sheth & Kim, 2017). Van-Tien Dao et al. (2014) report that the advertised message's information and entertainment value influence consumers' purchase intention. Social media influencers continuously post content on their feeds with both informative and entertaining aspects. The value of the sponsored content posted by SMIs determines how the followers perceive it and what benefits it can generate for the brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

H3: The entertainment value of SMI-generated content is significantly associated with attitude towards sponsored content.

H4: The entertainment value of SMI-generated content is significantly associated with purchase/Visit intention.

2.3 Attitude towards Sponsored Content as a Mediator

The whole purpose of utilizing SMIs to promote products and services is to get consumer engagement and develop a positive attitude. To evaluate the effectiveness of advertising, it is important to assess the reaction of consumers towards that advertisement in the form of their attitude (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2014). Consumers' attitude in the context of sponsored content refers to the favorable or unfavorable perception of the SMI-generated content, which can influence consumers' decision-making process. Consumer attitude toward sponsored content is "a predisposition to respond favorably or negatively to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). A positive attitude can increase an individual's propensity to engage in a particular action or behavior. Numerous studies in the past have demonstrated a positive correlation between attitude and behavioral intention, including purchase intent (Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2022).

Lou and Yuan (2019) also provide evidence of the influence of followers' attitudes toward sponsored content on the relationship between content value and purchase intent. In addition, Vrontis et al. (2021) provide evidence and emphasize the need to investigate the mediating role of consumer attitudes in determining SMI research outcomes. Based on the preceding argument, it is proposed that the perceived value of

SMI-generated sponsored content will positively affect attitudes toward advertising content and intent to purchase a brand suggested by an SMI.

H5: Attitude towards sponsored content is significantly associated with purchase/Visit intention.

H6: Attitude towards sponsored content mediates the relationship between the informative value of content and purchase/Visit intention.

H7: Attitude towards sponsored content mediates the relationship between the entertainment value of content and purchase/visit intention.

2.3 Product Experience as a Moderator

In their study, [Zollo et al. \(2020\)](#) mentioned that how the consumer processes the advertised content also depends on whether they already have an experience with that product/service. Therefore, it is also important to study product experience when advertising a product. Consumers will generate a more positive attitude towards the advertised content if their previous experience with the brand has been good. Conversely, if their prior experience was not good and they see sponsored content related to that product/service, it can have negative implications. [Munnukka, Uusitalo, and Toivonen \(2016\)](#) have studied the moderating effect of past product/service experience. They proposed that users with no prior experience with the product/service are more likely to form an attitude towards endorsed/sponsored messages than those who are experienced, as the experienced users will most likely base their decision on their experience rather than the SMIs message ([Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006](#); [Cowley & Mitchell, 2003](#)). Therefore, inexperienced and experienced users process the sponsored content's value and the source credibility differently. Very few studies have taken the aspect of consumers' prior experience with the brand into account while studying influencer marketing effectiveness. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by studying the moderating role of prior product/service experience. So, the following hypotheses are proposed,

H8: Prior experience with products/services moderates the relationship between the informative value of content and attitude towards sponsor content.

H9: Prior experience with products/services moderates the relationship between the Entertainment value of content and attitude towards sponsor content.

As seen in the conceptual model presented in Fig 1 below, the present study proposes that the message value perceived by followers influences their attitude towards the sponsored content, ultimately leading to the intention to purchase the brand recommended by the SMI.

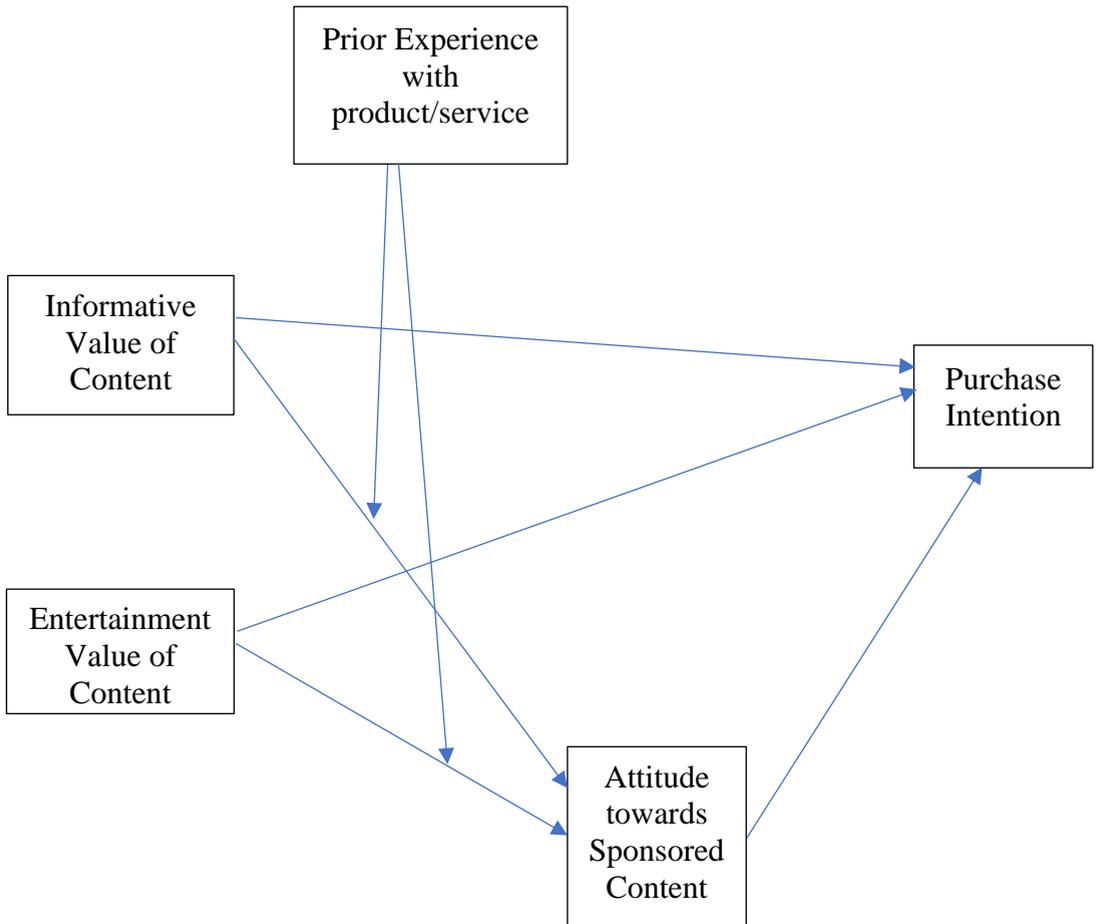


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the Study

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Instrument

The study's various constructs will be measured using pre-validated instruments found in the literature. The construct of content value, including informative and entertainment value, will be measured on a 5-point semantic differential scale and adopted from [Lou and Yuan \(2019\)](#). A scale adapted from [Mitchell and Olson \(1981\)](#) will measure attitude towards the sponsored content. Lastly, the construct of purchase intent will be measured with the instrument developed by [Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández \(2019\)](#). All constructs will be measured using a 5-point Likert scale except for informative and entertaining values. The moderator, i.e., product experience, will be measured by asking respondents if they have previously used the advertised product. [Table 1](#) presents the measurement items/statements corresponding to each construct and their source.

Table 1: Measurement Tools

Items	References
Informative Value of Content	
1. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Ineffective/Effective	(Lou & Yuan, 2019)
2. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Unhelpful/Helpful	
3. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Not functional/Functional	
4. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Unnecessary/Necessary	
5. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Impractical/Practical	
Entertainment Value of Content	
1. Concerning the influencers I am following on social media, I think their posts/updates are Not fun/Fun.	(Lou & Yuan, 2019)
2. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Dull/Exciting	
3. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Not delightful/Delightful	
4. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Not thrilling/Thrilling	
5. Concerning the influencers whom I am following on social media, I think their social media posts/updates are Unenjoyable/Enjoyable	
Attitude towards Sponsored Content	
1. I feel the advert was very good.	(Mitchell & Olson, 1981)
2. The advert was enjoyable.	
3. The advert was interesting.	
4. There was a lot about the advert that I liked.	
Purchase Intention	
1. I would purchase a brand based on the advice I am given by the influencers I follow.	(Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019)
2. I would follow brand recommendations from the influencers that I follow.	
3. In the future, I will purchase the products of brands recommended by the influencers that I follow.	
Prior Experience with Product/Service	
1. I have used the advertised product/service before	(Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016)
2. I frequently use this product/service	
3. I found this product/service very useful."	

3.2 Target Population and Sampling Technique

For this study, the data was collected from fast-food restaurants in Saudi Arabia. The reason for selecting fast food restaurants is because the hype and popularity of such restaurants are mostly based on word of mouth; for that matter, the recommendations of social media influencers can be influential. Also, most fast-food restaurant patrons are young people who use social media platforms frequently and typically follow some SMIs. Therefore, the target population for this study was the Saudi Arabian customers of fast food restaurants.

Since the population frame of customers of fast-food restaurants in Saudi Arabia was not available, the probability sampling technique could not be used. So, a non-probability sampling technique known as convenience sampling was used to collect large amounts of data quickly (Alalwan et al., 2016). Only those interested and willing were asked to participate in the study.

3.3 Data Collection Method

The present study is cross-sectional as it captures the data at one point. The data for this study were collected using a survey design, including a self-administered questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was handed out to random customers in fast-food restaurants in Saudi Arabia. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire based on any SMI they followed. Before handing in the questionnaires. Their consent was taken, i.e., no respondent was forced to participate in the study. It was also informed to the respondents that their data will solely be used for academic purposes only, and no information will be leaked. Respondents had ample time to complete the questionnaires. In addition, respondents were asked about any ambiguities in the questionnaire statements that required clarification. In such cases, the statement was explained to them in simpler language. 300 respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire, and 154 responses were received. 11 questionnaires were discarded due to insufficient responses, leaving only 143 questionnaires for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis Method

The quantitative numerical data collected for the present study was analyzed using Software including SPSS. The frequency distribution tables for demographics and descriptive analysis tables were generated using SPSS. The hypothesis testing was done using structural equation modeling on SmartPLS, which allows for testing complex models, including mediation and moderation, which was the case of the model of this study. During the SEM analysis, the measurement model was tested first with confirmatory factor analysis to gauge the quality of measurement items, i.e., to assess the reliability and establish convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scale. Next, the structural model was assessed for path analysis using regression models for hypothesis testing for direct effects, mediation, and moderation.

4. ANALYSIS

This study's data analysis was conducted by adopting a two-step approach. First, the measurement model of the study was assessed, in which confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The reliability and convergent and discriminant validity of all constructs were determined. Next, the structural model was assessed, in which path analysis was used to test the study's hypotheses.

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The initial step of SEM analysis is measurement model evaluation. The measures, including Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, are evaluated for convergent validity. Table 2 reveals that the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability for all study variables are greater than the generally accepted value, indicating that the variables are reliable and internally consistent. In addition, the AVE values exceed the standard accepted value of 0.5, which determines the convergent validity of the study's variables.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Informative value of content	IV-1	0.715	0.799	0.814	0.684
	IV-2	0.814			
	IV-3	0.799			
	IV-4	0.874			
	IV-5	0.766			
The entertainment value of content	EV-1	0.814	0.844	0.755	0.791
	EV-2	0.834			
	EV-3	0.769			
	EV-4	0.716			
	EV-5	0.819			
Attitude toward sponsored content	ATSC-1	0.817	0.768	0.817	0.760
	ATSC-2	0.714			
	ATSC-3	0.733			
	ATSC-4	0.764			
Prior experience with product/service	PE-1	0.866	0.815	0.788	0.847
	PE-2	0.722			
	PE-3	0.769			
Purchase Intention	PI-1	0.718	0.763	0.737	0.811
	PI-2	0.847			
	PI-3	0.861			

Next, the discriminant validity of the variables was evaluated using the method of Fornell and Larcker. Table 3 demonstrates that the square root of AVE for all variables is greater than the correlation of each variable with other variables, thereby establishing the discriminant validity of all variables in the study.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Informative value of content	1				
The entertainment value of content	0.687	1			
Attitude toward sponsored content	0.471	0.687	1		
Prior experience with product/service	0.571	0.458	0.647	1	
Purchase Intention	0.678	0.588	0.599	0.743	1

The measurement model fit indices and standard accepted values are presented in Table 4. All measurement model fit indices can fall within the acceptable ranges, indicating that the measurement model is a good fit and allowing the analysis to proceed to the structural model.

Table 4: Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Overall Model Score	Acceptable Model Fit	Acceptable Baseline
CFI	0.90	Accept	≥ 0.90
AGFI	0.85	Accept	≥ 0.80
RMSEA	0.058	Accept	< 0.10
CMIN/df	2.67	Accept	< 3
TLI	0.91	Accept	≥ 0.89
IFI	0.94	Accept	≥ 0.90

4.2. Structural Model Assessment

Following the evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated. Path analysis in SEM is used to test the study's hypotheses in structural models. Before that, the model fit indices of the structural model are determined; as shown in Table 5, all model fit indices fall within the acceptable ranges, indicating that the structural model is a good fit.

Table 5: Structural Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Overall Model Score	Acceptable Model Fit	Acceptable Baseline
CFI	0.91	Accept	≥0.90
AGFI	0.81	Accept	≥0.80
RMSEA	0.064	Accept	<0.10
CMIN/df	1.68	Accept	<3
TLI	0.93	Accept	≥0.89
IFI	0.92	Accept	≥0.90

After assessing the model fit indices, the study's hypothesis was tested. Table 6 summarizes the analysis and the decision of the hypothesis involving direct effects. It can be seen that informative value positively influences attitudes toward sponsored content, which supports H1 of the study. Further, informative value also positively influences purchase intention, supporting H2 of the study. Moreover, entertainment value is found to have a positive association with attitude towards sponsored content and purchase intention, which supports H3 and H4 of the study. Also, attitude towards sponsored content is positively associated with purchase intention, which supports H5 of the study.

Table 6

Relationship	t-value	p-value	Status
The informative value of content → Attitude towards sponsored content	1.99	0.000	Accept
The entertainment value of content → Attitude towards sponsored content	2.01	0.000	Accept
The informative value of content → Purchase intention	2.36	0.000	Accept
The entertainment value of content → Purchase intention	2.87	0.000	Accept
Attitude towards sponsored content → Purchase intention	3.24	0.000	Accept

Table 7 provides a summary of the study's analysis of indirect relationships. It can be seen that the attitude toward sponsored content positively mediates the relationship between the informative value of the content and the intention to purchase, supporting the study's hypothesis. However, attitude toward sponsored content is not a significant mediator between the entertainment value of content and the intention to purchase, thus refuting the seventh hypothesis of the study.

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing-Indirect Effects

Relationship	t-value	p-value	Status
The informative value of content → Purchase intention	4.58	0.000	Accept
The entertainment value of content → Purchase intention	1.31	0.225	Reject

Table 8 displays the results of the moderation effect of prior product/service experience. It can be observed that prior experience with a product or service positively moderates the relationship between the informative value of content and attitude toward sponsored content, supporting the study's hypothesis 8. However, previous product/service experience is not a significant moderator of the relationship between the entertainment value of content and attitude towards sponsored content, thus refuting the study's hypothesis 9.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing-Moderation Effects

Relationship	t-value	p-value	Status
The informative value of content*Prior experience with product/service → Attitude towards sponsored content	3.147	0.000	Accept
The entertainment value of content*Prior experience with product/service → Attitude towards sponsored content	1.012	0.147	Reject

5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the impact of the value of SMI-generated content on followers' attitudes toward sponsored content and their intent to purchase. To achieve this objective, data from 156 social media users in Saudi Arabia were collected and analyzed using the SEM analysis technique and SmartPLS software. The analysis revealed a positive relationship between the informative value of content and attitudes toward sponsored content, and purchase intent. This finding is consistent with previous research that examined the relationship between overall content value and consumer outcomes such as attitude and intent to purchase (Aggad & Ahmad, 2021; Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sheth & Uslay, 2007). The result is also consistent with previous studies investigating the relationship between the informative value of SMI content and consumer outcomes (Erkan & Evans, 2018; Xue, Lee, & Mu, 2018). Therefore, if people perceive a piece of information generated by an SMI to be useful,

they will be more likely to interact with it. Thus, it influences their attitude toward the content and their intent to purchase the product/service being promoted.

In addition, the study's findings revealed that the entertainment value of content is positively correlated with attitudes toward sponsored content and purchase intent. This finding is consistent with prior research examining the relationship between overall content value and consumer outcomes such as attitude and intent to purchase (Aggad & Ahmad, 2021; Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sheth & Uslay, 2007). In addition, previous research suggests that the entertainment value of the content posted by SMI can increase engagement with that content and with the brand (Dzogbenuku, Doe, & Amoako, 2022; Jones & Glynn, 2019). Moreover, it can lead to favorable consumer outcomes such as a positive attitude and purchase intent (Sheth & Kim, 2017; Van-Tien Dao et al., 2014). Consequently, the entertainment value of the sponsored content is also an important factor in capturing consumers' attention, fostering a favorable attitude, and influencing purchase intent.

In line with previous research (Leong, Loi, & Woon, 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019), attitudes toward sponsored content have a positive relationship with purchase intent. In addition, the study discovered that attitude toward sponsored content acts as a positive mediator between the informative value of content and purchase intent. However, it does not play a significant role as a mediator between the entertainment value of content and purchase intent. This finding responds to Vrontis et al.'s (2021) suggestion to investigate the role of attitude as a mediator in SMI-related research.

Finally, the moderating function of product experience was investigated. The relationship between the informative value of content and attitude towards sponsored content was positively moderated by prior experience. However, it was not a significant moderator of the relationship between entertainment value and attitude toward sponsored content. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that users with no prior experience with the product/service are more likely to form an attitude towards an endorsed/sponsored message than those with experience, as experienced users will likely base their decision on their experience rather than the SMIs message (Biswas, Biswas, & Das, 2006; Cowley & Mitchell, 2003; Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016).

5.1. Implications

This study contributes to the body of knowledge as very few studies have investigated the influence of SMI-generated content on consumer outcomes, such as attitude towards sponsored content and purchase intention. Moreover, the informative and entertainment values of SMI-generated content have not been studied much. Moreover, the moderating role of previous experience with products/services has been understudied; therefore, this study contributes to the literature.

Marketers and practitioners can gain insight from this study's findings. When appointing an SMI to promote the products and/or services of a brand, care must be taken to ensure that the SMI has sufficient knowledge and expertise about the product and/or service's category so that he/she can provide followers with informative, high-quality content that yields positive results for the brand. Moreover, the SMI must be permitted to add creativity and entertainment value to sponsored content, which can result in greater engagement among their followers and, consequently, greater brand outcomes.

5.2. Limitations and Recommendations

Future studies may employ other methods of analysis, such as content analysis of SMI-generated sponsored posts or qualitative in-depth interviews with social media users, to determine the extent to which SMI-generated content influences the purchase behavior of social media users. Future research can add to the existing model by examining additional influencer marketing-related factors not covered in the current study. In this context, the ethics of sponsorship disclosure can also be studied. Future studies may replicate the same model in other contexts to obtain a cross-comparison.

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