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The impact of social media influencers on online customer journey: Trustfulness as a moderating factor

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of three key characteristics of social media influencers: interaction, expertise, and personality on the five online stages of the customer journey, with trustfulness serving as a moderating factor. A quantitative research methodology was employed, utilizing data collected from participants in Jordan and analyzed using descriptive analysis in SPSS, multiple regression, ANOVA tests, and AMOS software. The findings indicate that interaction, expertise, and personality significantly impact the customer journey, with trustfulness playing a positive moderating role. However, expertise does not influence the awareness stage of the journey, while personality exerts the highest effect overall. The study underscores the importance of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior and highlights their strategic role in marketing efforts. Businesses should prioritize influencers with strong personalities and high trustworthiness to maximize their impact, recognizing that expertise alone may not be sufficient at the awareness stage. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of influencer marketing and provide practical implications for marketers seeking to optimize engagement and consumer decision-making.

Keywords: Customer journey, Online shopping, Social media influencers, Social media.

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1. Introduction

Social media is a catch-all for various online technological solutions that enable people to easily communicate and share information online, facilitating communication [1]. Social Media Influencers (SMI) have changed how people gain information in recent years. Marketers shift their marketing campaigns to social media influencer marketing because of their many followers [2].

With the advent of social media, communication and marketing dynamics have entirely changed, allowing brands to communicate in real time with consumers and enabling meaningful bonds. SMIs are one of the drivers of these changes, as they have a powerful capacity to shape perceptions, preferences, and purchase behaviors [3]. The rise of the SMI market—\$1.7 billion in 2016 and \$9.7 billion in 2024 indicates its significance in current marketing agendas [4]. Past research has examined how SMIs affect customer awareness and purchase behavior; however, there remains a lack of insight into how attributes such as interaction, expertise, and personality affect the five stages in the online customer journey [5].

Marketers put considerable effort into communicating with their audience. Yet, more research is needed to know how a social media influencer could affect customer purchase intention by considering the factor of customer trust in those influencers, with consumer behavior as a moderator role towards purchase intention [6]. Even so, they should select influencers who can communicate, persuade, and make recommendations for their target audience [7].

Recent studies have paid attention to the influence of SMIs on social media users who become their followers. This resulted in characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, and physical attractiveness [8]. SMIs significantly affect customers through all stages of the customer's journey, starting from awareness to advocacy, depending on the most effective characteristics of SMLs, such as expertise, honesty, reliability, accuracy, and knowledge quality [9].

Companies use SMI to connect directly with the audience because they are more accessible and trustworthy to their customers [10]. Customers use their experiences to evaluate and consider products or services [11]. Accordingly, it is imperative to focus on exploring the effect of SMIs' characteristics on all five stages of the customer journey through their online shopping to reach the best outcomes that could help marketing researchers and managers achieve the effective role of SMIs in digital marketing [12].

Literature investigates the impact of SMIs' attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on customer buying behavior and intentions. However, limited studies have tested the impact of other SMLs' characteristics on customer journeys, such as interaction and personality. Moreover, few studies have investigated the impact of SMLs on the five stages of the customer journey. Most of the related research has investigated the impact of SMLs on standard stages of the customer journey, such as awareness, purchase intentions, and repurchase, and discussed the impact on customer behavior as a unit.

This study attempts to find how other SMIs' characteristics interaction, expertise, and personality could affect the customer journey in all five stages: awareness, consideration, conversion, retention, and advocacy. In addition, it examines how trustfulness moderates the relations between the SMLs and the customer journey.

2. Literature Review

SMIs share with their followers their lifestyle and new trends, Dinh and Lee [10], and they can influence people's opinions, purchasing decisions, and ideas [13]. The messaging of the firms and products is perceived to be more genuine and trustworthy here than in sponsored sponsorship advertising [14]. Digital influencers are vital elements of persuasion since they greatly influence customers' purchase intentions. One of the variables influencing customer intentions is expertise [15]. SMIs significantly positively influence purchase intention depending on their characteristics [16]. Marketers and social media managers can collaborate with specific macro-influencers to create implementation strategies that offer support and resources to customers searching for and disseminating information [17]. Studies usually focus on traditional endorsement models by stars, such as attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, while other studies have shown the impact of SMIs on customers' behavior and attitude [11].

Personality and similarity features are the essential components of SMIs' characteristics that should be tested [7]. In addition, they influence customer purchase intentions [18, 19].

2.1. Interaction

SMIs play an important role in collecting customers' preferences to create a profitable advertisement that catches customers' attention [20]. Influencers can reach more people on social media with greater engagement, which increases their visibility and effect [21].

Previous studies have focused on the role of SMIs' interaction that affects their followers' behaviors and intentions, which are determined by followers' emotions, such as when they have warm feelings towards SMIs [22]. SMIs significantly affect customer behavior when interacting with a customer through live streaming [23].

SMIs' interaction with their audience affects customers' purchase intentions, especially when customers find SMIs as credible sources to the source credibility theory that has been applied [24]. SMIs' interaction with their audience positively impacts the customer journey because customers enjoy engagement and interaction with others to gain information and recommendations from their experiences with the product and the brand [25]. In contrast, Garg and Bakshi [20] found that SMIs' interaction with audiences did not affect their customers' behavior towards SMIs and their customer journey; this study is aligned with Serman and Sims [26] which found that parasocial interaction between SMLs and their audience did not influence their behavior in their shopping journey. Moreover, Garg and Bakshi [20] confirmed that SMIs' interactivity with their valuable content significantly affects customer journeys. In addition, SMIs can build long relationships between their target audience and the brand. In their recent study, Bandara et al. [27] found that SMIs' interactivity significantly affects

young people's awareness, consideration, and purchase intentions stages in the United Arab Emirates. Accordingly, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H₁: Interaction has a significant positive effect on awareness at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.*
- H₂: Interaction has a significant positive effect on consideration at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.*
- H₃: Interaction has a significant positive effect on conversion at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.*
- H₄: Interaction has a significant positive effect on retention at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.*
- H₅: Interaction has a significant positive effect on advocacy at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.*

2.2. Expertise

Expertise influencers are more credible and trustworthy to their audience [20]. SMIs can easily interact and communicate with their target audience [22]. The effectiveness of the shared message by SMIs is correlated with SMI's credibility based on their trustworthiness and expertise [18]. Followers are more likely to buy things influencers advocate if they align with SMI's knowledge [22].

Previous research indicated that the number of SMIs increased, related to the important role of SMLs' characteristics in creating purchase intentions, customer engagement, customer loyalty, and brand equity [4]. SMI experts are considered opinion leaders for their audience [28]. Furthermore, the literature confirmed that expertise impacts customer engagement and purchase intentions [4].

Customers' purchase decisions are highly influenced by SMIs' characteristics, such as trust, expertise, and attractiveness [6]. According to Lou and Yuan [29], SMIs' credibility, expertise, and attractiveness increase consumers' awareness of the product and the brand. Moreover, customers are influenced by SMIs, which have experience and knowledge about the products they promote; customers rely on them to collect information, compare alternatives, and make purchase decisions [30]. In addition, SMIs' expertise positively affects customer purchase intention when customers perceive SMIs' trustworthiness [19]. Moreover, SMIs' technological experiences affect users adapting technology on their customer journey; Mete [31] found that SMIs, with their attractiveness, expertise, trust, credibility, and perceived usefulness, affect the intentions of SMIs followers. Vemuri [32] found that SMIs must have good looks and prestige to attract customers to follow them.

- H₆: Expertise has a significant positive effect on awareness at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₇: Expertise has a significant positive effect on consideration at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₈: Expertise has a significant positive effect on conversion at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₉: Expertise has a significant positive effect on retention at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₁₀: Expertise has a significant positive effect on advocacy at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*

2.3. Personality

The uniqueness of SMI's personality strongly impacts customer buying behavior because customers find it more favorable. Followers will not engage with an online retailer if the SMIs' personalities do not match the brand because customers will think this company is just money-driven [19]. Brands can benefit from SMIs' relationships with customers determined by SMLs' personalities, which builds a long relationship with the brand [8].

Several studies examined the relationship between SMIs' personalities and customer preferences and behavior toward the brand to better understand what personality traits affect customers' behavior and their purchase intentions toward the brand [33]. Previous scholars found that SMIs' personality traits, such as similarity, significantly affect interaction with customers with the same information preferences [7]. Moreover, SMIs should build trust with their customers by promoting products and brands that represent their personality to reflect their credibility and not be based on monetary values [11].

SMIs' personality traits need knowledge to be more convincing and to affect the customer journey. This is consistent with the study of Chan [34] and Aggad and Ahmad [35] who found that SMIs' knowledge and expertise do not influence customers in the awareness stage, but there is an excellent effect on SMIs' personalities, attitude, and how SMIs associated with the brand on the customer journey. Matin et al. [36] assured that SMIs' personal traits affect customers in the consideration stage when they perceive honesty, credibility, and competency.

Dutta and Bhattacharya [37] confirmed that SMIs' personality plays a negative role in customer behavior when their personalities are inappropriate with the promoted product. Jaitly and Gautam [38] showed that the more SMIs are closed and interact with their customer easily, the more they influence them with their promoted product and motivate them to buy it. Frimpong and Alam [39] found that customers' purchase intentions vary by SMIs' personality, trustworthiness, and content created by SMIs, and trustworthiness is the most important factor that affects customer purchase intentions. Accordingly, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H₁₁: Personality has a significant positive effect on awareness at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₁₂: Personality has a significant positive effect on consideration at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₁₃: Personality has a significant positive effect on conversion at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₁₄: Personality has a significant positive effect on retention at $\alpha \leq 0.05$*
- H₁₅: Personality has a significant positive effect on advocacy at $\alpha \leq 0.0$*

2.4. Customer Journey

The customer journey is a customer experience through online shopping, which includes multiple stages, such as pre-purchase (awareness and consideration stages), purchase (conversion), and post-purchase (retention and advocacy stages) [5].

In addition, using customer journeys is a beneficial way for firms to improve their services and product quality. Also, to determine the level of customers' satisfaction [40].

A firm needs an internal or external department to get all customer journey information through cross-media [41]. Consumers' decisions to purchase are influenced by information rather than attractiveness [42]. On the other hand, social media influencers could turn followers into customers [8].

2.5. Awareness

There is a link between SMIs' source credibility and the brand image, which means SMIs should have attractiveness expertise and interact with the target audience to increase customer awareness and brand reach, Silveira et al. [43]. Lee and Eastin [44] found that SMIs favorably impact brand awareness, which is increasing more quickly than digital advertising. The results of this study supported the widely held assumptions that SMIs positively increase brand awareness.

Through SMIs' content, the barriers between customers and the barriers between the brands and the followers have been broken down, as SMIs are a source of credibility [45].

2.6. Pre-Purchasing (Consideration)

Pop et al. [5] examined the effect of SMIs' trust on travelers' customer journey; they found that there is a positive effect of SMIs on the customer journey in the pre-purchase stage, such as collecting information and experiences, comparing alternatives, and purchase intentions to purchasing and post-purchasing stages. Matin et al. [36] found that SMI characteristics positively affected customer purchase decisions. Ao et al. [4] tested eight characteristics of SMIs: credibility, expertise, trustfulness, attractiveness, and valuable information that positively affect customer engagement and purchase intentions.

2.7. Purchasing and Post-Purchasing (Conversion, Retention and Advocacy)

Fornell and Larcker [46] showed an important connection between Instagram SMIs and their effect on buying habits, including brand image, marketing, sales, and user enjoyment. Moreover, Hair Jr et al. [47] study supported the positive impact of social media influencer posts, tales, and reels on consumer engagement. In addition, Taber [48] found that SMIs' expertise, attractiveness, and similarity have a direct positive effect on millennials who prefer to continue using bank services and advocate the brand.

Moreover, Ajzen [49] tested the impact of SMIs as YouTubers and TikTokers on the Customer Journey. They found that YouTubers and TikTokers impact all Customer Journey stages.

2.8. Trustfulness

Influencers often advocate for firms with which they connect to enhance their credibility [22]. Factors affecting purchase intentions to help companies maintain their market share and image and avoid profit shortages are worth studying [18].

Trust plays a significant role in customers' choice of their destination in tourism based on social media influencers [5]. Trust is a focal point in SMIs' customer communication, built through repeated communications. Trust leads customers to benefit from their relationship with SMIs [4]. Trustworthy SMIs are more credible and reliable to their audience. They have more loyal customers because they are opinion leaders [20]. SMIs' trustworthiness impacts customers' consideration in choosing what to purchase [6]. Trustfulness significantly impacts customers' intentions to buy and degree to which customers follow SMIs [50]. SMIs' trustfulness influences the customer journey in all stages [25]. SMIs' trustfulness significantly impacts the awareness stage of the customer journey. On the other hand, SMIs' trustfulness as a mediator variable is critical in influencing all customer journey stages in the tourism sector [5]. Customers' perceived SMIs' trust significantly impacts customers' awareness of the brand and customers' intentions to buy, increasing the company's market share [51]. SMIs' trustworthiness motivates customers' behavior in all buying stages. Accordingly, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

H₁₆: Trustfulness moderates the impact of Social media Influencers on Customer Journey at $\alpha \leq 0.05$

2.9. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was developed based on the combined two theories theory of planned behavior developed by Pop et al. [5]. The current research model measures the impact of three characteristics of social media influencers: interaction, expertise, and personality on customer journey stages. In addition, it examines trustfulness as a moderator factor that could affect the relationship between social media influencers and the customer journey [5].

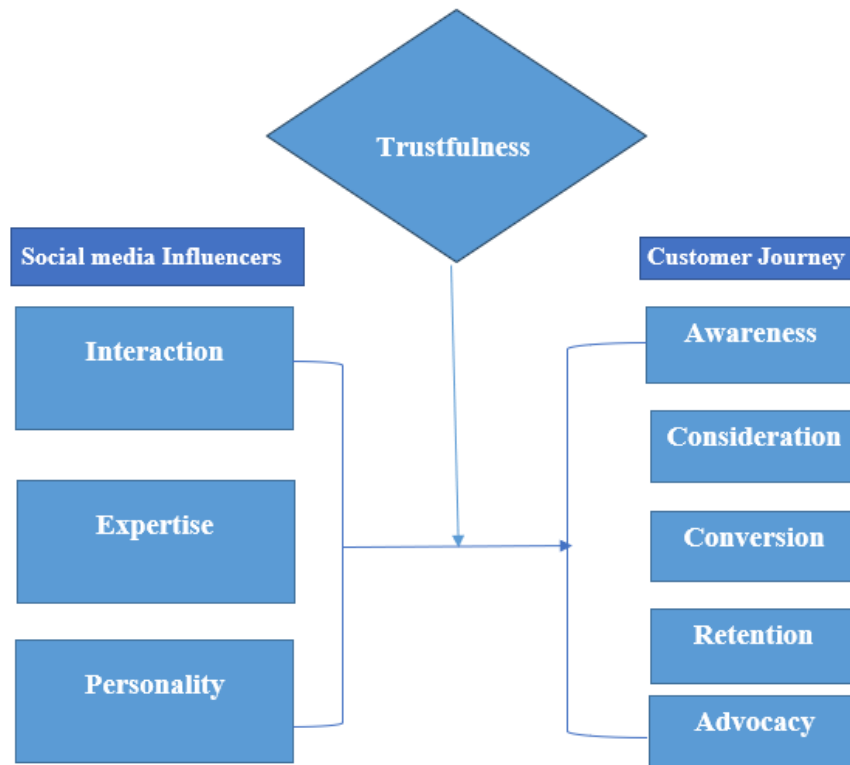


Figure 3.
The research model.

Source: The research team based on developed this model based on (Abd et al., 2023); (Saldanha et al., 2023)

Figure 4 explains testing the 15 hypotheses in this study. In addition, Figure 5 tests trustfulness as a moderator of the relationship between the independent variables, which are Social media influencers' characteristics and customer journey stages, dependent variables.

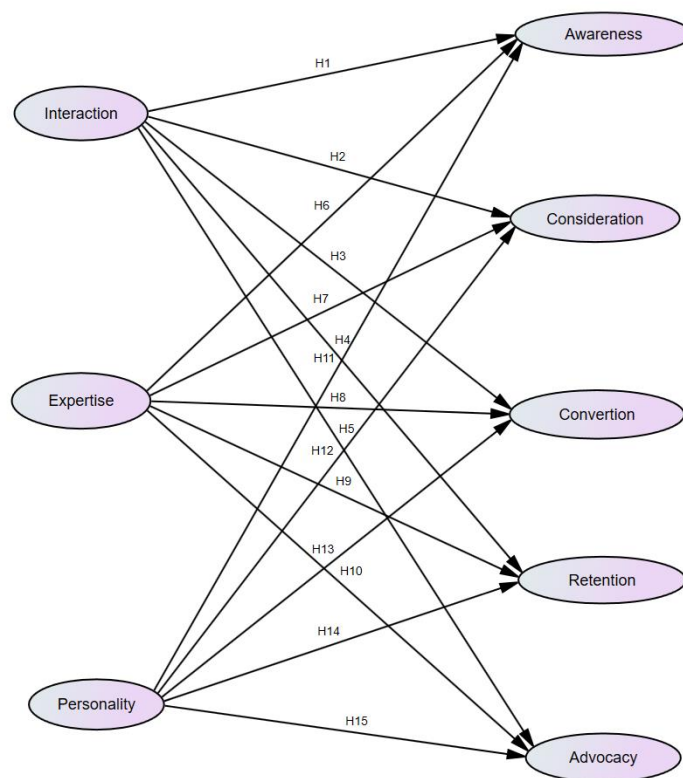


Figure 4.
Testing 15 Hypotheses Model.

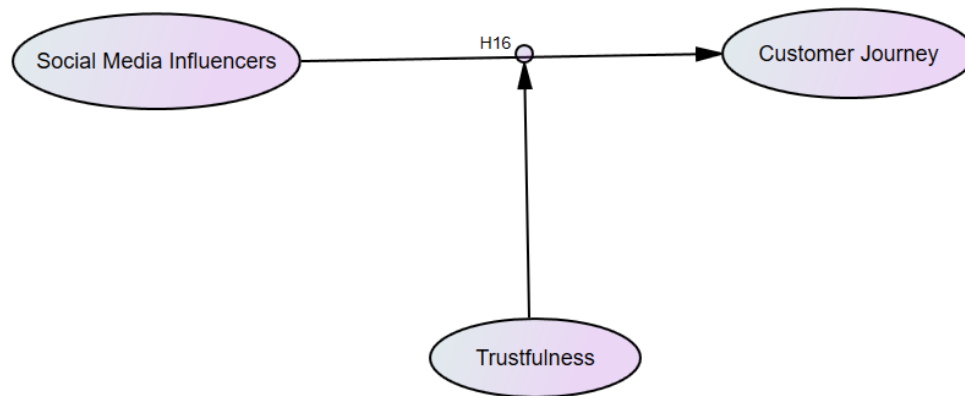


Figure 5.
Testing the hypothesis of moderated variable.

3. Methodology

The study utilizes a quantitative approach to systematically examine the relationships between SMIs and customer journeys. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure all survey items. Engaging 411 individuals completed a structured Google form. The questionnaire consists of indicators used to measure the study's variables and describes these indicators by their minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values. The researcher uses descriptive analysis with (SPSS) V.28 software.

3.1. Demographics

The percentage of respondents from the female category was 55.2%, and the percentage of males was 44.8%. The percentage of respondents in the age category from 18 to 25 years was 56.9%, the majority of respondents. The 26-34 years category was 13.9%, and the age category of 35-44 years was 13.9%. Age categories of 45-54 years and 55 years and above were ranked last with 7.5% and 7.8%, respectively. The study's sample was represented by viewers of social media influencers, which is appropriate for the age distribution. For educational levels, the Bachelor's degree category was 64.7%, which is the majority of respondents; the category of the Master's degree was 15.8%; holders of Doctorate degrees were 4.9%; diploma holders were 8.3%, and high school graduates were 6.3%.

3.2. Results

Descriptive analysis of the research items showed that all items are at a moderate level, and the values of standard deviation for each factor were as follows: Interaction 1.048 - 1.308, Personality 0.934 - 1.135, Awareness 0.965 - 1.149, Consideration 1.121 - 1.207, Conversion 1.025 - 1.228, Retention 1.091 - 1.123, Advocacy 1.063 - 1.223, and Trustfulness 1.114 - 1.200. These values suggest that the data obtained from respondents for each item is relatively spread out from the mean value of the item. This spread suggests variability in the respondents' perceptions and experiences concerning their interactions with social media influencers.

Meanwhile, the descriptive analysis of the Expertise items showed that all items are at a low level. The standard deviation values were between 0.794 and 0.872, suggesting that the data obtained from respondents for each item is relatively clustered closely around the mean value of the item.

As described in Table 1, the variable personality has the highest mean value (3.64), which indicates the high value of social media influencers' personalities from users' perceptions. The variable expertise is the lowest one (1.82), suggesting a low level of expertise among social media influencers from the users' point of view. Regarding the dependent variables representing the customer journey elements (Awareness, Consideration, Conversion, Retention, and Advocacy), the values of their means are very close to each other, suggesting the convergence of their levels from the insights of users. Values of standard deviation are between .712 and 1.037, suggesting that the data obtained from respondents for each variable is relatively clustered closely around the mean value of the item.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of all Variables.

Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Interaction	411	1.00	5.00	3.2783	1.03622	Medium
Expertise	411	1.00	5.00	1.8256	.71502	Low
Personality	411	1.00	5.00	3.6448	.87949	Medium
Awareness	411	1.00	5.00	3.4580	.91143	Medium
Consideration	411	1.00	5.00	3.2670	1.04020	Medium
Conversion	411	1.50	5.00	3.3266	.90774	Medium
Retention	411	1.00	5.00	3.3155	.96537	Medium
Advocacy	411	1.00	5.00	3.3341	1.01199	Medium
Trustfulness	411	1.00	5.00	3.1513	1.03715	Medium

3.3. Reliability

As a preliminary check for reliability, Cronbach's Alpha estimation was used to evaluate the internal consistency of each variable's indicators; a high value of Cronbach's Alpha indicates the high consistency of data representing each variable by its indicators. The study of Taber [48] identified an acceptance criterion for reliability based on Cronbach's Alpha value; a value of Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7 for a variable leads to a satisfied internal consistency for its indicators.

The value of Cronbach's Alpha of the five interaction indicators was 0.928. The three indicators of expertise were 0.833. The four indicators of personality were 0.862. For the four items of awareness, it was 0.872. For the four items, the consideration was 0.922. The four items of conversion were 0.789. The three retention items were 0.838. For the three items of advocacy, it was 0.869. The five items of trustfulness were 0.935. The 35 items were 0.973, and these results suggest satisfied reliability based on the internal consistency of variables.

The researcher used skewness and kurtosis values as indicators to evaluate the normal distribution of data. The acceptable ranges of skewness and kurtosis, as suggested by Hair Jr et al. [52] and Ozili [53], are (from -2 to 2) and (from -7 to 7), respectively. The skewness values for research factors are between -.845 and 1.410, within the acceptable range. The kurtosis values are between -.997 and 4.044, within the acceptable range. This indicates that the data for the study's variables are normally distributed. The normal distribution is significant for data analyses, and complying with this criterion strengthens the quality of any further analyses or contributions drawn from the normally distributed data.

3.4. Correlations

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between each pair of variables to check the degree of similarity between variables based on the variation in response to other variables. Table 2 illustrates the outcome of the correlation analysis between variables.

Table 2.

Correlations.

	I	E	P	Aw	Cons	Conv	R	Ad	T
I	1								
E	-0.269**	1							
P	0.766**	-0.342**	1						
Aw	0.835**	-0.275**	0.796**	1					
Cons	0.851**	-0.239**	0.774**	0.873**	1				
Conv	0.790**	-0.225**	0.720**	0.775**	0.854**	1			
R	0.770**	-0.249**	0.720**	0.763**	0.805**	0.826**	1		
Ad	0.798**	-0.204**	0.730**	0.804**	0.826**	0.826**	0.826**	1	
T	0.795**	-0.213**	0.678**	0.774**	0.799**	0.808**	0.825**	0.828**	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Awareness and consideration have the highest correlation of 0.873, the lowest correlation was between Expertise and Personality with a value of -0.342, and Expertise has low correlations with other variables. The correlations between the dependent variables ranged between 0.774 and 0.873, and between trustfulness and other variables ranged between 0.774 and 0.825. The values of correlations between variables are less than 0.90, which is acceptable based on the study's recommendation by Tariq et al. [54].

3.5. Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) implements the entire model, including all variables and indicators, all relationships between variables according to the theoretical framework, and the measurement model for the loadings between indicators and their associated variables. The SEM includes three independent variables (Interaction, Expertise, and Personality) representing the Social Media Influencer factors and five dependent variables (Awareness, Consideration, Conversion, Retention, and Advocacy) representing the Customer Journey elements. Figure 9 illustrates the outcome of the Structural Equation Modeling analysis.

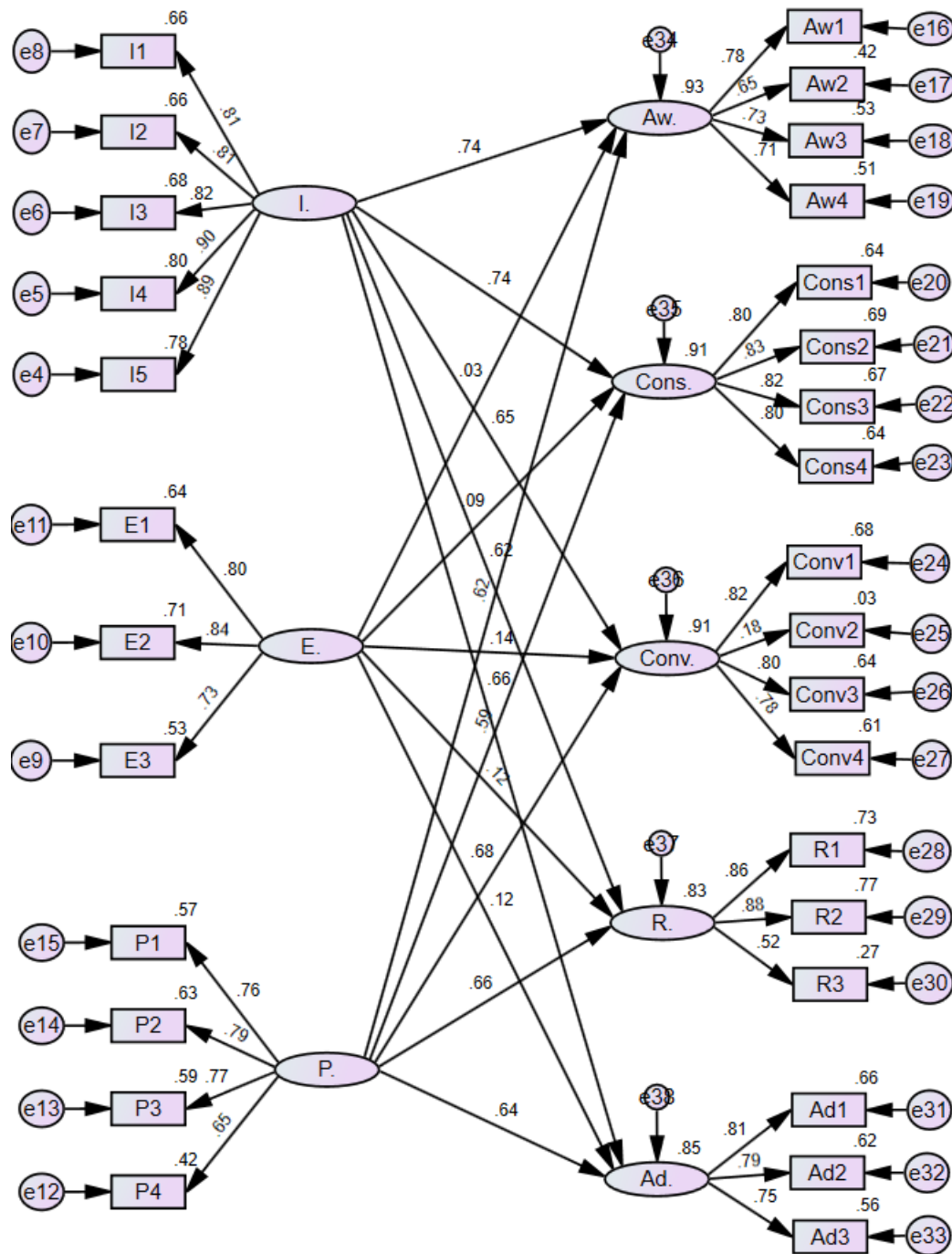


Figure 9.
Structural Equation Modelling Outcome.

3.6. Factor Loadings

The value of the regression path coefficient is called the factor loading. This value is recommended to be more than 0.5 [55]. The square value of the factor loading for an indicator indicates how much the related variable explains the indicator's variance. According to the results, factor loadings of each variable were as follows: interaction variable between .811 and .895, expertise variable between 0.727 and 0.84, personality variable 0.652 and 0.794, awareness variable between .647 and .778, consideration variable between 0.802 and 0.832, conversion variable between 0.783 and 0.884, retention variable between 0.524 and 0.876, and advocacy variable between 0.746 and 0.810. As a result, all factor loadings are above the recommended threshold of 0.5, indicating that each indicator sufficiently explains a substantial portion of the variance of its related latent variable. This level of factor loadings supports the reliability and validity of the measurement model, ensuring that the indicators are appropriate and effective measures of their respective constructs. As a result, the constructs are well-represented by their indicators, contributing to the overall robustness of the study. The acceptability of factor loadings above 0.5 ensures that the indicators are valid and reliable measures of the latent variables, supporting the structural equation model's integrity and the study's overall conclusions.

The value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to assess the convergent validity. All (AVE) values were more than 0.5, indicating the satisfaction of convergent validity for all variables subjected to Structural Equation Modelling [58].

All (CR) values were more than 0.7, suggesting the satisfaction of composite reliability for all variables subjected to Structural Equation Modelling [55].

3.7. R-Squares of the Dependent Variables Based on (SEM) Analysis

The R-squared value is the variance ratio explained by the independent variables. The value of R-squared for Awareness is .931, indicating that 93.1% of this variable's variance is explained by the three factors of Social Media Influencers. The R-squared value for consideration is .906, indicating that 90.6% of this variable's variance is explained by the three factors of Social Media Influencer (Interaction, Expertise, and Personality). The R-squared value for conversion is .913, indicating that 91.3% of this variable's variance is explained by the three factors of Social Media Influencer (Interaction, Expertise, and Personality). The R-squared value for retention is .828, indicating that 82.8% of this variable's variance is explained by the three factors of Social Media Influencer (Interaction, Expertise, and Personality). The R-squared value for advocacy is .854, indicating that 90.6% of this variable's variance is explained by the three factors of Social Media Influencer (Interaction, Expertise, and Personality). All values of R-squared are higher than 0.5, suggesting an acceptable model [52].

Table 3.

R-squares of the dependent variables.

Variable	R-Square
Ad.	0.854
R.	0.828
Conv.	0.913
Cons.	0.906
Aw.	0.931

3.8. Hypothesis Testing

The P-value indicates the significance level of the relationship, and the standardized coefficient indicates the direction and strength of the relationship. Table 4 describes the results of (SEM):

Table 4.

Structural Equation Results.

Path	Standardized Coefficient(β)	Unstandardized Coefficient	S.E.	CR.	P
Aw. <--- I.	0.523	0.741	0.031	16.747	***
Cons. <--- I.	0.573	0.741	0.032	17.703	***
Conv. <--- I.	0.525	0.653	0.032	16.572	***
R. <--- I.	0.461	0.619	0.029	15.704	***
Ad. <--- I.	0.454	0.655	0.029	15.443	***
Aw. <--- E.	0.042	0.032	0.045	.951	.341
Cons. <--- E.	0.137	0.095	0.044	3.082	.002
Conv. <--- E.	0.204	0.136	0.051	4.016	***
R. <--- E.	0.166	0.120	0.050	3.353	***
Ad. <--- E.	0.152	0.117	0.048	3.192	.001
R. <--- P.	0.867	0.657	0.070	12.324	***
Ad. <--- P.	0.787	0.641	0.067	11.805	***
Aw. <--- P.	0.772	0.617	0.066	11.757	***
Cons. <--- P.	0.810	0.590	0.067	12.051	***
Conv. <--- P.	0.975	0.684	0.077	12.624	***

3.9. Interaction effect related Hypotheses

According to the results as described in Table 4, interaction has a significant positive effect on awareness ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.523$), which supports hypothesis H1: “Interaction has a significant positive effect on Awareness at sig ≤ 0.05 ”. Interaction has a significant positive effect on consideration as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.573$), which supports hypothesis H2: “Interaction has a significant positive effect on Consideration at sig ≤ 0.05 ”. Interaction has a significant positive effect on conversion as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.525$), which supports hypothesis H3: “Interaction has a significant positive effect on Conversion at sig ≤ 0.05 ”. Interaction has a significant positive effect on retention as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.461$), which supports hypothesis H4: “Interaction has a significant positive effect on Retention at sig ≤ 0.05 ”, and interaction has a significant positive effect on advocacy as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.454$), which supports hypothesis H5: “Interaction has significant positive effect on Advocacy at sig ≤ 0.05 ”.

3.10. Expertise effect related Hypotheses

According to the results as described in Table 4, expertise does not have a significant effect on awareness as ($P = 0.341$), which rejects hypothesis H6: “Expertise has a significant positive effect on Awareness at sig ≤ 0.05 ”. Expertise has a significant positive effect on consideration as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.137$), which supports hypothesis H7: “Expertise has a significant

positive effect on Consideration at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ". Expertise has a significant positive effect on conversion as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.204$), which supports hypothesis H8: "Expertise has a significant positive effect on Conversion at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ". Expertise has a significant positive effect on retention as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.166$), which supports hypothesis H9: "Expertise has a significant positive effect on Retention at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ", and expertise has a significant positive effect on advocacy as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.152$), which supports hypothesis H10: "Expertise has a significant positive effect on Advocacy at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ".

3.11. Personality Effect Related Hypotheses

According to the results as described in Table 4, personality has a significant positive effect on awareness ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.772$), which supports hypothesis H11: "Personality has a significant positive effect on Awareness at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ". Personality has a significant positive effect on consideration as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.810$), which supports hypothesis H12: "Personality has a significant positive effect on Consideration at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ". Personality has a significant positive effect on conversion as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.975$), which supports hypothesis H13: "Personality has a significant positive effect on Conversion at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ". Personality has a significant positive effect on retention as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.867$), which supports hypothesis H14: "Personality has a significant positive effect on Retention at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ", and personality has a significant positive effect on advocacy as ($P < 0.05$, $\beta = 0.787$), which supports hypothesis H15: "Personality has a significant positive effect on Advocacy at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ".

3.12. Moderating Effect Hypothesis

To test the effect of trustfulness in moderating the relationship between social media influencers and customer journeys, the researcher conducted a hierarchical regression analysis employing social media influencers and customer Journeys as one construct. The results of the analysis are shown in the following tables:

Table 5.
Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.879 ^a	0.773	0.773	0.42596	0.773	1393.879	1	409	0.000
2	0.928 ^b	0.861	0.860	0.33366	0.088	258.565	1	408	0.000

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), SMI

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMI, T.

Table 6.
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	252.908	1	252.908	1393.879	.000 ^b
	Residual	74.210	409	0.181		
	Total	327.117	410			
2	Regression	281.694	2	140.847	1265.115	.000 ^c
	Residual	45.423	408	0.111		
	Total	327.117	410			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: CJ

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMI

c. Predictors: (Constant), SMI, T.

Table 7.
Coefficients^a.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.336	0.101		-3.332	0.001
	SMI	1.211	0.032	0.879	37.335	0.000
2	(Constant)	-0.084	0.080		-1.047	0.296
	SMI	0.707	0.040	0.514	17.543	0.000
	T	0.405	0.025	0.471	16.080	0.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: CJ.

Based on the results in Tables 5, 6, and 7, social media influencers positively affect the customer journey ($P = 0.00$, $t = 37.335$, $\text{Beta} = 0.879$), and the R-squared value was 0.773. After adding trustfulness, the R-squared value was enhanced to 0.860. The change in R-squared indicates that trustfulness moderated the effect of social media influencers on customer journeys. Trustfulness in the model as a moderating variable strengthens the model and the total effect on the customer journey, which supports Hypothesis H16: "Trustfulness moderates the relationship between social media influencers and the customer journey at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$."

4. Discussion

The combined results provide a clear understanding of how social media influencers affect customer journeys in all stages by testing three influencers' characteristics: interaction, expertise, and personality. The findings of the tested hypotheses suggest that marketers should cooperate with social media influencers who have expertise and knowledge of the products and brands they promote. Social media influencers should also connect and build strong relationships with customers and the brands they promote by interacting with the target audience. A social media influencer's personality should align with society's culture, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior to be more credible and reliable to the customer.

The findings support the interaction hypotheses form (1-5) that interaction significantly positively affects awareness, consideration, conversion, retention, and advocacy. This is aligned with the study of Dinc [21], which confirms that influencers can reach more people on social media with greater engagement, which increases their visibility and effect. In addition, Koay et al. [22] focused on the role of SMI interaction that affects their followers' behavior and intentions. This study chimes with Serman and Sims [26] who found that parasocial interaction between SMLs and their audience did not influence their behavior in their shopping journey.

Results reject hypothesis six, as expertise had no significant effect on awareness. This contradicts a previous study by Al-Abdallah et al. [50], which may be because the awareness stage is primarily about visibility and emotional connection rather than credibility. In later stages, customers seek trusted and knowledgeable sources to help themselves with their decisions. During the awareness phase, personality and interaction-based attributes, which encourage initial engagement and attention, are usually more powerful [4]. This resonates with findings indicating that entertainment and connection matter more than expert knowledge in attracting consumers at the early stages of the customer funnel [53].

Results support the expertise hypotheses (7-10) that expertise has significantly positive effects. According to Al Kurdi et al. [30], customers are influenced by SMIs who have experience and knowledge about the products they promote. In addition, SMIs' expertise positively affects customers' purchase intention when a customer perceives SMIs' trustworthiness [19]. In contrast, other findings indicate that SMIs' expertise did not influence purchase intentions in skin beautification in Jordanian society because customers rely on E-word of mouth when they make their purchase decisions [18]. This is consistent with the findings of Chan [34], which show that SMIs' knowledge and expertise do not influence customers in the awareness stage, but there is an excellent effect on SMIs' personalities and attitudes.

The findings also support the personality's hypotheses form (11-15) that personality significantly positively affects Awareness, Consideration, Conversion, Retention and Advocacy. These results align with previous scholars' who found that SMIs' personality traits, such as similarity, significantly affect interaction with customers with the same information preferences [7]. Moreover, SMIs should build trust with their audience by promoting products and brands representing their personalities to reflect their credibility and not as monetary values [11]. Additionally, marketers should cooperate with SMIs to promote their services because the behavioral intentions of Generation Z (12- 28) years old are influenced by SMIs' attractiveness [53].

Finally, the results support the hypothesis (16) that trustfulness moderates the relationship between social media influencers and the customer journey at $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$. The findings confirm that social media influencers positively affect customer journeys ($P=0.00$, $\text{Beta}=0.879$), and the R-Square value is 0.773. After adding trustfulness, the R-squared value is enhanced to 0.860. The change in R-squared indicates that trustfulness moderates the effect of social media influencers on customer journeys. The existence of trustfulness in the model as a moderating variable strengthens the model and the total effect on the customer journey, which supports Hypothesis H16.

These findings are consistent with Abid et al. [6] that SMIs' Trustworthiness impacts customers' purchase decisions. In addition, Al-Abdallah et al. [50] concluded that trustfulness significantly impacts customers' intentions to buy and the degree to which customers follow SMIs. Moreover, Chaturvedi [25] found that SMIs' trustworthiness influences the customer journey in all stages. On the other hand, SMIs' trustfulness as a mediator variable is critical in influencing all customer journey stages in the tourism sector [5]. Additionally, Hovland and Weiss [51] concluded that customers' perceived trust in SMIs significantly impacts customers' awareness of the brand and their intentions to buy, increasing the company's market share.

The study shows that social media influencers (SMIs) affect customers throughout the online journey, with personality being the most influential characteristic. Interaction creates the environment for engagement and visibility, whereas expertise adds credibility, especially at decision-making stages. Nevertheless, the study reveals a more complex truth: Simply displaying expertise may not boost brand awareness since consumers often rely on various sources on the web for first learning about products.

This function of trustfulness as a moderator enriches these findings, highlighting its key role as a gatekeeper to the effectiveness of SMIs. When consumers trust them, the effectiveness of interaction, expertise, and personality reinforces customer retention and advocacy. These results align with earlier studies and highlight the need to ensure SMIs' characteristics are aligned with brand values and correspond to target audience expectations (i.e., [29]).

5. Recommendations

Marketers should use highly standardized criteria when selecting the SMIs that present and promote their products and brands. They should focus on SMIs' personalities aligning with their target audiences to be more attractive and credible. In addition, marketers should choose individuals with excellent knowledge and expertise about the products they promote to be more persuasive. Moreover, this study recommends that SMIs work hard to develop their personalities to be acceptable to their target audiences. This can happen by studying customers' preferences, behaviors, and attitudes. Further research should investigate the impact of different types of SMIs on customer journeys, such as Macro, Micro, and Nano, to determine the most effective way to attract customers in their shopping journey.

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