The New Game of Online Marketing: How Social Media Influencers Drive Online Repurchase Intentions Through Brand Trust and Customer Brand Engagement

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the impact of social media influencers (SMIs) on online repurchase intentions through brand trust and customer engagement in the cosmetics sector.

Design/methodology/approach: The study framework and hypotheses in this paper were tested using a questionnaire survey approach, with the consumer as the unit of analysis. The study's main target was individuals who purchase cosmetics products through social media platforms. Questionnaire items were created using a measurement scale employed in an earlier study. A Likert scale of seven points, ranging from 1 to 7, was used to grade the questionnaire items. Responses ranged from strong disagreement to strong agreement.

Findings: In general, this study revealed that social media influencers have a significant positive direct impact on brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intentions. Moreover, social media influencers were the most vital determinant of online repurchase intention, followed by brand trust and customer brand engagement. Moreover, customer brand engagement had a significant positive impact on brand trust. Additionally, brand trust and customer brand engagement impacted significantly and positively on online repurchase intention. The mediation analysis results found that customer brand engagement did not mediate the positive impact of social media influencers on online repurchase intention. Furthermore, it was found that brand trust mediated the positive impact of social media influencers on online repurchase intentions. This study is among the first to offer empirical evidence to demonstrate that social media influencers act as a route to online repurchase intention through brand trust and customer brand engagement.

Research limitations/implications: This study has several limitations. The first one is that it was only conducted in one country. Using samples from a single country (Jordan) may produce culture-specific findings that are difficult to generalise across other settings. The second limitation of this study is related to the target population. In this study, researchers surveyed individuals who purchased cosmetics products through social media platforms.

Practical implications: As the use of social media rises, social media influencers have an ever-greater impact on customers' online purchase and repurchase intentions, as customers deem influencers to be ideal role models they aim to imitate.

Originality/value: The study is highly valuable for marketing strategies, as social media influencers have a powerful impact on effective marketing strategies.

To cite this article:

1. Introduction

The growth of social media has resulted in the rise of a group of individuals known as "influencers" These include "Instagrammers," "YouTubers," and "Bloggers." Influencer marketing has come about in response to increased use of social media and the enormous interest and popularity these new platforms have brought (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, influencers are not merely marketing tools for social media sites; they are also social connection assets that companies can partner with to achieve their marketing objectives (Siqi & Yee, 2021). By establishing themselves on social media as relatable and accessible specialists, social media influencers provide a new marketing tool for brand managers, transforming how marketing is conducted out and how customers connect with products and services (Taillon, Mueller, Kowalczyk & Jones, 2020).

The impact of social media influencers is rising on social networks, and they are serving as intermediaries between companies and customers (Leite & Baptista, 2022). In fact, social media influencers with strong persuasive power may significantly impact customers' purchase intentions (Cheng, Regt & Fawaz, 2022), brand trust (Celik, 2022) and customer brand engagement (AlFarraj, Alalwan, Obeidat, Baabdullah, Aldmour & Al-Haddad, 2021). In recent years, companies have increasingly resorted to working with social media influencers because they generate content which is highly valued by consumers (Anaya-Sanchez, Mesas-Ruiz, Molinillo-Jimenez & Japutra, 2022). Nearly 93% of marketers utilise influencers to reach online customers (Wojtun, 2022). In other words, these influencers are how digital marketing will be conducted in the future (Al-Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2023). According to Statista (2023), the global market for influencer marketing was $148 million in 2019, and it is expected to rise to $248 million in 2024 and $337 million in 2027. See Figure 1 below.
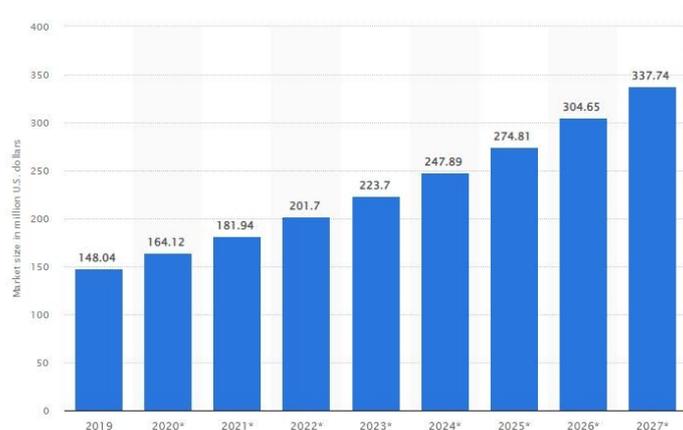

Figure 1. Influencer Marketing Platform Market Size Worldwide 2019-2027 (Statista, 2023)

According to Sokolova and Kefi (2020), using social media influencers has become part and parcel of contemporary brand marketing strategies. The endorsements of influencers wield significant influence that surpasses that of brands. Consequently, social media influencers challenge other marketing strategies, underscoring brand needs to keep ahead and to comprehend the factors that sway consumer behaviour (Rokka, Mattsson & Vuorivirta, 2022). Given the rise of influencers, it is critical to comprehend their impact on customers and how they convert their followers into customers (Leite & Baptista, 2022).

The surge in fascination with social media influencers has risen dramatically and continues to grow. However, current research on social media influencers is still incipient and, therefore, needs to be studied in greater detail (Yahia & Al-Mudahka, 2023). Vanha-Aho (2023) contended that despite the amount of research on social media influencers, the field is still nascent. Consequently, it is imperative to cultivate an all-encompassing theoretical comprehension of social media influencers (Rokka et al., 2022). According to Djafarova and Bowes (2021), a research gap exists on this group's influence on consumption, thereby warranting further investigation. Influencers are a recent phenomenon that has yet to be extensively researched in terms of their relationship and influence on online repurchase intention, brand trust, and customer brand engagement.

Jordan has around 6.61 million social media users, representing 58.4% of the country's population (Freihat, 2023). It was chosen for the study considering the country's widespread use of social media. Individuals who purchased cosmetics products through social media platforms were carefully identified. The cosmetics industry has reaped substantial benefits from the rise of social media, which is why brands are increasingly turning to digital media to raise their visibility and credibility and boost their sales (Höfer, 2021). Social media platforms strongly influence large audiences and contribute to the heightened demand for cosmetics products (Li & Chen, 2023). Cosmetics brands are increasingly partnering up with influencers, paying them to promote their products, create tutorials to showcase their use and potential, as well as to gain consumer trust to drive more traffic to their websites (Xu, 2023).

The decision to narrow the focus of this study to the cosmetics industry stemmed from a dual rationale. Firstly, there is a noticeable void in existing research specifically addressing influencers within the cosmetics sector, leaving a significant gap in understanding the dynamics of influencer impact in this particular industry. Secondly, given the substantial financial investments made by global cosmetics businesses in annual marketing activities, it becomes crucial to explore and comprehend social media influencers' role in enhancing marketing efficiency within this context. By exploring this niche, the study aimed to provide valuable insights that can inform and benefit companies operating in the dynamic and competitive landscape of the cosmetics industry.

Based on the above, this study aimed to investigate the effects of social media influencers on online repurchase intentions in the cosmetics industry. The study also investigated the mediation role of brand trust and customer engagement in the connections between social media influencers and online repurchase intention. By comprehending these connections, the research offers valuable insights for marketers and influencers which can be used to create more efficient influencer marketing tactics and content that can positively impact consumers' online repurchase intentions for the advertised brands and the likelihood of them buying the promoted cosmetics products.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Social Media Influencers

Recent years have seen an upsurge in the amount of research about influencer marketing (Ao, Bansal, Pruthi & Khaskheli, 2023; Hudders & De Jans, 2022; Munnukka, Maity, Reinikainen & Luoma-aho, 2019). Social media influencers constitute a novel category of independent third-party endorsers who change consumer attitudes through blogs, tweets, and other social media (Venkatesan, Yorde-Rincon, Grevers, Welch & Cline, 2023). These influencers are active users who prefer to monitor specific trends and topics, delivering up-to-date information to followers (Cut-Nurvajri, Yunus & Chan, 2022). Thanks to their ability to start trends and persuade followers to purchase the goods and services they advertise, brands like social media influencers. It is becoming clear that they are used as a marketing and advertising platform (Kemec, 2020).

Using social media influencers is one of the most effective marketing tactics for promoting goods and services (Ronnhed & Wiksborg, 2021). Social media influencers have a range of alternatives to generate different types of content on social media platforms, including Facebook Live, TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat (Du, 2022). People often follow social media channels that post content they are interested in. This may hasten their decision-making process and help companies target the most appropriate market (Shahbaznezhad, Dolan & Rashidirad, 2021). Influencers provide a shortcut to many prospective consumers who would not otherwise have access to a brand. A partnership between a brand and the appropriate influencer may also help a business reach its intended audience. If this person is trusted, influencer marketing may also assist a brand in creating trust, image, and credibility (Tóth, 2022). The opportunity for two-way contact between the influencer and the user is another advantage of social media influencers (Khan, Raza & Zaman, 2022).

In addition, social media influencers successfully strengthen brand image and attitude and make a difference in highly competitive marketplaces (Mattke, Muller & Maier, 2019). According to studies, consumers are more likely to purchase after hearing positive recommendations about their favourite brands from social media influencers (Al-Qatami, 2019). Collaborations with social media influencers are on the rise as more brands realise the potential of this new method of reaching consumers. Their influence on customers' purchasing behaviour is considerably higher than that of conventional marketing methods.

The number of followers represents the popularity of influencers, and more followers imply a broader audience to communicate commercial messaging, which is essential for brands. Companies often aim for an image of sincerity and trustworthiness when collaborating with an influencer (Kemec & Yuksel, 2021). This is because consumers trust social media influencers almost as much as they trust their friends (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers are identified based on how they engage with a brand and their capacity to influence others (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). Marketers may choose from a diverse pool of influencers to market their products according to different characteristics based on brand recognition, follower base, engagement rate, and skill sets. Along these lines, Figure 2 shows five unique categories representing perceived authenticity, accessibility, subject matter knowledge, cultural capital, and follower counts (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).
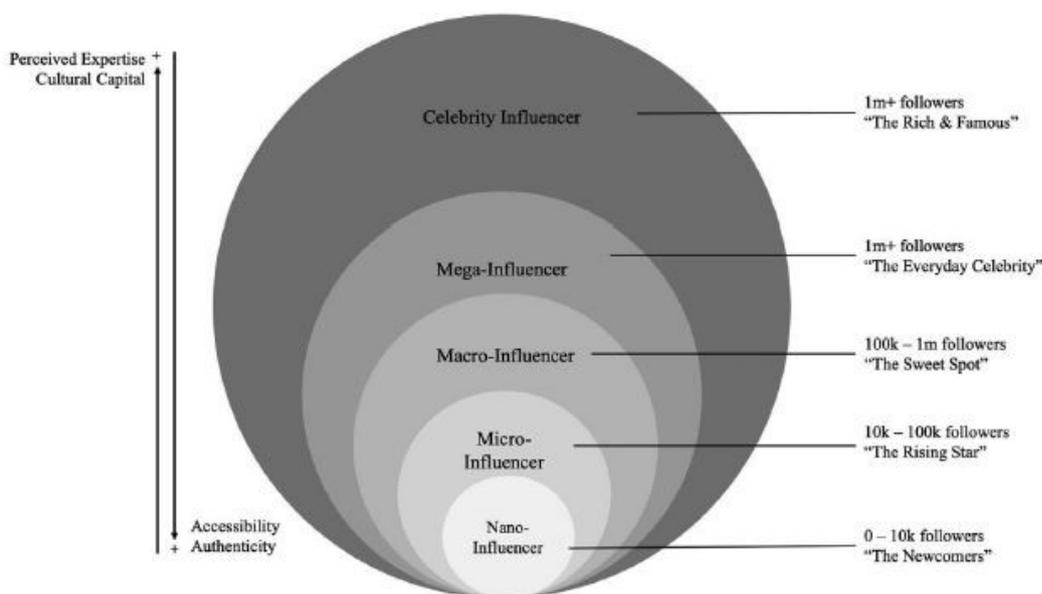
Figure 2. Influencer categories (Campbell & Farrell, 2020)

Trust and sincerity are the most crucial brand factors when selecting an influencer (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Trust in influencers and their credibility are essential in their parasocial interaction with consumers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Kemec & Yuksel, 2021). Businesses use influencers as a marketing technique because of their attractiveness and credibility (Breves, Liebers, Abt & Kunze, 2019). According to

specific research published in the literature, influencers' credibility impacts on customers' purchasing intentions and brand trust (Nascimento, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Credibility is defined as having experience and offering reliable information about a topic. Although the term "experience" denotes subject-matter expertise, the term "trustworthy" relates to the reliability and sincerity of the source (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián & Ibanez-Sanchez, 2021). Source credibility has emerged as a crucial topic for research in fields including advertising, marketing, and communication (Kemec, 2020). One of the most popular models for influencer endorsements is Ohanian's source credibility model (e.g., Mammadli, 2021; Na, Kunkel & Doyle, 2020; Siqi & Yee, 2021). Ohanian (1990) classified the sub-dimensions of the source credibility scale as expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. Table 1 shows Ohanian's source credibility model.

Dimensions Measured	Items
Expertise	– Expert—Not an expert – Experienced—Inexperienced – Knowledgeable-Unknowledgeable – Qualified—Unqualified – Skilled-Unskilled
Trustworthiness	– Dependable—Undependable – Honest—Dishonest – Reliable—Unreliable – Sincere—Insincere – Trustworthy—Untrustworthy
Attractiveness	– Attractive—Unattractive – Classy—Not Classy – Beautiful—Ugly – Elegant—Plain – Sexy—Not sexy

Table 1. Ohanian's source credibility scale (Kemec, 2020)

Expertise. Knowledge and experience are two sub-dimensions of expertise, which is the most critical dimension if approved items are to succeed (AlFarraj et al., 2021). In addition to suggesting that an experienced advertiser or influencer can provide what is promised to the consumers in the advertising, Tille (2020) defined expertise as the endorser's experience, knowledge, talent, and qualification.

Trustworthiness. This is about the source's integrity, accuracy, and credibility, and may alter depending on how the target audience perceives it. The message will be more readily received when the source is trustworthy. The intended outcome cannot be achieved if it is not. There are five qualities of trustworthiness: honesty, dependability, reliability, sincerity, and trustworthiness (Ozboluk & Akdogan, 2022).

Attractiveness. According to Ozboluk and Akdogan (2022), the more appealing the source, the more likely the buyer is to make a purchase. A social media influencer's ability to exert influence is positively impacted by his or her attractiveness. In addition, Lou and Yuan (2019) came to the conclusion that a visually alluring social media influencer helps to draw and focus followers' attention, so they recognise and remember the sponsored brand. Moreover, when deciding whether to follow new accounts, people are heavily swayed by the attractiveness of an influencer in their photographs on social networking sites like Instagram (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

2.2. Brand Trust

Brand trust is a customer's faith in a brand and its capacity to deliver as promised under pressure (Wolff, 2022). Brand trust is the extent to which an individual consumer believes a brand will fulfil on its promise (Kemec, 2020). When consumers feel vulnerable in an uncertain situation, trust becomes more critical and reduces uncertainty because consumers know they can rely on a trustworthy brand. Trust is also crucial for businesses to build a strong relationship between consumers and brands (Kemec & Yuksel, 2021). Consumers build their trust in a brand based on their expectations of the product's performance and the company's behaviour (Budi, Hidayat & Mani, 2021). Kolarova (2018) found that when a firm gains a customer's trust, the customer is more likely to promote the company's product to others (54% of the time).

Brand trust is one of the most crucial elements of building a great brand in today's online environment (Jatiyananda, Nurittamont & Phayaphrom, 2021). Trust is a crucial component of loyalty since it fosters highly valued connections (Villagra, Monfort & Sanchez-Herrera, 2021). Trust has four elements: competence, predictability, benevolence and integrity. The set of abilities, competencies and traits that give the trustee sway in a specific field is known as competence.

Integrity is the trustor's belief that a trustee's activities are consistent with good values and encompass honesty and morality (Kox & Hueting, 2021). The belief that a trustee would not act opportunistically against the trustor, even when given the opportunity, is known as benevolence (Collier, Guin, Sarkis & Lambert, 2022). The predictability dimension reflects the perception of a brand's constancy in its behaviour. It helps to alleviate early ambiguity by establishing what is often expected of a trustee operating in good faith (Hegner & Jevons, 2016).

2.3. Customer Brand Engagement

Customers' brand engagement pertains to the extent of cognitive, emotional and behavioural involvement that consumers exhibit in their interactions with a brand across various communication channels (Cheung, Leung, Yang, Koay & Chang, 2022). Contemporary marketing literature has emphasised customer brand engagement, which constitutes an essential facet of customer engagement (Molina-Prados, Munoz-Leiva & Prados-Peña, 2022). The term "customer brand engagement" has gained significant attention among marketers and scholars in a constantly changing, unpredictable business environment (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Various scholars have formulated the concept of customer brand engagement and concur that this involvement leads to behavioural outcomes (Lim, Rasul, Kumar & Ala, 2022; Prentice, Weaven & Wong, 2020).

The literature suggests that there is a positive correlation between customer brand engagement and various organisational outcomes such as enhanced corporate performance (Garg, Gupta, Dzever, Sivarajah & Kumar, 2020), improved competitive positioning (Gong, 2018), the creation of new markets (Storbacka, Brodie, Böhmann, Maglio & Nenonen, 2016), and increased customer satisfaction, loyalty and trust in the brand (Kholis & Ratnawati, 2021). According to Pratomo and Magetsari (2018), customer engagement with a brand is more than just a contact process between customers and brands; it is a crucial instrument in cultivating more profound connections between them and brands. Previous research has shown that firms with high levels of consumer engagement perform well in terms of both their brands and profits (Tarabieh, 2022). Majeed, Asare, Fatawu and Abubakari (2022) stated that businesses can attain their objectives, including sales growth, cost reduction, improved customer experiences, higher profitability, and customer loyalty through heightened customer brand engagement. As per the findings of previous research conducted by Pansari and Kumar (2017), a significant proportion of marketers, over 80%, aim to acquire engaged customers to enhance trust and advocacy.

The term "cognitive engagement" pertains to the level of interest or concern consumers show about a particular brand. This reflects their capacity to comprehend and acknowledge various aspects of the brand (Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger, Leung & Sharipudin, 2021). Emotional engagement pertains to the favourable emotions that consumers experience about a particular brand, such as happiness, love and pride, due to their interactions with it (Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger, Leung & Chang, 2021). Behavioural engagement pertains to the exertion, vigour, and duration of consumers' involvement in their interactions with brands and customers. In general, customers' level of brand engagement indicates their willingness to invest time and energy in comprehending brands. It is a significant metric for assessing the degree of relationship intensity between consumers and brands (Cheung et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study employed the dimensions of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement set out by Cheung et al. in 2022 to measure customer brand engagement.

2.4. Online Repurchase Intention

Online repurchase intention pertains to an individual's inclination to engage in another purchase from the same company based on their prior experience (Hui, Dastane, Johari & Roslee, 2021). Various marketing studies have underscored the significance of online repurchase intention as a determinant of success in online shopping (Khan, Panditharathna, & Bamber, 2020). The intention to repurchase online is a manifestation of customer loyalty, indicating a strong affinity with the brand and a greater likelihood of engaging in word-of-mouth promotion of it and its products. Furthermore, if the services provided are dependable and meet customer

expectations, there is a greater likelihood of customer loyalty and repeat business for the company. The intention to repurchase online is a crucial aspect of the success and profitability of e-commerce establishments. It is also a key objective for marketers, as it determines the organisation's sustainability (De Canio, Martinelli & Endrighi, 2021).

The significance of online repurchase intention is that retaining a customer is more cost-effective than acquiring a new one. Consequently, the behaviour of existing customers towards repurchasing generates greater profitability for the company (Tong, 2020). Numerous studies have confirmed that repeat customers generate greater profits for firms, as they are less expensive to maintain. In addition, they require less time to evaluate and make purchases due to their familiarity with the online purchasing process (Chiu & Cho, 2021). According to Phan-Tan and Le (2023), establishing a competitive advantage in the market can be achieved through the intention to repurchase online. The primary factor influencing repurchase is previous purchasing experiences. According to Antwi and Amponsah (2021), online consumers are more likely to repurchase from a particular retailer, provided they have experienced value and satisfaction with their previous acquisition. According to Wu, Wu and Schlegelmilch (2020), a favourable purchasing experience can positively affect consumers and encourages them to share positive feedback through online reviews.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

The concept of social media influencers is a recent phenomenon that has yet to be extensively researched in terms of its relationship and influence on online repurchase intention, brand trust, and customer brand engagement. Consequently, it is imperative to cultivate an all-encompassing theoretical comprehension of social media influencers (Rokka et al., 2022). According to Djafarova and Bowes (2021), a research gap exists about influencers' impact on consumption, thereby warranting further investigation. This study required a suitable conceptual framework, and it had to be developed to fit the context in which it was conducted (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). Figure 3 shows how the suggested theoretical framework was organised. The conceptual outline of the article included four theoretical constructs: online repurchase intention, brand trust, customer brand engagement and social media influencers. The model also took eight research hypotheses into account.
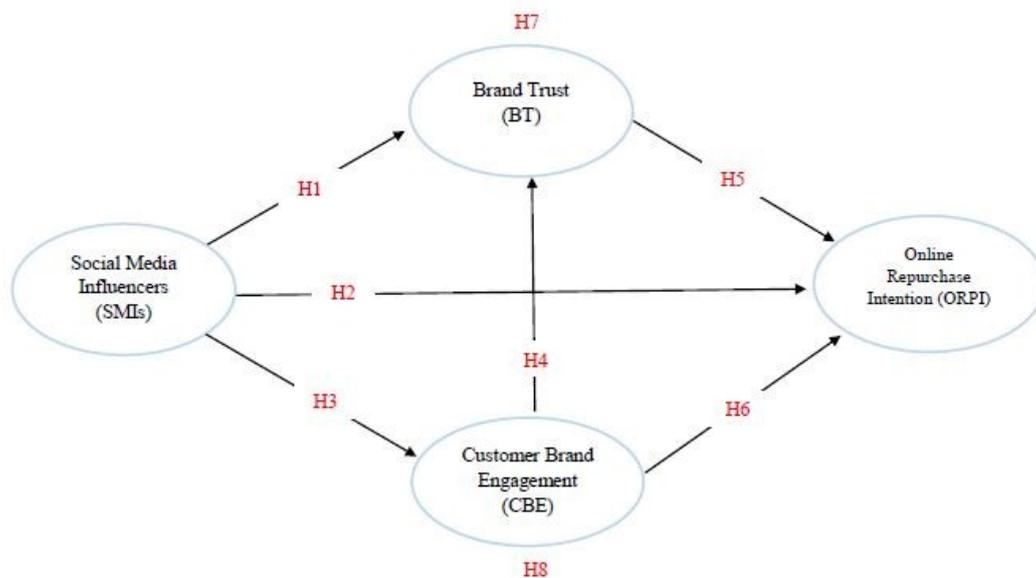
Figure 3.Theoretical framework

3. Research Hypotheses
3.1. The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Brand Trust

Wolff (2022) discovered that trust can be transferred. Thus, the trustworthiness of social media influencers, along with other personality traits, has the potential to cultivate brand trust when endorsing a brand. Additionally, the transfer of trust from an influencer to a brand is contingent upon individuals' experience with

the influencer. Meaning that the trustworthiness of an influencer is a crucial factor in determining the extent to which their endorsement impacts on consumers' trust in a brand. Furthermore, the engagement of influencers has been found to positively impact the level of consumer brand trust (Britt, Hayes, Britt & Park, 2020).

According to Reinikainen, Tan, Luoma-aho and Salo (2021), there is a link between a favourable association with a social media influencer and a positive, trusting relationship with a brand that an influencer has promoted. According to Martin, Khoshtaria and Todua (2022), when social media influencers provide informative content, this can develop brand trust among followers. Using social media influencers in social media brand campaigns enables a brand to connect directly with potential customers, ultimately promoting brand trust (Celik, 2022). Thus, this study puts forward the hypothesis that:

> *H1: social media influencers have a significant positive impact on brand trust*

3.2. The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Online Repurchase Intention

According to Jimenez-Castillo and Sanchez-Fernández (2019), using social media influencers has increased consumers' online purchase intentions. The impact of social media influencers on these intentions is determined by their perceived authority, expertise (Kádeková & Holiencinova, 2018), trustworthiness (Bendoni & Danielian, 2019), and relationship with their followers (Wolff, 2022). Terziev and Andreeva's (2020) research provided additional evidence supporting the impact of social media influencers on consumers' online purchase intentions. According to Kolarova (2018), social media influencers and online purchase intentions correlated positively.

Marketers' utilisation of social media influencers for promotional purposes has recently become more prevalent. This approach aims to cultivate a favourable brand perception and elicit online purchase inclination (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi & Thrassou, 2021). A favourable perception of the credibility of influencers is positively associated with an increase in the intention to purchase, which subsequently enhances the likelihood of actual purchases. According to a recent study by Hussain and Ali (2022), a significant proportion of consumers (40%) have reported purchasing products endorsed by social media influencers after placing trust in their recommendations. Additionally, the study found that 49% of customers relied on the recommendations of social media influencers when making purchasing decisions. Thus, the researcher of this study hypothesised that:

> *H2: social media influencers have a significant positive impact on online repurchase intention*

3.3. The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Customer Brand Engagement

Jaitly and Gautam (2021) posited that social media influencers can potentially increase customer brand engagement on social media platforms. According to the research conducted by Duh and Thabethe (2021), social media influencers significantly impact the engagement of branded content endorsed on social media. Jaakonmaki, Muller and Vom Brocke (2017) emphasised the importance of selecting an appropriate influencer for a company, as this decision can significantly impact user engagement levels. The role of an influencer in driving user engagement is influenced by creator-related factors such as the use of content and context, number of followers, creator's age, and gender. These factors are considered imperative in determining the effectiveness of an influencer in engaging users. According to Wolff's (2022) research, brands employ social media influencers as they are perceived to be more persuasive and capable of driving higher levels of engagement. Thus, this study hypothesised that:

> *H3: social media influencers have a significant positive impact on customer brand engagement*

3.4. The Impact of Customer Brand Engagement on Brand Trust

Establishing brand trust is a probable consequence of customer brand engagement as engaged individuals are more likely to be involved in trusting, high-quality relationships with an organisation. Additionally, the marketing literature posits that favourable extra-exchange relationship interactions boost levels of trust. Consequently, increased engagement is expected to build greater trust in a relationship (Rather, 2019).

The active engagement of customers with brand communities through interactive experiences is a significant factor in fostering trust. This is because consumers who engage in these activities become more acquainted with the brand's products. Hence, consumers can tackle concerns about the use of these goods. As a result, using the

brand's products reduces ambiguity among consumers, boosting their trust in the brand (Kwon, Jung, Choi & Kim, 2021). Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H4: customer brand engagement has a significant positive impact on brand trust

3.5. The Impact of Brand Trust on Online Repurchase Intention

Amoako, Kutu-Adu, Caesar and Neequaye (2019) established brand trust as being crucial in stimulating the likelihood of repeat online purchases. According to Trivedi and Yadav's (2018) research, trust is a significant factor that positively influences consumers' intention to purchase online. Combs (2020) found that a company's ability to establish trust among its current customers can expand the potential for consumer repurchase intention. According to Chanthasaksathian and Nuangjamnong (2021), repurchasing online is contingent upon establishing trust between the customer and the vendor. Trust has been identified as a significant indicator of repeat purchasing (Goutam, 2020). Ellitan, Harvina and Lukito (2022) posited that establishing brand trust is crucial in increasing purchase intentions. Maintaining brand trust is also paramount as it directly influences repurchase intention. Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H5: brand trust has a significant positive impact on online repurchase intention

3.6. The Impact of Customer Brand Engagement on Online Repurchase Intention

Customers who engage with a brand are more likely to cultivate favourable perceptions of the sellers than those who do not (Majeed et al., 2022). The study by Cheung, Pires, Rosenberger and De Oliveira (2020) suggested that a favourable correlation exists between customer brand engagement and online repurchase intention. According to Rather and Hollebeek (2019), customers who are highly engaged tend to experience a sense of empowerment following their interactions, resulting in favourable transactional consequences such as online repurchase intent. In the study by Liang, Choi and Joppe (2018), the intention to repurchase online was seen as a surrogate measure for actual purchase behaviour. According to Wu et al. (2020), using brand-interactivity elements on social media during engagement can enhance consumer attention, comprehension, and favourable sentiment, ultimately leading to increased repurchase intention. Thus, the researcher of this study hypothesised that:

H6: customer brand engagement has a significant positive impact on online repurchase intention

3.7. Social Media Influencers, Brand Trust, and Online Repurchase Intention

According to Lou and Yuan's (2019) research, social media influencers can impact on their followers' trust in a brand they endorse by transferring their personal traits onto the brand. In Leite and Baptista's (2022) findings, the intention to repurchase online was positively influenced by establishing brand trust. The trust that consumers place in a brand is positively correlated with their intention to repurchase products from it. This is due to the desire to prevent the potential disappointment that may arise from selecting a comparable product from a brand that lacks trustworthiness. Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H7: brand trust mediates the impact of social media influencers on online repurchase intention

3.8. Social Media Influencers, Customer Brand Engagement, and Online Repurchase Intention

According to Wolff's (2022) research, brands employ social media influencers as they are perceived to be more persuasive and capable of driving higher levels of engagement. Nyadzayo, Leckie and Johnson (2020) found that customer brand engagement can impact customers' purchasing decisions and subsequently increase their likelihood of engaging in repeat purchases online. Jaakonmaki et al. (2017) stated that selecting an appropriate influencer is crucial for a company to impact on customer brand engagement. According to Majeed et al. (2022), there is a positive correlation between customer engagement and feelings of empowerment, which results in favourable transactional outcomes such as product repurchase. Thus, this study hypothesised that:

H8: customer brand engagement mediates the impact of social media influencers on online repurchase intention

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study used a questionnaire survey methodology to investigate the study framework and hypotheses. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms, targeting Jordanian consumers who had previously engaged in online cosmetics purchases following recommendations from social media influencers. Thus, a survey with filter questions was given to participants: "Have you ever made online cosmetics purchases based on the recommendations of social media influencers?" By using these filter questions, the researchers ensured that the study targeted a specific subset of the population that was aligned with the research objectives.

4.2. Measures and Instrumentation

The investigation formulated questionnaire items by adapting the measurement scale in the studies referenced below. Social media influencers were measured by 15 items adapted from the Kemec and Yuksel (2021) study. The questions for the brand trust variable were measured using seven items adapted from the Febrian and Fadly scale (2021). The questions for customer brand engagement were measured using 10 items adapted from Chi, Harrigan and Xu (2022). The online repurchase intention variable questions were measured using five items adapted from the scale drawn up by Ali and Bhasin (2019). See Table 2 for more details.

All the items were close-ended questions. In previous research studies, the researchers Ali and Bhasin (2019), Chi et al. (2022), Febrian and Fadly (2021), and Kemec and Yuksel (2021) used the Likert scale. The Likert scale is a commonly used method for measuring people's attitudes, perceptions, opinions and behaviours in survey research (Kusmaryono, Wijayanti & Maharani, 2022). Therefore, this study adopted a seven-point Likert scale as the standard measurement for this research. The use of the same scale for all questions made it easier for the respondents to complete the questionnaire and for the researcher to interpret the results (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, Bougie and Sekaran (2019) pointed out that a seven-point scale is just as good as any other and that increases in rating scales do not improve the reliability of the scores.

	Items	References
Social Media Influencers (SMIs)		
SMIs1	The influencer I follow is attractive.	Kemec & Yuksel (2021)
SMIs2	The influencer I follow is classy.	
SMIs3	The influencer I follow is beautiful.	
SMIs4	The influencer I follow is elegant.	
SMIs5	The influencer I follow is sexy.	
SMIs6	The influencer I follow is dependable.	
SMIs7	The influencer I follow is honest.	
SMIs8	The influencer I follow is reliable.	
SMIs9	The influencer I follow is sincere.	
SMIs10	The influencer I follow is trustworthy	
SMIs11	The influencer I follow is an expert in the field.	
SMIs12	The influencer I follow is skilled.	
SMIs13	The influencer I follow is knowledgeable.	
SMIs14	The influencer I follow is qualified.	
SMIs15	The influencer I follow is experienced.	
Brand Trust (BT)		
BT1	This brand gives me a sense of security.	Febrian & Fadly (2021)
BT2	I trust in the quality of this brand.	
BT3	The services of this brand assure quality.	
BT4	This brand is interested in its customers.	
BT5	The brand name guarantees satisfaction.	
BT6	The brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.	
BT7	The brand would compensate me in some way for a problem with the product.	

Items		References
Customer Brand Engagement (CBE)		
CBE1	Using brand X makes me think about the brand.	Chi et al. (2022)
CBE2	Using brand X stimulates my interest in learning more about the brand.	
CBE3	Using brand X stimulates my interest in learning more about the brand.	
CBE4	I feel very positive when I use brand X.	
CBE5	Using brand X makes me happy.	
CBE6	I feel good when I use brand X.	
CBE7	I am proud to use brand X.	
CBE8	I spend a lot of time using brand X, compared to other brands in the same product category.	
CBE9	When I am using products from this product category, I usually use brand X.	
CBE10	Brand X is one of the brands I usually use in this product category.	
Online Repurchase Intention (ORPI)		
ORPI1	I intend to continue to purchase goods online from sites that I use regularly.	Ali & Bhasin (2019)
ORPI2	If I were to buy something, I would consider buying it from an online store.	
ORPI3	I intend to use an internet shopping site that I use regularly as a priority online store for future purchases.	
ORPI4	Unless there are any unexpected changes, I intend to continue to use the internet shopping site that I use regularly.	
ORPI5	I intend to use the internet shopping site that I use regularly as a priority online store for future purchases.	

Table 2. Items used to measure the constructs

4.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through a strategic collaboration with my esteemed academic counterparts in Jordan, to ensure that the data collection process was culturally attuned, linguistically appropriate, and respectful of local norms, ultimately contributing to the reliability and validity of the research findings. The questionnaire was uploaded to the Google Forms website, and then the questionnaire link was shared with the respondents via various means including social media platforms and e-mails. After four weeks, 411 answers had been received. However, after inadequate and extreme outlier replies were removed, only 384 responses were empirically investigated. 56.2% of the population was female and 43.8% was male; 11.7% were under the age of 25; 28.1% were between 26 and 33; 48.2% were between 34 and 41; and 12% were over 42; 65.5% had PhD, bachelor, or master's degrees; and 97.3% had a total monthly income of $1,000 or more.

4.4. Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of participant demographics and relationships between all research variables was carried out using SPSS 26. As recommended by Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics (2009), SMART-PLS3 was employed with a two-step structural equation modelling (SEM) method. The measurement model had to be analysed first to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and verify the construct validity of each measurement. The second stage examined causation and mediation effect hypotheses by testing the structural links between the latent constructs.

5. Results
5.1. CFA Findings

The convergent validity and discriminant validity of the CFA are its two key evaluation criteria. According to Hair et al. (2010), convergent validity refers to how well different efforts to assess the same idea agree with one another. The results are shown in Table 3.

The standardised factor loadings of all items are shown in Table 3. They varied between .702 and .918 and were all above the 0.6 cut-off proposed by Hair et al. (2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which show the overall amount of variation in the indicators that the latent construct accounts for, varied between 0.536 and 0.689 and were all over the cut-off of 0.5 as proposed by Hair et al. (2010). The composite reliability (CR) values, which show how well the construct indicators predict the latent construct, were higher than

Peterson & Kim's (2013) suggested value of 0.6 for all constructs and varied from 0.894 to 0.953. The Cronbach's Alpha values, which indicate how error-free a measure is, were higher than the 0.7 cut-off point recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), and they varied from 0.886 to 0.938.

Construct Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Internal Reliability Cronbach Alpha
Social Media Influencers (SMIs)	SMI1	.719	.536	.939	.938
	SMI2	.73			
	SMI3	.702			
	SMI4	.717			
	SMI5	.727			
	SMI6	.711			
	SMI7	.71			
	SMI8	.718			
	SMI9	.703			
	SMI10	.721			
	SMI11	.78			
	SMI12	.797			
	SMI13	.747			
	SMI14	.736			
	SMI15	.754			
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	.828	.641	.922	.908
	BT2	.857			
	BT3	.825			
	BT4	.77			
	BT5	.761			
	BT6	.768			
	BT7	.79			
Customer Brand Engagement (CBE)	CBE1	.786	.594	.953	.931
	CBE2	.708			
	CBE3	.788			
	CBE4	.769			
	CBE5	.778			
	CBE6	.786			
	CBE7	.836			
	CBE8	.773			
	CBE9	.763			
	CBE10	.712			
Online Repurchase Intention (ORPI)	ORPI1	.842	.689	.894	.886
	ORPI2	.846			
	ORPI3	.799			
	ORPI4	.735			
	ORPI5	.918			

Table 3. Convergent validity and internal reliability

The construction scale, means and levels are shown in Table 4. Discriminant validity, which pertains to the question of how different a construct really is from others, is also shown in Table 4, utilising two methods: the Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) technique to analyse the outcomes of Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of Correlations (HTMT), and Fornell and Larcker's proposal (1981) to compare the standardised correlations and square root of the AVE.

The average variance extracted for each construct appears in Table 4, and as can be seen, the square root of this variance was higher than the correlations of each construct with other constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, the correlations between the items were all lower than the threshold of 0.85, ranging from .540 to .704, thus demonstrating a reasonable level of discriminant validity amongst the constructs (Kline, 2023). The latent constructs' HTMT values, which varied from 0.486 to 0.829, were lower than 0.90. As a result, this supports the claim made by Henseler et al. (2015) that each latent construct measurement was completely discriminating from the others. Table 4 also includes the constructs' descriptive statistics, such as the mean values of all constructs.

The lowest mean belonged to customer brand engagement (CBE) and online repurchase intention (ORPI) (4.13) while the highest mean belonged to brand trust (BT) and social media influencers (SMIs) (4.15). The overall mean levels of all constructs were high.

Variable	Mean	Level	BT	CBE	ORPI	SMIs
Brand trust (BT)	4.15	High	.800	.535	.829	.778
Customer brand engagement (CBE)	4.13	High	.579	**.771**	.562	.486
Online repurchase intention (ORPI)	4.13	High	.607	.571	.830	.819
Social media influencers (SMIs)	4.15	High	.704	.540	.644	**.732**

The values in bold on the diagonal show the square root of the average variance extracted; values below the diagonal show the correlations according to Fornell and Larcker's approach; values above the diagonal show the HTMT results; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics & discriminant validity, using Fornell and Larcker approaches and HTMT

5.2. Hypotheses' Findings

5.2.1. Causal Effects

The structural model was then assessed after the good results obtained in the measurement model. Coefficient values and significant level were used to confirm or disprove the claimed relationships. The t values of the model were also calculated using a bootstrapping technique with 5000 samples, with values of t equal to or greater than 1.645, indicating that the hypothesised relationship was significant at a p-value of less than 0.05 (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). The amount of variance explained (R-square) was used to assess the model's predictive power. The coefficient of determination (R^2) values for BT, CBE and ORPI were 0.640, 0.340 and 0.808 respectively. All values were classified as substantial with respect to Cohen (1988). The results of investigating the causal effect hypothesis (i.e. H1 through H6), are shown in Table 5.

Path: IVDV	β	SE	t	p
H1) SMIs → BT	.338***	.067	5.039	.000
H2) SMIs → ORPI	.458***	.047	9.666	.000
H3) SMIs → CBE	.188*	.080	2.339	.010
H4) CBE → BT	.185***	.032	5.690	.000
H5) BT → ORPI	.296***	.037	7.920	.000
H6) CBE → ORPI	.094**	.029	3.248	.001

β = standardised coefficient; SE = standard error; *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001(two-tailed); SMIs = social media influencers; BT = brand trust; CBE = customer brand engagement; ORPI = online repurchase intention

Table 5. Results of path analysis to examine causal effect hypotheses

As shown in Table 5, SMIs had significant positive effects on BT (β = 0.338, t = 5.039, p < 0.001, supports H1), ORPI (β = 0.458, t = 9.666, p < 0.001, supporting H2) and CBE (β = 0.188, t = 2.339, p < 0.05, supporting H3). Customer brand engagement was found to have significant positive effects on brand trust (β = 0.185, t = 5.690, p < 0.001, supports H4) and online repurchase intention (β = 0.094, t = 3.248, p < 0.01, supporting H6). The effect of BT on ORPI was also found to be significantly positive; β = 0.296, t = 7.920, p < 0.001, supporting H5. Therefore, all proposed causal effect hypotheses H1 through H6 were supported.

5.2.2. Mediation Effects

A reliable technique for mediation analysis was to bootstrap using 5000 samples (Hayes, 2017). This approach uses several expensive iterations to calculate the sampling distribution. First, the entire effect (path model) was evaluated using the bootstrapping method without the mediator. The impacts of the direct and indirect channels were assessed based on that sampling distribution (Awang, 2015). Hair, Sarstedt, Matthews and Ringle (2016) proposed the mediation strength VAF (variance accounted for) score to evaluate its strength. The VAF calculation is only taken into account when the indirect influence is large (Hair et al., 2016). Full mediation, as

defined by Hair et al. (2016), occurs when the VAF value is over 80%. Partial mediation occurs when the VAF value is between 20% and 80%, and no mediation occurs when the VAF value is below 20%. The results for the mediation effect hypothesis (H7 and H8) are shown in Table 6.

As shown in Table 6, the results indicated that SMIs had a significant positive indirect effect on ORPI through BT; β = 0.090, t = 3.756, p < 0.001. Therefore, hypothesis H7 was supported. The VAF was 1.96, below the threshold of 20%, indicating no mediation effect. Social media influencers did not have any significant indirect effect on online repurchase intention through customer brand engagement; β = 0.007, t = 1.183, p > 0.05. Moreover, the VAF of 1.53 was below the threshold of 20%. The phenomenon indicated no significant mediation effect. Therefore, hypothesis H8 was rejected. The findings model and the outcomes of analysing research hypotheses are shown in Figure 4.

Path: IVMDV	β	SE	t	p	VAF %
H7) SMIs → BT → ORPI	.090***	.024	3.756	.000	1.96
H8) SMIs → CBE → ORPI	.007	.006	1.183	.118	1.53

SE = standard error; *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001(two-tailed); SMIs = = social media influencers; BT = brand trust; CBE = customer brand engagement; ORPI = online repurchase intention

Table 6. Results of path analysis to examine mediation effect hypotheses
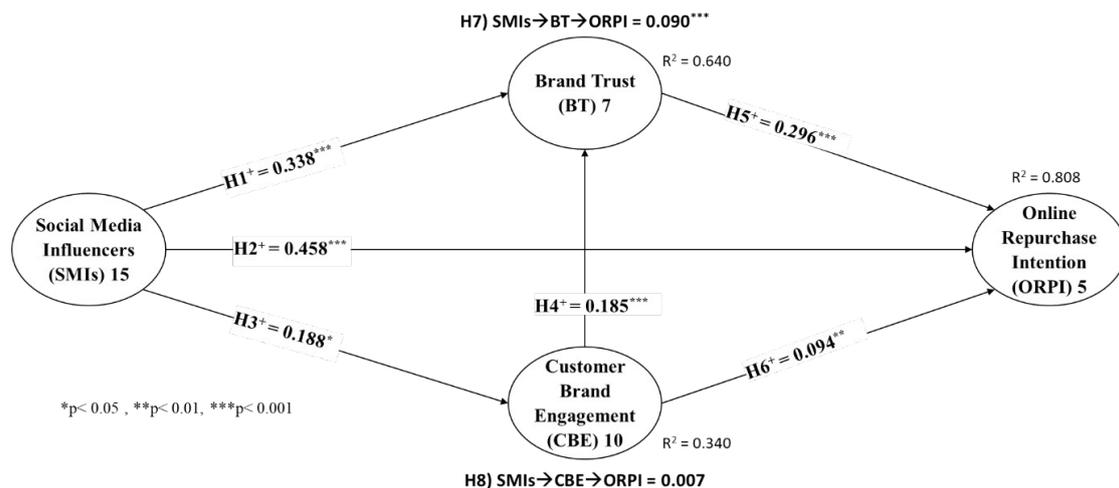
Figure 4. Findings model & estimation results

6. Discussions and Conclusions

The findings revealed that social media influencers have a significant influence on brand trust (H1), customer brand engagement (H2) and online repurchase intention (H3). These results imply that social media influencers' credibility is crucial in shaping customer trust and engagement towards the advertised brands and their willingness to repurchase promoted products. These findings are supported by the literature, which states that the followers often place their trust in an influencer through the brand the influencer is promoting (Prader, 2021). Additionally, Wolff (2022) found that social media influencers are used by brands because influencers drive more engagement due to their persuasiveness. These results are also supported by Cut-Nurvajri et al. (2022), who stated that the credibility of influencers positively affected the consumer's intention to purchase. Therefore, this study agrees with the result that social media influencers affect brand trust. Accordingly, collaboration with credible influencers should be established to create brand trust. When audiences perceive the message source as being trustworthy, they become more inclined to trust the brand if it is promoted by credible social media influencers. In this sense, when social media influencers are credible and favourable, they will have a greater impact on customer brand engagement. This means that a positive attitude is more likely to increase according to the perceived credibility of the social media influencers, thus positively influencing online purchase and repurchase intentions.

Moreover, the research reveals the major impact of customer brand engagement on brand trust (H4). The findings also revealed that brand trust and customer brand engagement have a significant influence on online repurchase intention (H5 and H6). These results are consistent with Kwon et al. (2021), who argued that customer brand engagement had a positive relationship with brand trust. In addition, Tian, Siddik and Masukujjaman (2022) suggested that customers were more likely to repurchase online when they had greater trust in the brand. Additionally, Majeed et al. (2022) found that customers who were highly engaged were more likely to feel empowered as a result of their interaction, thus leading to a variety of positive transactional outcomes, such as online repurchase intention.

The last aim of this study was to investigate the mediating role of brand trust and customer brand engagement in the relationships between social media influencers and online repurchase intention (H7 and H8). The mediation analysis results showed that customer brand engagement did not mediate the positive effects of social media influencers on online repurchase intention. It was also found that brand trust mediated the positive effects of social media influencers on online repurchase intention. The results are consistent to a certain degree with those of Kemec and Yüksel (2021), who reported that brand trust had a mediation effect on the relationship between YouTube influencers and purchase intention. It can be concluded that influencers have a substantial impact on both building brand trust and increasing purchase intention. These findings highlight the importance of considering brand trust as a critical mechanism through which social media influencers condition consumers' purchasing intentions. Therefore, these results confirm that social media influencers help to reinforce consumers' trust in the endorsed brand. In turn, this leads to the purchase and repurchase of products and services endorsed by social media influencers.

This study pioneers new territory and establishes a new pattern for academic and industrial partnerships. It may also inspire similar studies in the future. The study field of influencer marketing is quite active, which is crucial to remember, given its early stages.

7. Theoretical and Managerial Implications
7.1. Theoretical Implications

The results of this paper have several significant theoretical implications for this body of knowledge in many aspects. First, the present research contributes to the marketing literature by presenting this study as one of the few empirical investigations that measure the impact of social media influencers on brand trust and customer brand engagement, which, in turn, leads to better online repurchase intentions in the cosmetics industry. To date, no such study has been conducted on this topic, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. The findings of this study confirm that social media influencers are an essential determinant in online shopping stores.

Second, the theoretical framework and measures developed in this paper for the cosmetics industry provide a framework that can also be employed in other industries, such as tourism and fashion. Therefore, the comprehensive theoretical framework and measures developed for this study contribute to the literature on brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intention. Third, the current study provides findings about crucial elements significantly affecting the cosmetics industry. Accordingly, the findings of this study have numerous ramifications for the cosmetics industry in Jordan and in other developing countries.

7.2. Managerial Implications

The outcomes of this paper can assist cosmetics industry managers in better understanding and appreciating the valuable relationship between social media influencers, brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intention. This study provides managers with empirical evidence that social media influencers are essential factors in gaining brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intention across the cosmetics industry. Hence, these managers should not ignore this group's vital role. In addition, social media influencers should be given a great deal of attention, embraced as a valuable strategy, and taken on board as a leading marketing strategy.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study provides empirical evidence to bear out the impact of social media influencers on brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intentions in the cosmetics industry. Nonetheless, the paper has several limitations. The first one is related to the use of a single country. The use of samples from one country (Jordan) may produce findings that are culture-specific and difficult to generalise across other settings. Consequently, further investigation is needed to test the research model in other countries to generalise the findings of this study. The second limitation of this study is related to its target population. The research surveyed individuals who purchased cosmetics products through social media platforms to assess the impact of social media influencers on brand trust, customer brand engagement, and online repurchase intentions.

Future research could be conducted to overcome the aforementioned limitations of this study. First, it would be interesting to survey other Middle Eastern countries in further studies to test and explore the model developed for this study. This would prove valuable in providing evidence of the strength of the research model across the Middle East. As the model's robustness may vary from one cultural setting to another, empirical testing would be required. Thus, further empirical research involving data collection from various countries, specifically Arab countries, is recommended to collect more information and provide an explicit overall picture of this topic in different countries. Second, future researchers are encouraged to add valuable contributions to the existing literature by conducting a comparative study of the data findings from one country with those of other countries. This would enable researchers to understand different public perception patterns of social media influencers across different countries. Third, this study adapted a quantitative research approach using a self-administered survey questionnaire to solve the research questions posed and to test the research hypotheses. Future studies could also explore these areas using a qualitative research approach, specifically case studies, to provide a deeper look into how the study variables interact within the cosmetics industry.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

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