Investigating the impact of influencer credibility dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention: *a case study on YouTube*[1]

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media influencers' credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure) affects purchase intention (PI) among YouTube customers in Egypt, using followers' e-WOM as the mediating variable. Proposed research concept model based on source credibility theory & deductions from previous literature on social media influencer marketing. A quantitative research methodology was employed to collect data from Egyptian customers via an online questionnaire, which yielded 756 replies, 749 of which were fully completed to be regarded as legitimate responses. SPSS 25 and PLS-SEM were used to analyse and report the data. The data fit well and showed that perceived attractiveness, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure affect e-WOM and purchase intention. E-WOM also boosts purchase intent. Perceived trustworthiness affects purchasing intention, while perceived expertise affects e-WOM. Also, e-WOM did not mediate perceived trustworthiness, perceived similarity, or purchase intention. This study only collected data from Egyptian YouTubers. Therefore, obtaining data from other YouTubers would yield more generalizable results. Contemplating more, examining the mediating role of other variables, such as online engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty programs, could also offer additional insights into the nature of the factors impacting the PI. Finally, an experiment on Egyptian YouTubers' reputations might yield better results, but none of them allowed the survey instrument to be shared on their official sites. Future studies should examine the effects of using many social media platforms. The data imply that consumers trust influencers with extensive product or service knowledge over those with a physical appeal.

Keywords: *Social media influencer marketing, social media platforms, e-WOM, credibility, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, sponsorship disclosure, influencers, YouTube, Egypt.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has drastically changed how we live, from news dissemination to communication with friends/family. It is a powerful force that cannot be stopped and is here to stay (Zhang et al., 2023). Platforms facilitate and promote user involvement in content creation/sharing (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021) and allow companies to reach customers globally (Cheung et al., 2022). The number of social media users has risen rapidly (Datareportal, 2022), spending 2.4 hours/network (Oberlo, 2022). 73% of marketers believe social media helps their campaigns (Oberlo, 2022). Furthermore, in a recent report by Napoleoncat (2022), the number of Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, LinkedIn, and YouTube users in Egypt has reached 50.07, 16.88, 45.45, 77.11, and 46.30 million, respectively. Social media marketing has revolutionized customer choice-making. Earlier, consumers were passive readers of advertising messages, but now they are shrewd users of social media (Jin et al., 2019), follow social media influencers (Zhou et al., 2023), consider the feedback and expertise of consumers when making a purchase decision, (Aventajado, 2023). Marketing strategies target social media users, and customers use these platforms to comment on businesses, brands, services, and products (Chetioui et al., 2020). Opinion leaders (OLs) bridge mass media and public, influencing choices (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). Social media influencers are OLs, possessing persuasive qualities that influence recipients through e-wom (electronic word-of-mouth) (Gräve, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Munnukka et al., 2019). Influencer marketing has become more popular recently, with companies investing more (Ki, 2020). OLs have expertise in certain fields and provide educational/entertaining messages to followers (Fissi et al., 2022). Their credibility is an important concern for marketers (Li & Peng, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023; Oberlo, 2022). Lou & Yuan (2019) found that 40% of people purchased due to an influencer's post. Influencers are "regular people" with expertise in certain fields (e.g., healthy living, travel, cuisine), providing educational/entertaining messages to followers (Fissi et al., 2022). Studies have examined their credibility and their relation to purchasing intentions (Fissi et al., 2022; Li & Peng, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). This is backed up by a new survey that came out in Oberlo (2022), which showed that about 49 % had taken the advice and recommendations of social media influencers into account related to purchasing decisions. Consequently, the perceived credibility of influencers has

always been a significant concern for marketers and brand managers in developing and developed markets. When influencers have a decent relationship with a business, this leads to a conspicuous boost in sales (Kumar & Polonsky, 2019). Studies have examined the effect of influencer marketing on customer behaviour (Blanche et al., 2021 a, b; Jin et al., 2019; Teng et al., 2014). Hovland & Weiss (1951) claimed that the elements affecting source credibility are expertise and trustworthiness. Ohanian (1990) constructed and validated three elements affecting source credibility expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness that have been extensively applied in influencer marketing research (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Chetioui et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ohanian, 1990; Schouten et al., 2020). Research has examined the influence of source credibility (expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness) and influencer-product fit on purchase intention (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Chetioui et al., 2020; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). Moreover, in peer endorsement studies, similarity has also been created to measure source credibility (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2016). It has been suggested that sponsorship disclosure can enhance source credibility (Stubb & Colliander, 2019) and foster persuasive knowledge (Stubb & Colliander, 2019). In addition, electronic word-of-mouth is seen to have an impact on consumer purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Teng et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2018). Jeong & Koo (2015) suggested e-WOM, facilitated by computers, allows access to relevant content from any location. Cheung et al. (2009) defined e-WOM Credibility as "believability, truth and factuality". Consumers trust e-WOM from reliable sources (Erkan & Evans, 2016) and use it to lessen the risk of bad choices (Hussain et al., 2017). Purchase intention is an individual's conscious plan to purchase a brand (Spears & Singh, 2004). Marketers struggle to choose the right social media influencer (De Veirman et al., 2017). Despite research on source credibility theory and social media influencer marketing concepts, studies examining critical factors determining influencer efficiency and their overall effect on customer attitudes are scarce. This is particularly the case in Egypt as an emerging market (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The preceding studies also examined the effects of other mediating variables, such as the para-social relationship between followers and social media influencers (Aw & Chuah, 2021), self-congruency with the influencer (Blanche et al., 2021 a, b), attitude toward endorsements (Bergkvist et al., 2016), online

engagement (AlFarraj et al., 2021), and sponsorship disclosure (Jans et al., 2019; Weismueller et al., 2020). As this gap has not been properly addressed (Hanaysha, 2022), the present study will examine the mediating function of Followers' e-WOM in the route between influencer credibility factors (attractiveness, trustworthiness, competence, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure) and purchase intentions of Egyptian Youtubers.

As a result, this study will be looking forward and try to answer the following main questions:

RQ1: What is the impact of social media influencers' perceived credibility dimensions on the followers' purchase intention?

RQ2: What is the impact of social media influencers' perceived credibility dimensions on the followers' E-WOM?

RQ3: How does the followers' E-WOM impact the followers' purchase intention?

RQ4: What is the mediating role of e-WOM on the relationship between influencers' credibility from YouTube and their PI in Egypt?

The rest of the research is organized as follows; first, an overview of the relevant literature represents a theoretical foundation that depicts the linkages on social media influencers' credibility dimensions, e-WOM, and purchase intention was presented. Second, the conceptual research model and hypotheses development are presented based on the literature and the research purpose. Lastly, the methodology used to guide the study is briefly reviewed before presenting results, discussion, conclusion, implications, and limitations, which provides some suggested directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION: SOURCE CREDIBILITY THEORY

According to Hovland & Weiss (1951), source credibility theory examines how a consumer's behaviour and purpose are affected by an influencer or source's perceived legitimacy (Breves et al., 2019, 2021). Hovland & Weiss (1951) considered perceived trustworthiness and expertise as credibility factors, Patzer (1983) considered the source's attractiveness a credibility factor, and McGuire (1985) advocated for a synergistic impact of the source's aesthetic qualities

(likeability, attractiveness, similarity, and familiarity) on consumers' perceptions. Perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure are used to assess social media influencer credibility in this study (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim (2021) indicated that trustworthiness is the most crucial credibility element, whereas Chetioui et al. (2020) found that perceived source expertise positively affects customers' purchase intention. The social media marketing industry is quickly extending the role of social media influencers as brand endorsers, prompting the concept to include physical attractiveness as a credibility criterion (Weismueller et al., 2020; Scott, 2015). The research found that social media influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure affect followers' e-WOM.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

As shown in figure (1), five main aspects of influencers' credibility: attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure are critical factors in predicting purchase intention directly and indirectly through e-WOM. In the following paragraphs, you will find more information on the models' construction and the justification for the research hypotheses.

3.1 PURCHASE INTENTION

Panwar et al. (2019) argued that purchase intention is a complicated process that evaluates the consumers' behaviour, perception, and attitudes before making the ultimate purchase. The purchase of a product by a consumer is not an instantaneous occurrence but instead consists of several stages: "consider, evaluate, buy, enjoy, advocate and bond"; considering several products or services accessible from a variety of sellers, being open-minded about all options before settling on one, making a purchase, and then swearing allegiance to the brand based on their positive experience using the product, and vice versa. Consider and assess the phases from which purchasing intent originated (Lin et al., 2022; Towers & Towers, 2020). At the evaluation stage, social media consumers evaluate numerous recommendations made by different influencers on social media applications and then take an online or offline purchase decision. The final step includes the practise of consumers discussing the products they have purchased on the official brand pages and the pages of the social media

influencers who have endorsed those products (Rebelo, 2017), so affecting both the credibility of the influencer and the purchasing intent of other users (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Spears & Singh (2004, p.56) defined purchase intention as an "individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand". Various researchers defined purchase intention as a decision-making process of the probability associated with consumers' willingness to purchase a certain product or service offered by a particular brand after a considerable evaluation of the costs, benefits, and reasons for buying (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In other words, it is a "strategy for completing the transaction" (Abdullah et al., 2020). To attract and retain more consumers, improve sales for their companies, generate more revenues and make more profits; marketers are constantly concerned with the variables that can influence the purchase intentions of their consumers (Yea et al., 2021). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) developed by Ajzen & Fishbein (1980) alleged that consumers' decisions are not unexpected, but their actions are governed by their attitude toward the product, the perceived value of the product by others and their perception of their control behaviour. According to the theory, a good attitude results in the performance of a specific action. In the context of the current research, a favourable perception of the influencers' credibility will result in more purchase intent, and greater purchase intent will increase the likelihood of actual sales. The influencers' credibility, purchase intention and e-WOM have ensued in the publication of many research papers and have been drawing attention in the marketing field as has been examined (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Hugh et al., 2022; Koay et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). For example, Weismueller et al. (2020) investigate the impact of social media influencers on purchase intention. They found that social media influencer credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) significantly influence purchase intention.

3.2 Attractiveness, e-WOM and purchase intention

Since celebrities become endorsers, several academics have explored how to source attractiveness affects audience attitudes toward advertisements (Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencer marketing increasingly uses physical attractiveness to assess credibility (Koay et al., 2022). Attractiveness is the degree to which face traits, including excellent looks, knowledge, beauty, wholesomeness, psychographic attributes, and sportsmanship, are pleasing to

witness and closely related to perceived attractiveness in customers' thoughts (Ki & Kim, 2019; Koay et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2017; Ohanian, 1990; Onu et al., 2019; Patzer, 1983). Erdogan (1999, p. 299) defined attractiveness as "a stereotype of favourable connections to a person that encompasses not only physical attractiveness but also other attributes such as personality and athletic ability." Thus, followers are more inclined to buy from an attractive influencer (AlFarraj et al., 2021). The attractiveness construct originated from the source attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985), and it could refer to the source's physical appeal, familiarity, or likability (Lou & Yuan, 2019; McCracken, 1989). While it is true that most commercials endorse physically attractive actors or models (Pornpitakpan, 2003). Attractiveness will increase customers' attention in brand advertising and encourage brand exploration (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Several studies indicated that social media influencers' attractiveness affects customers' buying intention (Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019; Sokolova & Kef, 2020; Schouten et al., 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021) Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim (2021) discovered that beautiful social media influencers are better at shaping customers' brand image, trust, and contentment, which increases their propensity to buy. Weismueller et al. (2020) discovered that social media influencers' perceived attractiveness directly affects followers' buying intentions. Lou & Yuan (2019) observed that beautiful social media influencers are better at influencing brand trust and purchase intent. According to the study, information receivers are more likely to accept reliable information. E-WOM assessment relies on source credibility (Mukherjee et al., 2022; Shen, 2021). Zolkepli et al. (2023), Armawan et al. (2023), & Abbasi et al. (2023) found that source credibility affects social media e-WOM acceptability. Information consumers might evaluate internet reviews depending on the source's credibility (Verma et al., 2023). Attractiveness affects e-WOM credibility for social media influencers (Zolkepli et al., 2023; Indrawati et al., 2022). Thus, based on the discussion above, it can hypothesize that:

H1. Attractiveness has a significant positive influence on e-WOM.

H2. Attractiveness has a significant positive influence on purchase intention.

H3. e-WOM will mediate the significant influence of attractiveness on purchase intention.

3.3 Trustworthiness, e-WOM and purchase intention

Trust underpins consumer relationships in marketing (Verma et al., 2023), but trust is not the same as trustworthiness. Trust is an accumulation of past impressions (Koay et al., 2022). Trust is how much customers trust the source (Chetioui et al., 2020). McCracken (1989, p. 311) defined trustworthiness as "the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertations". According to Hernandez & Leker (2022, p.4), Hovland et al. (1953) defined trustworthiness as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's purpose to disclose the claims he or she feels most valid". Trustworthiness is "the degree of trust, acceptance, and confidence of consumers in the message and the source that conveyed the message," according to Ohanian (1990, p.41). Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim (2021) defined trustworthiness as the extent to which an endorser and their material are seen as honest, genuine, reliable, impartial, integrity, credible, and dependable. Thus, trustworthiness asks if an endorser's judgement is honest or influenced by other parties. Disick's erroneous tweet showed that he was following the brand's instructions to get a reward, not expressing his honest opinion (Chetioui et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Govindan & Alotaibi, 2021; Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022; Rusdiana et al., 2020; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). An influencer who advocates for their profit is guilty of the self-serving bias in influencer marketing communication, which makes consumers dislike ads (Aw & Chuah, 2021). Consumers are more likely to trust trustworthy influencers (Schouten et al., 2020). Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim (2021) found that followers' behaviours are most influenced by credibility. Consumers are more likely to adopt positive opinions when persuaded by trustworthy influencers than less trustworthy endorsers (Schouten et al., 2020). Whether or whether they are subject area experts, trustworthy influencers are more convincing (Adedeji, 2023). When the trustworthiness and expertise components of source credibility were altered, trustworthy endorsers were more compelling, regardless of whether the audience saw them as subject-matter experts (McGinnies & Ward,1980). Previous research demonstrated strong relationships between social media influencers' perceived trustworthiness and consumer attitudes, intention to buy, attitude toward advertising, and brand attitudes (Chetioui et al., 2020; Goldsmith et al., 2000; Schouten et al., 2020; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim (2021) also

evaluated whether influencers' attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness are helpful for online influencer marketing. They discovered that trustworthiness is most important, followed by attractiveness, while expertise is virtually irrelevant. The relationship between trustworthiness and buying intentions was examined by several studies (e.g., AlFarraj et al., 2021; Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Koay et al., 2022; Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022; Masuda et al., 2022; Reichelt et al., 2014; Schouten et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). Yuan & Lou, 2020). Social media influencers who provide engaging and valuable material will build an emotional connection with their followers, making them more likely to purchase the items or businesses they recommend (Ki et al., 2020). Lou & Yuan (2019) studied influencer trustworthiness and purchase intention. The study surveyed 538 social media users online in 15 minutes. Differential scales assessed their reactions. This study used PLS path modelling. The trustworthiness of influencers increased purchase intent. Trustworthiness boosts e-WOM message credibility (Verma et al., 2023). Several studies have examined influencers' credibility, particularly trustworthiness, as a factor in followers' e-WOM (Abbasi et al., 2023; Shamhuyenhanzva et al., 2016; Verma et al., 2023; Zolkepli et al., 2023). They highlighted the relevance of social media influencer trustworthiness, which may boost e-WOM validity. Hence, based on the discussion above, it can hypothesize that:

H4. Trustworthiness has a significant positive influence on e-WOM.

H5. Trustworthiness has a significant positive influence on purchase intention.

H6. e-WOM will mediate the significant influence of trustworthiness on purchase intention

3.4 EXPERTISE, E-WOM AND PURCHASE INTENTION

Expertise is defined as the degree to which an influencer is perceived as understood, experienced, skilled, qualified, competent, knowledgeable, and problem-solving in a specific domain, in general, a good source by the consumers (Hovland et al., 1953; Ki et al., 2020; Koay et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). McCracken (1989, p. 311) defined expertise as the "perceived ability of the source to make valid assertations". An expert can excel in a domain at a high level that is uncommon for others to reach (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Becoming an expert takes

much effort, thorough training, experience, and/or practice. People differentiate between competence and ordinary or weak performance in any field by considering both the expert's knowledge and their behaviours or achievements (Wiedmann & Von Mettenheim, 2021). Consumers tend to agree with expert opinions if they can deliver accurate information more than non-expert viewpoints (Li & Peng, 2021; Martiningsih & Setyawan, 2022; Samarasinghe, 2018; Xiong et al., 2018). Social media influencers with significant expertise are more likely to supply customers with professional, complete content services and improve interpersonal interactions (Li & Peng, 2021). Further, social media influencers will not be viewed by their customers as influencers in a particular field unless they think of them as skilled, adept, and knowledgeable, so consumers may sense their recommendation ability and trust their e-WOM (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2023; Trzebinski et al., 2022). An influencer's expertise is like a certification that immediately impacts the amount of persuasion required to purchase a product (Masuda et al., 2022; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). According to Daneshvary & Schwer (2000), an influencer's success, recognition, and followers depend on their expertise. If fans do not think an influencer is competent, informed, and skilful, they will not consider him an expert (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Schouten et al., 2020). Additionally, Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) questioned 18–30-year-old female Instagram customers and found that YouTube and Instagram influencers were better predictors of expertise and purchasing behaviour than celebrities. According to AlFarraj et al. (2021), influencers' credibility and customers' purchasing behaviour and intentions would be affected by expertise. A previous study has shown that an endorser with more expertise and is seen as an expert by his/her knowledge and achievements may be more convincing and improve e-e-WOM with the brand (Shen, 2021; Verma et al., 2023; Trzebinski et al., 2023). Customers also trust internet reviews from credible and knowledgeable reviewers, which may influence their purchase decisions (Filieri et al., 2018; Koay et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020). Widyanto &Agusti (2020) quantitatively studied the effect of expertise on purchase intention on 154 young women from Generation Z who resided in Greater Jakarta (Jabodetabek) and followed social media beauty influencers who recommended a prestigious domestic cosmetics brand. Purchase intention was unaffected by celebrity endorser expertise. Lou & Kim (2019)

found that social media influencers seen as followers are more likely to generate favourable e-WOM. Thus, social media influencers' expertise may affect client engagement and purchase intent. Hence, based on the discussion described above, it can hypothesize that:

H7. Expertise has a significant positive influence on e-WOM.

H8. Expertise has a significant positive influence on purchase intention.

H9. e-WOM will mediate the significant influence of expertise on purchase intention.

3.5 Similarity, e-WOM and purchase intention

People are more prone to prefer comparable sources to those dissimilar to them. The likeness of the source to the recipient is more influential in persuading than the source's knowledge (Balabanis & Chatzopoulou, 2019). This effect is similar to the theory of homophily proposed by Lazarsfeld & Merton (1954). This idea posits that the communication volume is more significant when the source and recipient are similar or homophiles. Homophily makes it easier for information to flow because people think there are fewer communication barriers, and they are more likely to choose a homophilous source because they have similar needs and product needs (Li & Peng, 2021). Lately, Munnukka et al. (2016) extended the scale of social media influencers' credibility by including a fourth aspect – perceived similarity or homophily – when assessing peer followers and building an integrated model to understand this phenomenon better (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2016). The similarity between interacting people in terms of philosophies, education and social status is called attitude homophily (Schouten et al., 2020). This concept is related to the number of interactions individuals have, as communicators with comparable characteristics are more likely to interact with one another. The recurrent encounters contribute to forming a relationship or, in the case of a celebrity, a para-social relationship closely tied to the identification procedure (Brown & Basil, 2010). The similarity was also discovered to be a persuasive element, notably when the similarity is pertinent to the message (Sokolova & Kef, 2019). This is more pertinent to influencer marketing, as influencers establish relationships with followers that resemble friendship and operate as followers' peers (Lou &Yuan, 2019; Lou & Kim, 2019). Therefore, the current research adopted the four-

dimension of social media influencers' credibility to gauge the appeal of influencers (Lou & Kim, 2019). Similarity examines followers' perceptions of demographic and ideological similarities between influencers and themselves (Jin et al., 2019). Hugh et al. (2022) defined perceived similarity as a follower's tastes, attitudes, or viewpoints matching those of the influencer. Influencers are more accessible than celebrities, like long-distance friends (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020). Influencers often directly address their followers in their postings, which creates a feeling of closeness and makes followers see them as peers (Schouten et al., 2020). Remarking on influencers' posts and connecting may make the influencer seem more like the person (Erz & Christensen 2018; Gannon & Prothero 2018). Similarities may backfire if the audience believes the speaker is a factual novice (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). Influencers' styles may draw followers to their other postings, even if they do not like them. Then, aesthetic similarity, not the influencer's physical attractiveness, might impact purchase intent (Verma et al., 2023). Lou & Yuan (2019) discovered that trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived similarity increased followers' trust in the commercial and brand. However, expertise did not affect content trust. Munnukka et al. (2016) found that influencer credibility is most affected by trustworthiness and similarity, whereas attractiveness and expertise have lower impacts. Despite these findings, they say influencer credibility may vary per product. Ahmad et al. (2019) also studied influencer trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, similarity (TEARS model created by Shimp, 2003) and endorsement among young customers. Influencer endorsement is unaffected by trustworthiness or expertise. Similarities increased influencer credibility but not attractiveness. In addition, Casalo et al. (2020) discovered that Instagram influencers who shared material and had similar characteristics helped customers feel closer. People also enjoy ads more if they see themselves as endorsers (Gupta et al., 2022; Shan et al., 2019). Barzily & Ackerman (2018) discovered that similarity positively affected Facebook purchase intentions. E-WOM credibility depends on perceived similarity or homophily (Verma et al., 2023). customers are more influenced by influencers with whom they have similarity, likeness, homophily, or a strong bond (Chih et al., 2020; Hugh et al., 2022; Tan & Lee, 2019; Yan et al., 2018). Many studies have used source persuasiveness to explain reviewer-related characteristics, (trustworthiness, homophily, tie strength) with

e-WOM credibility (Ismagilova et al., 2020c; Lis, 2013; Verma et al., 2023). The degree of interpersonal relationship (tie strength) and similarity, likeness, and homophily between the reviewer (source) and receiver also affects e-WOM credibility (Tan & Lee, 2019; Verma et al., 2023). Thus, based on the discussion mentioned above, it can hypothesize that:

H10. Similarity has a significant positive influence on e-WOM.

H11. Similarity has a significant positive influence on purchase intention.

H12. e-WOM will mediate the significant influence of similarity on purchase intention.

3.6 Sponsorship disclosure, e-WOM and purchase intention

Disclosure's effects on consumer message processing and consequences are often described using Friestad & Wright's (1994) Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). PKM shows how persuasion targets (like consumers) employ persuasion knowledge, agent knowledge, and subject knowledge to comprehend and react to an influence agent's (like a social media influencer) persuasion effort (such as an ad). The "change of meaning" concept in PKM states that once consumers recognise the clear purpose when the disclosure is provided in the persuasive message, they will withdraw from the persuasion interaction and devalue what the influence agent says, diminishing the message's persuasiveness. Most empirical research shows that disclosure activates persuasion knowledge, which forms customer views and leads to resisting persuasion. Advertising cynicism, lower ad credibility, unfavourable brand attitudes and assessment, and decreased recommendation or forwarding intentions (Fauzan & Jaroenwanit, 2023; Ju, 2017) result from resisting persuasion. (e.g., Eisend, 2015; Eisend et al., 2020; Lee & Choi, 2017). Recent interview research found that consumers' reactions to native ads on news websites ranged from scepticism to indifference to delight (Jiang et al., 2017). If the FTC mandates disclosure, how will consumers respond to sponsored content? Persuasion Knowledge has supported research on how media sponsorship disclosure affects consumers' persuasion knowledge and brand perceptions. Sponsored programmes with longer sponsorship disclosure durations activated viewers' persuasion knowledge and negatively impacted brand opinion more than those with shorter disclosure durations (Lee & Kim, 2020). Evans et al. (2017) discovered that sponsorship disclosures that utilised the

phrase "Paid Ad" (a detailed disclosure) were more likely to influence others than those that used "SP" or no disclosure. However, no study has examined how phrases implying complete or partial concealment, such as "advertising" and "ad," activate persuasion knowledge. sponsorship disclosure in social media influencers' credibility is recognised by a wide range of professionals in marketing, government, and academia (Boerman et al., 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2021). Disclosure of endorsement is a requirement of many national regulations and guidelines for online sponsored messages to prevent dishonest and misleading behaviour and ethical issues (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Solomon & Michael (2017, p.422) defined Word-of-mouth (WOM) as "product information that individuals transmit to other individuals." Cheung et al. (2009, p.12) defined e-WOM Credibility as "the extent to which one perceives a recommendation/ review as believable, true or factual". Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to content published by social media influencers that discusses a brand online (Zhou et al., 2021). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 39) defined it as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to many people and institutions via the Internet". Tsao & Mau (2019, p. 195) defined it as the "sharing of relevant knowledge and opinions (positive or negative) about the products and services of a firm among potential or actual customers". Examination of sponsorship disclosure studies in the field of social media Consumers' responses to sponsorship disclosure may vary across offline and online contexts, making e-WOM all the more crucial. This means that the impacts of sponsorship disclosure studied in the context of more traditional media may not be the same in the e-WOM setting for three reasons; firstly, unlike traditional advertising, sponsored regular people to create e-WOM. Secondly, traditional media and online media have distinct characteristics and histories. Lastly, Internet-based media, in contrast to more traditional forms of media dissemination, allow for two-way communication. Therefore, online media consumers have more say over the material to which they are exposed (Guo et al., 2023). Previous research found that when SMIs open out about their commercial partnerships with companies in their e-WOM, consumers are less likely to remember those brands and be positively disposed toward them (Zhou et al., 2021 a). As a result, research is needed into the effects of sponsorship

disclosure on marketing outcomes and how social media users perceive and interpret such disclosures (Guo et al., 2023; Kim & Kim, 2021, a, b). The degree to which consumers are aware of and comfortable with a product's sponsorship can significantly impact their opinions and buying decisions. Social media users may identify the presence of a sponsored message as an instance when they are the intended recipients of marketing material. When people on social media see a post created in exchange for money, they may ignore it (Kim & Kim, 2021 a, b). As a result of exposure to this advertising, people's ability to influence them is triggered (Friestad & Wright, 1994), and as a result, skepticalness and resistance to persuasive messages are developed (Kim & Kim, 2021 a, b). In the available literature, some researches have demonstrated that resistance to sponsored communications may cause negative views toward products and reduce users' adoption of recommended actions (Boerman et al., 2017; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Regarding sponsored reviews, studies have shown that declaring sponsorship in a review diminishes the review's credibility (Jensen & Yetgin, 2017), and sponsored reviews reduce prospective buyers' propensity to buy advised products or services (Kim & Kim, 2021 a, b). Thus, based on the discussion mentioned earlier, it can hypothesize that:

H13. Sponsorship disclosure has a significant positive influence on e-WOM.

H14. Sponsorship disclosure has a significant positive influence on purchase intention.

H15. e-WOM will mediate the significant influence of sponsorship disclosure on purchase intention.

3.7 E-WOM AND PURCHASE INTENTION

In numerous research, e-WOM credibility was found to affect purchase intention (Armawan et al., 2023; Bataineh, 2015; Fan & Miao, 2012; Verma et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2018; Zolkepli et al.,2023).

Verma et al. (2023) examined eWOM credibility antecedents and effects using meta-analysis. Purchase intention increases with e-WOM credibility (Verma et al., 2023). E-WOM credibility enhanced Black Sweet Coffee Shop purchase intention, according to Armawan et al. (2023) and health supplement purchase intention on social media sites (Zolkepli et al.,2023). When e-WOM credibility is significant, TikTok advertising increases purchase intention, according to

Indrawati et al. (2023). Chetioui et al. (2021) found that e-WOM credibility positively affected purchase intention. They discussed how Facebook marketing influences collectivists' purchases. They indicate that social media advertising must consider consumers' cultural backgrounds. E-WOM credibility increases purchase intention, according to Yan et al. (2018). Erkan & Evans (2016) found that e-WOM credibility positively affects purchase intention among 384 social media-using university students. E-WOM credibility boosts purchase intent, according to Bataineh (2015). E-WOM credibility increases acceptance, which positively impacts the intention to purchase, according to Fan & Miao (2012). According to this survey, women are more likely than men to use trustworthy e-WOM when purchasing. Thus, based on the discussion described above, it can hypothesize that:
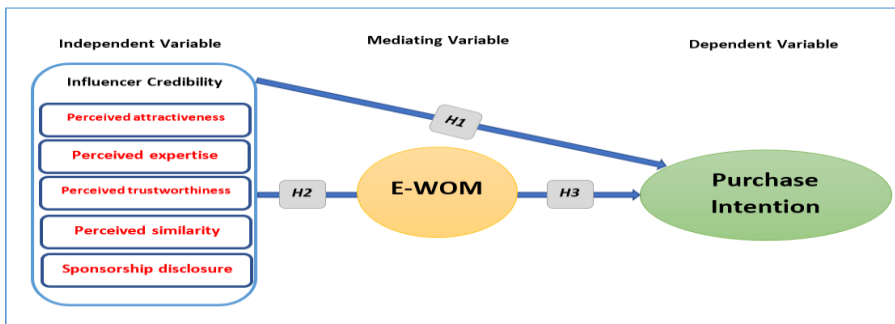
H16. e-WOM positively impacts purchase intention.

Figure 1: the conceptual model

4. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research approach to gather data from 756 Egyptian customers using an online questionnaire. Only 749 were completed entirely to be deemed legitimate replies, resulting in a 99% response rate. The findings were reported using SPSS 25 and partial least squared-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). This study examines how social media influencers' credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure) affect purchase intention "PI" using followers' electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) as the mediating variable among Egyptian YouTube consumers. Social media users that follow YouTube influencers are the research's population. The literature suggested multi-item

measures for research variables. The researcher modified reliable and valid scales for each aspect instead of creating a questionnaire. These scales' reliability and validity were tested. 1-to-5 Likert scale answers (5 for "strongly agree" to 1 for "strongly disagree") were coded and input into SPSS version 25. Recoding reverse-scored variables was the second step before statistical analysis (as indicated in the original scales). The questionnaire's Arabic equivalency was determined using appropriate measures. After translating the questionnaire, two co-workers evaluated it. Their comments prompted many changes. Reverse translation helps verify translated statements. The back-translation from Arabic to English was done by a professional translator from the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport's language department. A native English speaker then compared the original English questionnaire to the back-translated questionnaire (Hair et al., 2017). Eliminating significant discrepancies made the two versions semantically compatible. The draught questionnaire was reviewed by five academics in the marketing departments of the Arab Academy of Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport and Alexandria University, who understand relationships and questionnaire design. This was done to verify that the questionnaire included relevant questions and was appropriately presented. They have also questioned whether the questions represented the researched domains and applied them to the target population to ensure understanding and consistency. Measured items were little changed after comprehensive examination and validation. The research instrument evaluated ideas well, ensuring content and face validity. The researcher randomly chose 60 customers to test the questionnaire. Responders understood all elements in the reliability test.

4.1 INSTRUMENTATION

This research employed a reflective construct survey with seven scales. Attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity came from (El-Naga et al. 2022; Lou & Kim, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2016, 2019; Yuan & Lou, 2020). Purchase intentions were developed by Lou and Kim (2019), Trivedi & Sama (2020), and Yuan et al. (2008). E-WOM credibility came from Fang (2014). The researcher created four items to measure sponsorship disclosure. See Appendix (1).

5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section offers empirical research on how influencer credibility dimensions—attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure—affect purchase intention directly and indirectly via e-WOM. Before hypothesis testing, the research participants' profiles were tested, followed by testing the research constructs for convergent & discriminant validity and Cronbach's alpha & Composite reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2017).

5.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Descriptive statistics describe data set properties. This method provides short profiles of respondents and how diversity was utilised to pick a sample representative of the community under consideration. The tables of frequencies reflect the number and percentage of Egyptian questionnaire respondents in this area. Table (1) shows the research participants' profiles. The study's research was collected using online surveys. This section provides gender, age, income, and education. This survey included N=749 Egyptian customers.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographics

		Frequency (N= 749)	Per cent (%)
Gender	Male	384	51.2%
	Female	366	48.8%
Age	16 to less than 25 years old	420	56%
	26 to less than 35 years old	156	28%
	36 to less than 45 years old	85	11.3%
	46 to less than 55 years old	41	5.5%
	55 years old and above	48	6.4%
Job Status	Students	367	48.9%
	Self-employed	228	30.4%
	retired	51	6.8%
	Full-time employed	37	4.9%
	Seeking for work	34	4.5%
	Part-time employed	33	4.4%
City of Residence	Alexandria	574	76.5%
	Other Cities	98	13%
	Cairo	78	10.4%
Monthly Household income in Egyptian Pounds	less than 5000	36	4.8%
	from 5000 and less than 10,000	160	21.4%

	from 10,000 to less than 15,000	84	11.2%
	from 15000 to less than 20000	354	47.2%
	from 20000 to less than 25000	48	6.4%
	from 25000 to less than 30000	42	5.6%
	30000 and above	26	3.5%
Education	High school graduate	223	29.7%
	College degree	483	64.4%
	Master	25	3.3%
	PhD	19	2.5%
Marital Status	Single	345	46%
	Married	200	26.7%
	Divorced/separated	192	25.6%
	Widowed	12	1.6%
Mostly used social media platforms to watch videos	You tube	299	39.8%
	Face book	179	23.9%
	Instagram	170	22.7%
	Twitter	81	10.8%
	TikTok	13	1.8%
	Snapchat	8	1.1%
Time spent on YouTube	Less than 10 minutes	111	14.8
	From 11 to 30 minutes	153	20.4
	From 31 to 50 minutes	184	24.5
	More than 50 minutes	302	40.3

5.2 DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Fornell-Larcker determines this study's discriminant validity. Fornell & Larcker (1981) advise using the square root of (AVE) in each latent variable to verify discriminant validity. This method compares the square root of (AVE) to the correlation of latent constructs. A latent construct should explain its indicators' variance better than other latent constructs' variance. Thus, each construct's square root (AVE) should be more significant than its correlations with other latent constructs. Table (2) shows the square root of AVE and construct correlation coefficients. Egypt found that all construct square roots (AVE) are more significant than their correlation coefficients.

Table 2: represents the correlation Coefficient between E-WOM, Perceived Trustworthiness, Perceived attractiveness, Perceived expertise, Perceived similarity, Sponsorship disclosure, and purchase intention.

	Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	E-WOM	**0.844**						
2	Perceived Trustworthiness	0.591	**0.859**					
3	Perceived attractiveness	0.584	0.655	**0.842**				
4	Perceived expertise	0.619	0.803	0.666	**0.859**			
5	Perceived similarity	0.563	0.691	0.652	0.641	**0.826**		
6	Purchase intention	0.619	0.637	0.672	0.633	0.623	**0.867**	
7	Sponsorship disclosure	0.584	0.517	0.522	0.548	0.529	0.647	**0.808**

5.3 Convergent validity and Cronbach's alpha & Composite reliability

Convergent validity measures how much variants share concept indicators (Hair et al., 2021). Factor loading and average extracted variance influence convergent validity, according to Hair et al. (2017). (AVE). 0.5 or greater average variance constructs should be extracted (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Table 3: Factor Loadings, AVE, Cronbach alpha, and Composite Reliability of research constructs

Items	EFA	CFA	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability	The average variance extracted (AVE)
Purchase intention					
Purchase intention 1	0.878	0.880			
Purchase intention 2	0.858	0.853	0.835	0.901	0.752
Purchase intention 3	0.864	0.867			
Sponsorship disclosure					
Sponsorship disclosure 1	0.829	0.824			
Sponsorship disclosure 2	0.764	0.771	0.822	0.882	0.653
Sponsorship disclosure 3	0.842	0.843			
Sponsorship disclosure 4	0.794	0.791			

Perceived attractiveness					
Perceived attractiveness 1	0.888	0.889	0.863	0.907	0.710
Perceived attractiveness 2	0.817	0.822			
Perceived attractiveness 3	0.839	0.841			
Perceived attractiveness 4	0.824	0.816			
E-WOM					
E-WOM1	0.860	0.857	0.798	0.881	0.713
E-WOM2	0.861	0.860			
E-WOM3	0.811	0.816			
Perceived expertise					
Perceived expertise 1	0.838	0.837	0.881	0.918	0.738
Perceived expertise 2	0.845	0.850			
Perceived expertise 3	0.877	0.874			
Perceived expertise 4	0.876	0.874			
Perceived similarity					
Perceived similarity 1	0.882	0.861	0.765	0.865	0.682
Perceived similarity 2	0.863	0.846			
Perceived similarity 3	0.727	0.767			
Perceived trustworthiness					
Perceived trustworthiness 1	0.864	0.865	0.881	0.918	0.738
Perceived trustworthiness 2	0.886	0.888			
Perceived trustworthiness 3	0.877	0.875			
Perceived trustworthiness 4	0.806	0.806			

5.4 R 2 AND EFFECT SIZE

The bootstrapping method's t-values assess the significance of the associations' route coefficients. The model's variance in each construct is determined by assessing the dependent variables' coefficients of determination, R2. Tests include effect size (f2) and predictive relevance (Q2). 5000 bootstrapped samples test regression weight significance. The dependent variables' R 2 is shown in Table (4). Each exogenous latent construct's impact on the endogenous latent construct is the effect size (f 2). Deleting an independent construct from the path model modifies the coefficient of determination R2 and determines whether the

removed latent exogenous construct significantly influences the latent endogenous construct. F^2 values greater than 0.35 (strong effect), 0.15 (moderate effect), and 0.02 (weak effect) indicate an effect (weak effect). Table (5) shows the effect size for the constructs. Table (5) shows that all constructs have a modest effect except sponsorship disclosure, which has a substantial effect.

Table 4: R^2

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
E-WOM	0.505	0.502
Purchase intention	0.620	0.617

Table 5: Effect Size

	E-WOM	Purchase Intention
E-WOM		0.024
Perceived Trustworthiness	0.005	0.012
Perceived attractiveness	0.025	0.077
Perceived expertise	0.028	0.002
Perceived similarity	0.010	0.014
Purchase intention	0.024	
Sponsorship disclosure	0.096	0.120

Table 6: Predictive Relevance Q^2

Variables	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
e-WOM	2,265,000	1,461,431	0.355
Purchase Intention	2,265,000	1,231,793	0.456

5.5 Normality Testing

To verify the normality of data, Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests are widely used, especially for samples >50 observations; normality is assumed if the p-value > 0.05. Table (7) represents the normality assumption for the research variables of data. The results show that the research variables are not normally distributed, as the corresponding P-values are all less than 0.05.

Table 7: Results of Normality Testing

Factors /variables	DF	Skewness		Kurtosis		Kolmogorov-Smirnov		Shapiro-Wilk	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Sig	Statistic	Sig
Perceived attractiveness	749	-0.675	0.089	0.088	0.178	0.101	0.000	0.947	0.000
Perceived expertise	749	-0.753	0.089	0.282	0.178	0.137	0.000	0.936	0.000
Perceived trustworthiness	749	-0.701	0.089	0.138	0.178	0.133	0.000	0.942	0.000
Perceived similarity	749	-0.457	0.089	-0.213	0.178	0.096	0.000	0.961	0.000
Sponsorship disclosure	749	-0.666	0.089	0.380	0.178	0.130	0.000	0.953	0.000
E-WOM	749	-0.716	0.089	0.177	0.178	0.140	0.000	0.938	0.000
Purchase intention	749	-0.755	0.089	0.102	0.178	0.132	0.000	0.926	0.000

5.6 Testing Multicollinearity Assumption

Verification of multicollinearity between independent variables in the model is conducted; the correlation between two or more variables causes difficulty in determining variance explained by independent variables and creating a regression model. Redundant dependent variable info presented. In Tables (10, 11) for the model employing respondents' answers, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is all less than 5, and the variable tolerance (TOL) indicating no multicollinearity

Table 10: Inner VIF

Constructs	E-WOM		Purchase intention	
	Tolerance	VIF	Tolerance	VIF
Perceived attractiveness	0.453	2.206	0.442	2.263
Perceived expertise	0.309	3.237	0.300	3.330
Perceived trustworthiness	0.297	3.367	0.295	3.386
Perceived similarity	0.445	2.247	0.440	2.270
Sponsorship disclosure	0.630	1.588	0.575	1.738
E-WOM	------	--------	0.495	2.019

Table 11: Outer VIF

Items	VIF
Purchase intention 1	2.047
Purchase intention 2	1.870
Purchase intention 3	1.921
Sponsorship disclosure 1	1.863
Sponsorship disclosure 2	1.576
Sponsorship disclosure 3	1.979
Sponsorship disclosure 4	1.728
Perceived attractiveness 1	2.580
Perceived attractiveness 2	1.859
Perceived attractiveness 3	2.034
Perceived attractiveness 4	1.944
E-WOM1	1.832
E-WOM2	1.836
E-WOM3	1.544
Perceived expertise 1	2.047
Perceived expertise 2	2.110
Perceived expertise 3	2.476
Perceived expertise 4	2.468
Perceived similarity 1	2.034
Perceived similarity 2	1.936
Perceived similarity 3	1.300
Perceived trustworthiness 1	2.344
Perceived trustworthiness 2	2.646
Perceived trustworthiness 3	2.482
Perceived trustworthiness 4	1.820

5.7 COMMON METHOD BIAS

Harman's one-factor test was applied to examine the potential presence of common method variance bias among the dependent and independent variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Based on this Harman test, if the percentage exceeds 50%, it could bias the data. Table (12) shows that the per cent of difference is 48% which could not affect the data.

Table 12: Common Method Bias

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.071	48.285	48.285	12.071	48.285	48.285
2	1.655	6.621	54.906			
3	1.172	4.690	59.596			
4	0.960	3.842	63.438			
5	0.916	3.664	67.102			
6	0.777	3.108	70.210			
7	0.631	2.523	72.733			
8	0.586	2.346	75.079			
9	0.543	2.174	77.252			
10	0.539	2.155	79.408			
11	0.483	1.930	81.338			
12	0.468	1.872	83.209			
13	0.451	1.803	85.012			
14	0.406	1.623	86.636			
15	0.388	1.550	88.186			
16	0.381	1.525	89.711			
17	0.359	1.437	91.148			
18	0.333	1.333	92.481			
19	0.302	1.209	93.690			
20	0.297	1.188	94.878			
21	0.290	1.159	96.037			
22	0.272	1.088	97.125			
23	0.255	1.020	98.145			
24	0.243	0.973	99.118			
25	0.220	0.882	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

5.8 STRUCTURAL MODEL (HYPOTHESES TESTING)

After analyzing the validity and reliability of the data, the bootstrapping test is used to analyse the causal effect and the mediating role. The structural model was analyzed to validate the conceptual model and test the study hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017). Table (13) illustrates the results of Hypotheses testing and effect size, followed by table (14) illustrates the mediation effect of e-WOM on the path between social media influencers' credibility dimensions and intention to purchase.

Table 13: Results of Hypotheses Testing and Effect size

	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	P Values	Effect Size e-WOM	Effect size Purchase intentions	Results
H1	Perceived attractiveness -> E-WOM	0.167	0.049	3.424	0.001	0.025		Accepted
H2	Perceived attractiveness -> Purchase intention	0.258	0.044	5.817	0.000		0.077	Accepted
H4	Perceived Trustworthiness -> E-WOM	0.095	0.062	1.533	0.125	0.005		Rejected
H5	Perceived Trustworthiness -> Purchase intention	0.122	0.059	2.084	0.037		0.012	Accepted
H7	Perceived expertise -> E-WOM	0.212	0.059	3.587	0.000	0.028		Accepted
H8	Perceived expertise -> Purchase intention	0.054	0.058	0.928	0.354		0.002	Rejected
H10	Perceived similarity -> E-WOM	0.107	0.045	2.395	0.017	0.010		Accepted
H11	Perceived similarity -> Purchase intention	0.111	0.038	2.910	0.004		0.014	Accepted
H13	Sponsorship disclosure -> E-WOM	0.274	0.047	5.865	0.000	0.096		Accepted
H14	Sponsorship disclosure -> Purchase intention	0.281	0.042	6.668	0.000		0.120	Accepted
H16	E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.136	0.044	3.075	0.002		0.024	Accepted

Table 14: The Mediation Effect

|	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	P Values	Results
H3	Perceived attractiveness -> E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.023	0.011	2.006	0.045	Accepted
H6	Perceived Trustworthiness -> E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.013	0.010	1.291	0.197	Rejected
H9	Perceived expertise -> E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.029	0.011	2.530	0.011	Accepted
H12	Perceived similarity -> E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.015	0.008	1.778	0.076	Rejected
H15	Sponsorship disclosure -> E-WOM -> Purchase intention	0.037	0.013	2.844	0.004	Accepted
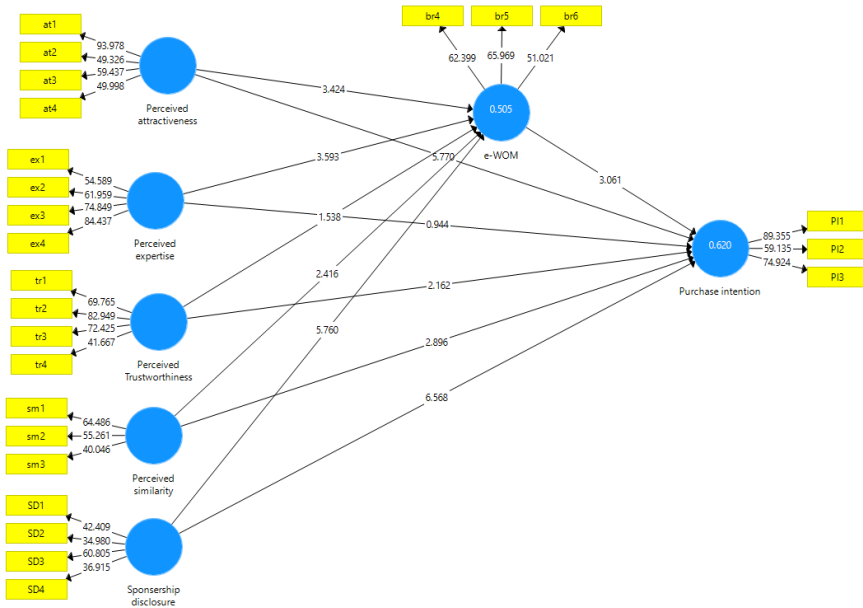
Figure 2: Standardized regression weights for the research model.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As social media platforms have developed, advertisers have had to find new ways to reach their target audiences. Compared to other forms of promotion, social media influencer marketing is expanding at an unprecedented rate. Given the marketing industry's growing reliance on social media influencers, a wealth of new research on the factors that shape the endorsement communications produced by these influencers is warranted. Although several studies have been on the topic, there is currently a dearth of high-quality research on social media influencer marketing (Aw & Chuah, 2021). More research is strongly requested (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019). The effect of these social media influencers' perceived credibility on consumers' intent to buy and perception of the brand e-WOM is still unclear (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Chetioui et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this study examined social media influencer's credibility dimensions (i.e., attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure) on consumer behaviour (purchase intention "PI") while considering followers' electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) credibility as the mediating variable among the YouTube consumers in Egypt (N= 749). The structural model accounted for approximately 0.505 and 0.620 of the variances in

e-WOM and PI, demonstrating its strong fit and predictive power. Attractiveness, trustworthiness, similarity, sponsorship disclosure, and e-WOM credibility directly affected purchase intention, but expertise did not. Attractiveness, expertise, similarity, and sponsorship disclosure all directly affected e-WOM credibility, but trustworthiness did not. E-WOM credibility also mediated influencer credibility dimensions, including attractiveness, expertise, and sponsorship disclosure with purchase intention. The association between broad credibility and followers' e-WOM credibility, which increases purchase intention, is one of this study's significant findings. This indicates that if social media influencers are beautiful, comparable, and trustworthy, customers will be more likely to connect with their posts and buy the suggested brand.

The direct impact of perceived attractiveness on e-WOM and purchase intention is supported as shown in table (13) H1 & H2. This suggests that customers are more inclined to evaluate e-WOM credibility and acquire the product if social media influencers appeal. These findings match earlier research (such as; Chetioui et al., 2020; Hughes et al., 2019; Ki & Kim, 2019; Koay et al.; 2022; Lim et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2015; Ohanian, 1990; Onu et al., 2019; Rebelo, 2017; Schouten et al., 2020; Weismueller et al., 2020; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Lim et al. (2017) found that social media influencers' credibility was judged by their attractiveness, suggesting that matching meanings and goods may boost PI, considering consumer attitude's mediating function. A year earlier, Munnukka et al. (2016) found that attractive social media influencers positively affect customer views. Similarly, Liu et al. (2015) dealt with the issue of how influential people in digital marketing can affect PI. They used this to argue that social media influencers, among others, should pay attention to e-WOM because it serves as a good barometer of consumer interest in and loyalty to a company. These studies not only lend credence to the study's empirical findings but also provide a wealth of material for comparing and contrasting situations and perspectives in developed and emerging economies. Next, we will evaluate all these factors to ensure the reliability of the findings from this study. Nonetheless, these findings are entirely different to AlFarraj et al. (2021) found no impact of social media influencers' perceived attractiveness on the PI.

Logically, As shown in table (13), the findings revealed that the direct impact of perceived trustworthiness on e-WOM was rejected. Thus, H4 was rejected.

However, the direct impact of perceived trustworthiness on PI was supported, and thus H5 was accepted. Regarding the social media influencers' perceived expertise, expertise is mainly the first contribution of the current study, as there is a lack of past literature examining this variable. As shown in table (13), the direct impact of perceived expertise on e-WOM was supported. Thus, H7 was accepted. However, the direct impact of perceived expertise on PI was rejected. Thus, H8 was rejected. These results identify the widespread mistrust of social media influencers' published content since most respondents believed that feedback is paid in exchange for promotional benefits. An endorser who is viewed as advocating things for their profit would be guilty of the self-serving bias in influencer marketing communication resulting in people responding negatively to adverts, which in turn will have a negative impact on the e-WOM credibility. However, they may be willing to purchase the product due to other features such as quality, value, and benefits (Aw & Chuah, 2021).

On the other hand, if consumers perceived the social media influencers as understood, experienced, skilled, qualified, competent, knowledgeable, and problem-solving in a specific domain, in general, a good source, which in turn has a positive impact on e-WOM credibility but they may not be willing to purchase the product due to other features such as high costs, or unneeded benefits or values. According to the Egyptian context, social media influencers' perceived trustworthiness is the primary motivator that supports the willingness to make the payment decision, and the perceived expertise is the primary motivator that supports the e-WOM credibility, but not the intention to purchase, as experience is still dull and immature enough to be an influencing factor. Furthermore, cultural tolerance is in a constant state of development. In addition, the literature review did not focus specifically on the expertise, and it did provide an illustrative case in point.

Regarding the social media influencers' perceived similarity, the similarity is mainly the second contribution of the current study, as there is a lack of past literature examining this variable. As shown in table (13), the findings revealed that the direct impact of perceived similarity on e-WOM and purchase intention was supported. Thus H10 & H11 are supported. This finding implies that as long as consumers see that social media influencers are similar or homophiles, they are more likely to have a positive evaluation of e-WOM credibility and intention to

buy the product. These results are consistent with previous studies (Ahmad et al., 2019; Barzily & Ackerman, 2018; Gupta et al., 2022; Shan et al., 2019, Verma et al., 2023). For example, Barzily & Ackerman (2018) found that similarity significantly positively impacted attitudes towards purchase intentions on social networking sites like Facebook. Perceived similarity or homophily is vital to e-WOM credibility (Verma et al., 2023).

Regarding the social media influencers' sponsorship disclosure, sponsorship disclosure is mainly the third contribution of the current study, as there is a lack of past literature examining it as an independent variable and its impact on e-WOM and PI. As shown in table (13), the findings revealed that the direct impact of perceived sponsorship disclosure on e-WOM and purchase intention was supported. Thus H13 & H14 are supported. This finding implies that as long as consumers see that social media influencers are aware of and comfortable with a product's sponsorship, it can significantly impact their opinions and buying decisions. Social media users may identify the presence of a sponsored message as an instance when they are the intended recipients of marketing material. When people on social media see that a post was created in exchange for money, they may choose to ignore it. These results are consistent with previous studies (Guo et al., 2023; Kim & Kim, 2021; Zhou et al., 2021).

As shown in table (13), the findings revealed that the direct impact of perceived e-WOM on purchase intention was supported. Thus, H16 are supported. This finding implies that consumers will evaluate e-WOM and other elements in depth before settling on a purchase. Finally, as long as consumers perceive a recommendation/ review as believable, accurate, or factual, which in turn, has a positive influence on purchase intention, These results are consistent with previous studies (Armawan et al., 2023; Bataineh, 2015; Fan & Miao, 2012; Verma et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2018; Zolkepli et al.,2023).

As shown in table (14), the mediating role of e-WOM had a significant effect on social media influencers' perceived attractiveness, expertise, sponsorship disclosure, and purchase intention. Thus H3, H9, & H15 were supported. These results imply that e-WOM credibility of social media influencers' who are perceived by their followers as high in facial characteristics such as good appearance, wisdom, beauty, wholesomeness, psychographic features, and

sportsmanship of a person is enjoyable to observe and intimately associated with perceived attractiveness in consumers' minds will stimulate the intention to purchase. Furthermore, the e-WOM credibility of social media influencers to be viewed as a reputable source of information is analogous to a qualification that promptly affects the degree of persuasion needed to convince consumers to purchase whatever is endorsed by their admirers. Similarly, e-WOM credibility of social media influencers' who are to be identified and comfortable with a product's sponsorship can significantly impact their opinions and buying decisions. Social media users may identify the presence of a sponsored message as an instance when they are the intended recipients of marketing material. When people on social media see that a post was created in exchange for money, they may choose to ignore it.

On the other hand, the mediating role of e-WOM had an insignificant effect between social media influencers' perceived trustworthiness and perceived similarity, and purchase intention. Thus, H6 and H12 were rejected. These results imply that the e-WOM credibility of social media influencers perceived by their followers as unfamiliar and untrusted may choose to ignore it, thus diminishing the intention to buy.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research should provide theoretical and practical insights into the literature. It will also assist marketers, entrepreneurs, and academics in understanding how influencer and e-WOM credibility affect purchase intention when choosing influencers to promote their goods and brands. This study will not only help theorists understand things better, but it will also give marketers and practitioners many clues about how to formulate marketing strategies and run their social media marketing campaigns to increase customers' perceptions of credibility and increase their purchase intention toward products and services. The research results would also assist influencers in understanding how followers' E-WOM may help them create and expand their professions as professional influencers.

The key results of this research offer implications for companies, academics, and marketers to realize the role of social media influencers' credibility in forming consumer behaviour. The results suggest that rather than relying solely on

physical appeal, consumers choose highly trusted influencers due to their comprehensive knowledge of the product or service they are marketing. Egyptian society does not simply pay attention to the images posted on social media because reviews can either increase or decrease even a celebrity's influence. Significantly, the recent research has a variety of managerial consequences.

8. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The two most crucial aspects are the question of trustworthiness and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Marketers should encourage their consumers to speak honestly about their experiences, as they play a crucial part in influencing influencers' PI. The second implication is the management of social media platforms, in which marketing managers should address any unfavourable e-WOM and increase the degree of service satisfaction among followers. The rise in satisfaction has a favourable effect on PI, and the service improves the effectiveness of the influencer function.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research has limitations despite its theoretical and administrative implications. First, this study relies entirely on quantitative data from different Egyptian cities. If the research design includes qualitative approaches, such as interviewing respondents, the findings may change. Second, convenience sampling was used because time and procedural limitations made probability sampling impossible. Finally, only Egyptian data was used. Data from two or more countries would provide a complete picture of the occurrences in varied socioeconomic contexts.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies may use the restrictions provided. Influencers are influential regardless of their popularity, the number of followers, Parasocial interaction with followers, or charm. More research is required to determine what makes influencers successful (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Boerman and Van Reijmersdal, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). Future researchers should use either a qualitative or a hybrid quantitative-qualitative strategy for data collection due to the drawbacks of using just quantitative approaches.

Qualitative data collection will be used to assess survey reliability. Future academics should compare significant works to further understanding. Then, researchers might see how followers' purchase intentions and brand views change by the country's social media influencer credibility.

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التحقيق في تأثير أبعاد مصداقية المؤثر: الجاذبية والجدارة بالثقة والخبرة والتشابه والإفصاح عن الرعاية على نية الشراء: دراسة حالة علىYouTube

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ملخص البحث باللغة العربية

تبحث هـذه الدراسـة في كيفيـة تـأثير جوانـب مصداقيـة المـؤثرين على وسـائل التواصـل الاجتمـاعي (الجاذبيـة، والجدارة بالثقة، والخبرة، والتشابه، والإفصاح عن الرعاية) على نية الشراء (PI) بين عملاء YouTube في مصر، باستخدام e-WOM الخاص بالمتابعين كمتغير وسيط. نموذج مفهوم بحثي مقترح يعتمد على نظرية مصداقية المصدر وخصومات من المؤلفات السابقة حول التسويق المؤثر على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. تم استخدام منهجية البحث الكمي لجمع البيانات من العملاء المصريين عبر استبيان عبر الإنترنت، والـذي أسفـر عن 756 إجابة، تم استكمال 749 منها بالكامل لاعتبارها ردودا شرعية. تم استخدام SPSS 25 و PLS-SEM لتحليل البيانات والإبلاغ عنها. تتلاءم البيانات جيدًا وأظهرت أن الجاذبية المتصورة والتشابه الملحوظ والإفصاح عن الرعاية تؤثر على WOM الإلكترونية ونية الشراء. تعمل E-WOM أيضًا على تعزيز نية الشراء. تؤثر الجدارة بالثقة المتصورة على نية الشراء، بينما تؤثر الخبرة المتصورة على E-WOM. أيضًا، لم تتوسط e-WOM في مصداقية المتصورة والتشابه المتصور أو نية الشراء. جمعت هذه الدراسة البيانات من مستخدمي YouTube المصريين فقط، وبالتالي فإن الحصول على البيانات من مستخدمي YouTube الآخرين سيؤدي إلى نتائج أكثر قابلية للتعميم. التفكير أكثر، ودراسـة دور الوساطة للمتغيرات الأخـرى مثل دور الوسيط للمشاركة عبر الإنترنت، والرضا، وبرامج الولاء يمكن أن يقدم أيضًا رؤى إضافية لطبيعة العوامل التي تؤثر على PI. أخيرًا ، قد تؤدي تجربة على سمعة مستخدمي YouTube المصريين إلى نتائج أفضل، لكن لم يسمح أي منهم بمشاركة أداة الاستطلاع على مواقعهم الرسمية. يجب أن تـدرس الدراسـات المستقبلية آثار استخدام العديد من منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. تشـير البيانات إلى أن المستهلكين يثقون في المؤثرين الذين لديهم معرفة واسعة بالمنتج أو الخدمة مقارنة بمن يتمتعون بجاذبية جسديه ومظهريه.

الكلمـات الدالـة: التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، منصـات التواصل الاجتماعي، المرأة الإلكترونيـة، المصداقية، الجاذبية، الجدارة بالثقة، الخبرة، التشابه، الإفصاح عـن الرعاية، المؤثرون، اليوتيوب، مصر.

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