



The Mediating Effect of Purchase Intention in the
relationship between Social Media Influencers'
Characteristics and Customer Purchasing Decision: Applied
research on social media automotive vlogs

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Abstract:

Purpose- Internet revolution creates a new life and everything around us encountered a radical change that is essential in people's everyday lives, Social media consider as a communication media often used to connect many people around the world, and the modern customer using social media to research and discuss issues close to his life, also modern influencer use it as a platform to fuel activism. Furthermore, electronic applications and social networks like Facebook and Twitter have changed the field of marketing communication since they allow companies to interact and be in direct contact with their (potential) customers.

The purpose of the current study is to discover the impact of social media influencers' characteristics on Egyptian customers purchasing decisions in the automotive industry through the mediating effect of purchase intention. In this study, Social media influencers' characteristics comprises four factors which are: Source credibility, Source attractiveness, Product match-up, and Meaning transfer.

Design/methodology/approach – The research design is descriptive and quantitative research. Data were gathered from various Sources; Secondary data - were collected from several research papers and websites which deal with research problem topic. Primary Data - were obtained by the E-Questioner method introduced by Google models for applying the questionnaire through the Internet and was filled out with different people. A total of 412 valid responses were obtained.

Hypotheses were tested employing the Path Analysis method using the Amos Ver.18 program. The researchers used the Structural Equations Modelling (SEM) method using the path analysis program, which is one of the regression programs, by using the Amos program with the Maximum Likelihood Estimates

(MLE) method. Where it can test the mediating influence of the purchase intention on the relationship between social media influencers' characteristics and customer purchasing decisions. Table (6) shows the results of the AMOS model for the impact of purchase intention as a mediating variable on the association between social media Influencers characteristics (independent variable) and Customer Purchasing Decisions (dependent variable).

Findings –The results revealed a substantial positive effect of social media influencers' Attributes on Egyptian purchasing decision in automotive industry. Besides, Purchase intention was found to mediate the association between social media influencers' characteristics and customer purchasing decision

Originality/Value – The current study further expanded the present knowledge by illustrating that the effect social media influencers' characteristics have on customer purchasing decisions is mediated by purchase intention. also, the study employed the strength of the Path Analysis method and Structural Equations Modelling (SEM) method using the Amos program when dealing with higher-order structures, permitting us to build and test such a parsimonious model that is useful for practitioners.

Keywords – Social Media Influencers, Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Meaning Transfer, Product Match-up, Purchase intention, Customer Purchasing Decision.

Paper Type – Research paper

1-Introduction

The revolution of communication and information technologies has contributed to a substantial change in the corporate setting, which has forced advertisers to employ new forms of marketing tactics to accomplish their goals. Wang & Chang (2013) stated that the social effects of user-generated social interactions on social media platforms (e.g., commenting, liking, and exchanging details, thoughts, or impressions) allow consumers to access online sources for product information, essential for their purchasing decisions.

According to Bianchi et al. (2017), there is a growth in internet users and a shift in marketing patterns and strategies. also, social media networks are now perceived by advertisers as the gateway to contact and engage with consumers. Moreover, celebrity endorsing is perceived to be a marketing tactic embraced today by many businesses to accomplish their marketing goals (Lee & Thorson, 2008).

So, a few years earlier, businesses sought to use the celebrities' popularity and social status to market their brands, yet this social media networks' advancement has led to a growing awareness of influencers (Xu & Pratt, 2018). With the era of the global Internet, bloggers have arisen as a diverse third-party contributor (Freberg et al., 2011).

Influencer advertising stresses the influencers' use to push a message of a brand to the target audience, as social media has provided new ways for marketers to communicate with consumers, with the potential to link individuals who can influence or even convey influence. A recognized celebrity, for example, imposes a certain influence different from that of a trustworthy friend or a neighbour who endorses a matching product. Thus, those celebrities can demonstrate a distinct kind of influence from that of a recognized authority (Bakshy et al., 2011).

Social networking, particularly with mobile data becoming more available, is increasingly changing the conventional one-to-one conversations that frequently take place between neighbours and co-employees. Consumers together with other stakeholders, continually share their views and perceptions of brands, products, services, and organizations with broader numbers of people (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Harris et al., 2016).

Thorne (2008) has described influencer marketing as a method of exploiting role models to convey word-of-mouth about products and brands to the targeted audience predominately to create buzz. In marketing, endorsements play an integral role in obtaining the company's image and objectives. Recently, social media influencers specially in automotive industry have marked themselves as possible supporters by creating a variety of buzzwords relative to other marketing tactics (i.e., celebrity endorsing). Besides, they are perceived as the most cost-effective promotional trends and they are seen as authentic and have loyal followings (Talaverna 2015; Patel 2016; Harrison, 2017).

Influencer marketing strategies include advertising and selling products or services by social media celebrities (i.e., the influencers) who would have the potential to shape the brand's character (Hill et al., 2020). Moreover, bloggers can illustrate persuasive effects in both media exposure and consumer persuasion (Booth & Matic, 2011). However, data regarding social media influencers is limited (Godey et al. 2016).

Consumer attitude has long been a major concern in marketing because learning why and how consumers are behaving when making their purchasing decisions aids marketers in developing their marketing approaches and make them more competitive (Stankevich, 2017). Finally, the research problem can be illustrated in the following question, what is the relationship between social media influencers' characteristics and Egyptian purchasing decision through the mediating effect of consumers purchase intention in automotive industry.

2-Literature Review

2.1: Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

Social networking is a contact tool that helps users interact with thousands to billions of individuals around the globe (Williams et al., 2012). Social networking often includes a wide array of online sources of information produced, circulated, and utilized by consumers to inform each other about the goods, brands, and services offered on the market (Marquesan, 2007).

Social media is distinct from most communication channels, as it is open to other users, happens in real-time, is permanently available, eliminates

gatekeeper obstacles so that anybody can tweet or blog, and promotes involvement in social networking (Whiting & Hair, 2019). Followers interact with social media influencers by frequently sharing the latest updates (Liu et al. 2012). Also, by leaning on a variety of social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube), social media influencers are quite used to promote brand information and new ads to online fans (Forbes, 2016; Markethub, 2016).

Dizon (2015) categorized influencers of social media into four types, celebrities' influencers, business professionals, micro-celebrities, content developers, and bloggers. Similarly, Solomon (2013) claimed that the automotive industry implements celebrity bloggers in four distinct forms. These forms include product or service promotion, product endorsements, acting tactics where the endorser is requested to play a part regarding the product together with impacting the consumer's purchase by acting as a representative for the brand.

Media influencers can be well-known celebrities, but not vice versa. Social networks allow influencers to make a profit off the brands they generate (Taillon et al., 2020). Social media influencers (SMIs) are third-party self-governing sponsors who communicate their message, information, and ideas through Instagram posts or other blogs (Freberg et al., 2011) to affect public opinions about brands, goods, and similar related topics or cases (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Influencers' communications tend to arise from a person like me or you, rather than from a possibly mistrusted corporation that could be trying to scam consumers to purchase its goods (Jahnke, 2018). Through endorsing services or goods, influencers may activate the contact of the brand in terms of an automated word of mouth and thus have a significant effect on the market success of the enterprise (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Even with paying for the uploaded content, the influencers' reviews are successful as they offer constant access into their private lives, establishing a para-social connection between them and the followers (Hsu et al., 2013).

Talaverna (2015) has stated that Messages shared by social media influencers are deemed more reliable and convincing to consumers, with 82% of

subscribers' polls have found that users are more willing to adopt the advice and recommendations of their preferred influencers.

Moreover, Van et al. (2009) reported that the influencer's correct choice can be successful in determining a place for a newly introduced product and shifting views of an incorrectly placed product. Using the recommendation of influencers, SMIs could shape purchasing choices, views, attitudes, and perceptions of their followers (Uzunoglu & Kip, 2014; Forbes, 2016).

Effectively managing and implementing media advertising messages is a key objective and an interest for a variety of brands (Hanaysha, 2018). Influencer marketing is no more the young attractive trend that splashes on the social scene, it is now a more sophisticated and wiser adult tactic, with the expertise and understanding of exactly how to help advertisers communicate meaningfully with their targeted audience. In 2019, around 40 % of advertisers launched 6 maybe more campaigns, while around 57% claimed to boost their investments in 2020 (State of Influencer Marketing report, 2020).

Consequently, organizations are switching their advertising budgets away from conventional mass media marketing outlets (e.g., print and radio) towards social media that became a viable and cost-effective alternative for brand marketers to rapidly access a more focused and specific audience (Evans et al., 2017). As a result, that proximity to a good portion of the targeted market easily and cost-efficiently causes the influencer advertising to become quickly popular as a promotion approach.

Analysts need to concentrate further on finding the key elements that could affect the consumer's response and interpretation of social media advertising. on the other hand, social media influencers can positively affect the company's awareness-building and having greater returns (Foong & Yazdanifard, 2014; Godey et al., 2016).

Erdogan (1999) found out that celebrity literature is comprehensive and involves four key research streams with four main models, which are source credibility, source attractiveness, match-up or congruence, and lastly, Meaning Transfer.

2.2: Source Credibility

It represents the degree of confidence and understanding the recipient has about a message from the source and its expertise or distributor (Ohanian, 1990; Alder & Rodman, 2000). It is also referred to as the interpretation of a person to the reality of a set of info. Additionally, it is considered as a multi-faceted term that poses a way for the information recipient to rank both the source and/or the communication transmitter following the information (Eisend, 2006).

Thus, input from a credible source may influence views, values, attitudes, and/or actions through a mechanism of "internalization", where recipients-consumers-accept the source effect on individual attitudes and value systems (Erdogan, 1999). Therefore, credibility is the degree to which the message represents fact after the client's appraisal.

Over years, advertisers, promoters, policymakers, specialists in different sectors, and academics in several disciplines have been trying to figure out if a strong or weak legitimacy source would be more beneficial or would have little influence on shifting the audience's views, perceptions, or actions (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Concurrently, the "noisy content" of social media blends information with low versus high credibility, making the information legitimacy assessment a critical challenge.

Many aspects can impact legitimacy. For instance, how the recipient gets a message from the influencers, whether the speaker makes a fresh impression or reaffirms an old one, and whether the speaker expresses confidence or lack of it. These variables may influence the speaker's reputation as well as the degree to which the message of a speaker is interpreted (Hans & Alois, 2006).

As a result, credibility is crucial to influencers and micro-famous individuals since it cultivates their efficiency and enhances their internal media view and self-branding (Chu & Kamal, 2008). Whenever an influencer is perceived to be more trustworthy, the purchasing intentions of the targeted audiences are greater, as they are viewed to have higher competence and reliability (Silvera & Austad, 2004).

Also, the information provided by a strongly reputable source is recognized as useful and reliable, allowing for simpler and quicker information transmission (Cheung et al., 2008; Ko et al., 2005). In other words, the information offered by a reliable source, as social media influencers,

may impact the views, values, perceptions, and actions of clients (Wang et al. 2017). Hence, the hypotheses produced are as follows:

H1: There is a significant correlation between the credibility of a source and the intention to purchase.

H2: There is a significant correlation between the credibility of a source and the decision of purchasing.

2.3: Source Attractiveness

An additional factor involved in this analysis is desirability, as it has been stated that it plays a key part in persuasion (Wu & Shaffer, 1987). Besides, the promotional documentation on spokespersons regarded attractiveness as a crucial element in consumers' choosing (Ohanian, 1990).

The attraction has been described by Amos et al. (2008) as a hugely influencing source trait on marketing efficacy metrics, namely purchasing intentions and brand attitudes. According to Erdogan (1999), an individual's attractiveness is a stereotyping of favourable experiences, which includes not just physical appearance but other qualities like character and athletic capacity as well. Often, the attractiveness implies fitness or congruity and is pointed to as the extent of similarity between the followers and the influencers, which is considered as a major determinant in the choices of the influencer (Silvera & Austad, 2004; Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016).

As appeal tends to build connections among individuals and between them and organizations, it has a favourable effect on the consumer attitude towards a source, especially brand perceptions and purchasing intention (Haley, 1996; Kiecker & Cowles, 2002; Amos et al., 2008; Lee & Yurchisin, 2011). As reported by Van et al. (2009), those influencers perceived as appealing are more expected to direct the purchasing intentions.

Similarly, Tsai & Chang's (2007) have established that an influencer's physical appeal represents attributes and key variables that impact consumer purchasing behaviour, as the more consumers are visually drawn to the influencers, the more they impact their purchasing intent.

As well, a study by Hakim (2010) ensured using Erotic Capital for clarifying the correlation between desirable goods and attractive influencers. Erotic Capital comprises six major components, including, appearance, sexuality, sexual attractiveness, social representation, interpersonal skills, and stamina. Social media influencers who have impressive appearances are more likely to attract the interest of fans. therefore, certain hypotheses are discussed in this study as follows:

H3: There is a significant correlation between the attractiveness of the source and the purchasing intention.

H4: There is a significant correlation between the attractiveness of the source and the decision to purchase.

2.4: Product Match-up

Matching implies the connection between an influencer and a message recipient. As suggested by Amos et al. (2008), product matching is a concordance between the chosen speaker's traits and the benefits of that brand contained in the commercial. The brand match-up is described as maintaining a resemblance between the attributes of the speaker and those of the product to improve the commercial efficacy. Furthermore, the form of both the commodity and the influencer needs to be congruent. For example, experts are more convincing as influencers for washing machines, whereas celebrities could be more convincing for jewels (Friedman & Friedman, 1979).

This suggests that the brand congruity is a logical evolution of value conversion and source reputation concepts since the resemblance between the influencer and the logo of the commodity in the commercial serves to communicate meaning by incorporating details about both the brand and the celebrity (Salvation, 2018).

While that study conducted by Kamins and Gupta (1994) showed that if celebrities' congruency is well matched or appealing to consumers, the celebrities inherently form exceptional eye-catching interaction with followers, it is deciding the effect of the actual match-up on the influencer marketing. Far more, there is a possibility that the right match-up would indicate that customers

will perceive the influencer more appealing. It will therefore affect their actions about the commodity (Salvation, 2018).

Overall, the congruity between the image of the influencer and the personality of the brand could promote the shared image-and, accordingly, the transfer of the personality (Lynch & Schuler, 1994). Thus, boosting the congruity of influencers with potential buyers might result in higher purchasing intentions and better behaviours toward the influencer (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Consequently, the hypotheses produced are as follows:

H5: There is a significant association between product celebrity matching and purchasing intentions.

H6: There is a significant association between product celebrity matching and purchase decisions.

2.5: Meaning Transfer

The meaning transfer is a term applied to the related transfer in the form of a celebrity endorsing but barely evaluated due to its ambiguity. Batra & Homer (2004) considered that transmission of meaning had an impact on non-verbal identity connections and/or brand value assumptions about the perceived appearance and brand advantage. The model of meaning transfer implies that society offers unique meanings to influencers, particularly celebrities, and when those influencers accept a brand, all meanings are shifted to that brand (McCracken, 1989; Amos, 2008).

As reported by Uzunoglu & Kip (2014), the influencer demonstrates the gateway to communicating information about the brand to a particular audience. Marketers claim that consumers are inclined to consume goods sponsored by their idols (Fowles, 1996). So, an essential factor for marketers is to choose influencers, in particular celebrities whose profile ideally suits the message the organization needs to convey for the product and to decide on specific celebrity characteristics that should be included (Canning & West, 2006).

Besides, McCracken (1986) suggested a framework that approached the meaning transfer from three aspects, namely, culture phase, endorsement phase,

and consumption phase. Regarding the culture stage, the meaning is passed to celebrities. It is then passed to the commodity during the endorsement stage, and finally, it is passed from the commodity to the consumer through the process of consumption.

Only a few studies investigated the effect of the transfer of meaning on consumers and observed that meaning transfer impacted purchasing decisions (Peetz et al., 2004), actual usage (Byrne et al., 2003), post-endorsement aspects that reported effective transfer of meaning to influence purchasing considerations, suggestion, and spending (Jain & Roy, 2016). Additionally, McCracken (1986) deemed a markedly favourable association between the consumers' purchasing intentions and the products sponsored by the transfer of meaning.

Besides, Analytical research validated that there is a correlation between the transfer of meaning and consumer behaviour and it affects purchasing intents as well (Peetz et al. 2004). Consequently, these hypotheses are produced as follows:

H7: There is a significant correlation between the transfer of meaning and the purchasing intent.

H8: There is a significant correlation between the transfer of meaning and the decision to purchase.

2.6: Purchase Intention

Social networking has introduced a new sense to the purchasing intention by progressively increasing the orientation of consumers toward social media to look for information, to explore and to decide the purchase intentions, and even to make purchase decisions. Also, purchasing intention is a vital indicator of a real purchasing attitude (Kalwani & Silk, 1982; Notani, 1997; Schlosser, 2003; Ghosh, 1990; Lim, 2013). The purchasing intent has also been described by Spears & Singh (2004) as a deliberate plan of a person to work towards purchasing an automotive brand. It includes the preparation of consumers and the deliberate decision to purchase a product, a service, or a brand. In other terms,

purchasing intent is a form of decision-making that investigates the rationale for purchasing a specific brand by the consumer (Shah et al., 2012).

What might occur when asking an intention question? Would that affect the purchase or the selection process of the consumer? Most consumers adhere to a basic model of selection formed of three steps proposed by Nedungadi et al. (1993). In the first step, consumers will develop substitutes, in an incentive-based way, a memory-based way, or a combination of both, while in the second stage, consumers would select alternatives to regard, and then in the third stage, they are going to be picked. Though, brand-related concepts, including intents and behaviours, could not yet be completely formed at any of these points. However, as consumers progress through each stage of the selection process, there is an increased probability that they will establish this cognition.

Furthermore, purchasing intention represents the mental phase of developing a choice in which the consumer has established an authentic tendency to act towards the good or service (Dodds et al., 1991; Wells et al., 2011). This feature makes that variable an indicator of potential consumer preferences and so, it is crucial for identifying an essential outcome for any of the advertising variables.

Based on the principle of logical action, purchasing intent is a component of the cognitive attitude of the consumer, as the consumer's attitude could be anticipated by its subsequent intents (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Hosein, 2012). Thus, advertising administrators should regularly use purchasing intention information to make calculated decisions on both novel and existing goods as well as marketing campaigns, which sustain them (Morwitz et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Taillon et al. (2020) found out that behavior towards the influencer does not represent a well-identified construct. firms can connect with the media bloggers to promote their products, and thereby purchasing intent or even the consumer's desire to consume a particular brand can affect the consumer's interaction with their bloggers. It is also necessary to consider the views of consumers regarding the media influencers' marketing.

Hsu et al. (2013) found that, after collaborating with the influencers to advertise certain goods and services, organizations perceived the effectiveness of the media bloggers' reviews and their substantial impact on consumers'

intentions. When administrators focus on buying intent, they aim ahead and believe they will foresee future purchases. As online purchasing requires knowledge exchange and purchasing action, purchasing intentions may rely on a variety of aspects (Pavlou, 2003). to cause an online buying desire among consumers, online retailers frequently have to concentrate on these aspects to maximize the consumer's chances of purchasing.

2.7: Purchasing Decision.

Consumer attitude has long been a leading trend in marketing, as understanding the way and the rationale behind behaving of consumers in a particular manner can support marketers in developing their strategies and make them more competitive in markets (Stankevich, 2017). Buyer conduct stresses identifying the purchasing decision of consumers and how they employ their current assets (e.g., cash, effort, and time) to obtain a service or a product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

The subject matter of consumer's buying decisions has been selected on many grounds. Firstly, anyone can act as a consumer and make a lot of purchasing decisions every day. So, it is essential to comprehend what affects personal purchase decisions, whether they are an issue, a desire, an individual, or a well-organized strategic advertising campaign. On the other side, from the marketer's point of view, it is helpful to recognize consumer purchase behaviour to better attract consumers, enhance the organization's goods and services, and realize how media influencers could affect consumers' buying habits along with any other aspect that could serve to increase value and consumer fulfillment, build a strategic edge and eventually, enhance the company's value (Stankevich, 2017).

The consumer purchasing decision process constitutes five phases, namely, problem identification, searching for information, assessment of alternatives, purchasing decision-making, and post-purchasing attitude (Chaffey, et al. 2009). Generally, consumers are searching for information and knowledge pertinent to unique consumption-related demands within their previous experience before seeking external information sources (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

Currently, the Web presents an integral source that can be depended on to provide knowledge, particularly on social platforms that are the key venue for the existence of Bloggers' efforts and corporation. Thus, that necessitated the researchers to exert significant efforts to investigate the effects of that existence on customer's behaviour.

The Decision-making process is a non-single operation that implies how consumers make purchase choices. It is based on the form of that decision-making and the participation of buyers in the purchasing. The decision-making process defines the procedures that consumers are moving through either before, during, or after purchase, while consumers plan to browse, pick, and purchase goods through the web. The Internet thus influences the consumer's decision-making actions at all points of their purchasing, pre-purchasing, purchasing, and post-purchasing (Meskaran et al.,2013).

Lim et al. (2016), noted that online purchasing intentions and online purchasing decisions should be more investigated. Besides, the consumer's intents are a measure of the degree to which consumers are engaged in conducting a particular action (Ajzen, 1991), which can be interpreted as the consumer purchasing decision in this study. Thus, the hypotheses can be produced as follows:

H9: There is a significant correlation between the purchasing intention and the purchase decision.

H10: Purchasing intention mediates the association between social media influencers' attributes (source attractiveness, source credibility, product match-up /congruence, and transfer of meaning) and purchasing decisions.

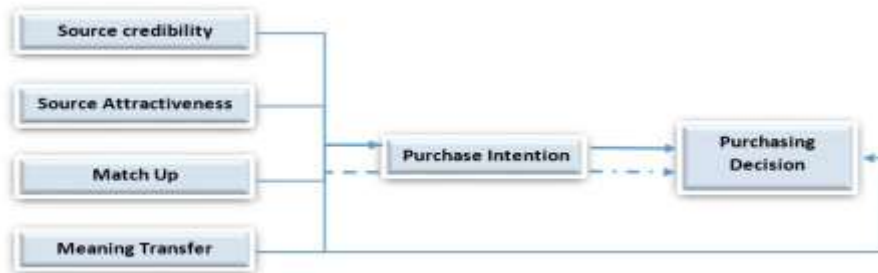


Figure 1

Conceptual diagram explaining the Research Model

1- Research methodology

The current study relies on the empirical analytical and descriptive methodology that involves the process of library surveying by the reference to earlier studies for developing a conceptual structure for the analysis, utilizing certain qualitative research approaches, and the field survey method for obtaining data by a focused survey.

3-1: Data Collection and Sample

The questionnaire method was utilized to gather data from the post-positivist perspective for model testing. The purposive sampling tool applied for data collection entailed respondents to follow social media influencers making automotive vlogs.

Given the consumer population's large size, along with time factor and cost concerns that are a limitation in research, the sampling technique was used to collect data needed for the customer field analysis. The sample size was estimated to be 384 individuals according to the act of large numbers.

A Likert-scale consisting of five points, which ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, was used to measure each attitude item. Data were collected via the electronic questioning process by Google Forms for applying the questionnaire online. We collected 450 responses, 412 of which are retained for analysis. Data collection lasted approximately three months from August 2020 to January 2021. Data analysis was done using SPSS and Amos Ver.18 statistical software packages.

3-2: Measures

To ensure that the measures used in the present study have a high degree of reliability, it was based on Cronbach's alpha as the most significant reliability analysis methods in evaluating the degree of internal consistency between the contents of the measures. In addition, it is used to determine the extent to which the scale items represent the target variable and not another (Tavakol and Reg 2011).

To develop the measurement of involved variables and the number of items, some previous studies are considered as shown in table (1). The study included three different types of variables, an independent variable, which is Social Media Influencers' Characteristics, a dependent variable that is Customer Purchasing Decision, and lastly, a mediating variable that is Purchase Intention. The questions utilized were developed and improved based on the literature and were measured using a Likert scale of five points. Social media influencers' characteristics were measured using four adapted items (source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and meaning transfer), The scale consists of twenty-three items which measure the four dimensions or facets of the construct, while Customer purchasing decision was captured by twelve items. for measuring the mediating variable that is Purchase intention, seven items were used with some close-ended questions been used to assess the sample's demographics.

Table 1. The measures are used in the study		
Variable	Number of items	Reference
Influencers' Characteristics	23	
- <i>Credibility</i>	6	(Pornpitakpan, 2004; Jain & Roy, 2016)
- <i>Attractiveness</i>	6	(Saaksjarvi et al., 2016; Taillon et al., 2020)
- <i>Match Up</i>	6	(Seiler a& Kuzca, 2017; Salvation, 2018)
- <i>Meaning Transfer</i>	5	(Jain & Roy, 2016; Khalid & Siddiqui, 2018)
Purchasing Decision	12	(Shah et al., 2012; Meskaran et al., 2013)
Purchase Intention	7	(Morwitz et al., 2007; Hosein, 2012; Wang & Chang, 2013)

Data was collected and obtained from the survey software program, then was fed into SPSS. Then, data was cleaned by removing invalid replies (i.e., incomplete questionnaires) or editing data with cases of misinterpretation or attention lacking.

3-2-1: Reliability of Measures Used in the Field Study

To ensure the validity of the scale, two steps were taken; firstly, the questionnaire was presented to a group of experts and specialists in the field of marketing and their observations were considered. Furthermore, the second step in the evaluation of predictive measures is validity evaluation. Validity is looked at by considering the convergent validity and distinguishing validity of a construct. The coefficient Alpha technique is a common method employed in estimating reliability measures. It retains a high accuracy degree when calculating the consistency degree of conformity of the various measures used. Help for convergent validity is given when each element has outer loads above 0.70 and the Average Variance Derived (AVE) of each construct is 0.50 or greater. The AVE is the great mean value of a group of indicators 'squared loadings (Hair et al., 2014) and is analogous to a construct's communality. Put succinctly, an AVE of 0.50 indicates more than half the variance of its indicators is clarified by the building.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA), a reliability assessment, and a validity assessment of constructs are used to detect the construct reliability and validity. In the present study, Cronbach's α and structural reliability were utilized for testing reliability. As seen in Table (2), all the construct composite reliabilities were more than 0.77 and Cronbach's α was more than 0.73. It reveals a high- degree of reliability of the data. We also assessed both the convergent and the discriminant validity of the results. Convergent validity relies on two bases, the path factor loading must be 0.7 or higher, and the average variance extracted (AVE) must be 0.5 or higher (Hair et al., 2006).

As presented in Table (2). The findings of estimating reliability also indicated that the Alpha coefficient for all measures has ranged from .736 to .863, which reflects a high degree of reliability of the measures exploited in humanities and marketing research according to humanities researches, the accepted level is 0.60 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table2: Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE coefficient displayed

Variable	AVE	Communality	Alpha Coefficient	Composite reliability
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Social Media Influencers	0.689	0.692	0.762	0.802
Source Credibility	0.683	0.683	0.837	0.846
Source Attractiveness	0.699	0.763	0.772	0.839
Match-up	0.696	0.696	0.736	0.773
Meaning Transfer	0.766	0.866	0.762	0.802
Purchase intention	0.783	0.683	0.837	0.846
Purchasing decision	0.832	0.832	0.836	0.863

Note(s): (a) Indicative: All item loadings are more than 0.7, implying convergent validity, (b) Indicative: All composite reliability (CR) more than 0.7, implying internal consistency (Gefen et al., 2000), (c) Indicative: All average extracted variance (AVE) more than 0.5 implying convergent reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

3-2-2: Data analysis and hypothesis testing:

The following is an analysis of the study data and discuss the results and hypothesis testing, as follows:

a) - *Test the relationship between the Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and purchase intention:*

Table 3. Correlations between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and purchase intention							
Variable	R	R Squa re	Beta	F -Test value	Sig. F.	Hypotheses Status	
Source Credibility	.391 ^a	.153	.457	17.277	.000 ^b	H1	Accepted
Source Attractiveness	.527 ^a	.277	.429	36.869	.000 ^b	H3	Accepted
Match-up	.380 ^a	.144	.468	16.196	.000 ^b	H5	Accepted
Meaning Transfer	.478 ^a	.228	.409	28.404	.000 ^b	H7	Accepted

a. Predictors: (Constant), purchase intention

By using multiple regression analysis, the type, strength, and the relativity importance of the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics (Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Match-up, Meaning Transfer), and purchase intention can be clarified Table (3)

There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Social media influencers' Characteristics and purchase intention, at the level (1%) according to the (F) test, and this relationship has a strength of (39%) Source Credibility, (52%) Source Attractiveness, (38%) Product Match-up, (47%) Meaning Transfer, according to the correlation coefficient R in the analysis model of regression.

Additionally, these components can explain the variance up to (15%) Source Credibility, (27%) Source Attractiveness, and (14%) product Match-up, (22%) Meaning Transfer, according to the determination parameter R^2 in the analysis model of regression.

Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between Social media influencers' characteristics and the value of purchase intention. And these results are consistent with previous studies according to each dimension, as follows: Credibility (Chan et al., 2013; Evans, 2017; Seiler a& Kuzca, 2017; Khalid & Siddiqui, 2018), Attractiveness (Seiler a& Kuzca, 2017; Taillon et al., 2020), Match Up (Jain & Roy, 2016; Seiler a& Kuzca, 2017; Salvation, 2018), and Meaning Transfer (Jain & Roy, 2016; Khalid & Siddiqui, 2018), and the impact of each dimension on Purchase Intention.

b) Test the relationship between the Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and customer purchasing decision:

Table 4. Hypotheses testing the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and customer purchasing decision

Variable	R	R Square	Beta	F -Test value	Sig. F.	Hypotheses Status	
Source Credibility	.488a	.238	.419	29.966	.000b	H2	Accepted
Source Attractiveness	.593a	.351	.393	52.006	.000b	H4	Accepted

Match-Up	.557a	.311	.406	43.235	.000b	H6	Accepted
Meaning Transfer	.649a	.422	.342	69.966	.000b	H8	Accepted
a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer purchasing decision.							

By using multiple regression analysis, the type, strength, and the relativity importance of the relationship between Social Media Influencers Characteristics (Source Credibility, Source Attractiveness, Match-up, Meaning Transfer), and customer purchasing decision can be clarified in Table (4).

There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and Customer purchasing decision, at the level (1%) according to the (F) test, and this relationship has a strength of (48%) Source Credibility, (59%) Source Attractiveness, (55%) Product Match-up, (64%) Meaning Transfer, according to the correlation coefficient R in the regression analysis model.

Additionally, these components can explain the variance up to (23%) Source Credibility, (35%) Source Attractiveness, and (31%) product Match-up, (42%) Meaning Transfer, according to the determination parameter R^2 in the regression analysis model.

Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between Social media influencers' characteristics and the value of Purchase Decision. And these results are consistent with previous studies according to each dimension, as follows: Credibility (Ahmed, et al., 2015; Khalid & Siddiqui, 2018), Attractiveness (Ahmed, et al., 2015;), Match Up (Salvation, 2018), and Meaning Transfer (Ahmed, et al., 2015; Jain & Roy, 2016; Khalid & Siddiqui, 2018), and the impact of each dimension on the Purchase decision.

c) Test the relationship between purchase intention and Customer purchasing decision:

Table 5. relationship between purchase intention and customer purchasing decision

R	R Squar e	Beta	F -Test value	Sig. F.	Hypotheses Status	
.611 ^a	.374	.282	57.310	.000 ^b	H9	Accepted

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention**a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Purchasing Decision**

There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between purchase intention and customer purchasing decision, at a significant level (1%) according to the (F) test, and this relationship has a strength of about (61%) according to the correlation coefficient R in the regression analysis model.

Additionally, these dimensions can explain the variance up to about (37%) according to the coefficient of determination R^2 in the regression analysis model.

Therefore, we accept the hypothesis that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between purchase intention and customer purchasing decision. These results are consistent with previous studies (Ajzen, 1991; Pavlou, 2003; Ahmed, et al., 2015; Lim et al., 2016; Peña-García, 2020).

d) Test the mediating effect of purchase intention in the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics (source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and meaning transfer), and Customer purchasing decision.

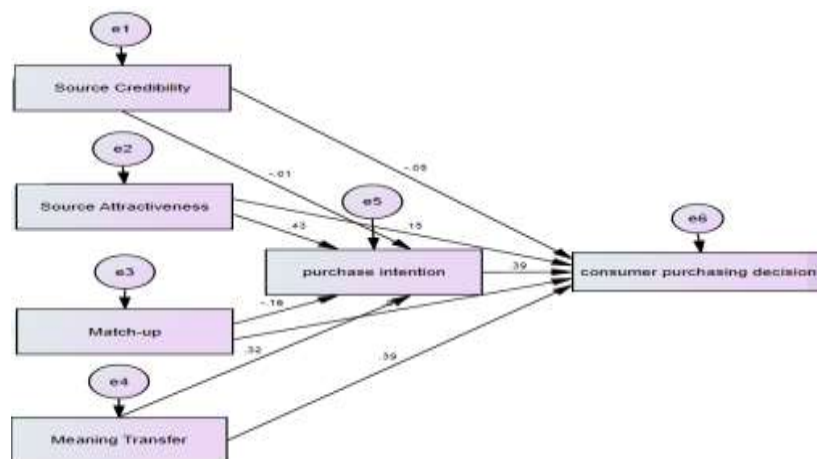


Figure 2

A measurement model for purchase intention as a mediator of the relationship between Social Media

Influencers' Characteristics, and Customer purchasing decision using AMOS

The researchers also used the Path Analysis method by using the analysis of moment structures (Amos Ver.18) program, and the researchers used the Structural Equations Modeling (SEM) method using the path analysis program, which is one of the regression programs, by using the AMOS program in the method of Maximum Likelihood Estimates (MLE) Through which it is possible to test the mediating influence of the purchase intention on the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and Customer purchasing decision. Table No.6 shows the results of the AMOS model for the impact of purchase intention as a mediating variable on the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and Customer purchasing decision.

Table 6: The multiple regression weight between constructs

Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
purchase intention	←	Credibility	.527	.063	8.389	***
purchase intention	←	Attractiveness	.722	.059	12.254	***
purchase intention	←	Match-up	.522	.064	8.122	***
purchase intention	←	Meaning Transfer	.605	.056	10.756	***
purchasing decision	←	purchase intention	.391	.079	4.392	***
purchasing decision	←	Credibility	.347	.046	7.457	***
purchasing decision	←	Meaning Transfer	.386	.051	8.329	.004
purchasing decision	←	Match-up	.269	.029	9.164	***
purchasing decision	←	Attractiveness	.095	.028	3.381	***

These results are consistent with the previous results obtained from the method of multiple regression analysis using the SPSS program, where there is a degree of compatibility between purchase intention and the customer purchasing decision, and that most of the regression coefficients are highly significant, which confirms that purchase intention has a mediating effect on the relationship between social media influencers' characteristics and customer purchasing decision.

To identify the sort and degree of association between purchase intention as an intermediate variable in the relationship between the intention to buy and

the purchase decision, and to verify the validity of this hypothesis, the SPSS program has been relied upon and using the method of multiple regression analysis in this analysis through its program related to the relationship model (Malhotra, 2011; Aaker et. al, 2014; Idris, 2016). The two researchers applied the method of regression and multiple correlation analysis on the social media influencers' characteristics as an independent variable, and the customer purchasing decision as a dependent variable in two cases. The first case is the state of the purchasing intention variable absence, while the second case is that the purchasing intention variable presence.

Table 7: The relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics, and Customer Purchasing Decision

Customer Purchasing Decision						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.130	.324		3.492	.001
	Purchasing Decision	.794	.096	.643	8.236	.000
R 643a		R Square .414		F 67.834		Sig .000
a. Independent Variable: Social Media Influencers						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Purchasing Decision						

... Type and strength of the relationship:

- (A) There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Social Media Influencers' characteristics and the customer purchasing decision, at the level of (1%) according to the (P) test, and this relationship has a strength of up to (64%) according to the correlation coefficient R in the regression analysis model.
- (B) Additionally, these dimensions can explain the variance up to (41%) according to the determination coefficient R^2 in the regression analysis model.
- (C) The unstandardized constant statistics 1.130 indicate that model would predict if the independent variable was zero. The B Coefficient for Purchasing Decision is 0.794. It reveals that on average if go up 1 point on the Purchasing Decision scale, Social

Media Influencers will improve by 0.794 units. The equation for the regression is: $Y = 0.1.130 + 0.794 (SMI)$.

Table 8: The relationship between Purchase Intention as an intermediate variable in the relationship between Social Media Influencers' Characteristics and Customer Purchasing Decision

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Hypotheses Status	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	.837	.362	2.311	.023	H9	Accepted
	Purchasing Decision	.666	.121	.539	.000		
	Purchase Intention	.202	.116	.170	.045		
R		.657a	R Squar	.52	F	36.149	Sig. .000
a. Independent Variable: Social Media Influencers							
b. Predictors: (Constant), purchase intention, customer purchasing decision							

... Type and strength of the relationship:

- (A) There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Social Media Influencers' characteristics and customer purchasing decision, at the level (1%) according to the test (F). This relationship has a strength of up to (65%) according to the correlation coefficient R in the regression analysis model.
- (B) Additionally, these dimensions can explain the variance up to (52%) according to the determination coefficient R^2 in the regression analysis model.
- (C) The unstandardized constant statistics 0.837 indicate that model would predict if the independent variable was zero. The B Coefficient for Purchasing Decision is 0.66
- (D) It reveals that on average if go up 1 point on the Purchasing Decision scale, Social Media Influencers will improve by 0.666 units. The equation for the regression is: $Y = 0.1.837 + 0.666 (PD)$. Also, The B Coefficient for Purchasing Intention is 0.202. It reveals that on average if go up 1 point on the Purchasing Intention scale, Social Media

Influencers will improve by 0.290 units. The equation for the regression is: $Y = 0.1.837 + 0.222 (PI)$.

It is evident from Table (8) that the social media influencers characteristics have a positive effect on a customer purchasing decision, and upon the introduction of the variable purchase intention, the strength of the relationship between social media influencers' characteristics and a customer purchasing decision occurred, from (64%) to (66%). According to the correlation coefficient R in the regression analysis model that indicates an increase in the strength of the relationship in the presence of the mediating variable and the level of significant significance. The interpretation of the variance increased from (41%) to (52%) according to the determination coefficient R^2 in the regression analysis model. Refers to the increase in the explanatory capacity of the independent variable (purchase intention) in case of the presence of the variable purchase intention.

2- Discussion and Recommendations

From the responses of most participants to the survey, we noticed that the most influential person followed by them was (Mahmoud Khairy) with 60.2%, while the most followed application on social media when people decided to purchase a new car is Twitter with 82.5 %, followed by Instagram that came with 58.3 %.

People were found to mostly appreciate the influencers' comments on social media about cars when deciding on purchasing a new one more than any other thing. Most of the followers (62.1%) were males with ages ranging from (21 to 30), constituting 44.7%. about 51.5% had an educational bachelor's degree and around 68.9% of all followers were married.

This research showed the impact of purchasing intent as a mediator factor on the interaction between social media influencers' Qualities (source legitimacy, source attractiveness, product congruency /match-up, transfer of meaning) and consumer purchase decisions. First, the credibility of the source of media influencers has been shown to have a strong correlation with behaviour and purchasing intentions (H1 and H2 were accepted). In the current study, respondents appreciated influencers who own legitimacy, and they impacted their buying decision. So, media influencers ought to have sufficient awareness of the endorsed automotive brand.

At the same time, Evans (2013) found that sponsors beyond their specific fields of expertise could implicitly compromise the presumed images for consumers, resulting in overall negative purchasing intents. From the consumer's point of view, it was difficult to have a positive view toward the legitimacy of influencers, especially with those influencers who were unaligned with the information they posted.

Regarding the source appeal of media influencers, it affected the purchasing intentions of consumers (H3 was accepted). That finding was not compatible with the previous study from Ohanian (1991) who reported that the attractiveness of the source did not affect the purchasing intentions of the consumers. The results from Till & Busler (2000) came in parallel with those of Ohanian (1991) as they claimed that the attractiveness was not a strong aspect to cause a purchasing attitude because of the significantly poor conceptual connection between the attractive influencer and the purchase intent. In the present study, respondents identified influencers with appealing looks and presenting approaches to impact their buying decision (H4 was accepted).

Next, the product congruency of the media influencers was proved to be significantly linked to purchasing intent and consumer purchase choices (H5 and H6 were accepted). The hypothesis of the product congruity has demonstrated that the messages related to the product, which are transmitted by the influencer must be consistent to achieve a successful promotional result (Kamins & Gupta 1994).

Additionally, several endorsements' works have emphasized the significance of congruity between the automotive brand or the product and its influencer as the main indicator for marketing performance (Carrillat, d'Astous & Lazure, 2013; Fleck, Korchia & Le Roy, 2012; Gurel-Atay & Kahle, 2010; Lee & Thorson, 2008). Similarly, according to this study, respondents perceived congruity between social media influencers and the product as having a huge effect on their purchasing intent, so marketers need to cautiously select influencers with attitudes and values compatible with the target clients and to track the day-to-day actions of influencers under the agreement in social media.

Subsequently, the findings confirmed that the transfer of meaning has a strong connection with explaining purchasing intentions and consumer purchase

choices (H7 and H8 were accepted). Consumers who relate the imagery to the endorsers and the favoured automotive brands may certainly perceive and pass the meanings of the brand, leading to increased purchases of that specific brand (Escalas & Bettman 2005). This study illustrated the fact that participants were more willing to embrace the meanings of automotive brands promoted by influencers whom they viewed as similar to themselves or those whom they appreciated.

This research also applied the emotional dimension to the interpretation of consumer's purchasing intentions and their purchasing choice attitude that is missing in traditional analyses, to add knowledge to the research regarding the role of motivation in online consumer conduct. Furthermore, the hypothesis of having a favourable correlation between the consumer's purchasing intent and the consumer's purchase decision was validated (H9 was accepted). So, advertisers should concentrate on recognizing bloggers as media figures, since popular bloggers with a large crowd of followers have a powerful influence on conveying their viewpoints to a big audience especially in automotive industry. Positive remarks about a corporation when responding to a blog post could be a tremendous contribution to the corporate reputation and enhance consumers' buying intention and conversely, negative commenting can be critical to the corporate image. Additionally, consumers' purchasing intent has been reported to substantially modulate the correlation between the qualities of social media bloggers (source reputation and attractiveness, product (congruency) match-up, transfer of meaning), and consumer's purchase decisions (H10 was accepted).

Eventually, future studies can consider how social media influencers in Egyptian market can reduce and eliminate the potential bias for specific automotive brands especially chines automotive brands. Similarly, social media influencers' emotional intelligence can be added as another mediating variable in the study's conceptual model.

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