

The Attitudes Homophily between Influencers and Customers and the Intention to Use the Brand in Social Media Marketing within the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: the Role of Trust

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Abstract

This study investigates the increasing prevalence of influencer marketing on social media. The main objectives are as follows: 1) To examine the impact of attitudes homophily on the intention to use the brand, 2) To study the influence of attitudes homophily on trust, 3) To investigate how trust acts as a mediator in the association between attitudes homophily and the intention to utilize the brand., and 4) To assess the impact of trust on the intention to utilize the brand. A questionnaire was developed, consisting of three sections, to test these hypotheses. Data was collected from hotel guests who visited Sharm El-Sheikh and tourists from tourism and aviation companies in Cairo, Egypt. The study involved the distribution of 550 questionnaires to a convenient sample of tourists. Out of these, 338 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 61.5%. The hypotheses were examined utilizing Smart PLS-3.0. The empirical results demonstrate a positive relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand, indicating that attitudes homophily has a favorable effect on both the intention to use the brand and trust.

1. Introduction

Over the past few years, businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry have increasingly adopted social media marketing as a popular strategy to engage with customers and expand their reach (Al-Dmour et al., 2023). This industry has benefited from the accessibility of social networking sites through mobile apps, enabling relationship building, brand awareness, and customer loyalty (Khan and Abir, 2022). According to Al-Dmour et al. (2023), social media platforms provide customers with extensive information, including blogs and tweets, which can have both supportive and unfavorable impacts on a product's esteem. Research indicates that customers tend to place more trust in information from private sources rather than commercial sources (Ly & Ly, 2020).

Brand devotion has been a longstanding priority for marketers in the travel and tourism industry, as it indicates the degree of customer loyalty towards a particular brand, resulting in recurrent patronage and recommendations through word-of-mouth (Abbasi et al., 2022). Within the travel sector, social media marketing has gained acknowledgement as one of the most impactful strategies, primarily due to the trust people place in the platform, relying on reviews, firsthand accounts, and feedback from fellow users (Hua et al., 2017). A critical element within the realm of social media marketing is the effective utilization of influencers (Bu et al., 2022).

According to Kay et al. (2020), influencer marketing encompasses the endorsement, sponsorship, or product placement by influential individuals or organizations. Lou and Yuan (2019) further define it as a marketing strategy where marketers leverage popular personalities with a significant social media following to promote their brands or products to their target audiences. This approach allows influencers to generate brand awareness and cultivate a user image that aligns with brands and retailers (Lee and Watkins, 2016).

Rather than simply addressing the audience, influencer marketing serves as a bridge to establish interactive and communicative channels with customers, facilitating authentic partnerships between influencers, brands, and retailers (Ki et al., 2020). In terms of market size, global influencer marketing reached USD 148 million in 2019, with an approximate 8% increase from the previous year. Projections indicate that it will surpass USD 373 million within the next six years (Bu et al., 2022). Surveys conducted among brand strategists and retailer marketers indicate that over half of them have integrated influencer marketing into their activities (Bu et al., 2022).

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is widely acknowledged, with 94% of marketers believing in its efficacy (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Additionally, 89% of marketers consider the return on investment of influencer marketing to be equal to or greater than other marketing strategies (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Notably, the return on investment for influencer marketing is reported to be 11 times higher than that of traditional advertising (Lou and Yuan, 2019). The relationship between influencers and their followers is often characterized by homophily, as highlighted by Ki et al. (2020).

According to Ao et al. (2023), homophily refers to the similarities between individuals based on their likes, dislikes, values, and experiences. Homophilic individuals often share common traits that facilitate easy communication and the formation of strong bonds. The impact of homophily on customer engagement and purchase intention has been demonstrated by Shen et al. (2022).

Purchase intention, as defined by Supriyanto et al. (2023), represents the attitude expressed by consumers when buying products or utilizing services to fulfill their needs. Additionally, Wardhana (2016) suggests that consumers' attitudes or intentions towards purchasing can be influenced by their levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service they experience. Hence, gaining insights into the impact of homophily on consumer behavior can assist businesses and marketing professionals in developing highly effective marketing campaigns and successfully penetrating new markets (Hu, et. al. 2023). When individuals perceive that an influencer shares similar attitudes or beliefs with them, it creates a sense of familiarity and connection. This connection can lead to the development of trust, as consumers believe that the influencer's recommendations are genuine and based on shared attitudes (Supriyanto, et. al., 2023).

Trust plays a vital role in consumer decision-making processes. (Kemeç, & Yüksel, 2021). Establishing trust is crucial for companies in fostering a robust bond between consumers and the brand (Merz, 2019). When consumers trust a brand, they have confidence that the brand will deliver on its promises and provide a positive experience (Chaudhuri, & Holbrook, 2001). According to Hacıfendioğlu & Fırat (2014), Developing trust towards brands on social media can offer a substantial competitive edge. In the context of influencer marketing, trust can be influenced by attitudes homophily, as customers are more inclined to trust and rely on influencers who share similar attitudes and beliefs (Kim, & Kim, 2021).

The primary focus of this study is to delve into and gain a deeper understanding of the mediating role of trust in the association between attitudes homophily and the intention to utilize a brand within the tourism and hospitality sector. Existing research has already established positive connections between attitudes homophily and both the intention to use the brand (Ladhari et al., 2020), and trust (Kim and Kim 2021). However, there remains a gap in knowledge concerning the mediating impact of trust on the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand. This knowledge gap hampers the development of effective marketing strategies that can leverage homophily and trust to enhance customer engagement and loyalty in the tourism and hospitality industry. Consequently, the aim of this study is to address this gap by thoroughly examining and exploring the mediating role of trust in this specific context.

The structure of this article is as follows: Part 2 provides the conceptual framework and hypotheses formulation. Parts 3 and 4 elaborate on the research methodology and data analysis, respectively. The discussion and implications of the study are presented in Part 5, while Part 6 addresses the limitations and suggests future work directions. Finally, the conclusion of the study is provided in Part 7.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Formulation.

2.1. *Attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand*

Homophily, within the realm of consumer behavior, refers to the inclination of individuals to associate with others who share similar preferences (Munawar et al., 2020). Homophily can be described as the level of resemblance between entities in binary connections, illustrating the similarity among individuals who engage based on beliefs, education, and social standing (Bu et al., 2022). Although homophily has traditionally been a focus in communication studies, it has recently garnered interest in marketing research, especially within social and digital contexts (Ladhari et al., 2020).

The impact of homophily on brand attitudes and purchase intention can manifest in several ways. Zhang et al. (2021) have explained that homophily can lead to an increase in purchase intention. If consumers perceive a strong sense of homophily with a brand, they are inclined to form a positive attitude towards it. This positive sentiment can lead to an increased intention to purchase and a greater inclination to recommend the brand to others. Furthermore, homophily has the potential to have a positive impact on customer value co-creation behavior, which pertains to the degree of customer engagement in actively contributing to value creation for a brand. This active involvement can lead to heightened customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, an increased intention to make a purchase (Bu et al., 2022).

Additionally, homophily can have a positive impact on brand attitude. Consumers who perceive a high level of homophily towards a brand are more likely to hold a positive attitude towards it (Pina et al., 2019). In conclusion, homophily significantly influences the formation of brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Businesses operating in the tourism and hospitality industry can leverage this understanding to develop marketing strategies that target customers with similar attitudes and values, thereby increasing brand awareness, customer satisfaction, and ultimately, sales.

Existing research primarily focuses on the association between brand value and brand awareness when examining the impact of homophily on brand intention (Ladhari et al., 2020). Certain research suggests that attitude homophily is positively associated with credibility, thereby impacting purchase intention in influencer marketing. (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). A study conducted by Kusumasondjaja (2015) investigated how the propensity for homophily affects consumer trust in hotels being reviewed on online platforms and its influence on the intention to make a reservation. investigated the impact of homophily between influencers and their audiences on customer value co-creation behavior, leading to heightened anticipated brand value and purchase intent.

Depending on these arguments, we can propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Attitudes homophily has a positive impact on the intention to use the brand.*

2.2. Attitudes homophily and trust

Homophily and trust are interconnected concepts extensively studied in the field of social networks (Ahlf et al., 2019). Trust has been defined and conceptualized in various ways across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and management (Hatamleh et al., 2023). One commonly used definition of trust is the willingness to rely on another party based on expectations of their competence, integrity, and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995). This definition implies that trust involves taking risks and being vulnerable based on an assessment of the other party's trustworthiness.

Another perspective on trust focuses on its social and relational dimensions. For instance, Kramer (1999) defined trust as a psychological state characterized by the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another person's intentions or behavior. This definition emphasizes the significance of trust in social interactions and highlights the role of positive expectations in trust development. In the context of online environments, trust has also garnered significant attention from researchers (McKnight et al., 2002). They define online trust as a user's subjective probability that a website will be secure, reliable, and protect their privacy. This definition underscores the importance of security and privacy in establishing online trust and emphasizes the role of individual perceptions in shaping trust.

Recent research has further emphasized the importance of context-specific definitions of trust. For example, Kim and Lee (2019) developed a definition of trust in the context of e-commerce, which refers to the expectation that an online retailer will fulfill their promises and provide a satisfactory shopping experience. This definition highlights the significance of trust in influencing consumer behavior and emphasizes the role of expectations in trust formation.

Trust, seen as the belief in a person's reliability, competence, and benevolence, plays a pivotal role in social exchange, influencing individuals' engagement in social interactions and their expectations of future benefits (Zhang et al., 2022). Social exchange theory emphasizes the significant role of trust in social media engagement, relationship benefits, and social connections (Norman et al., 2020). Studies suggest that trust strengthens the positive effects of social media on relationship closeness and satisfaction (Bazarova et al., 2015; Abril et al., 2022).

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the relationship between homophily and trust in social media marketing. Kim and Kim (2021) highlighted the role of homophily, along with expertise and authenticity, as relational resources in establishing follower trust in social media influencers. This trust, in turn, leads to loyalty and favorable marketing outcomes. Kuster (2017) emphasized the importance of influencer homophily in enhancing brand trust and perceived quality, with macro influencers being perceived as more credible than micro influencers. Additionally, Masuda et al. (2022) discovered that homophily positively influences purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing. They further suggested that tailored marketing strategies should consider personal attributes, characterizations, and influencer types to maximize effectiveness. These findings collectively emphasize the significance of homophily in building trust, credibility, and purchase intentions in the context

of social media influencer marketing. Therefore, these studies suggest that homophily plays a significant role in influencing trust and purchase intentions in social media marketing.

Based on this discussion, the below hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Attitudes homophily has a positive impact on trust*

2.3. Trust and the intention to use the brand

Establishing long-term relationships between businesses and consumers based on Building trust (Zehir et al., 2011). Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that brand trust is consumers' willingness to rely on a brand. Lau and Lee (1999) mentioned that brand trust can be defined as a purchaser's willingness to depend on the brand from the viewpoint of uncertainty since anticipating that the brand will deliver positive outcomes. Because of the importance of brand trust in building long-lasting relationship with customers is very important for the success of the brand in today's especially in highly competitive global market, more researchers discussed this point lately. High levels of trust in the brand will produce favorable attitudes towards it (He et al., 2012; Kamboj et al., 2018). Previous research has shown that brand trust is one of the most important antecedents of consumer loyalty and repurchase intention (Gibreel et al., 2018). Consumers tend to repurchase brands they trust because they cognitively and affectively value the brand's reliability (Rafael et al., 2020).

On the other side, brand trust has been recognized in the extant literature as the central element involved in the development and maintenance of the relationship between two exchange partners in diverse contexts (Amani, et al., 2015).

In the line with what has been mentioned, there is a correlation between brand trust and purchase intention. If brand trust has developed, then the rate of purchase intention will grow (Aydin et al., 2014; Sanny et al., 2020).

Although several studies have explored the correlation between trust and positive effect on the intention to use the brand, few have specifically with in the tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, we suggested the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Trust has a positive effect on the intention to use the brand*

2.4. Trust as a mediator in the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand

Further exploration of the mediating role of trust in the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand in the tourism and hospitality sector is of great importance. This role can be better understood through several key findings. Firstly, previous studies by Zhang et al. (2021) and Pina et al. (2019) have emphasized the positive relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand. They suggested that individuals tend to choose and support brands that align with the attitudes and beliefs of their preferred influencers. Secondly, research by Gibreel et al. (2018) and Rafael et al. (2020) has highlighted the positive impact of trust and attitudes homophily. When individuals trust a brand, it increases their likelihood of intending to use it. Thirdly, studies by Kim and Kim (2021) and Kuster (2017) have demonstrated a positive correlation between attitudes homophily and trust. When customers perceive that an influencer shares similar attitudes or beliefs with them, it enhances their trust in the brand being promoted by that influencer.

Building upon these established correlations, this study proposes the hypothesis that trust acts as a mediator in the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand in the tourism and hospitality industry. Understanding this mediating role is essential for tourism and hospitality businesses to develop effective marketing strategies that leverage both homophily and trust to enhance customer engagement and loyalty.

Thus, this study suggests the following hypothesis

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Trust mediates the positive impact of attitudes homophily on the intention to use the brand*

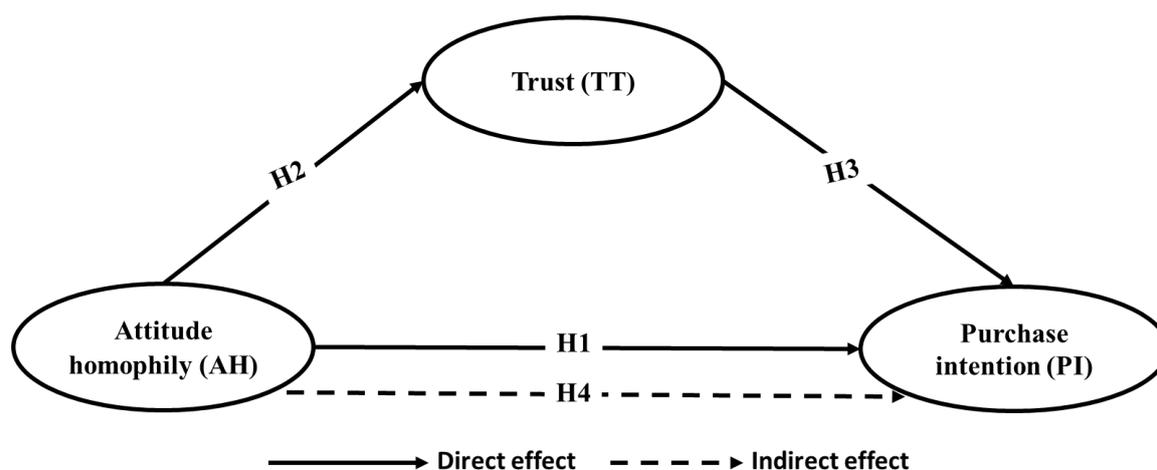


Figure 1. The research model.

3. Methodology

3.1. The sample and design

A total of 550 questionnaires were dispersed in-person to a random segment of guests at Sharm El-Sheikh five stars' hotels and tourism and aviation companies in Cairo during April 2023. Of the 372 questionnaires, 34 were discarded because they lacked sufficient responses. This resulted in a recovery rate of 61.5%, as 338 questionnaires were found to be valid. The sample size of 550 questionnaires provides a sufficiently large sample to ensure statistical power and accuracy in the data analysis. It allows for the potential detection of meaningful relationships and patterns within the data. Respondents were required to sign a consent form and could either take part in the survey or skip it. The sample consisted of 193 (51.1%) male and 145 (42.9%) females. Cairo and Sharm El-Sheikh are chosen because of being major cities in Egypt, well-connected with transportation infrastructure and easily accessible for researchers. This accessibility can facilitate data collection and ensure a smoother research process. Moreover, they offer a wide range of hotels and tourism companies, providing a diverse pool of potential participants. This diversity can enhance the representativeness of the sample and allow for a comprehensive analysis of the tourism and hospitality industry.

3.2. Measures

A questionnaire was developed to test the study hypotheses, and the study's measures were identified through a comprehensive analysis of the prior empirical research. As a result of the

previous process, three dimensions have emerged. The attitude homophily (AH) was measured using the 4-items scale suggested by (Lou & Kim, 2019). The trust variable (TT) was measured by 3-items based on the study of (Kim & Kim, 2021). Finally, 4-items from (Li & Peng, 2021) were used to operationalize the intention to use the brand (IU). All items are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

4. Data Analysis Results

In our research, we employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the "Partial Least Squares (PLS)" method to assess the hypotheses using SmartPLS-3. PLS-SEM is known for its flexibility and ease of use compared to other SEM methods. It requires fewer distributional assumptions, has fewer model identification problems, and is relatively straightforward to implement, especially for researchers with limited statistical expertise. The theoretical model we proposed was evaluated using a two-step methodology recommended by Leguina (2015), as outlined below;

4.1. Evaluation of the external measurement model

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the external model, assessments were conducted on internal consistency reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Initially, as depicted in Table 1, the internal consistency reliability of the constructs was examined using Cronbach's alpha (α), which ranged from 0.829 to 0.846, and composite reliability (C.R) ranging from 0.898 to 0.896. Subsequently, the reliability of indicators was deemed acceptable, with all loading values of the construct indicators surpassing 0.70. Lastly, convergent validity was assessed by ensuring that the average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50. (Elshaer, et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2009).

Table 1

Evaluation of the external measurement model

Abbreviation	Outer Loading	α	C.R	AVE
Attitude homophily (AH)		0.846	0.896	0.684
AH_1	0.861			
AH_2	0.849			
AH_3	0.787			
AH_4	0.810			
Trust (TT)		0.829	0.898	0.745
TT_1	0.892			
TT_2	0.860			
TT_3	0.836			
Intention to use the brand (IU)		0.844	0.896	0.684
IU_1	0.873			
IU_2	0.848			
IU_3	0.859			
IU_4	0.720			

Ultimately, three criteria were utilized to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs: cross-loading, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Elshaer, et al., 2022a; Leguina, 2015). As illustrated in Table (2), the outer-loading for each latent variable - highlighted - exceeded the cross-loading values with other variables.

Table 2

Results of cross-loading

	Attitude homophily (AH)	Trust (TT)	Intention to use the brand (IU)
AH_1	0.810	0.585	0.385
AH_2	0.861	0.611	0.426
AH_3	0.849	0.598	0.376
AH_4	0.787	0.469	0.409
TT_1	0.635	0.892	0.479
TT_2	0.602	0.860	0.421
TT_3	0.537	0.836	0.424
IU_1	0.432	0.460	0.873
IU_2	0.363	0.370	0.848
IU_3	0.426	0.422	0.859
IU_4	0.364	0.432	0.720

As depicted in Table 3, the bolded Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values on the diagonal exceed the correlations between variables.

Table 3

Correlations between constructs, the square root of Average Variance Extracted

	Attitude homophily (AH)	Intention to use the brand (IU)	Trust (TT)
Attitude homophily (AH)	0.827		
Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.482	0.827	
Trust (TT)	0.687	0.512	0.863

As per Gold et al. (2001), it is recommended that most Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values should be below 0.90. The HTMT values in this study were found to be below this threshold (refer to Table 4). These results indicate that the model exhibits sufficient discriminant validity. Therefore, the outcomes of the external measurement model were considered robust enough to proceed with the evaluation of the structural model.

Table 4

Correlations between constructs, Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) findings

	Attitude homophily (AH)	Intention to use the brand (IU)	Trust (TT)
Attitude homophily (AH)			
Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.569		
Trust (TT)	0.815	0.609	

4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

Following that, structural equation analysis was employed to evaluate the hypotheses. More precisely, the scrutiny was on the model's capability to accurately predict and account for variances while offering explanations. (Hair Jr et al., 2016). With the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of the observed indicators ranging from 1.373 to 2.395, well below the threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity in the structural model. Furthermore, it was noted by Chin (1998) and Elshaer, et al. (2024a) that the minimum threshold for R-squared (R²) values is 0.10. Consequently, the R² values for the variables of intention to use the brand (IU) (0.294) and Trust (TT) (0.472) were deemed satisfactory (refer to Table 5). Additionally, the Stone-Geisser Q² test revealed that the intention to use the brand (IU) and trust (TT) values were above zero (refer to Table 5), indicating adequate predictive validity of the model as per Elshaer, et al. (2024b) and Henseler et al. (2009). Thus, sufficient predictive validity for the structural model was also confirmed.

Table 5

Model's coefficient of determination (R²) and predictive relevance (Q²)

Endogenous latent construct	(R ²)	(Q ²)
Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.294	0.196
Trust (TT)	0.472	0.346

Finally, the hypothesized association's path coefficient and t-value were examined utilizing a bootstrapping technique. The hypothesis test results are presented in Table 6 and Figure 2 below, showcasing the path coefficient values and their respective significance levels. It was observed that AH had a significant positive impact on IU with $\beta = 0.246$, $T = 3.580$, and $p < 0.000$, thereby supporting H1. Additionally, the results indicated that AH had a significant positive effect on TT ($\beta = 0.687$, $T = 13.513$, $p < 0.000$), confirming H2. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that TT positively influenced IU with $\beta = 0.343$, $T = 4.580$, $p < 0.000$, thus validating H3. Regarding the mediating effect, it was found that the AH variable positively influenced IU through TT (indirect effect) with $\beta = 0.236$, $T = 4.223$, and $p < 0.000$, supporting H4.

Table 6

Path Coefficients

	Hypotheses	Beta (β)	(T-Value)	p Values	Results of Hypotheses
Direct Effect					
H1	Attitude homophily (AH) -> Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.246	3.580	0.000	Accepted
H2	Attitude homophily (AH) -> Trust (TT)	0.687	13.513	0.000	Accepted
H3	Trust (TT) -> Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.343	4.580	0.000	Accepted
Indirect Effect					
H4	Attitude homophily (AH) -> Trust (TT) -> Intention to use the brand (IU)	0.236	4.223	0.000	Accepted

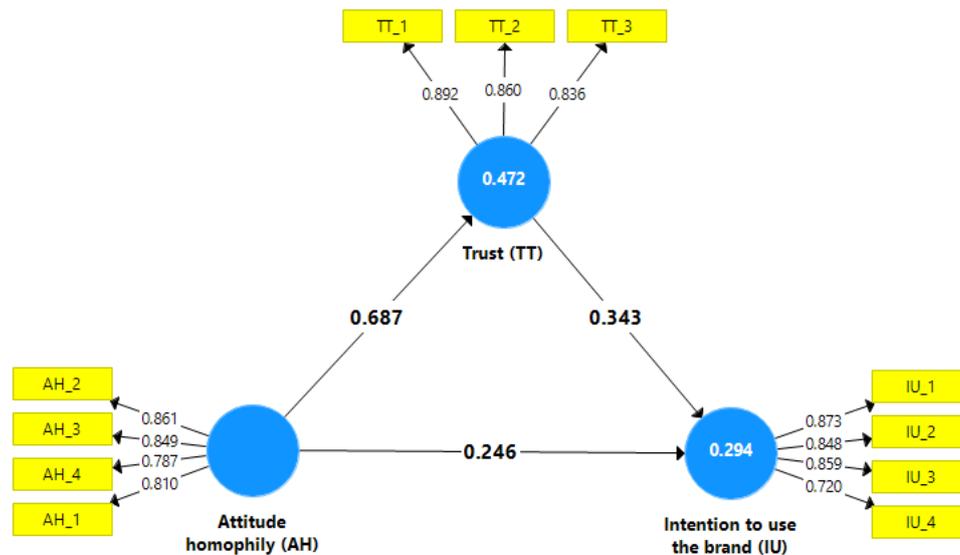


Figure.2. The structural and measurement farmwork

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. AH and PI

The findings of this study indicate that attitudes homophily (AH) has a positive impact on purchase intention (PI), which is consistent with previous research of Zhang et al. (2021), and (Pina et al., 2019). These results suggest that individuals in the tourism and hospitality industry are more inclined to select and support brands that align with their preferable influencers attitudes and beliefs. This implies that individuals value the coherence and compatibility of their influencers attitudes with the brand they choose, resulting in an increased intention to use that brand for their tourism and hospitality needs.

5.2 AH and TT

The practical findings of this study confirmed a positive correlation between attitudes homophily (AH) and the trust (TT). This finding is consistent with the researches conducted by Kim and Kim (2021) and Kuster (2017). It means that when customers perceive that an influencer shares similar attitudes or beliefs with them, it increases their trust in the brand being promoted by that influencer. When customers see that an influencer holds attitudes or beliefs that are similar to their own, it creates a sense of familiarity and connection. This sense of similarity leads customers to trust the influencer and, by extension, the brand they are endorsing. The positive relationship between AH and TT implies that when customers perceive a match between their attitudes and those of the influencer, they are more likely to trust the brand that the influencer is associated with. This trust is based on the belief that an influencer who shares similar attitudes is more likely to have genuine intentions, be credible, and provide trustworthy recommendations. Hence, It emphasizes the importance of aligning influencer attitudes with the target audience to build trust and credibility in influencer marketing campaigns in tourism and hospitality industry.

5.3 TT and PI

According to the empirical results of the study, it is found that TT positively influences on PI. This result agrees with Gibreel et al., (2018) and Rafael et al., (2020). It indicates that when individuals trust a brand, it increases their likelihood of intending to use this brand. Positive customer trust in a brand has a significant impact on the intention to use that brand in the tourism and hospitality industry. Research has shown that trust is a critical factor in building customer relationships, increasing brand recognition, and improving overall business performance. Trust is built through various factors, including brand consistency, responsiveness to customer concerns, and transparent interactions. Moreover, customer trust is essential for creating a positive brand image, driving purchase decisions, and reducing the cost of conducting business. In the tourism and hospitality industry, customer trust is particularly important, as it can influence customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat business. Therefore, businesses in this industry must focus on building and maintaining trust to strengthen their relationships with customers and drive business success.

5.4 The mediating role of TT in the relationship between AH and PI.

As shown in Table 6 and figure 3, the TT significantly has mediated the relationship between AH and PI. This result agrees with the findings by Zhang et al. (2021) Pina et al. (2019), Gibreel et al. (2018), Rafael et al. (2020), Kim and Kim (2021) and Kuster (2017). It implies that the influence of attitudes homophily on the customer's intention to use the brand is partially driven by the trust they have in the influencer. When customers perceive attitudes homophily with the influencer, it enhances their trust in the influencer. This trust, in turn, mediates the relationship between attitudes homophily and the customer's intention to use the brand. In other words, the alignment of attitudes between the influencer and the customer builds trust, which further influences the customer's intention to engage with the brand in the tourism and hospitality sector. This implies that in influencer marketing strategies within the tourism and hospitality industry, it is important to consider not only the attitudes homophily between the influencer and the customer but also the trust that customers have in the influencer. Building trust with the influencer becomes crucial in leveraging the positive impact of attitudes homophily on the customer's intention to use the brand. By establishing trust, influencers can enhance their credibility and authenticity, thereby increasing the likelihood that customers will intend to use the brand they promote in the tourism and hospitality industry.

6. limitations and future research

The study's sample was limited to guests in Sharm El-Sheikh hotels and tourists from tourism and aviation companies in Cairo during April 2023. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other locations or time periods. In addition to that, the initial sample size of 550 questionnaires was reduced to 338 valid responses. While this can still be considered a reasonable sample size, a larger sample could have enhanced the statistical power and generalizability of the results. Another important point which is represented in the probability of self-selection bias; respondents were given the choice to participate or skip the survey. This introduces the possibility of self-selection bias, as those who chose to participate may have different attitudes or characteristics compared to those who opted out.

As for Future work, one potential avenue for future research is to explore the impact of homophily on customer loyalty and repeat purchase behavior. While previous studies have

demonstrated the positive impact of homophily on purchase intention, it is unclear whether this effect extends to long-term customer loyalty and repeat purchase behavior. Another area for future research is to investigate the role of trust in the relationship between homophily and purchase intention. While some studies have explored the impact of trust on the relationship between influencers and their followers, more research is needed to understand how trust influences the impact of homophily on purchase intention. Additionally, future research could explore the impact of homophily on customer engagement and brand advocacy, as well as the effectiveness of different marketing strategies that leverage homophily. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can provide valuable insights into how businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry can effectively leverage homophily to drive customer engagement, loyalty, and ultimately, sales.

7. Conclusion

The objectives of the current study are as follows: 1) To investigate the influence of attitudes homophily on the intention to use the brand, 2) To examine the effect of attitudes homophily on trust, 3) To explore the mediating role of trust in the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand, and 4) To assess the impact of trust on the intention to use the brand. A questionnaire was developed in three sections to test the proposed hypotheses. Data were collected from hotel guests in Sharm El-Sheikh and tourists from tourism and aviation companies in Cairo, Egypt. A convenient sample of tourists was selected, and a total of 550 questionnaires were disseminated, yielding 338 valid responses and a response rate of 61.5%. Smart PLS-3.0 was employed for hypothesis testing. The empirical findings indicated that attitudes homophily positively influences the intention to use the brand, attitudes homophily has a positive impact on trust, trust positively affects the intention to use the brand, and trust mediates the positive relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand.

The study's recommendations emphasize focusing on fostering attitudes homophily by creating alignment and similarity in attitudes between influencers and customers. This can be achieved through targeted influencer marketing strategies that identify influencers who share similar attitudes and values with the target audience. Building trust with customers; As the study found that trust mediates the relationship between attitudes homophily and the intention to use the brand, it is crucial for businesses to focus on building trust with their customers. Leveraging influencers as trust builders; Since attitudes homophily positively impacted trust, businesses can leverage influencers who have a strong connection with their target audience and are perceived as trustworthy. Collaborating with such influencers can help build trust with customers and increase their intention to use the brand. Enhancing brand loyalty through trust; The study revealed a positive impact of trust on brand usage intention. Hence, it is advisable for businesses to prioritize establishing trust, as it can enhance customer loyalty and encourage repeat patronage. This can be accomplished by consistently meeting customer needs, delivering top-notch products or services, and actively interacting with and addressing customer feedback. By incorporating these recommendations into their marketing and branding strategies, businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry can potentially enhance customer trust, strengthen brand loyalty, and increase the intention of customers to use their services or products.

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دور التشابه في المواقف بين المؤثرين والعملاء وتأثيرها على النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية في التسويق عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في صناعة السياحة والضيافة: دور الثقة

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الملخص العربي:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في انتشار التسويق عبر المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وتتمحور الأهداف الرئيسية على النحو التالي:

- (١) فحص تأثير تشابه المواقف على النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية،
- (٢) دراسة تأثير تشابه المواقف على الثقة،
- (٣) استكشاف دور الثقة كوسيط في العلاقة بين تشابه المواقف والنية في استخدام العلامة التجارية،
- (٤) تحليل دور الثقة في النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية. تم تطوير استبيان يتألف من ثلاثة أقسام لاختبار هذه الفروض. تم جمع البيانات من ضيوف الفنادق الذين زاروا شرم الشيخ والسياح من شركات السياحة والطيران في القاهرة، مصر. تم توزيع مجموعة من ٥٥٠ استبيانًا على عينة من السياح الملائمة، وتم جمع ٣٣٨ استبيانًا صالحًا بنسبة استجابة بلغت ٦١.٥%. تم استخدام برنامج Smart PLS-3.0 لاختبار الفروض. تشير النتائج التجريبية إلى أن تشابه المواقف له تأثير إيجابي على النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية، وله تأثير إيجابي على الثقة. وبدورها، تؤثر الثقة بشكل إيجابي على النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية، وتعمل كوسيط في التأثير الإيجابي لتشابه المواقف على النية في استخدام العلامة التجارية. بشكل عام، تشجع هذه الدراسة على إجراء مزيد من الأبحاث حول التسويق عبر المؤثرين والانخراط للعملاء والدعاية للعلامة التجارية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

تشابه المواقف، المؤثرون، الثقة، العلامة التجارية، التسويق، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.