Impact of social media marketing features on consumer's purchase decision in the fast-food industry: Brand trust as a mediator

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper was to investigate the effect of four features of social media marketing on the purchase decision of consumers in the fast-food industry. It also aimed to determine if brand trust mediates the relationship between them. Necessary data was gathered from the visitors of different fast-food cafes in UAE via a quantitative online survey. After obtaining the desired responses, the data was analyzed by the AMOS 21- structural equation modeling. The results confirmed the significance of brand trust in predicting purchase decision. Above all, the findings showed that informativeness, perceived relevance, and interactivity have positive effect on purchase decision. But, it was found that the effect of entertainment on purchase decision is insignificant. The results also confirmed that brand trust mediates the association between only two social media marketing features (interactivity and informativeness) and consumer purchase decision. Theoretically, this paper advances the current literature by exploring the mediating effect of brand trust among the four features of social media marketing and purchase decision with new empirical insights from UAE, taking into account that the earlier researches of this nature in Arab region are scarce.

1. Introduction

Consumer purchase decision has been widely researched in the contemporary marketing literature. It was expressed by Salem (2018) as the process that starts when a consumer recognizes a need, searches for options, evaluates alternatives, and then selects a certain product and service. Therefore, purchase decision can be conceptualized as series of steps that consumers go through before making the actual purchase. It is comprised of various aspects, such as what to buy, when to buy, from where to buy, which brand or model to buy, what is the payment method that will be used, and how much to spend. Purchase decision is likely to be formed based on the perceptions of consumers towards a firm's offerings and its brand name. To be precise, the purchase behavior of consumers is usually shaped according to their past experiences in using a firm's offerings and the ability of purchased product in satisfying the specific needs. Furthermore, marketers can stimulate consumers' buying behavior through developing advertising and promotion programs that can arouse their responses. In recent years, multiple media channels have emerged online for communicating a firm's offering and inducing consumers' buying decisions. These channels have emerged as a result of the advancement in the information and communication technologies (Aswani et al., 2018)

Earlier studied which emphasized on marketing activities via social media established that developing strong connections with customers

via online platforms is regarded as a contemporary means for advertising and reaching mass audiences (McClure & Seock, 2020; Pandey et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Owing to the quick advancement of communication technologies, several social media sites have emerged in recent years that prompted marketing practitioners to take advantage of them for interacting, communicating, and collaborating with their customers conveniently (Grover et al., 2019). Such rapid advancements in internet and information technologies provided business practitioners with immense opportunities for reaching their audiences and reinforcing their brand values (Reveilhac & Blanchard, 2022; Saheb et al., 2021). Social media platforms include different web-based tools that enable internet users to share and broadcast large pool of information virtually (Gómez et al., 2019; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). In the earlier literature (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60), various terms have been proposed to express the meaning of social media sites; this includes "Web 2.0, social networking communications, social networking tools, social networking sites, and blogs".

The adoption of social media for communicating and promoting new or existing products or services have witnessed enormous growth in recent years due to its significance in influencing consumer buying behavior (Park et al., 2021). The emergence of online media channels supported by mobile devices have reduced the interest towards using traditional media channels (Chatterjee et al., 2021). According to Kar and Kushwaha (2021), when consumers are interested in getting important

information about a brand, they tend to search through social media. As a result of the growth in smart phone and wireless devices, social media sites have been accepted as the most viable option for searching about a brand. Marketers can also rely on them for obtaining greater insights about consumers to make wise marketing decisions. Such benefits have prompted service providers to capitalize on their financial resources, dedicate their times, and use their marketing skills to communicate about their offerings online in an attempt to arouse consumer purchase decision. Although social media marketing has gained adequate attention in the marketing literature, only few studies intended to investigate its effect on purchase decision (Hasan & Sohail, 2021; Mason et al., 2021). By looking prior empirical studies on social media marketing activities, it can be observed that most them examined their effects on purchase intention, but not on actual purchase.

Prior literature reveals that the majority of earlier studies on social media marketing activities explored their direct effects on buyer behavior, but those which explored the mechanisms through which social media marketing features may affect purchase decision are scarce. Certain studies used brand trust as a mediator between social media marketing activities and brand equity (Ebrahim, 2020; Hafez, 2021). Others also verified that brand trust mediates the association between social media marketing features and brand loyalty (Tatar & Eren-Erdoğmuş, 2016; Yazdanian et al., 2019). Moreover, a number of scholars reported that brand trust mediates the relationship among social media marketing elements and purchase intention (Moslehpour et al., 2020, 2021). Overall, there are many studies that used brand trust as a mediator between different factors. However, there is insufficient evidence in the empirical literature to prove if brand trust really mediates the linkages between social media marketing features and purchase decision. Earlier studies on social media marketing and purchase behavior in the fast-food industry setting received very limited attention. Also, the empirical research on this topic in Arab countries are scarce. Accordingly, the present paper tends to contribute to the theory and literature social media marketing, brand trust, and purchase decision by bringing new insights from United Arab Emirates.

Additionally, the studies on social media marketing relied on different aspects for measuring it. Kim and Ko (2012) focused on trendiness, electronic word-of-mouth, customization, entertainment, and interactivity for examining this concept. Sano (2015) also used four key elements for testing social media marketing in the insurance context; perceived risk, trendiness, interactivity, and customization. Similarly, Jo (2013) examined social media marketing using three aspects; advertisements, information, and events. Furthermore, Kim (2017) employed immediacy, access, responses, and information for measuring social media marketing features. In addition, Seo and Park (2018) measured social media marketing effectiveness through entertainment, interactivity, perceived risk, customization, and trendiness. However, the current paper attempts to make a noteworthy contribution to the empirical literature on social media marketing by incorporating informativeness, interactivity, perceived relevance, and entertainment to measure their effects on consumer purchase decision in UAE fast-food industry. The results would be useful for improving our knowledge towards the relevance of these aspects of social media marketing in predicting purchase decision, mainly, in fast-food context. The next sections start by the review of literature and research methodology. After that, research findings, discussion of results, theoretical and practical implication are presented. Lastly, the limitations and recommendations for forthcoming research are highlighted.

2. Literature review

2.1. Purchase decision

In earlier studies, purchase decision was expressed as a person's decision to select a certain product or service that is introduced by a firm over those of its competitors (Kim & Sung, 2009). Consumer purchase

decision can be influenced either by internal or external marketing factors. Internal factors include beliefs and attitude, knowledge, personality, perception, lifestyle, roles and status. On the other hand, external factors include culture, membership groups, and social class. As consumers nowadays have become exposed to various product or service offerings and multiple alternatives, service providers realized that it is very challenging to attract and retain successful relationships with key customers to ensure their continued growth and presence in the marketplace (Salem, 2018). Marketing practitioners also noticed that consumers have become more comfortable in using internet channels and social media sites for connecting with each other, and for this reason, most of the service providers created their own pages on social networks in order to connect with customers online and develop positive images about their brands (Hutter et al., 2013). When consumers' awareness about a brand and its offering increases, they usually seek for more information about it online and then assess the benefits of selecting it over those of competitors prior to making a buying decision (Sharma et al., 2021). In view of that, social media sites emerged recently as a powerful approach for communicating and interacting with customers virtually at lower cost. By utilizing social media networks, firms can improve consumer engagement (Gkikas et al., 2022), easily share important marketing messages, and quickly reach the target market (Huang et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2018). Customers through their experiences will also get the opportunity to influence others and share their opinions through online reviews, comments and spreading word-of-mouth (Liu et al., 2021).

2.2. Brand trust

Brand trust was defined in the earlier literature as the willingness of consumers to depend on the brand in delivering its stated or implied promise (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Therefore, it exists through a firm's benevolence for acting in the consumers' best interests in order to develop successful relationships with them. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), brand trust exists when consumers have confidence in the reliability and integrity of the service provider. In the virtual world, the responses of consumers toward different brand interactions depend on trust and brand knowledge. Calefato et al., Lanubile and Novielli (2015) stated that social media interactions play an imperative role in nurturing brand trust. The authors added that these interactions can be developed either through a firm's-generated content or through online comments and social media metrics. As brand trust grows among consumers in target market, it will be easier for firms to convey their desired marketing messages and create favourable impressions about their brands in consumers' minds (Ebrahim, 2020). Jadil et al., Rana and Dwivedi (2022) reported that online trust plays a key role in influencing consumers' behavior. Pop et al., Dabija and Alt (2022) also confirmed that brand trust positively affects purchase decisions. Hence, the subsequent hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Brand trust has a positive effect on purchase decision.

2.3. Social media marketing features

In earlier literature, researchers employed different elements of social media marketing to attest their impact on consumer buying behavior (Alalwan, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). However, the current paper emphasizes on four distinct features of social media marketing to determine their direct and indirect effects on purchase decision via brand trust. The elements/ features include perceived relevance, interactivity, entertainment, and informativeness. Therefore, the main contribution in this paper is represented through the collective examination of the effect of these elements on purchase decision mediated by brand trust in a single research framework. Through the observation of past studies, one would notice that there are limited empirical studies on these variables in Arab region. In view of that, the key focus of this study is directed towards addressing existing gaps in the literature on social

media marketing and purchase decision by getting fresh insights from UAE.

Earlier studies on the acceptance and usage of information technologies have grown in the empirical literature. This rising interest has largely been driven by the fact that the success of information technology applications is contingent on the degree of individual acceptance. Accordingly, several theories that attempted to measure technology acceptance among individuals and organizations have been proposed and verified. Several scholars relied on different theories for studying the facets of new technology acceptance, such as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). However, the UTAUT which was proposed earlier by Venkatesh et al. (2003) represents the foremost recent popular theory that has been extensively used and applied to identify the determinants of customers' adoption and usage of technology in different environments. According to Alawadhi and Morris (2008), UTAUT is the most appropriate model in the technology acceptance literature. Similarly, Arfi et al. (2021) indicated that the model of UTAUT has effectively harmonized the literature on technology adoption. In the published literature, social media has been considered as an important part of information technology. Several studies applied UTAUT for studying the effect of social media marketing on consumer purchase decision. Therefore, the theoretical foundation for the present study is built upon the UTAUT model to test the linkage among social media marketing features and purchase decision, and to verify whether brand trust mediates the associations between them.

In the prior literature, several studies (e.g. Gruzd et al., 2012; Mishra et al., 2022' Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021) used UTAUT model for explaining the effect of social media marketing features on buyer behavior. Trust is also necessary to the individual adoption of any contemporary system of information technology (Liu et al., 2022). When users develop high level of trust towards brands that promote themselves on social media channels, they will have high confidence in purchasing their offerings. Nowadays, brands can connect with customers and reach them easily using different social media networks in order to promote their offerings and develop positive images for themselves in consumers' minds (Thaker et al., 2020). The information on social tend to spread quickly among customers and minimize the risk in purchasing desired products or services (Liao et al., 2019).

2.3.1. Interactivity

Interactivity is known as one of the important facet of digital marketing that gained remarkable attention in earlier research. The concept of interactivity was conceptualized in the literature as the ability of a firm to enable its stakeholder to share and exchange a pool of information with others virtually (Jensen, 1998). Another definition was suggested by Kiousis (2002) as the marketers' abilities in connecting with their current and prospective customers online to disseminate key marketing messages. Considering that significance of social media sites in providing organizational customers with multiple opportunities for exchanging and obtaining diverse information, the interactions using these platforms enable them to obtain noteworthy benefits while looking for purchasing certain goods or services (Muntinga et al., 2011). Furthermore, the continuous improvement of virtual media sites is likely to encourage consumers' interactions with others online by discussing the benefits, stories and attributes of a brand. These interactions can reinforce the relationships between customers and their service providers, hence, leading to favourable exchange results. According to Arjun et al. (2021), marketers can exploit mobile applications, e-mail, and internet technologies in order to connect with customers and reach them easily.

Earlier researches showed the interactions through social media can influence consumer purchase behavior and brand trust. According to Zafar et al. (2021), interactivity has a noteworthy role in determining consumers' impulse purchase behaviours. Certain scholars (De Vries et al., 2012; Yeon et al., 2019) examined social media interactivity and found that it has a significant effect on purchase decision. In a similar

vein, Liao et al. (2019) confirmed that an interactive website leads to favourable purchase behavior among consumers. Overall, the channels of social media are regarded as important medium for reaching consumers and interacting with them to induce their buying behaviours. Another study conducted by Sohail et al. (2020) found that social media interactivity has a positive effect on brand trust. However, based on the extant review of prior researches, it can be said that a limited empirical work has been done with regards to testing the mediating effect of trust amongst interactivity and purchase decision. Therefore, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Interactivity has a positive impact on brand trust.

H3: Interactivity has a positive impact on purchase decision.

H4: Brand trust mediates the relationship between interactivity and purchase decision.

2.3.2. Entertainment

Entertainment has undoubtedly become an essential social media marketing aspect which calls upon designing a content that is considered playful, funny and interesting (Sharma et al., 2022). According to Cheung et al. (2020), entertainment via social media platforms exists when service providers create memorable experiences for their customers by developing funny and playful content to fulfill their needs for enjoyment. Pertierra (2021) indicated that entertainment represents an important feature that influences consumer's attitude towards a social media site. Likewise, Park et al. (2009) demonstrated that consumers' involvement tends to be fostered via social media sites through sharing a content that is perceived to be entertaining and up to expectations. This is because individuals normally look for a brand-related content for the purpose of enjoyment, relaxation, and passing their times (Muntinga et al., 2011). These views were supported by Courtois et al., De Marez and Verleye (2009) who reported that the main purposes for most of the consumers in loading social media contents include enjoyment and escapism, which are the main indicators of entertainment fulfillment. By successfully entertaining consumers and improving their brand perceptions, firms can generate greater values from them through positive word of mouth and brand trust (Kang, 2005). In view of that, diverse entertainment activities on social media platforms may exert positive impact on consumers' engagement and brand choice; for instance, active involvement in contests, online games, and sharing prerecorded videos (Buzeta et al., 2020; Jayasingh, 2019).

In past studies, Mustafi and Hosain ((2020)) found that entertainment plays an imperative role in shaping consumers' attitude and influencing their purchase intentions. Van Noort and Van Reijmersdal (2019) also showed that a firm's marketing activities that are perceived by consumers to be funny and entertaining tend to encourage them towards exerting higher efforts for getting more information about the brand to make wise purchase decision. Moreover, Sohail et al. (2020) found that entrainment has a positive influence on brand trust. Hafez (2021) has further confirmed that brand trust mediates the linkage amongst social media marketing features and brand equity. Wottrich et al. (2017) also concluded that brand trust and choice tend to be fostered among consumers by designing and sharing entertaining social media ads and contents to satisfy their needs for enjoyment. However, based on the extant review of prior researches, it can be said that a limited empirical work has been done with regards to testing the mediating effect of trust amongst entertainment and purchase decision. Thus, the following hypotheses are projected:

H5: Entertainment has a positive impact on brand trust.

H6: Entertainment has a positive impact on purchase decision.

H7: Brand trust mediates the relationship between entertainment and purchase decision.

2.3.3. Perceived relevance

Perceived relevance was conceptualized by Zhu and Chang (2016, p. 443) as "the degree to which consumers perceive a personalized advertisement to be self-related or in some way instrumental in achiev-

ing their personal goals and values". In virtual settings, perceived relevance exists through designing specific messages to the targeted group of customers. Effective management of a firm's web page enable it to customize its products or services, emphasize on individuality, and establish stronger relationships with key stakeholders. Zhu and Chen (2015) suggested that firms can categorize their posts on social media sites with regards to message customization based on two types: a highly customized message and the broadcast. A customized message is primarily designed to reach a particular person or niche market; while, a broadcast focuses on sharing marketing contents with mass audiences. A prominent example is evident in Burberry and Gucci brands, which manage their virtual presence well by targeting certain brand messages to individual customers who may involve in customizing their desired products or services (Sangar, 2012). In general, perceived relevance in this study can be described as the degree to which social media advertisements are targeted to meet the specific needs and expectation of individual customers.

In earlier literature, it is reported that when buyers sense that a firm's marketing messages fit their particular preferences, they tend to develop favourable interests toward them (Pechmann & Stewart, 1990). Zhu and Chang (2016) also found that perceived relevance influences consumers' buying intentions through self-awareness. When marketers focus on instance responses to consumers' queries through social media platforms, purchase decision and brand trust are likely to be stimulated towards the service provider (Gautam & Sharma, 2017). These claims are supported by Hafez (2021) who concluded that brand trust mediates the linkages among social media marketing and a firm's brand equity. Similarly, prior studies showed that a customized marketing content that is perceived to be relevant to consumers and match their specific needs/ interests affect brand trust positively (Kim & Ko, 2012; Sohail et al., 2020) and purchase behavior (Thaker et al., 2020). Accordingly, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H8: Perceived relevance has a positive impact on brand trust.

H9: Perceived relevance has a positive impact on purchase decision.

H10: Brand trust mediates the relationship between perceived relevance and purchase decision.

2.3.4. Informativeness

Rotzoll and Haefner (1990) referred informativeness to the ability of advertisements to convey important information and messages to consumers in order to enhance their brand attitude. Lee and Hong (2016) also stated that informativeness exists when marketing practitioners design persuasive ads that can aid in attracting larger number of customers and influencing their behaviours towards marketing content. In social media sites, service providers can easily reach and inform their customers regarding the most recent news and latest product offerings, hence making it a viable option for them to search about certain goods or services (Naaman et al., 2011). Furthermore, the widespread of internet and new smart phones have made it easier for firms to spread important information online and connect with customers (Chhonker et al., 2018). In comparison to the traditional ads and sales promotion programs, consumers tend to develop greater trust towards the information that are shared on social media networks, especially when online reviews are provided. In view of that, brand trust is likely to be reinforced by exposing consumers to the information about product or service quality and brand values (Hajli, 2014; Warren et al., 2014).

Kitsios et al. (2022) highlighted the significance of social networking sites in enabling consumers to share their brand experiences, which would represent an important source of information to other customers. Blanco et al. (2010) found that social media informativeness was positively associated with consumer buying behavior. This is in line with Lee and Hong (2016) who verified the positive impact of creative ads and informativeness on consumers' perceptions. They indicated that sharing important brand information on the website of the firm influence buyer's purchase behavior. Further support was reported by Chen

and Lin (2019) who stated that the sources of information that consumers search for prior to making purchase decisions have been changed from traditional media to social media platforms. For this reason, in today's social media digitalization, firms have put key consideration with regards to the creation of marketing content and determining the frequency of posts on media platforms on hope to attain their marketing objectives. Bilgin and Kethüda (2022) also found that informativeness has a positive impact on brand trust. With reference to the preceding discussion, it can be stated that informativeness is an essential marketing elements that can be exploited to influence and shape buyer behavior. By developing and communicating brand messages through Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other social networks, brand trust and purchase behavior are likely to be improved (Devereux et al., 2020). Accordingly, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H11: Informativeness has a positive impact on brand trust.

H12: Informativeness has a positive impact on purchase decision.

H13: Brand trust mediates the relationship between informativeness and purchase decision.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection and sample

The primary aim of this paper was centered on determining the direct and indirect impact of social media marketing features on the purchase decision of consumers through brand trust. Accordingly, a survey method is employed for collecting the data. The participants consisted of 258 customers of several fast-food brand in UAE. As survey researches require selecting suitable sampling techniques during data collection in order to ensure that desired number of responses can be gathered, convenience sampling method was used. This is because it has been widely regarded as the most appropriate technique for collecting data from consumer at lower cost, particularly when the sampling frame cannot be obtained. Furthermore, convenience sampling allows researchers to easily reach the respondents and distribute the questionnaire. Several prior studies have also relied on this sampling technique for collecting data from customers in diverse sectors (e.g. Guan et al., 2021; Phau & Teah, 2009; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Furthermore, the data of this paper were gathered in accordance with ethical guidelines and principles, and the consent from the participants in this research was obtained before starting data collection process.

3.2. Measures

While developing the survey for data collection purpose, the measurement items of constructs were adapted from past researches. Section A in the survey focused on the personal information of respondents (e.g. gender, age, education, etc.), whereas the other section was about the measurement items. First, brand trust was measured through four items taken from the study of Ebrahim (2019). Moreover, purchase decision was measured using 5 items adapted from Hanaysha (2018). Additionally, social media marketing features in this study were measured based on a total of 19 items being adapted from the earlier researches of Alalwan (2018) and Cheung et al. (2020). In details, interactivity was measured through 4 items, and entertainment is also measured based on 4 items. Finally, perceived relevance is measured according to 6 items, while informativeness is measured through 5 items. Likert scale which ranges from strong disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used across all the measurement items.

3.3. Data analysis technique

As stated in the above section, only 267 respondents filled the survey returned it. Among them, it was found that the valid responses which are deemed suitable for data analysis accounted for 258. First, the collected data were coded and screened in order to identify missing values,

and then, replacing them before proceeding to actual data analysis. In this study, the AMOS software was employed for estimating the measurement and structural models. Specifically, measurement model was used to verify the reliability and validity of measurement scales. Reliability analysis was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, whereas convergent validity as well as discriminant validity were used for determining the validity of the instrument. After achieving acceptable values for them, the final structural model was generated in order to verify the projected hypotheses.

3.4. Robustness check

Common method bias (CMB) has largely been emphasized in the literature as a vital test for checking the robustness of data, especially when a survey tool is employed and the responses are self-reported (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, in line with the suggestions of Podsakoff et al. (2003), CMB test was conducted. According to these authors, it is important to provide the respondents with assurance that all the collected data will remain synonymous and used only for the purpose of research without disclosing them publically. Therefore, while approaching the participants for data collection, they were informed that their answers will be strictly confidential. Moreover, Harman's (1967) single factor test was executed in order to check if the measurement items have any a single factor extraction during exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Based on the results, it was found that about 38.4% of variance is explained by unrotated single factor, which means that it did not exceed 50%. Consequently, these analysis provide an indication that there is no CMB issues across the collected data, because the measurement items of constructs did not mix with each other, and no one single factor explains or accounts for most of the variance.

4. Analysis of results

In this study, 258 usable responses were gathered from the participants and deemed suitable for data analysis. The demographic analysis pointed out that males represent 63.2 percent of them, while females represented 36.8 percent. Concerning age profile, the analysis indicated that those whose ages were less than 25 years accounted for 56.2 percent, 30.1 percent represented the age group of 26–35 years, 11.4 percent were aged between 36–46 years, and only 2.3 percent belong the age group of 46 years and above. Furthermore, the demographic statistics exhibited that 67.9 percent of the respondents in this study had bachelor degree qualification, 7.6 percent had diploma background, and 25.5 percent had a qualification in postgraduate programmes. Lastly, the statistical analysis of respondents outlined that all of them are involved in social media and have a minimum of one personal account on any of these social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. In details. 51.4 percent had an account on Facebook, 17.7 percent had an account on Snapchat, 18.3 percent had a Twitter account, while 12.6 had an account on Instagram.

In order to check if there is any issues of Multicollinearity among the constructs in the proposed model, this study relied on the Variable Inflation Factor (VIF). Earlier studies revealed that this indicator has widely been used in quantitative research to estimate the multicollinearity as well as correlations between the measurement scales of constructs via the measurement model. Vu et al. (2015) outlined that multicollinearity issue tends to be absent when the values of VIF across all items do not surpass 5. Table 1 displays that all value of VIF for selected measures appear in the tolerable range (< 5), and this confirms the appropriateness of collected data for additional analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the descriptive statistics of constructs (Means and standard deviation) as well as correlation matrix were analyzed. It is evident in Table 2 that interactivity is positively correlated with entertainment ($r = 0.518$, $p<0.01$), informativenss ($r = 0.391$, $p < 0.01$), perceived relevance ($r = 0.464$, $p < 0.01$), brand trust ($r = 0.453$, $p < 0.01$), and purchase decision ($r = 0.529$, $p < 0.01$). It is also clear that entertainment

Table 1
Multicollinearity test.

Construct	Item	VIF	Construct	Item	VIF
Interactivity	INT1	1.321	Brand Trust	BT1	1.569
	INT2	1.351		BT2	1.817
	INT3	1.411		BT3	2.128
	INT4	1.218		BT4	1.707
Entertainment	ENT1	1.313	Purchase Decision	PD1	2.067
	ENT2	1.257		PD2	2.042
	ENT3	1.158		PD3	1.890
Informativeness	INF1	2.264		PD4	1.860
	INF2	2.592			
	INF3	2.147			
	INF4	1.538			
Perceived Relevance	PR1	1.910			
	PR2	2.124			
	PR3	2.446			
	PR4	2.207			
	PR5	1.299			

Table 2
Correlations.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Interactivity	1					
2. Entertainment	0.186**	1				
3. Informativeness	0.230**	0.392**	1			
4. Perceived Relevance	0.385**	0.083**	0.541**	1		
5. Brand Trust	0.557**	0.491**	0.636**	0.412**	1	
6. Purchase Decision	0.520**	0.380**	0.549**	0.633**	0.545**	1

$^{**}p < 0.01$.

has a positive relationship with informativenss ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), perceived relevance ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), brand trust ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$), and purchase decision ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, informativenss has a positive correlation with perceived relevance ($r = 0.532$, $p < 0.01$), brand trust ($r = 0.583$, $p < 0.01$), and purchase decision ($r = 0.709$, $p < 0.01$). The analysis also showed that perceived relevance has a positive correlation with brand trust ($r = 0.540$, $p < 0.01$) and purchase decision ($r = 0.626$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, the correlation between brand trust and purchase decision is positive ($r = 0.680$, $p < 0.01$). On whole, these results provide an indication for the existence of significant and positive relationship among the constructs. Furthermore, the mean values for all constructs were found as follows: interactivity (3.95), entertainment (4.02), informativenss (3.79), perceived relevance (3.83), brand trust (3.84), and purchase decision (3.70). Lastly, the standard deviation ranged from 0.79 to 0.93 for all constructs.

In this research, the software of AMOS 21 was utilized for performing the analysis of data. Initially, the measurement model was estimated in order to check the factor loadings and establish the reliability in addition to validity for the selected measurement scales. After that, the structural model was estimated to verify the hypotheses. In the measurement model, there are four things that should be estimated: model fit, factor loadings, reliability analysis, and convergent validity. The fit indices should achieve the acceptable threshold values. After deletion of few items due to lower loading, the estimated measurement model achieved a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 239.704$, df = 150, GFI = 0.876, AGFI = 0.826, RMSEA = 0.061, CFI = 0.921, and TLI = 0.900). Corresponding to the suggestions of Hair et al. (2010), the acceptable values of factor loading for the remaining items of each construct should fall in the range of 0.5 to 1. The statistical analysis showed that all factor loadings (standardized) of the residual items came in the range of 0.544 to 0.829. Therefore, it can be said that there is no issue being reported with respect to the convergent validity test. Another test which was conducted to assess convergent validity is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Hair et al. (2010) stated that it can be attained when the AVE value for a construct surpasses 0.5. In general, the outcomes

Table 3
Confirmatory factor analysis.

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CompositeReliability	AVE
Interactivity	INT1	0.737	0.814	0.884	0.615
	INT2	0.805			
	INT3	0.609			
	INT4	0.809			
Informativeness	INF1	0.676	0.736	0.753	0.432
	INF3	0.657			
	INF4	0.632			
	INF5	0.664			
Entertainment	ENT1	0.726	0.738	0.741	0.492
	ENT2	0.772			
	ENT3	0.593			
Perceived Relevance	PR1	0.654	0.793	0.805	0.514
	PR2	0.544			
	PR3	0.829			
	PR4	0.803			
Brand Trust	BT1	0.688	0.776	0.781	0.543
	BT2	0.801			
	BT4	0.718			
Purchase Decision	PD1	0.622	0.685	0.736	0.413
	PD2	0.712			
	PD3	0.664			
	PD4	0.562			

Table 4
Test of discriminant validity.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Interactivity	**0.784**					
2. Entertainment	0.186	**0.657**				
3. Informativeness	0.230	0.392	**0.751**			
4. Perceived Relevance	0.385	0.083	0.541	**0.716**		
5. Brand Trust	0.557	0.491	0.636	0.412	**0.737**	
6. Purchase Decision	0.520	0.380	0.549	0.633	0.545	**0.642**

showed that the convergent validity for all constructs is achieved. In addition to that, reliability analysis were calculated for the constructs. Hair et al. (2010) stated that the threshold value for both composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha is equal to 0.6. The statistical analysis presented in Table 3 confirmed that all of the value for Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability as well exceeded 0.60; hence, reliability assumptions are fulfilled.

Furthermore, discriminant validity was examined via the measurement model to ensure that the measurement items of each construct are different from those of other constructs. This procedure was used in response to the proposed formula of Fornell and Larcker (1981). According to these authors, we can check discriminant validity by comparing the interrelationships which exist among all the constructs against the square root (SQRT) of AVE. In general, the results (see Table 4) verified that the values of AVE' SQRT for each construct surpassed the values of the correlation in the identical row and column, which provides a clear indication that the assumptions of discriminant validity are attained.

As the acceptable values of factor loadings along with reliability and validity analysis are met based on the measurement model, the final structural model was generated using AMOS software to check and test the projected hypotheses. Fig. 1 exhibits that the generated structural model maintained a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 363.260$, df = 189, GFI = 0.839, AGFI = 0.785, RMSEA = 0.076, CFI = 0.873, and TLI = 0.845). Table 5 also illustrates that the hypothesis 1 regarding the impact of brand trust on purchase decision ($\beta = 0.449$, t-value = 3.135, $p < 0.05$) is supported. The statistical findings also showed that interactivity positively affected brand trust ($\beta = 0.413$, t-value = 4.227, $p < 0.05$) and purchase decision ($\beta = 0.228$, t-value = 2.403, $p < 0.05$), thus, H2 and H3 are supported, The statistical analysis also proved that entertainment has a positive impact on brand trust ($\beta = 0.236$, t-value = 2.355, $p < 0.05$), but its effect on purchase decision ($\beta = 0.023$,

t-value = −0.278, $p > 0.10$) is insignificant; consequently, H5 is accepted while H6 is rejected. Unexpectedly, the outcomes showed that perceived relevance does not affect brand trust ($\beta = -0.013$, t-value = −0.123, $p > 0.05$), while its impact on purchase decision is significant ($\beta = 0.191$, t-value = 2.257, $p < 0.05$), thus, H8 is rejected whereas H9 is supported. Finally, the results confirmed the positive effect of informativeness on brand trust ($\beta = 0.456$, t-value = 3.430, $p < 0.05$) and purchase decision ($\beta = 0.317$, t-value = 2.513, $p < 0.05$), hence, H11 and H12 are supported. In general, these factors explain 60.2% of the variance in brand trust. Also, brand trust explains 61.4% of variance in purchase decision.

To verify the mediating role of brand trust among social media marketing features and purchase decision, this study followed the formula which was proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Initially, the indirect effect of independent variables (SMM features) on the dependent variable (purchase decision) was calculated. Based on their suggestions, the first condition for existence of mediating effect can be met if the p-value is significant. After that, both of lower bound as well as upper bound values should be calculated. The mediating effect of independent variables on the dependent variable can be confirmed and proved if there the lower bound and upper bound values do not have zero between them with a Confidence Intervals (CIs) of 95%. Or else, there is no proof to confirm the mediating effect. Overall, the results displayed in Table 6 reveal that the indirect effect of interactivity on purchase decision is confirmed (p-value = 0.017, LL = 0.150, UL = 0.696), thus, H4 is accepted. The findings also showed that the indirect effect of entertainment (p-value = 0.180, LL = −0.072, UL = 0.412) and perceived relevance (p-value = 0.825, LL = −0.474, UL = 0.466) on purchase decision is insignificant, thus, H7 and H10 are rejected. Finally, the analysis indicated that the indirect effect of informativeness on purchase decision is supported (p-value = 0.010, LL = 0.287, UL = 0.955), thus, H13 is confirmed.

5. Discussion

The primary aim of the present paper was centered on examining the direct and indirect effect of the features of social media marketing on buying decision, and also to verify if brand trust really mediates the linkages between them in UAE fast-food context. It was found that brand trust is a significant predictor of purchase decision. Pop et al. (2022) also confirmed that brand trust has a positive effect on purchase decision. Brand trust represents an important reason for building and maintaining
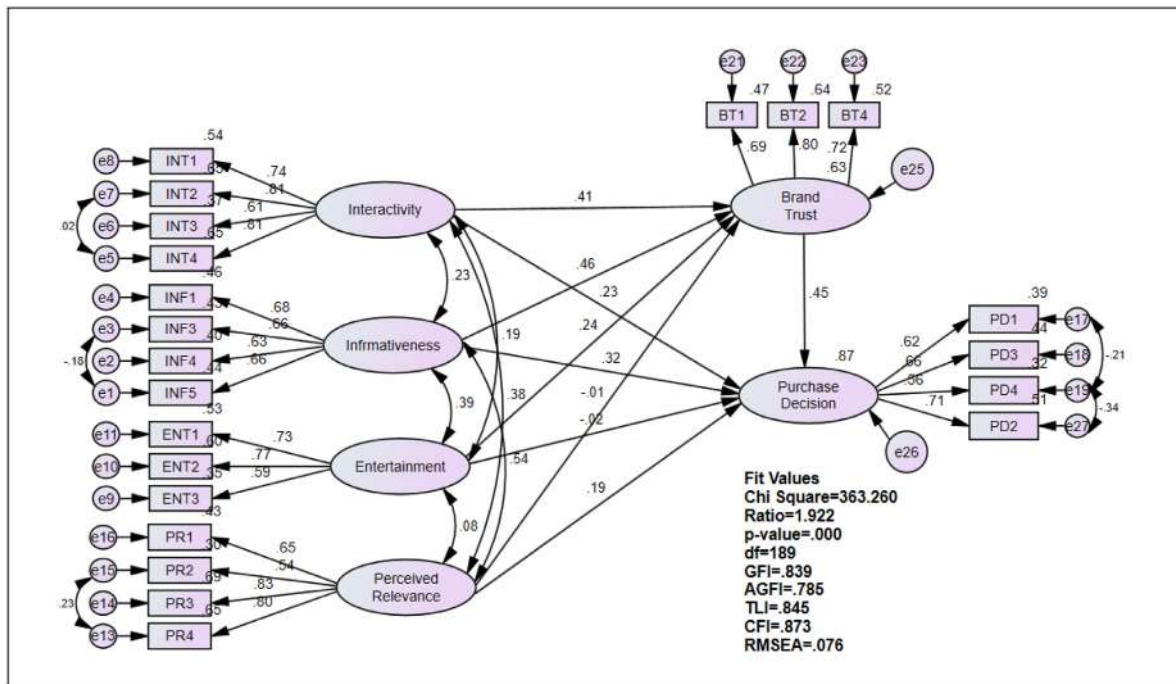
Fig. 1. The structural model.

Table 5
Hypotheses' results.

	Hypotheses		Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-Value
H1	Brand Trust	Purchase Decision	0.449	0.181	3.135	0.002
H2	Interactivity	Brand Trust	0.413	0.062	4.227	***
H3	Interactivity	Purchase Decision	0.228	0.076	2.403	0.016
H5	Entertainment	Brand Trust	0.236	0.081	2.355	0.019
H6	Entertainment	Purchase Decision	−0.023	0.083	−0.278	0.781
H8	Perceived Relevance	Brand Trust	−0.013	0.076	−0.123	0.902
H9	Perceived Relevance	Purchase Decision	0.191	0.079	2.157	0.031
H11	Informativeness	Brand Trust	0.456	0.108	3.430	***
H12	Informativeness	Purchase Decision	0.317	0.130	2.513	0.012

**p < 0.01.

Table 6
Mediation test.

	Bootstrapping		BC 95% CI			
	Est.	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	P-Value	Indirect Effect
Interactivity	0.451	0.148	0.150	0.696	0.017	0.127
Informativeness	0.591	0.208	0.287	0.955	0.010	0.193
Entertainment	0.154	0.120	−0.072	0.412	0.180	0.132
Perceived Relevance	0.009	0.262	−0.474	0.466	0.825	0.216

*Dependent variable: purchase decision; mediator: brand trust.

a robust and enduring relationship among the customers and the service provider. Statistical results also outlined that social media interactions positively influence purchase decision directly and indirectly via brand trust. This result is in harmony with those of earlier researches which concluded that social media interactions (Islam et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2019) have significant impact on purchase decision. Further support was seen in the study of Ibrahim and Aljarah (2018) who reported that brand trust was a partial mediator in the relationship between interactivity and purchase intention. Cheung et al. (2021) also showed that a company which relies on social media sites to communicate and interact with its specific group of customers, is likely to get high brand trust and be one of the consumers' choices. By looking at UAE context, it can be seen most of the buyers prefer browsing through social media channels to

look for brands and interact with one another. Due to these facts, social media has been regarded as the most viable option for connecting and interacting with current as well as prospective customers.

Surprisingly, the findings displayed that entertainment is positively associated with brand trust only, while effect on purchase decision is insignificant. Furthermore, the mediating effect of brand trust between entertainment and purchase decision is not supported. This indicates that sharing brand messages on the social media sites of fast-food restaurants, and including entertaining activities can build brand trust, but necessarily influences consumers' purchase decisions. Consistent with Hollebeek and Macky (2019), when social media ads are designed for providing entertainment to consumers, a higher degree of brand trust will be developed in consumers' minds. Other studies also viewed en-

tertainment as one the foremost predictors of electronic word of mouth (Ha et al., 2020) and brand involvement (McClure & Seock, 2020). Likewise, Cheung et al. (2020) revealed that marketing messages that entertain consumers and have fun features can be easily and quickly disseminated on social media platforms. Based on the result, it can be said that when service providers focus on entertainment activities to enhance consumers' experiences via social media sites, this results in greater brand trust.

The findings of this research have further confirmed the direct impact of perceived relevance on purchase decision is significant while it relationship with brand trust is insignificant. The mediating effect of brand trust between perceived relevance and purchase decision is also not confirmed. The insignificant effect on brand trust could be because consumers do not trust the firm's ads in social media setting. According to Naeem (2021), customized brand contents that are designed and shared on social media sites exert a positive impact on buyer behavior. Therefore, customized brand messages on social media platforms will provide customers with greater chances to be engaged in brand advertisements, and hence, stimulating purchase behavior (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Hewett et al. (2016) added that when a firm shares customized and relevant brand messages with its customers online, and then reply to each of them privately tends to be perceived positively. For this reason, perceived relevance have been considered to be vital for predicting purchase decision.

Finally, the outcomes confirmed that informativeness directly and indirectly affects consumer purchase decision via brand trust. This was supported earlier by Moslehpour et al. (2021) who confirmed that brand trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing activities and purchase behavior. Kang et al. (2020) also found a positive association between informativeness (a feature of social media marketing) and purchase decision. Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) added that the young generations (those aged less than 30 years) in Gulf region rely heavily on social media and internet channels in searching for different tangible and intangible products. Therefore, creating brand trust through social media networks is becoming very important because consumers deal with services providers virtually. The spread of positive word of mouth and consistent brand messages can improve consumers' perceptions and brand trust. However, if brand trust among consumers is low, their purchase decision will also be negatively affected, and vice versa.

5.1. Contribution to the literature

This study attempted to make a key theoretical contribution to the empirical literature by exploring and verifying the role of social media marketing features in predicting purchase decision. Primarily, three elements of social media marketing (informativeness, interactivity, and perceived relevance) were taken from the study of Alalwan's (2018) that was conducted in Jordanian context. In other similar researches, entertainment was also used as one of the main elements of social media advertising that could affect brand trust and buying behavior. By looking at existing studies in the published literature, one would notice that it is hard to come across a study that focused on investigating the impact of selected features of social media marketing directly and indirectly on purchase decision via brand trust jointly in one research framework. The present research further corresponds to the studies that recommended identifying the mediating mechanisms through which the features of social media marketing affect the purchase decisions of consumers. Therefore, brand trust was used as a key mediator to address existing gaps in the literature. This paper also intended to contribute the empirical literature by verifying the positive correlations between selected variables based on consumers' insights in UAE owing to the apparent social and cultural diversity. Importantly, the current study proved the positive impact of both informativeness and perceived relevance on the purchase decision of consumers. Such linkages have received very limited attention in the earlier researches, especially in the fast-food sector. Lastly,

this research contributes to the UTAUT model and upsurges our comprehension regarding the significance of the chosen social media marketing aspects in predicting brand trust as well as purchase decisions.

5.2. Implications for practice

The primary focus of this paper was to identify the direct and indirect effects of social media marketing features on purchase decision via brand trust in fast-food context. The results exhibited that informativeness has the strongest impact on brand trust and purchase decision. The analysis further indicated that purchase decision could be significantly influenced by perceived relevance and interactivity, while entertainment does not have a significant effect on it. Most importantly, it was found that brand trust is a significant mediator in the relationship between only two elements of social media marketing (interactivity and informtiveness) and consumer purchase decision. These results in general prove the importance of social networks and suggest that business practitioners, particularly, in the fast-food sector should exploit social media channels for designing persuasive content and spreading key marketing messages to attain their desired marketing objectives. Managing online communities on social media platforms is also very essential for building brand community and shaping corporate image. Moreover, marketers are encouraged to focus on creating appealing ads that may arouse the feelings of consumers towards the service provider and reinforce their brand engagement. When designing social media contents, marketing practitioners should pay a remarkable attention to their level of quality and characteristics as this could result in greater brand trust, and eventually better purchase decision. In addition to that, marketing specialists should have adequate understandings about the sort of brand information that consumers usually search for via social media platforms, and also be able to determine which contents can enhance consumers' interactions. However, there are some means that can be useful for marketers in monitoring consumers' responses toward the online content, such as Google analytics and other tools.

5.3. Limitations and future research

There are some limitations in the current paper which can be taken into account in forthcoming studies. For instance, the required data was gathered via a survey method to measure consumers' perceptions towards social marketing features and purchase decision; accordingly, upcoming studies may employ the qualitative approach or use the longitudinal method. Moreover, the data was collected from consumers in UAE fast-food industry; hence, it is suggested for forthcoming researches to replicate the model in different contexts to gain greater insights. Additionally, social media marketing was measured using four elements, thus, future researches are recommended to examine other elements that may exert a significant impact on purchase decision (e.g. trendiness and habits). Finally, data collection procedure followed a non-random sampling tool; consequently, future studies are recommended to use random sampling methods in order to ensure the generalizability of the statistical results.

6. Conclusion

This study attempted to examine the effects of social media marketing features of fast-food brands on purchase decision. The mediating effect of brand trust between them is also verified. The results indicated that social media sites represent important platforms for fast-food brands to attain their desired marketing objectives, for instance building brand trust and influencing consumers' purchase decision. Social media marketing features in this study are comprised of four dimensions; interaction, entertainment, perceived relevance, and informativeness. All of these dimensions except entertainment are found as significant predictors of purchase decision. The insignificant effect of entertainment may mean that consumers perceive the social media content of fast-food

brand to be less entertaining or does not perform well in this aspect. It can also be attributed to cultural complexity in UAE and that consumers do not pay high attention to entertainment on social sites prior to making purchase decisions. This finding call for further research in different context to verify it. Furthermore, brand trust plays a critical role in mediating the relationship between two of the selected social media marketing features (interactivity and informativeness) and purchase decision. Therefore, it is important to regularly share interactive posts and brand information on social media sites that are most frequently used by the customers of fast-brands in UAE to increase their confidence to them. As the key objective of marketing advertising and promotion is to build brand trust and stimulate consumer purchase behavior, social media marketing activities are also deemed to be important for developing successful relationships with customers and attaining these objectives. With the increasing interest towards fast-food consumption among consumers, the usage of social media sites for marketing purposes seems to be a relevant medium for reaching target market and influencing their perceptions. Through social media, service providers can easily share brand information with their followers and enhance the bonds with each other. These findings suggest that policy makers should reinforce their presence on social media and regularly search about changing consumers' needs, then developing offer for meeting them. As online networks are characterized by minimal costs, being placeless, quick reach, and the large number of users, marketing managers should exploit the advantages of social media in diverse means.

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