The effects of influencer marketing on overall brand equity through brand awareness and customer brand engagement

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C H R O N I C L E	A B S T R A C T
	This paper focuses on five-star hotels in Jordan to investigate the impact of influencer marketing on overall brand equity. The mediating role played by brand awareness and customer brand engagement between influencer marketing and overall brand equity is tested. The survey method is employed to conduct this research, and data is collected from 300 respondents. The proposed hypotheses are tested using structural equation modeling. The results indicate that influencer marketing directly influenced overall brand equity, brand awareness and customer brand engagement partially mediate the relationship between influencer marketing and overall brand equity.

1. Introduction

New technologies have a big impact on our lives because technology is available and is often promoted in our society. Technology also has a positive impact on several industries, including healthcare, business, and manufacturing channels, access to information, educational methods, and daily housework (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). These positive effects can be seen in many ways, including technology that also affects the e-commerce business, which has been growing a lot in the last year. In recent times, e-commerce has changed to mobile commerce (m-commerce) because of the growth of the internet and the rise of smartphones with a lot of features. This has shifted how customers exchange money through mobile transactions. As internet and social media technology progress, the e-commerce market grows even faster. This makes it easier and faster to make commercial transactions with a mobile device in our hands (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Furthermore, the world of communication has changed dramatically (De Veirman et al., 2017). We have observed the emergence and growth of new communication channels, which have resulted in the proliferation of information. Social media use is increasing (Hall, 2015). This increasing usage has contributed to the development of social media users. Simultaneously, the expanding number of social media users has increased the number of marketing influencers. Social media platforms may use marketing influencers to share their thoughts and experiences about products/services with their followers that have similar interests (Ahluwalia, 2018). Indeed, a rising number of companies are increasingly depending on social media to improve client interactions and product/service sales. For customers, social media provides a plethora of convenience options in addition to visual capabilities such as videos and images. The content of this audio and visual assistance on social media platforms may be commercial (connected to goods and services) or non-commercial (Freberg et al., 2011). Current and former users, as well as non-users, have positive or bad judgments. Consumers increasingly prefer social media to learn about new products,

according to recent surveys (Kumar et al., 2020). Thus, social media is seen as critical for followers to get further information (Freberg et al. 2011).

Several studies such as Kumar et al. (2020) have previously shown the beneficial effect of social media marketing interactions on consumers' purchasing intentions. Due to social media's enormous popularity, academics and marketers are interested in discovering new ways to use it for promotional activities; therefore, there has been extensive research on topics such as online marketing, social media, and celebrity endorsement, but little research on influencer marketing. A previously conducted study examined the effect of different characteristics of endorsers in conventional media channels on customers' purchase intentions (Trivedi & Sama, 2018). However, just a few research studies have been undertaken to determine how social media influencer marketing affects customer buying behavior.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of marketing influencers on overall brand equity through brand awareness and consumer brand engagement. Previous research has established how marketing influencers affect consumer purchasing intentions, but it has not addressed the implications of marketing influencers on overall brand equity by emphasizing the role of brand awareness and customer brand engagement. In turn, although the impacts of social media influencers on purchasing intentions have been studied, the consequences on total brand equity have been overlooked. The rest of this paper is organized as follows: First, it provides context for the suggested model and its hypotheses, as well as the study's implementation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Influencer Marketing

According to Rudd et al. (2012) influencers are third parties who substantially alter client purchasing choices but may also be partially accountable for it (content). Maybelline is a well-known cosmetics brand, and each of its cosmetic items has garnered several Top Brand Awards. This demonstrates that Maybelline goods have a strong brand image (Ahluwalia, 2018). According to Keller (2013), there are three brand image indicators. The first is the process of information acquired by customers in line with the current quality and quantity. Second, something is generated from consumer thinking about a brand based on the relation between features and advantages that may match consumer requirements and desires, forming a favorable image of the whole brand, and third, a brand is distinct from other brands (Karjaluoto & Kiuru, 2016).

Pina et al. (2019) identified influencers as being akin to customers who have a direct effect on the behaviors of their followers as early as 2008. Used characteristics such as the number of followers, the number of influencers followed, collaboration with other influencers, and so on, to determine the greatest rate of likeability of each influencer, as well as their impact on the consumer. On the other hand, there is a group of works focused on niche themes, such as the effects of influencer marketing on the strategic decision and communication process of companies (Gautam & Sharma, 2017); the use of influencer marketing as a favorable environment for the generation of Communities of Practice; the use of emerging languages and changes in communication standards (Gass & Seiter, 2011); and the creation of tribes between influencers and followers. A third study group focuses on sponsorship disclosure. Hayes and Carr (2015) confirmed that disclosure impacts the identification of the commercial aim of the communication, adversely influencing brand memory and engagement with postings. Similarly, investigated the impact of disclosure on ad recognition, affecting brand attitude and desire to disseminate the message. Stubb et al. (2019) investigated the influencer's technique of attempting to explain the creation of sponsored material, known as 'compensation justification disclosure.' Its findings show that this method has a favorable effect on customer sentiments, improving the message's trustworthiness. The biggest category of works investigates how influencer marketing efforts produce favorable attitudes and behaviors in consumers. In this regard, have demonstrated that influencer-promoted messaging generates better levels of engagement and consumer sentiment than brand-promoted commercials. Similarly, Schouten (2011) showed that consumers trust and identify more with an influencer than with a celebrity endorser, enhancing the message's efficacy.

2.2. Brand Awareness

the consumer is already acquainted with the brand; brand awareness enhances the possibility that it will be considered when making a purchasing choice.

Regarding influencer marketing aims, companies are targeting brand recognition as a goal since it is vital for consumers' purchasing decisions and buying behavior. This also leads to a better understanding of the influence of brand awareness on client purchase intentions. Customers' trust in purchasing decisions is linked to brand awareness. Companies should establish powerful brands through increasing brand awareness. Brand loyalty is mostly driven by brand awareness (Rudd et al., 2012). Brand awareness represents buyers' capacity to recognize (Keller, 2013) and remember the brand in a certain product category, and it is therefore critical in the purchasing decision process (Keller, 2013).

Furthermore, People who have a lot of followers on social media are called "influencers". They are paid by a company to market their products, give information about the products, and change people's behavior on their social media accounts (Ong & Ito, 2019; Chen & Lin, 2018). A Celebrity Influencer, Mega Influencer, Macro Influencer, Micro Influencer, and Nano Influencer are all types of influencers (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Olsen & Sandholmen, 2019). These are the five types:

Celebrity Influencers are people who get a lot of attention outside of social media. They usually already have a job in the media industry (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). They only use social media to help their job, and because of their popularity in the public, they have more than 1 million followers on social media. Another group is Mega Influencers, who have gained a lot of followers on social media but are not well-known outside of their followers. It is common for people who have more than 100.000 followers to be called Macro Influencers. They usually work with well-known brands so they can appear in front of a bigger audience, even on TV. As a result, we think that the three dimensions of CBE make people think and feel more positive about the brand, which makes them think and feel more positive about the brand, too. This belief is in line with Yoo et al. (2000), who say that brand communication boosts brand equity because consumers can think of the communicated brand as part of their "evoked set". In the case of online social media, Bruhn et al. (2012) say that how users think about their communication has a big impact on how they think about online brands. In the same way, Hutter et al. (2013) found that consumer engagement and brand awareness have a big impact. Using Facebook as a social media platform for brand communication, Dabrowski (2015) says there is a positive relationship between user-generated reviews and brand awareness.

2.3. Customer Brand Engagement

Marketing literature (Ohanian, 1990) has been inconsistent in its definition of "brand engagement", but it has lately begun to come together around the definition offered by Ohanian (1990) during or in connection with a brand's most important interactions with consumers. Cognitive processing, attachment, and activation are the three facets of brand engagement (Wang et al., 2017, 2018). Consumers' "immersion" in a brand is referred to as "cognitive processing". "Affection" is referred to as "passion". "Activation" is referred to as "energy, effort, and time spent" with the brand" (Hollebeek, 2011). A key performance indicator for brands, consumer brand affinity, and purchase intent are both boosted by consumer brand affinity (Gautam & Sharma, 2017). According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), "insights into consumers' engagement-related dynamics remain limited empirical validation to date".

According to Maslowska et al. (2016) brand engagement happens within the context of consumer interaction. Four types of brand engagement are described in this model: customer experiences, shopping habits, and brand conversations. There is no doubt that in today's marketing climate, brand activities are not the only ones driving customer engagement with a brand. "Other actors," on the other hand, play an equally vital role in promoting brand engagement and loyalty (Gass & Seiter, 2011). So, "it is not always the brand that initiates and dominates the discussion" is an accurate statement (Maslowska et al., 2016). As instances of how these other actors impact brand engagement, the authors point to the watching of brand-related material, such as videos, and then reading other customers' comments on those brand postings. Assuming this model holds, marketers may attempt to affect the relationship between each of the variables included. The brand works with an SMIs to develop a video on YouTube, for example, other actors. As a result, although social media has been praised as an important channel for facilitating brand interaction, the value of SMIs as a factor contributing to brand engagement for their followers has yet to be demonstrated.

2.4. Overall Brand Equity

Nowadays, social media plays a big role in the creation of brand equity through customers' involvement with the company (Bruhn et al., 2012). Customers who interact with brands on social media show that they are more invested in the brands, and this increases the value of the brands (Calder & Malthouse, 2005). So, when people are more engaged with a brand, they learn more about it. This helps them build strong, positive, and unique associations with the brand, which in turn influences their purchasing decisions, makes them more likely to buy, and builds brand equity ((Hutter et al., 2013).

Previous research has looked at how brand equity comes from different sources (i.e. financial and consumer). However, brand equity is meant to show how the brand adds value to the product, no matter what other research has shown (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). The difference between how people respond to a focal brand and an unbranded product when both have the same level of marketing stimuli and product attributes is called brand equity. This is what Yoo and Donthu (2001, p. 1) say. In the past, to think about CBBE, researchers used two main frameworks. Keller (1993) says that brand equity is based on brand knowledge, which has two parts: brand awareness and brand image. Aaker (1991) says that brand equity is more general and comprehensive. came up with a way to think about brand equity, based on Keller (1993) and Aaker (1996) frameworks (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). In more detail, BL, PQ, and BAS were thought of as the three main dimensions (first order scale) of brand equity, which was thought of as a second order thing (Yoo & Donthu; 2001). So, to answer the research questions, brand equity dimensions will shift from focusing on brands to their applications on social networking sites to do so. Thus,

H₁: *The SMIs positively impacts brand awareness.*

H₂: *The SMIs positively impacts the customer brand engagement.*

H₃: *The brand awareness positively impacts the overall brand equity.*

H₄: *The customer brand engagement positively impacts the overall brand equity.*

H₅: *The SMIs positively impacts the overall brand equity.*

H6: *The brand awareness positively mediates between SMIs and overall brand equity.*

H7: *The customer brand engagement positively mediates between SMIs and overall brand equity.*
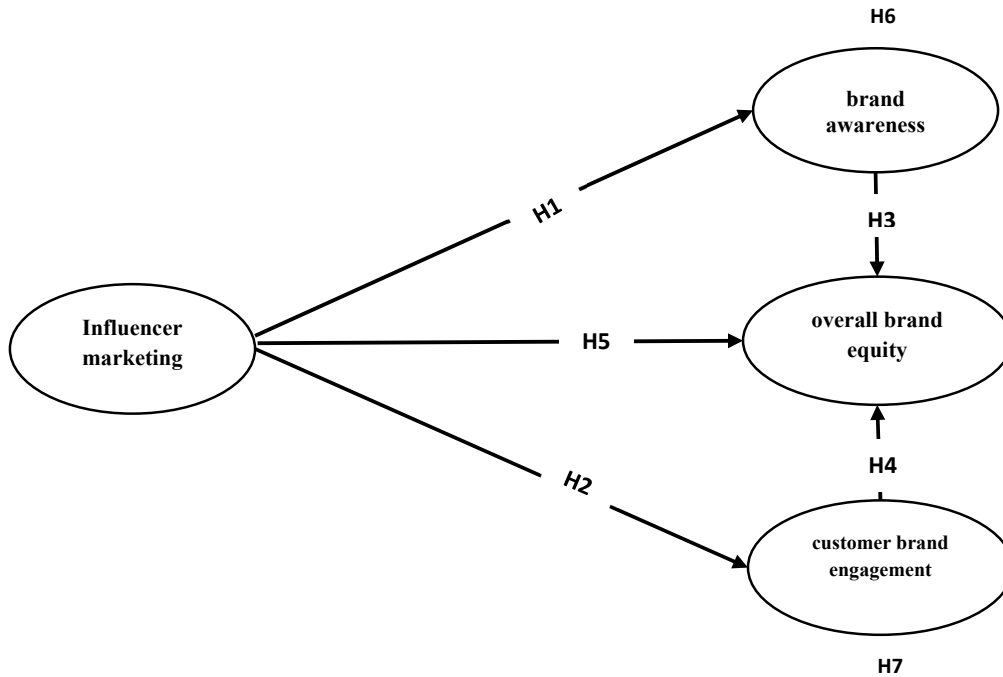

Fig. 1. Research Model

3. Method

Items for the questionnaire were adapted from previous research in the field (Voss et al., 2003). Two sections were included in the questionnaire. Instruments for building structures were discussed in the first section. To begin, SMIs were determined using Twenty items from the collection (Ball & Harris, 1982). The brand engagement was measured using the following five items. To measure brand awareness, the following four items from Reysen (2005) were used: Finally, a total of four factors were employed to determine the overall brand equity. The responses ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a Likert Scale of 5 points (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019; Adaileh et al., 2020; Alshanty et al., 2019; Alrwashdeh et al., 2020; Alrwashdeh et al., 2022). The demographics and general information of those who responded were the focus of the second section. To gather primary data for this study, researchers used Google Forms to distribute questionnaires to study participants. They are all Jordanians who have visited a five-star hotel. Data gathering and dissemination took around six months to complete. It is possible to target a specific group while protecting the identity and privacy of respondents using internet-based surveys There is a minimal sample size of 300 for a model with fewer than seven variables, according to Reysen (2005) In all, there were 438 participants in this investigation. Descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), and bootstrapping were used in the study. Before doing an exploratory factor analysis, a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) analysis was carried out to determine the concept validity and feasibility of the data collection. the loading factor of each item must also exceed 0.50 to guarantee that no items are correlated with each other (Adaileh et al., 2022).

4. Results

Four items were removed for lack of factor loading (0.50) because of the EFA findings. One independent variable (SMIs), two mediating factors (BA and CBE), and one dependent variable (OBE) were all retrieved using SPSS 23. Table 1 summarizes the findings of the CFA study (Bradley, 2018; Strauss and Smith, 2009). A reasonable degree of fit was found for the suggested model: 2/df = 1.15, p-value = 0.02, GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.02.

Table 1
CFA test

GOF Index	Acceptable Value	CFA Model
χ^2		401.49
df		349
χ^2/df	<3	1.15
GFI	>0.90	0.93
RMSEA	≤0.08	0.02

It is shown in Table 2 that there are satisfactory findings in terms of discriminant validity, convergent validity, and composite reliability. CR > 0.7, AVE > 0.5, MSV AVE, and AVE > Max correlation are all positive correlation values that indicate a strong relationship (Hair et al. 2012).

Table 2
Reliability and validity

Var. Items	EFA	CFA	SEM	M	SD	α	CR	AV	AVE (%)	KMO
Min Value	>0.5	>0.5	>0.5			>0.6	>0.7	>0.5	>50	**>0.5**
SMIs1	0.89	0.88	0.88	3.49	0.93	0.91	0.91	0.72	78.99	**0.85**
SMIs 2	0.88	0.84	0.84							
SMIs 3	0.90	0.87	0.87							
SMIs 4	0.86	0.81	0.81							
CBE1	0.80	0.83	0.83	3.75	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.52	61.49	**0.85**
CBE 2	0.76	0.69	0.70							
CBE 3	0.78	0.74	0.74							
CBE 4	0.75	0.66	0.66							
CBE 5	0.74	0.66	0.66							
BA1	0.81	0.80	0.81	3.58	0.90	0.80	0.81	0.51	62.98	**0.79**
BA2	0.78	0.72	0.72							
BA 3	0.75	0.65	0.65							
BA 4	0.77	0.67	0.67							
OBE1	0.75	0.74	0.74	3.75	0.86	0.81	0.81	0.51	63.51	**0.80**
OBE1	0.78	0.73	0.73							
OBE3	0.79	0.71	0.71							
OBE4	0.75	0.69	0.69							
Total						**0.83**			**68.55**	**0.81**

Items details for each construct (questionnaire).

SEM, particularly path analysis, was used on the study variables after establishing an appropriate model from the analysis findings. Extending from factor analysis, SEM may be used to assess substantive ideas using empirical data sets. To find out how well a model fits a dataset and assess the interaction between many variables at once, the route analysis approach was used. Hypotheses and the significance of the association between study variables were tested using SEM. Table 3 shows the model fit indices for the suggested model in this research in further detail. 2/df = 1.16, p-value = 0.01, GFI = 0.93, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.99, and RMSEA = 0.02 are the results. GFI readings were all over the permissible threshold.

Table 3
SEM goodness-of-fit statistic.

GGOF Index	Acceptable Value	SEM Model
χ^2/df	<3	1.16
GFI	>0.90	0.93
AGFI	>0.90	0.91
CFI	>0.90	0.99
RMSEA	≤0.08	0.02
SRMR	≤0.08	0.05

For a normalized value, the standardized coefficient was employed. Table 4 shows that all hypotheses are accepted. SMIs influenced CBE, as shown by the value β= 0.50 *** and p-value = 0.000. SMIs were also shown to influence BA, as shown by the value = 0.30 ** and p-value = 0.002. CBE to BA (H3) has a 0.20 * impacting relationship. With 0.23 ***, the path from BA to OBE had a significant effect (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998). SMIs were also shown to have a favorable effect on OBE = 0.32 **. Furthermore, the analytical findings revealed the most important SMIs.

Table 4
Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E.	C.R. (T Statistics)	p-Value	Result
H1	SMIs →CBE	0.50 ***	0.21	4.18	0.000	Supported
H2	SMIs →BA	0.30 **	0.18	3.15	0.002	Supported
H3	CBE →OBE	0.20 *	0.09	2.29	0.022	Supported
H4	BA →OBE	0.23 ***	0.07	3.25	0.000	Supported
H5	SMIs → OBE	0.32 **	0.22	2.54	0.010	Supported

This research also looked at the precise impact of each SMIs on CBE, BA, and OBE. Without a mediating variable, the examination of each SMIs on OBE revealed that direct impact on OBE.

4.1. Mediating Variables

To get more accurate and useful research, mediating variables can be found to explain how and why the relationship between the independent and dependent variables works (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This will help us get more accurate results. Standard errors and confidence intervals were calculated very well from bootstrapping, and they were very accurate. Percentile confidence intervals were set at 95 percent CI in this study, and bias-corrected confidence intervals were also set at 95 percent CI. To figure out the mediating effect, bootstrapping could be used to figure out the total, direct, and indirect effects. If the mediating effect was there, the next step was to figure out how big the effect size of the mediating variable was. The results show that H_6 and H_7 played a role in the process. Table 5, shows a summary of the SEM results with CBE and BA as the mediating variables, as shown in the figure. Each part of the SMIs effect was looked at in more detail on OBE, with CBE to get the effect. Interaction and customization were two SMI features that had a big impact on OBE through CBE (Table 5).

Table 5
Summary of mediation analysis results

Hypothesis	Path	Total (c)	Direct (c')	Indirect (ab)	Mediation
H_6	SMIs→CBE→OBE	0.48 ***	0.36 *	0.12 *	Supported
H_7	SMIs→ BA → OBE	0.48 ***	0.41 **	0.07 *	Supported

5. Discussion

There were three variables in this study: an independent variable, a mediating variable (CBE and BA), a dependent variable, and an intermediate variable (OBE). Therefore, we investigated the impact of SMIs on CBE, BA, and OBE among Jordanian consumers and discovered the effects of CBE and BA on OBE. CBE and BA were also examined to validate their mediation function in the link between SMIs and OBE (Creyer & Ross; 1997). First, we discovered that SMIs had a considerable impact on CBE. According to Moussetis et al. (2005), this conclusion is consistent. This suggests that the company's social media marketing efforts affect customer confidence in the brand. Consumers' confidence in the hotel will make it simpler for the brand to build stronger ties with them. In addition, our statistical analysis demonstrates that SMIs (INT and CUS) had a substantial impact on CBE in this research. SMIs allows hotels to engage with their customers in a more personal and direct way via the use of social media (Maignan & Ferrell 2004). Customers' trust is directly influenced by the quality of the company's communication. In the service market, personalization is a vital component that may be done via SMIs. Customers will have a greater sense of ownership in the company's service delivery if they get more personalized attention. A favorable brand image for BA may be achieved by effectively managing SMIs, according to our findings. This study confirms earlier results. For hotels, a strong sense of identity is a critical part of their overall marketing strategy. As a result of all the elements that contribute to brand recognition, consumers place a high value on it. Using social media to build a brand's reputation is a cost-effective strategy.

According to this study, BA has a substantial impact on OBE, as do the variables CBE and OBE in premium branded items. According to previous study, our results are in line with Kim and Ko (2012). According to our results, the more trust customers have in a brand, the more likely they are to purchase their products from it. Developing strong customer-company connections is critical to the success of an internet business (Creyer & Ross, 1997). As a result of the complexity and variety of online transactions, product suppliers might be dishonest and unexpected. Consumer OBE will below if they have a low level of confidence in the brand, and vice versa. In addition, we discovered that SMIs had a considerable impact on OBE, confirming our prior conclusions. As a result, a well-managed SMI will lead to an increase in consumer OBE. Furthermore, among the five SMM elements, only entertainment and word of mouth have a substantial impact on OBE. Consumer OBE is positively correlated with perceptions of BA, which is in line with previous studies (Maignan & Ferrell., 2004). This suggests that a more positive consumer impression of BA leads to a greater level of OBE for the product in question. Consumers look at a company's OBE before making a buying choice. Consumers can develop a positive or negative impression of a brand, which might influence their purchasing choices.

6. limitation and future study

The present study's limitation is that the participants were selected from a population of hotel guests in Jordan. In addition, for the second limitation, we only employed a qualitative method. Future studies should look at SMIs in diverse cultures to see whether our findings remain true. Furthermore, it would be interesting for future studies to investigate possible disparities within the group of SMIs; these differences may include location or gender, for example. A future study might also compare the effect of SMIs to that of other sorts of

spokespersons, such as celebrities. This research was an early investigation into the impact of SMIs on brand engagement, and it laid the groundwork for several prospective expansions.

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