

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN RETAIL FASHION INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the impact of social media marketing on consumer engagement, focusing on the moderating role of social media influencers within the Bangladeshi fashion retailers. By examining the relationships between various types of social media content—*informativeness, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), entertaining content, and trendiness*—and consumer engagement, the research posits that social media influencers can amplify or diminish these effects. Utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data from a sample of 202 consumers, the study finds that all types of content significantly influence consumer engagement, with influencers enhancing the impact of entertaining and trendy content more than informative and eWOM content. The results align with previous research, confirming the robustness of these relationships and highlighting the need for alignment between influencer characteristics, brand values, and audience preferences. These findings have important implications for policymakers, academics, and industry practitioners. Industry practitioners should prioritize content quality and strategically select influencers to maximize engagement. Despite the study's limitations, including its focus on a specific market and cross-sectional data, it offers a robust framework for enhancing social media marketing effectiveness. Overall, the study underscores the strategic value of combining high-quality content with influencer marketing to drive consumer engagement, offering insights applicable to the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry and beyond.*

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KEYWORDS

Social Media Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Social Media Influencers, Retail Fashion Industry, Trendiness

1 Introduction

Social media platforms enable users to establish virtual communities where they can share thoughts and opinions (Yu & Hu, 2020). This potential has led billions of individuals globally to join at least one social networking site (Zhang & Lee, 2022). In 2024, over five billion people worldwide were using social media, with this number projected to surpass six billion by 2028, reflecting the popularity of social networking as a dominant digital activity. Facebook remains the most popular platform globally, boasting approximately 2.9 billion monthly active users in 2024, while other top apps, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, maintained high engagement levels. Facebook remains the most popular platform globally, boasting approximately 2.9 billion monthly active users in 2024, while other top apps, such as WhatsApp and Telegram, maintained high engagement levels. Surveys indicate that 57% of consumers are less likely to engage with brands perceived as inauthentic. This issue is compounded by the prevalence of fake followers and bots, which inflate engagement metrics without contributing to genuine interactions (Abhishek & Srivastava, 2021). Research suggests that up to 15% of Twitter accounts could be both, impacting the credibility of engagement statistics (Berman & Zheng, 2020). Meanwhile, the eCommerce Apparel market in Bangladesh, like in many other regions, has seen substantial growth from 2019 to 2029, driven by the increasing penetration of digital technologies, the growing popularity of online shopping, and the shift in consumer behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rapid and exponential growth of social media has transformed traditional marketing approaches, introducing innovative paradigms that necessitate a deep understanding of the factors influencing consumer engagement. Among these factors, the informativeness of social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a critical determinant (Yu & Hu, 2020). Informativeness, which refers to the value and relevance of the content shared with the target audience, plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. As of June 2023, approximately 4.9 billion individuals worldwide were active social media users, a number projected to rise to 5.85 billion by 2027, representing 59.4% of the global population. Despite this, a

significant gap persists in understanding the specific factors that contribute to its success. Studies have noted a lack of exploration into how certain strategies might lead customers to disregard or dismiss influence-generated promotional content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Moreover, as SMI marketing increasingly relies on the quality and appeal of social media content, identifying the precise content features that drive successful brand endorsements is critical (Ibrahim, 2021).

This oversight is particularly concerning given the garment sector's reliance on strong customer relationships and dynamic marketing strategies to sustain competitiveness in a fast-evolving digital marketplace. Addressing this gap is imperative to provide actionable insights into how advanced social media tools can be tailored to enhance relationship-building efforts, optimize marketing strategies, and drive growth in the garment business. By bridging this gap, this study aims to contribute both to the theoretical understanding of social media marketing in industry-specific contexts and to the practical applications of these tools for the garment sector.

The specific objectives are to:

RO1: To investigate the impact of informativeness on consumer engagement.

RO2: To examine the extent to which electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) influences Consumer Engagement.

RO3: To assess the influence of entertaining content on consumer engagement.

RO4: To explore the relationship between trendiness and the extent of consumer engagement.

RO5: To investigate the relationship between social media influencer and consumer engagement.

RO6: To investigate whether social media influences the relationship between informativeness in social media marketing and consumer engagement.

RO7: To examine whether social media influencers moderate the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social media and consumer engagement.

RO8: To assess whether social media influences moderate the relationship between entertaining contents in social media and consumer engagement.

RO9: To examine whether social media influences moderate the relationship between trendiness in social media and consumer engagement.

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Does informativeness of social media marketing

influence consumer engagement?

RQ2: To what extent does electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) influence consumer engagement?

RQ3: To what extent do entertaining contents influence consumer engagement?

RQ4: To what extent does trendiness affect consumer engagement?

RQ5: What is the relationship between social media influencers and consumer engagement?

RQ6: Does social media influence moderate the relationship between informativeness in social media and consumer engagement?

RQ7: Does social media influence moderate the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social media and consumer engagement?

RQ8: Does social media influence power moderate the relationship between entertaining content in social media and consumer engagement?

RQ9: Does social media influence moderate the relationship between trendiness in social media and consumer engagement?

This study focuses on the Bangladeshi fashion retail industry, concentrating on firms located in Dhaka, the capital city. Dhaka is strategically selected due to its pivotal role as the economic, cultural, and administrative hub of Bangladesh. The city hosts a significant portion of the country's fashion retail businesses, serving as a major commercial epicenter. The study is conducted at the individual level, with both the unit of analysis and the unit of observation being individual consumers. This approach is chosen to provide a granular understanding of how brand-related social media content impacts consumer engagement and purchasing decisions. The study extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to consumer engagement in social media marketing, particularly within the context of Bangladesh's unique cultural, economic, and digital environment. The findings of this study hold substantial practical value for marketing professionals, including executives, managers, research analysts, product managers, and digital content creators. First, it provides actionable recommendations for optimizing consumer engagement strategies on Facebook, a platform widely used in Bangladesh for brand interactions.

2 Literature review

The use of social media, which is described as "a group

of Internet-based applications that build on the philosophical and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content," has fundamentally altered both people's daily lives and the marketing strategies of businesses (Touni et al., 2019).

2.1 Informativeness and Customer Engagement

Informativeness in advertising has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing consumers' perceptions of advertising quality and their overall engagement with promotional content. Research indicates that advertising messages that are rich in relevant and accurate information positively shape consumers' evaluations of the content, enhancing their willingness to interact with it. Informative advertising plays a vital role in delivering functional benefits by addressing users' specific needs, offering solutions, and enabling problem-solving. Messages that are clear, concise, adequate, and timely are more likely to stand out in the crowded digital space, capturing users' attention and fostering a sense of trust (Fagherazzi et al., 2022). For instance, transparent and educational advertisements that clearly outline product benefits, costs, and usage scenarios equip customers with the necessary knowledge to evaluate their options. This not only simplifies the purchasing process but also ensures that consumers feel confident in their choices, thereby increasing their likelihood of engaging with the brand (Fan et al., 2019).

H1. Informativeness has significant influences on customer engagement.

2.2 eWOM and Customer Engagement

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) refers to communication shared by potential, current, or past customers about a product, brand, or organization through social media platforms (Hanaysha, 2022). This digital exchange is fueled by the perceived reliability of eWOM, which motivates consumers to spontaneously generate and share brand-related information with friends, acquaintances, and the wider online audience (Fagherazzi et al., 2022; Falgoust et al., 2022; Hosen et al., 2021; Nafees et al., 2021).

Consumers who engage in positive eWOM often share their satisfaction with others, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond their immediate interactions. Such dynamics underscore the potential of positive eWOM to build a robust and enduring brand image, cementing the trust and affinity consumers feel toward the brand.

Given its critical role in shaping consumer trust and brand perceptions, it can be hypothesized that eWOM significantly impacts consumer engagement. By fostering trust, creating shared experiences, and amplifying brand-related information, eWOM acts as a powerful mechanism for enhancing consumer interaction and loyalty. The dual-edged nature of eWOM necessitates strategic management to mitigate its risks while maximizing its potential to positively influence consumer behaviors and perceptions.

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth significantly influences Customer Engagement

2.3 Entertaining Contents and Customer Engagement

Entertainment, characterized as the enjoyment and fun derived from interactions with online media, plays a significant role in shaping consumer engagement (Gligor et al., 2019). Research suggests that entertainment fosters deeper cooperation between companies and consumers while enhancing the mood and satisfaction of shoppers, creating a more favorable environment for engagement (Sands et al., 2022). Further, recent studies have deepened the understanding of the impact of entertaining content by examining its effectiveness across various media formats. Hollebeek et al. (2022) demonstrated that emotionally engaging television advertisements significantly enhance viewership and contribute to increased online sales, highlighting the power of entertainment in driving immediate consumer action.

Moreover, Ho et al. (2022) extended this understanding to the realm of digital journalism, where emotionally charged articles on platforms like the New York Times were found to have a higher likelihood of being shared among readers. These findings illustrate the broader implications of entertaining content, emphasizing its ability to inspire deeper interactions beyond initial consumption.

H3: Entertaining content significantly influences Customer Engagement

2.4 Trendiness and Customer Engagement

The growing reliance on social media platforms for product discovery and information highlights the importance of trendiness in influencing customer engagement. Social media is perceived as more beneficial and unique than traditional methods,

providing customers with up-to-date, relevant content on trending and popular topics (Liu et al., 2021). Social media platforms serve as a dynamic space where trend-driven updates can rapidly circulate, creating opportunities for brands to engage with their audiences on a more meaningful level (Malarvizhi et al., 2022).

As social media continues to redefine the ways in which consumers interact with brands, the importance of trendiness in building these meaningful connections becomes increasingly evident. The ability to stay relevant and align with prevailing consumer trends is crucial for brands aiming to foster long-term engagement and loyalty (Cheung et al., 2020).

H4: Trendiness significantly influences Customer Engagement.

2.5 Social Media Influencer and Consumer Engagement

Social media influencers play a pivotal role in shaping customer engagement by driving interactions such as likes, shares, and comments on brand-related posts (Arora et al., 2019b). The type of media used in posts—whether links, images, videos, or status updates—significantly impacts the level of interaction, as different media formats offer varying degrees of "media richness" or "vividness," which refers to the intensity of sensory stimulation provided by the content (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

The dynamic and interactive nature of influencer-driven posts—featuring various media formats like videos, live streams, and interactive polls—adds richness and relevance to the content, making it more appealing and credible (Lou & Kim, 2019). This enhanced interactivity strengthens consumer engagement, as followers perceive the content as not only informative but also aligned with their interests.

H5: Social Media Influencer significantly influences Customer Engagement.

2.6 Social Media Influencer, Informativeness, and Consumer Engagement

Social media marketing and customer interaction are fundamental to relationship marketing, serving as key drivers for building and maintaining connections between brands and consumers (Boerman, 2020; Delbaere et al., 2020). Social media platforms enable users to interact with businesses through activities such as commenting, sharing, and engaging with content,

fostering a sense of community and relational value (Ki et al., 2020). This interaction not only strengthens consumer loyalty but also enhances brand visibility and trust, especially when users actively engage with informative content.

Moreover, social media influencers play a critical role in enhancing consumer engagement by serving as credible intermediaries between brands and consumers (Brooks et al., 2021). Their ability to present informative content in a relatable and engaging manner fosters trust, strengthens consumer perceptions, and encourages meaningful interactions. Influencers effectively translate complex or factual brand information into accessible and relatable narratives, ensuring it resonates with their audiences (Brooks et al., 2021). This ability to contextualize and personalize information not only enhances its utility but also strengthens the connection between the brand and the consumer.

H6: Social Media Influencer significantly mediates the relationships between Informativeness, and consumer engagement.

2.7 Social Media Influencer, Electronic Word of mouth and Consumer Engagement

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a cornerstone of the digital marketing ecosystem, occurring across a wide range of online platforms, including blogs, emails, forums, customer review websites, and social media networks (Singh et al., 2020b; Yuan & Lou, 2020). Customer engagement, an integral element of eWOM, represents the active and multi-dimensional involvement of customers in their interactions with a brand. This engagement extends beyond simple transactions to include behaviors such as sharing experiences, participating in discussions, and promoting the brand to others (Martínez-López et al., 2020; Wellman et al., 2020; Woodroof et al., 2020).

Social media influencers serve as a catalyst in this process by enhancing the visibility, credibility, and impact of eWOM. Leveraging their extensive networks and perceived authenticity, influencers can amplify eWOM messages, making them more relatable and persuasive to their audiences.

H7: Social Media Influencer significantly mediates the relationships between Electronic Word of Mouth in social media and consumer engagement

2.8 Social Media Influencer, Entertaining contents and Consumer Engagement

Social media influencers have emerged as novel and powerful types of third-party endorsers who significantly shape audience attitudes and behaviors through their online content (Wellman et al., 2020). This personalized approach has made influence on marketing particularly effective in engaging consumers, as it fosters a sense of intimacy and credibility between influencers and their followers. With its growing popularity, influencer marketing is rapidly replacing traditional methods, especially in emerging markets where social media plays a central role in consumer decision-making (Brooks et al., 2021). According to Zhou et al. (2021), 93% of marketers believe that influence endorsements enhance brand awareness and attract new customers, underscoring the immense trust and influence this individual command. This effectiveness is further reinforced by their ability to integrate entertaining elements into their messaging, making it more engaging and memorable for their audiences.

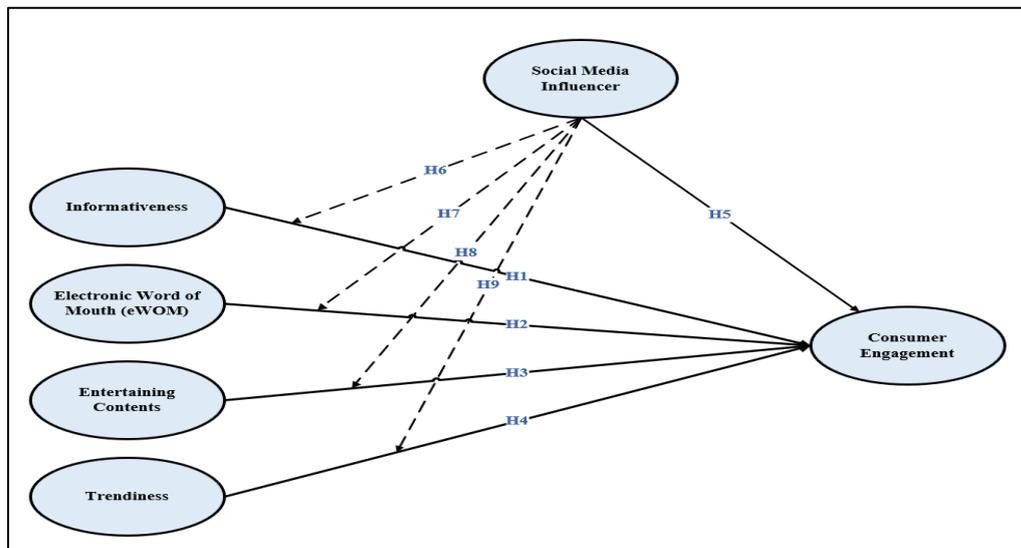
H8: Social Media Influencer significantly mediates the relationships between Entertaining contents and consumer engagement

2.9 Social Media Influencer, Trendiness and Consumer Engagement

In the modern digital era, organizations cannot sustain their operations without leveraging social media platforms as a core part of their business strategies (Lee & Theokary, 2021). However, with the growing prominence of social media, businesses have begun to use these platforms extensively to attract consumer attention, promote their offerings, and facilitate two-way communication (Lou, 2021; Spillane et al., 2021). In this context, the role of influencers extends beyond simple promotion; they actively shape consumer preferences and influence purchasing behaviors by sharing remarks, reviews, and endorsements on social media platforms (Vrontis et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021).

H9: Social Media Influencer significantly mediates the relationships between Trendiness in social media and consumer engagement.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



3 Research methodology

3.1 Research Design

Appropriate research methodologies and instruments must be used in every study to ensure that the collected data will address the study's goals. To collect data, the quantitative approach uses a logical scientific process. An exploratory research strategy was used in this study because of the nature of the research aims. Explanatory research often aims to explain why some variables have an impact on other variables (Bell et al., 2022). Links between variables or constructions are important, as shown by several earlier ideas (Clark et al., 2021). Explanatory researchers often evaluate these variables and provide information to confirm or disprove assumptions that have been made (Saridakis & Cowling, 2020).

Explanatory, or causal, research is a type of study that aims to investigate the causal relationships between variables and identify the underlying reasons for observed phenomena (Ghauri et al., 2020). This study is primarily interested in exploring the relationships between various factors (informativeness, eWOM, marketing mix, entertaining content, trendiness, and social media influencers) and consumer engagement. By adopting an explanatory research design, the study can delve deeper into these relationships and identify the causal mechanisms that underlie them (Creswell, 2018). The researchers employed a quantitative approach to conduct the study. In general, to get research results, the

deductive method and quantitative technique are employed to construct and validate hypotheses generated via the use of scientifically accepted techniques. Both are used to assess the accuracy of the theoretical assumptions developed in earlier research that have already undergone theoretical evaluation (Tashakkori et al., 2020). According to Saridakis & Cowling (2020), quantitative approach is used to investigate business difficulties and analyze current ideas and conceptions that are composed of several sets of variables.

3.2 Sampling and Instrumentation

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals or entities from a population to represent the broader group, enabling researchers to gain insights into specific phenomena without studying the entire population (Hanif et al., 2018). This subset, referred to as a sample, is critical for reducing the complexity and cost of research while maintaining the reliability and validity of findings. This section provides an in-depth explanation of the sampling frame, sample size, and the sampling method adopted for this study.

For this research, simple random sampling was employed as the sampling method. Simple random sampling is a widely recognized technique that ensures every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample (Hanif et al., 2018). Furthermore, this technique ensures that the sample reflects the population's diversity, making the

findings more generalizable.

This sampling approach aligns well with the study's positivist philosophy, which emphasizes empirical evidence and objectivity in research (Martino et al., 2018). By using random sampling, the study adheres to the principles of rigorous scientific inquiry, allowing for the application of robust statistical techniques to analyze the data. These techniques ensure that the conclusions drawn from the sample are valid and applicable to the broader population of Bangladeshi fashion retailers. Additionally, the use of random sampling supports the explanatory research design adopted in this study, which seeks to identify and understand relationships between variables based on quantifiable data.

Simple random sampling not only reduces the likelihood of bias but also facilitates the use of statistical models to derive meaningful insights and test hypotheses about the population. This methodological rigor ensures that the findings of this study are reliable and can contribute to a deeper understanding of social media marketing practices and customer engagement within the Bangladeshi fashion retail industry. By adhering to this robust sampling framework, the research maintains its credibility and ensures the validity of its outcomes. Based on calculations from both the Raosoft and GPower tools, a sample size of approximately 202 is recommended to ensure statistical accuracy and confidence in this study. The Raosoft calculator determined this sample size by factoring in a 95% confidence level, a margin of error of 6.89%, and a response distribution of 50%, highlighting its ability to provide precise estimations of population parameters within acceptable error margins. This widely validated tool is grounded in established statistical principles and has been extensively used across various disciplines, further supporting the reliability of its results (Majumder et al., 2022; Magni et al., 2021). Complementing this, the GPower analysis reinforced the appropriateness of this sample size by calculating the minimum requirement for achieving a statistical power of 95% (1- β error probability) using a linear multiple regression model with a fixed R^2 deviation from zero. Incorporating an effect size of 0.05, a significance level (α) of 0.05, and five predictors, GPower recommended a minimum sample size of 171 participants, ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect significant relationships within the data. The combined use of Raosoft and GPower provides a robust justification for the selected sample size, ensuring reliability, validity,

and generalizability of the findings while aligning with the study's positivist philosophy and quantitative research objectives. These complementary tools ensure the sample size is both methodologically sound and capable of addressing the research questions effectively. For this study, the instruments were adapted from Cordeiro et al. (2013), Yaylı & Bayram (2012), Masa'deh et al. (2021), Salem & Alanadoly (2023), and Herdman et al. (1997) and Cheung et al. (2022). All "items included in this questionnaire have been measured by using a five-point Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) except the demographic variables (gender, age, education, experience, salary range, and name of the organization). The option 'neutral' was also included in the questionnaire to avoid possible uninformed response errors (Guthrie, 2022).

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection and examination process are very crucial if a researcher wishes to apply structural equation modelling (SEM). Social scientists often use primary data gathered via surveys for SEM analysis. As stated by Ramayah et al. (2018), there are several techniques for gathering data, including in-person interviews, telephone surveys, postal surveys, surveys sent by e-mail, and surveys conducted online. Verma & Yadav (2021) recommended that three typical methods—questionnaires, interviews, and observation—should be taken into consideration while conducting a survey research study.

The questionnaire was chosen as the best method of data collection since it allowed the respondent to continue with his replies on each range of the scales and because this research is quantitative in nature. The questionnaire was largely sent to the target respondents using the postal survey technique. According to Ramayah et al. (2018), the average response rate for studies that require data collection from people is 52.7%. A 30% response rate is regarded as acceptable for postal surveys. In the first week of July, a random sample of participants will get questionnaires. The cross-sectional approach is used because, as Radomir et al. (2023) argues, it differs significantly from longitudinal research in that it calls for data that was gathered just once. It may save a lot of time and be a lengthy procedure to collect information on people's levels of approval of the effectiveness of e-hailing services when surveys are only ever issued once (Purohit et al., 2022). Through the convenience strategy,

a set of surveys are sent to the predetermined target audience. The same questions are asked by every responder in every set of questions. To convince 220 target respondents spread around the state to take part in the survey, the researcher would personally contact them in the next step. Once again, responders are offered face-to-face instruction to promote engagement. If questionnaires are used to gather empirical data, additional difficulties must be addressed. Missing data, questionable response patterns (such as straight lining or inconsistent responses), outliers, and data distributions are the fundamental problems that need to be looked at. This study briefly discusses each of them in the sections that follow.

Common scale properties such as response format will be eliminated as well. There are different types of biases that can affect research results, including selection bias, measurement bias, and reporting bias, among others (Bhaumik et al., 2022). To address potential biases, the

study used probability sampling to ensure that the sample is representative of the population of interest. The study also pretested the research instruments to ensure that they are reliable and valid for the study context.

4 Results

4.1 Demographic Information

A total of 250 surveys were distributed to fashion retailers actively engaged on social media platforms. Out of these, 202 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 80.8%. The high response rate indicates strong relevance and interest in the study's focus among the target population, enhancing the reliability and representativeness of the collected data. This ensures that the findings provide meaningful insights applicable to the broader fashion retail industry in Bangladesh.

Table 4.1: Demographic Information

Variables	Category	n	%
Age	Under 18	4	2
	18-24	31	15.3
	25-34	71	35.1
	35-44	74	36.6
	45-54	22	10.9
Gender	Male	62	30.7
	Female	126	62.4
	Third gender	14	6.9
Education	Secondary School	22	10.9
	Diploma	47	23.3
	Bachelor's Degree	88	43.6
	Master's Degree	45	22.3
Employment Status	Employed full-time	10	5
	Employed part-time	15	7.4
	Self-employed	45	22.3
	Unemployed	77	38.1
	Student	55	27.2
Frequency Social Media Usage	Multiple times a day	78	38.6
	Daily	35	17.3
	A few times a week	45	22.3
	Weekly	44	21.8
Primary Social Media Platforms Usage	Facebook	53	26.2
	Instagram	17	8.4
	TikTok	68	33.7
	YouTube	64	31.7
Reasons for Using Social Media	News	68	33.7
	Entertainment	20	9.9
	Keeping in touch with friends/family	96	47.5
	Following influencers/celebrities	18	8.9

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Number of Influencers Followed	5-9	84	41.6
	10-20	36	17.8
	21-50	33	16.3
	More than 50	49	24.3
Sectors of Interest	Fashion/Beauty	80	39.6
	Health/Fitness	58	28.7
	Food/Cooking	29	14.4
	Technology	20	9.9
	Business/Finance	15	7.4

4.2 Reliability

The assessment of indicator reliability requires that individual indicators' loadings on their associated latent variable be at least 0.7, signifying a strong relationship and shared variance between the indicator and construct (Babin & Sarstedt, 2019). Additionally, the internal consistency of the constructs is typically evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, where a value above 0.7 is deemed Acceptable (Hair et al., 2021). The item loadings for all constructs—Customer Engagement, eWOM, Entertaining Contents, Informativeness, and Social Media Influencer—remain above the recommended

threshold of 0.7, suggesting strong and significant relationships between individual indicators and their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2021). No item was deleted due to low loadings, which further indicates the high quality of the measurement items used. In terms of the constructs' internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha values all exceed the 0.7 benchmark, confirming reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Composite reliability scores (both CR (rho_a) and CR (rho_c)) also exceed the threshold, with values ranging from 0.865 to 0.930 for CR (rho_a) and from 0.898 to 0.938 for CR (rho_c), which is indicative of excellent internal consistency and surpasses the reliability levels.

Table 4.2 Reliability testing

	Item	Loading	Cronbach's α	CR (rho_a)	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Customer Engagement	CE01	0.830	0.883	0.886	0.914	0.681
	CE02	0.868				
	CE03	0.800				
	CE04	0.813				
	CE05	0.813				
eWOM	EM1	0.797	0.858	0.865	0.898	0.637
	EM2	0.806				
	EM3	0.790				
	EM4	0.804				
	EM5	0.793				
Entertaining Contents	EC01	0.840	0.912	0.914	0.934	0.739
	EC02	0.875				
	EC03	0.876				
	EC04	0.866				
	EC05	0.840				
Informativeness	IF01	0.818	0.917	0.930	0.938	0.751
	IF02	0.869				
	IF03	0.924				
	IF04	0.884				
	IF05	0.835				
Social Media Influencer	SMIT01	0.833	0.900	0.901	0.926	0.715
	SMIT02	0.846				
	SMIT03	0.842				
	SMIT04	0.893				
	SMIT05	0.812				
Trendiness	TR1	0.732	0.878	0.880	0.912	0.675
	TR2	0.885				
	TR3	0.844				
	TR4	0.834				
	TR5	0.805				

4.3 Assess the Path Coefficient

The relationship between Informativeness and Customer Engagement is statistically significant, with a standardized beta of 0.165, a t-value of 2.597, and a p-value of 0.009. This finding falls within the confidence interval of 0.033 to 0.293, indicating that as the informativeness of content increases, so does customer engagement. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) shows a strong and positive impact on Customer Engagement, evidenced by a standardized beta of 0.362, a t-value of 5.650, and a p-value of 0.000, well within the confidence interval of 0.241 to 0.490. The analysis supports Hypothesis 3, indicating that Entertaining Contents positively affect Customer Engagement, as

shown by a standardized beta of 0.171, a t-value of 2.847, and a p-value of 0.004. The confidence interval ranges from 0.056 to 0.293, suggesting that entertainment value is an essential component of content that can significantly drive customer engagement levels on social media. Trendiness is found to have a positive influence on Customer Engagement, with a standardized beta of 0.254, a t-value of 2.657, and a p-value of 0.008. The confidence interval (0.069 to 0.439) supports Hypothesis 4. Interestingly, Hypothesis 5, which posits a relationship between Social Media Influencer impact and Customer Engagement, is supported, albeit with a negative standardized beta of -0.152. This is indicated by a t-value of 2.792 and a p-value of 0.005, with the confidence interval ranging from -0.267 to -0.046.

Table 4.3: Path Coefficient Assessment

Hypo	Relation	Std. Beta	Std. Error	t-value	P Values	Decision
H1	Informativeness -> Customer Engagement	0.165	0.065	2.597	0.009	Supported
H2	Electronic Word-of-Mouth -> Customer Engagement	0.362	0.063	5.650	0.000	Supported
H3	Entertaining Contents -> Customer Engagement	0.171	0.060	2.847	0.004	Supported
H4	Trendiness -> Customer Engagement	0.254	0.094	2.657	0.008	Supported
H5	Social Media Influencer -> Customer Engagement	-0.152	0.056	2.792	0.005	Supported

4.4 Hypothesis testing

The analysis reveals that the interaction between Informativeness and Social Media Influencer does not significantly influence Customer Engagement. The results show a Sample Mean of -0.002, T-statistic of 0.148, and a P-value of 0.882, indicating no statistical significance. Consequently, H6 is not supported, as the interaction fails to produce a meaningful impact on engagement outcomes. The findings for H7 indicate that the interaction effect of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Social Media Influencer on Customer Engagement is not statistically significant. The analysis yielded a Sample Mean of 0.010, T-statistic of 0.673, and a P-value of 0.501. Therefore, H7 is not supported, as the moderating role of influencers in this context is negligible. The interaction effect of Entertaining

Contents and Social Media Influencer on Customer Engagement is statistically significant. The results demonstrate a Sample Mean of -0.075, T-statistic of 2.084, and a P-value of 0.037, indicating partial moderation. As such, H8 is partially supported, highlighting the influence of Social Media Influencer in scenarios involving engaging and entertaining content. For H9, the analysis shows that the interaction between Trendiness and Social Media Influencer has a statistically significant effect on Customer Engagement at the threshold level. The results include a Sample Mean of 0.032, T-statistic of 1.962, and a P-value of 0.050, suggesting partial moderation. Therefore, H9 is partially supported, emphasizing the moderating role of influencers in leveraging trendy and current social media content to engage consumers.

Table 4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Hypo	Path	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Results
H6	Informativeness * Social Media Influencer-> Customer Engagement	-0.002	0.014	0.148	0.882	No Moderation
H7	Electronic Word-of-Mouth * Social Media Influencer -> Customer Engagement	0.010	0.015	0.673	0.501	No Moderation
H8	Entertaining Contents * Social Media Influencer -> Customer Engagement	-0.075	0.036	2.084	0.037	Partial Moderation
H9	Trendiness * Social Media Influencer -> Customer Engagement	0.032	0.017	1.962	0.050	Partial Moderation

5 Discussion

The discussion section delves into the interpretation and implications of the study’s findings, placing them within the broader context of existing research and theoretical frameworks. This section elucidates the significance of the results, exploring how they contribute to our understanding of social media marketing and customer engagement, particularly within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. By comparing the study’s findings with those of previous research, we identify both consistencies and divergences, shedding light on the unique dynamics at play in this specific market. Additionally, this section addresses the practical implications for marketers and suggests directions for future research, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. The discussion is structured around the key components examined in the study: informativeness, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), entertaining content, trendiness, and the moderating role of social media influencers, providing a comprehensive analysis of how these factors interact to influence customer engagement. Moderation models within the framework of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) are critical for examining how the strength or direction of the relationship between independent variables (IVs) and dependent variables (DVs) changes in the presence of a moderating variable. Unlike mediation, which explains the mechanism through which an IV influences a DV, moderation focuses on the conditions under which this relationship varies (Babin

& Sarstedt, 2019; Hair et al., 2021).

5.1 Answer to RQ1: Does informativeness of social media marketing influence consumer engagement?

The hypothesis (H1) posits that informativeness positively affects consumer engagement, suggesting that more informative content should lead to higher levels of engagement. These results support the hypothesis that informative social media content enhances consumer engagement, aligning with the notion that valuable and relevant information attracts and retains consumer interest.

Comparing these findings with earlier studies reveals a consistent positive relationship between informativeness and consumer engagement. For instance, Hajli and Laroche (2019) found that informative social media content significantly impacts consumer engagement across various industries. Their study indicates that when brands provide valuable and relevant information, consumers are more likely to interact and engage with the content. Similarly, Dhanesh and Duthler (2019b) reported that consumers demonstrate higher engagement levels with brands that offer useful information on social media platforms. These studies reinforce the notion that informativeness is a critical factor in driving consumer engagement, echoing the results observed within the Bangladeshi clothing retail sector. The consistent findings across different studies and industries suggest that providing informative content is a universally effective strategy for enhancing consumer engagement.

5.2 Answer to RQ2: To what extent eWOM influences consumer engagement?

The second research objective of this study is to determine the extent to which electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) influences consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. These results confirm the hypothesis that eWOM plays a crucial role in enhancing consumer engagement, demonstrating that consumer-generated content and recommendations on social media platforms are highly effective in engagement. When comparing these findings with earlier studies, there is a clear alignment in the positive impact of eWOM on consumer engagement. For instance, a study by Tapanainen et al. (2021) found that eWOM significantly enhances consumer engagement by delivering trustworthy information from peers, which often resonates more with consumers than traditional advertising. Similarly, Dhanesh and Duthler (2019b) confirmed that eWOM positively influences consumer engagement across various social media platforms and industries, highlighting its role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. This study aligns with the broader body of research, reinforcing the notion that eWOM is a critical factor in driving engagement in the digital marketing landscape.

5.3 Answer to RQ3: To what extent entertaining contents influence consumer engagement?

The hypothesis (H3) posits that entertaining content positively affects consumer engagement, suggesting that content designed to amuse and captivate the audience leads to higher engagement levels. These results support the hypothesis that entertaining content enhances consumer engagement, confirming that content that is enjoyable and engaging can effectively capture consumer interest and encourage active participation on social media platforms. Comparing these findings with earlier studies, there is a clear consistency in the positive relationship between entertaining content and consumer engagement. For instance, a study by Tapanainen et al. (2021) found that entertaining content significantly boosts consumer engagement by making the brand experience more enjoyable and memorable. Their research indicated that brands that prioritize entertainment in their content strategy see higher levels of consumer interaction, as entertaining content tends to evoke positive emotions and create a lasting impression. Similarly, Zhou et al.

(2021) reported that entertaining content on social media leads to higher levels of likes, shares, and comments, indicating increased consumer interaction and engagement. Their study highlighted that content designed to entertain not only captures attention but also encourages active participation from consumers, thereby enhancing the overall engagement metrics for brands. These studies reinforce the findings of our research, highlighting the critical role of entertainment in driving engagement on social media.

5.4 Answer to RQ4: To what extent the level of trendiness affect consumer engagement?

The fourth objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the level of trendiness influences consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. These results support the hypothesis that trendiness enhances consumer engagement, confirming that content reflecting the latest trends can effectively capture consumer interest and encourage active participation on social media platforms. Comparing these findings with earlier studies reveals a clear consistency in the positive relationship between trendiness and consumer engagement. For instance, a study by Liu et al. (2021a) found that trendy and current content significantly boosts consumer engagement by making the brand appear more relevant and attractive. Their research demonstrated that content reflecting the latest trends tends to capture more attention and encourage interactions such as likes, shares, and comments, as consumers are drawn to what is perceived as fashionable and up to date. Similarly, a study by Malarvizhi et al. (2022) reported that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that showcase the latest trends and fashionable items on social media platforms. Their findings indicated that by aligning with current trends, brands can increase their visibility and attractiveness, thereby fostering higher levels of consumer engagement.

5.5 Answer to RQ5: What is the relationship between Social Media Influencer and consumer engagement?

The fifth objective of this research question is to explore the relationship between social media influencers and consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. The findings from hypothesis testing reveal a significant but negative relationship between

social media influencers and consumer engagement. a study by Lee and Theokary (2021) noted that the overuse of influencer endorsements and perceived lack of authenticity could lead to consumer skepticism and reduced engagement. Similarly, Riccio et al. (2022) found that excessive commercialism in influencer content could negatively impact consumer perceptions and engagement. These studies support the notion that while influencers can significantly impact engagement, the nature of this impact can be negative if not managed carefully.

5.6 Answer to RQ6: Does Social Media Influencer moderate the relationships between Informativeness in social media and consumer engagement?

The sixth objective of this study is to investigate whether social media influencers moderate the relationship between the informativeness of social media content and consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. The findings from hypothesis testing reveal that social media influences do not significantly moderate the relationship between informativeness and consumer engagement. Some studies, such as those by Leader et al. (2021), have suggested that influencers can amplify the effects of informative content by providing credibility and a personal endorsement, which can enhance consumer trust and engagement. However, other studies, such as those by Chen et al. (2023), have found that the moderating role of influencers can be context-dependent and not universally significant. They argue that the effectiveness of influence moderation can vary based on the nature of the content, the type of product, and the characteristics of the target audience. This variability suggests that the impact of influences is not straightforward and can be influenced by various factors including cultural context and consumer expectations.

5.7 Answer to RQ7: Does Social Media Influencer moderate the relationships between Electronic Word of Mouth in social media and consumer engagement?

The seventh objective of this study is to explore whether social media influencers moderate the relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. The findings from hypothesis testing reveal that social media influences do not significantly

moderate the relationship between eWOM and consumer engagement. Comparing these findings with earlier studies reveals both alignments and discrepancies. Some studies, such as those by Singh et al. (2020b), have suggested that influencers can amplify the effects of eWOM by providing additional credibility and personal endorsement, thereby enhancing consumer trust and engagement. This perspective aligns with the idea that influencers add a layer of validation and relatability to eWOM, potentially making it more persuasive and effective. However, other studies, such as those by Arora et al. (2019a), have found that the moderating role of influencers can be context-dependent and not always significant. They argue that the effectiveness of influencer moderation can vary based on the type of product, the specific social media platform, and the demographics of the target audience.

5.8 Answer to RQ8: Does Social Media Influencer moderate the relationships between Entertaining contents in social media and consumer engagement?

The eighth objective of this study is to examine whether social media influencers moderate the relationship between entertaining content and consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. The findings from hypothesis testing indicate that social media influencers do indeed moderate the relationship between entertaining content and consumer engagement, though this effect is partial. Research by Fernandes et al. (2022) underscores how influencers can amplify the effectiveness of entertaining content by leveraging their personal appeal and connection with their audience. Their findings suggest that entertaining content, when endorsed by influencers, can lead to higher levels of likes, shares, and comments, indicating increased consumer engagement. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2021) have demonstrated that influencers' capability to entertain and engage their audience can significantly boost the effectiveness of content designed to amuse and captivate viewers.

5.9 Answer to RQ9: Does Social Media Influencer moderate the relationships between Trendiness in social media and consumer engagement?

The final objective of this study is to explore whether social media influencers moderate the relationship between trendiness in social media content and consumer engagement within the Bangladeshi clothing

retail industry. The findings from hypothesis testing reveal that social media influencers do moderate the relationship between trendiness and consumer engagement, albeit this effect is partial. When compared to earlier studies, these findings show both consistent and deviations. Studies such as those by Leader et al. (2021) have highlighted the significant role that influencers play in amplifying the impact of trendy content. Their research indicates that influencers, by leveraging their popularity and perceived trendsetting abilities, can make trendy content appear more attractive and credible, thereby boosting consumer engagement. Similarly, Chen et al. (2023) found that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that showcase the latest trends, especially when those trends are endorsed by influencers who are perceived as fashion authorities.

6 Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive examination of the impact of social media content and influencer engagement on consumer behavior within the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry. The research focused on evaluating the roles of informativeness, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), entertaining content, and trendiness, alongside the moderating effects of social media influences on customer engagement. The findings derived from the hypothesis framework highlight several key insights. The first hypothesis (H1) revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between informativeness and customer engagement, indicating that consumers value detailed and accurate product information, which enhances their interaction with the brand. The second hypothesis (H2) confirmed the strong positive influence of eWOM on customer engagement, underscoring the importance of consumer reviews and recommendations. The third hypothesis (H3) demonstrated that entertaining content significantly affects customer engagement, suggesting that captivating content is crucial for maintaining consumer interaction. The fourth hypothesis (H4) showed that trendy content positively influences customer engagement, emphasizing the need for brands to stay current and relevant. The fifth hypothesis (H5) highlighted the complex role of social media influencers, showing that while they significantly impact engagement, the influence can sometimes be negative, necessitating careful selection of influencers.

In addition to these primary findings, the study also explored the mediating role of social media influencers. Hypotheses H6 and H7, which examined the mediation effects of social media influences between informativeness and customer engagement and between eWOM and customer engagement, respectively, did not find significant mediation effects. This suggests that the direct influence of informativeness and eWOM on customer engagement does not significantly operate through social media influences. Conversely, H8 revealed that social media influences partially mediate the relationship between entertaining content and customer engagement, enhancing the impact of entertaining content. Similarly, Hypothesis H9 indicated that influences partially mediate the relationship between trendiness and customer engagement, amplifying the effects of trendy content. These findings suggest that while social media influencers can enhance the impact of certain types of content, their role is more nuanced and depends on the nature of the content itself. The implications of these findings are significant for various stakeholders. For policymakers, the research underscores the importance of creating guidelines that ensure transparency and authenticity in influencer marketing. Clear regulations can help maintain consumer trust and prevent deceptive practices, thereby protecting consumers and promoting sustainable growth in the digital marketing landscape. For industry practitioners, the insights emphasize the critical importance of content quality and the strategic selection of influencers. Brands should invest in understanding their consumers' preferences and behaviors to tailor their content strategies effectively and select influencers who genuinely align with their values and can positively influence their target audience. Future research should address these limitations by exploring different cultural and industry contexts, employing longitudinal studies to capture changes over time, and incorporating a wider variety of influencers and content types. Despite these limitations, this research provides a solid foundation for understanding the intricate dynamics of social media marketing and sets the stage for further exploration into how brands can effectively engage with consumers in the digital age. By building on these findings, future studies can continue to enhance our knowledge of social media's role in consumer behavior and inform more effective marketing strategies.

7 Limitations and Recommendations

This study, while offering valuable insights into the Bangladeshi clothing retail industry's social media marketing dynamics, has several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, its geographic scope is confined to Dhaka, Bangladesh, which, while a significant hub for the industry, may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries with different cultural, economic, or consumer behavior contexts. Secondly, the cross-sectional design of the study captures data at a single point in time, thereby restricting the ability to analyze causal relationships or observe how the relationships between social media marketing factors and consumer engagement evolve over time. Future longitudinal studies could address this gap to provide deeper insights. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported survey data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, where respondents might provide answers, they perceive as favorable rather than entirely accurate. While measures were taken to ensure anonymity and encourage truthful responses, this inherent limitation of self-reported data remains. These limitations underscore the need for future research to adopt broader geographic and industry scopes, incorporate longitudinal approaches, explore additional variables, and analyze platform-specific nuances to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social media marketing's impact on consumer engagement. Based on the findings of this study, several actionable recommendations are proposed to assist fashion retailers in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka, in optimizing their social media marketing strategies to enhance consumer engagement. Firstly, retailers should prioritize creating content that is highly informative, providing detailed information about products, pricing, and after-sales support. Informative content helps consumers make better purchasing decisions, which, in turn, builds trust and fosters deeper engagement with the brand. This strategic focus on informativeness is particularly vital in an industry like fashion, where customers often seek clarity and reliability before making purchases. Second, leveraging electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) should be a key component of social media marketing strategies. eWOM has proven to be a powerful driver of consumer engagement, as peer recommendations and reviews are often perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertising. Retailers should encourage satisfied customers to leave positive reviews and share

their experiences on social media platforms. Incentivizing customers to participate in eWOM activities, such as offering discounts for testimonials or hosting referral programs, can further enhance this effect. The study highlights that entertaining content significantly boosts engagement, making it a critical strategy for brands looking to stand out in the crowded digital space. Retailers should experiment with different forms of entertainment to understand what resonates most with their audience.

Staying relevant by embracing trendiness is another essential recommendation for retailers in the competitive fashion industry. Social media thrives on current trends, and brands that align their content with trending topics, hashtags, or viral challenges can increase their visibility and relatability. Retailers should actively monitor social media trends and incorporate them into their campaigns to demonstrate that they are in tune with the latest consumer interests. This approach is particularly important for fashion retailers, where staying ahead of trends is key to maintaining relevance in the eyes of the audience.

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THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN RETAIL FASHION INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

1 APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Strongly Agree (SA)=5, Agree (A)=4, Neutral(N)=3, Disagree(D)=2, and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.

Variables	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Source	
Informativeness	IF01	Social media provides me the best deal of apparel products	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted from <u>Cordeiro et al., (2013)</u>
	IF02	I find all information regarding products on social media in a shorter amount of time.	1	2	3	4	5	
	IF03	Different perspectives on social media regarding my apparel product improve my point of view as well.	1	2	3	4	5	
	IF04	The information I received from social media platform are sufficient	1	2	3	4	5	
	IF05	I always look for better quality products in the social media platform.	1	2	3	4	5	
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	EM1	When I buy a product online, the reviews presented on the website are helpful for my decision making	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted from <u>Yaylı & Bayram, (2012)</u>
	EM2	When I buy a product online, the reviews presented on the website make me confident in purchasing the product	1	2	3	4	5	
	EM3	When I buy a product online, the impact of positive reviews on the web effect is greater for electronic goods on my purchasing decision	1	2	3	4	5	
	EM4	Received high ratings for product affect my purchase decision.	1	2	3	4	5	
	EM5	When I buy a product online, the impact of negative reviews on the web effect is greater for electronic goods on my purchasing decision.	1	2	3	4	5	
Trendiness	TR1	Social Media Marketing is a trending issues in social media	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted from <u>Masa'deh et al., (2021)</u>
	TR2	I always follow the top trending matters in social media	1	2	3	4	5	
	TR3	Apparel products are always on the top list in social media platform	1	2	3	4	5	
	TR4	Social media services now deliver finely tuned and personalized feeds of images, video, music, news, gaming, and shoppable media to billions of users	1	2	3	4	5	
	TR5	Trending in Facebook assists me improving B2B businesses	1	2	3	4	5	
Social Media Influencer	SMIT01	SMI has novel understanding.	1	2	3	4	5	<u>S. Zhou, L. Barnes, H. McCormick, & M. Blazquez Cano, (2021)</u>
	SMIT02	SMI has the idea of infinity/lasting phenomena	1	2	3	4	5	
	SMIT03	SMI has experiences with original objects.	1	2	3	4	5	
	SMIT04	SMI has highly emotional experiences	1	2	3	4	5	
	SMIT05	SMI has been motivating.	1	2	3	4	5	
Entertaining contents	EC01	I purchase from social media because it is very entertaining to me	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted and adjusted from: <u>Cheung et al., (2022)</u>
	EC02	I prefer social media because the contents are very Interactive	1	2	3	4	5	
	EC03	The product picture I always see in	1	2	3	4	5	

		the social media is very creative.						
	EC04	The products' Infographics I always find in the social media is very helpful	1	2	3	4	5	
	EC05	The Videos of the product posted in the social is very informative	1	2	3	4	5	
Customer Engagement	CE01	Social Media Marketing techniques allow customers to direct the interaction during service delivery at all times	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted from Salem & Alanadoly, (2023)
	CE02	Social Media Marketing techniques always encourage our customers to help us in the production of quality service	1	2	3	4	5	
	CE03	Social Media Marketing techniques generally co-design and co-produce most of our products	1	2	3	4	5	
	CE04	Social Media Marketing techniques continuously encourage our customers to persuade prospective customers to experience our products/services	1	2	3	4	5	
	CE05	Social Media Marketing techniques frequently provide incentives to foster participation of customers in new product/service development	1	2	3	4	5	