

Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intentions: The Roles of Brand Equity and Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media marketing activities (SMMA), brand equity, and brand awareness on consumers' purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia's rapidly expanding online shopping environment. In recent years, social media platforms have revolutionized the way businesses interact with consumers, making it essential to understand their influence on purchasing behavior. This research adopts a quantitative approach, collecting data from 203 respondents in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia through a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to evaluate the proposed relationships among the constructs. The findings demonstrate that social media marketing activities have a significant and positive impact on consumer purchase intentions. Similarly, brand equity and awareness have an essential influence on purchase intentions, suggesting that consumers are more likely to engage in purchasing behavior when they recognize and trust a brand. These results underscore the importance of cultivating a strong brand presence on social media platforms, as such strategies enhance brand perception and consumer loyalty. The study offers practical implications for marketers and brand managers aiming to optimize their digital marketing efforts within the Saudi market. By focusing on interactive, consistent, and value-driven content, brands can enhance consumer engagement, build more substantial equity, and increase the likelihood of purchase.

Keywords: social media marketing activities, brand equity, brand awareness, purchase intentions

INTRODUCTION

The rapid rise of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed consumer behavior, especially in how individuals interact with brands, gather information, and make purchasing decisions. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are essential marketing channels, enabling brands to directly engage with consumers while fostering brand awareness and loyalty (Liu & Zhang, 2024). This shift has marked a significant departure from traditional marketing paradigms, as social media provides unique, interactive touchpoints where consumers can access peer-generated content, brand information, and promotional activities at any time and from anywhere. Despite the established importance of social media as a marketing tool, there remains a limited understanding of the specific mechanisms through which SMMA affect key consumer outcomes, such as brand equity, brand awareness, and purchase intention.

Existing research has demonstrated that SMM has a positive impact on brand perception and consumer engagement (Al-Quran, 2022; Rahardja, 2022). However, much of this work has treated SMM as a general concept without adequately examining its components or how these components distinctly influence consumer behavior. Studies have demonstrated that brand equity and awareness are significant predictors of purchase intention. Yet,

the precise role of social media in enhancing these factors, particularly in markets with high social media penetration, such as Saudi Arabia, remains underexplored. The Saudi market, with its high rates of internet and social media usage, presents a unique context in which SMM could have a significant impact on consumer behavior. However, limited research has addressed how SMMA influences Saudi consumers' perceptions of brand equity, awareness, and ultimately their purchase intentions, thus creating a gap in regional and contextual understanding (Mari et al., 2023). Social media has become a cornerstone of contemporary communication. Experts in the technology sector argue that engaging with platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Second Life is now integral to one's online presence. Understanding social media is crucial for businesses, decision-makers, and marketers, as it has become an essential part of daily life for many individuals. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram boast a vast user base that continues to expand rapidly, with an estimated 3.196 billion users in 2018 alone (Usaini Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2024).

This study seeks to address this gap by critically examining the role of SMMA on brand equity, brand awareness, and purchase intention within Saudi Arabia's digital consumer landscape. By examining these relationships, this research aims to clarify how SMM affects purchase intention, offering insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies that influence consumer decision-making processes. This investigation has practical implications for marketers, as it provides data-driven recommendations for optimizing social media strategies to foster consumer engagement, trust, and purchase behavior in competitive digital environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The overarching goal is to establish a robust theoretical framework that underpins the subsequent discussions and analyses within this study (Shariq, 2018). By delving into existing literature, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of key concepts essential for understanding the dynamics of social media and its impact on brand perception and consumer behavior. The focus of this chapter revolves around the theoretical framework, where a plethora of literature is reviewed, dissected, and synthesized to elucidate the central critical concepts of this study. These conceptual frameworks provide the theoretical underpinnings and lay the groundwork for empirical investigations and practical applications. Before delving into the intricacies of SMMA, it is imperative to grasp the fundamental concept of social media itself. Social media is an online ecosystem designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and interactions among users. It encompasses a wide array of digital platforms, including, but not limited to, social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, media-sharing platforms like Instagram and YouTube, and blogging platforms like Tumblr. These platforms collectively constitute a virtual landscape where individuals, businesses, and communities converge to share information, engage in discussions, and foster digital interactions. Researchers have underscored the transformative potential of social media in enabling content creation, fostering digital communities, and facilitating business interactions, all at a relatively low cost (Shariq, 2018). The participatory nature of social media platforms empowers users to contribute content, engage with diverse communities, and amplify their digital presence, thereby presenting innovative avenues for communication and brand promotion. In business marketing, particularly in the fashion industry, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping brand narratives, influencing consumer perceptions, and driving purchase intentions (Febriansyah, Yunita, & Nugraha, 2024). Researchers have elucidated various dimensions of SMM activity (SMM), categorizing them into entertainment, interaction, trendsetting, personalization, and leveraging word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing strategies. Mao et al. (2024) expanded upon these components by integrating purchase intention into the framework, thereby contextualizing these strategies within the realm of fashion branding.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is an essential decision consumers make when they intend to purchase a particular product or avail of a specific service (Mabkhot, 2024). This intention depends on many factors, changes over time, and the evolution of consumers' interests, financial capabilities, and environmental factors (Mabkhot, Isa, & Mabkhot, 2022). Researchers in behavioral sciences focus on understanding and analyzing this intention to understand consumers' behavior and anticipate their future needs. Numerous studies have shown that purchase intention is influenced by personal interests, financial ability, and attitudes towards the products offered (Ha et al., 2014; Lavuri et al., 2024; Li, Peng, & Planning, 2021). Predicting future consumer behavior is one of the most critical challenges facing companies because understanding intent can contribute to developing more effective marketing strategies and better controlling business operations.

Additionally, research indicates that positive purchase intent often reflects a high level of customer engagement and loyalty toward products, highlighting the importance of carefully understanding and analyzing these intentions to achieve success in a competitive marketplace. Using intent forecasts can help companies direct their efforts and direct their strategies toward successfully achieving their business goals. Researchers Chanda, Isa, & Ahmed (2024) point out that behavioral science plays a significant role in determining purchase intention. Other researchers, such

as Baabdullah et al. (2019), emphasize the importance of understanding these intentions and using them to improve sales processes and guide presentations and marketing directly.

Social Media Marketing

SMM enables companies to have an effective and direct reach to their target audience across various social media platforms. This type of marketing aims to support the implementation of many multi-party businesses, such as creating firm online business profiles and providing comprehensive information about products and services. These technologies enable companies to select innovative solutions that help achieve their marketing objectives. On the other hand, consumers' use of these digital technologies and social media presents a golden opportunity to reap numerous benefits. Customers can obtain helpful information, efficiently compare products and services, view comments and reviews, compare prices, and enjoy the convenience and variety of choices provided by these technological means (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Previously, companies primarily relied on traditional media, such as television, radio, direct marketing, and telephone, to interact with customers and disseminate product information. Consumers now prefer to use the Internet to obtain and share information, read about other people's experiences, and review products and services. Hence, companies are under increasing pressure to engage with their customers more effectively and proactively. Social media platforms appear to play a crucial role in enhancing consumer engagement, so companies should utilise SMM creatively and effectively to communicate with their potential and new customer-oriented customers (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). services. However, with the evolution of consumer behavior and technology adoption, social media has become a vital platform that brings people together, allowing them to communicate and exchange experiences and opinions about various products and services in the modern digital environment. Social media also greatly influences online shopping behaviors, as consumers rely on influencer recommendations and other customers' reactions when purchasing products (Liu & Qureshi, 2023). Social media enables the analysis and tracking of changes in customer behavior and attitudes, allowing companies to accurately predict future customer behavior and adjust their marketing and communication strategies accordingly (Liu & Qureshi, 2023). When SMM is used, marketers have access to a wide range of tools and data to identify and track customers' purchase intent, allowing them to adjust marketing strategies and approaches based on daily or even hourly analytics and basic information (Cole et al., 2017). These rapid changes can shadow market purchasing patterns and overall consumer interaction.

Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA)

Studies indicate that engaging and entertaining content on social media platforms can positively impact brand recognition and engagement, fostering a delightful user experience that encourages repeated interactions (Moslehpoor et al., 2022). By leveraging such activities, companies can effectively disseminate information about their latest offerings through posts and stories, keeping their followers abreast of recent developments (Shuyi, Mamun, & Naznen, 2024). Notably, SMM initiatives prove particularly efficacious in industries such as film and television, where enthusiasts actively seek insights into brands that captivate their interest (Shuyi, Mamun, & Naznen, 2024). Moreover, these activities serve as a potent tool for providing timely updates on company products and services, enabling firms to stay attuned to consumer preferences and sustain interest in new releases (Banerji & Singh, 2024). Furthermore, SMM endeavors are crucial in shaping sustainable purchase intentions by promoting eco-friendly practices and increasing consumer awareness of environmental concerns (Moslehpoor et al., 2022). By championing sustainability through these platforms, companies can effectively influence green purchasing decisions, thus stimulating demand for environmentally responsible products and services. Social media serves as a dynamic platform for communicating a company's sustainability initiatives to stakeholders, fostering trust and credibility among consumers, and positively influencing purchasing behavior regarding products and services. Consequently, there is a growing imperative to leverage social media as a powerful tool for enhancing brand awareness, fostering engagement, cultivating sustainable purchase intentions, and facilitating dialogue between businesses and consumers on sustainability issues. The research underscores the substantial impact of SMM(SMM) activities on customers' purchase intentions (PI). For instance, Gautam & Sharma (2017) revealed a noteworthy correlation between SMM efforts, particularly in the context of luxury fashion brands, and heightened purchase intentions among consumers. To comprehensively understand consumers' purchase intentions, marketers of luxury fashion brands are advised to integrate SMMA into their overall strategies. This necessitates establishing a robust presence on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, fostering continuous engagement with customers, and curating content that resonates with the brand's values and distinctiveness. In essence, empirical evidence suggests that SMM plays a pivotal role in bolstering consumers' purchase intentions, particularly within luxury brands, thereby advocating strategic investments in this facet of marketing to yield favourable outcomes. Hence, the proposed hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1: SMMA has a significant positive effect on Purchase intention.

Brand Equity

Brand equity is considered a set of assets and liabilities associated with the brand, whether through a name or symbol, and it plays a crucial role in determining the value of the product or service provided by the company, both for the company itself and for its customers (Goyal & Verma, 2024). A consumer's perception, thinking, and behavior toward a brand, as well as their purchasing decision, reflect the value of brand equity. For example, brand equity may have a limited impact if a customer focuses primarily on product features, price, and convenience, without giving much consideration to the brand. On the other hand, if customers prefer to buy a particular brand even if there is competition from other products that are superior to it, this indicates a high brand equity value.

Social media emerges as a potent tool for brand promotion and enhancing brand visibility among consumers. Findings from Ouaissa et al. (2024) highlight the crucial role of social media advertising in improving brand recall and recognition, particularly during the purchasing decision-making process. Moreover, communication channels facilitated by social media platforms significantly shape customers' attitudes towards a brand and its perceived value, consequently fostering increased word-of-mouth promotion (Song & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, Majeed, Owusu-Ansah, & Ashmond (2021) demonstrate that leveraging social media platforms for content creation, increasing posts, and managing diverse online platforms effectively heightens product awareness and consumer interest, positively impacting purchase intentions. Building on this body of evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed: Brand equity has a positive influence on purchase intention. Accordingly, the hypothesis is stated as follows:

H2: Brand equity has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the strength and presence of a brand in the minds of consumers and is an essential element in assessing the value of a brand (Khalid Javaid, 2024). Previous studies Keller (1993) offer multiple conceptualisations of brand awareness, ranging from simple brand recognition to a dominant level, where the consumer can vividly remember the brand and regard it as the only or primary choice in the product category. In this context, brand awareness is defined by David (1991) as "the ability of a potential buyer to perceive and remember that a brand is a member of a particular product category". While Keller (1993) emphasises brand recall as a crucial indicator, consumers can recall the brand from memory when the product category or associated needs are mentioned. According to research by Shahid, Hussain, & Zafar (2017), brand awareness is essential through its positive influence on consumers' decisions and purchase intentions. For example, consumers tend to buy products and services from well-known and favorite brands, and their ability to purchase and consider a brand increases as their awareness of it increases. Independently, Liu & Yu (2024) highlight the importance of consumers' brand understanding and its impact on their purchasing decisions, as brand awareness is considered a crucial element in attracting consumers' interest and motivating them to choose well-known and beloved brands. On the other hand, Dabbous & Barakat (2020) highlight the impact of brand engagement in social media and content quality on customers' awareness of the brand and their purchase intentions, which enhances the role of technology and digital communications in enhancing consumer interaction with the brand and building a positive relationship with it. Based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Brand awareness positively impacts purchase intention (PI)

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework consists of three independent variables (IVs) that will be examined and assess their impact on the dependent variable (DV). The IVs are listed as follows: SMMA (SMMA), Brand equity, and Brand Awareness, while the DV is Purchase intention.

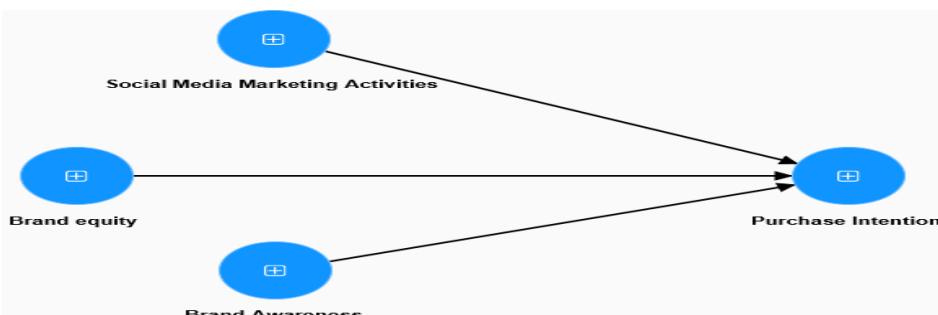


Figure (1): The research model

Source: Created by authors

METHODOLOGY

This study is a hypothesis test, designed using a quantitative approach to analyze SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness in greater detail. This research methodology revolves around creating and measuring the study, and then developing the questionnaire by referring to previous studies related to the research topic. Additionally, questionnaires are distributed, and then statistical analysis is conducted on the collected data. Research design is the comprehensive approach to integrating various components within a study. It plays a crucial role in addressing research problems by providing a detailed data collection, measurement, and analysis plan. The descriptive research method was deemed suitable for the research problem, as it effectively captured the extent of the issue (Siedlecki, 2020).

The focus of this research was on individuals residing in the Eastern Province. The population of the Eastern Province reached 5,125,254 people, according to the 2022 Saudi Census (Alabdulmohsen et al., 2024). It is essential to ensure that the selected sample accurately represents the largest group to enhance the reliability and value of the study by using the sample size table (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, we determined that the sample should comprise 368 respondents. The questionnaire was distributed, and we obtained 203 respondents. This sample size is considered acceptable for the current study. Thus, the study targeted online shoppers in the Eastern Province to reflect the broader population's characteristics accurately.

The primary data for this research were collected through the survey method, where questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Quantitative methods were used. According to (Kelley et al., 2003), "the questionnaire will give a large coverage of the respondents in the study sample and will provide clear information from the respondent to the researcher to conduct their research." The questionnaire presented in English consists of two main sections. The first section focuses on demographic data, including gender, age, and education level. The second section includes (6) items assessing the impact of SMMA on purchase intention, (3) items evaluating the effect of brand equity on purchase intention, and (5) items measuring the impact of brand awareness on purchase intention. In addition, the third part includes (4) items to measure purchase intention. All questionnaire items were adapted from a previous study, and their validity was confirmed.

RESULTS

Respondents' Demographic

An overview of the respondents' characteristics, including gender, age, and education level. Most respondents were female (64.0%), while 36.0% were male. This indicates a higher representation of females in the study sample. The largest age group was 21–35 years, comprising 54.7% of respondents, suggesting that over half of the participants were relatively young adults. The 36–50 age group comprised 32.5%, while those older than 50 accounted for 12.8%, reflecting a diverse age distribution with a concentration in the younger demographic. Most respondents (75.4%) held a bachelor's degree, highlighting a highly educated sample. 17.7% had a master's degree, while only 1.0% had a PhD, and 5.9% had a Diploma, indicating that most participants had undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, with few holding lower or higher academic degrees. This demographic profile suggests a sample that is predominantly female, young, and highly educated, which may influence the study's findings, as the demographic data is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' demographics

Source: Created by authors

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	73	36.0
Female	130	64.0
Age		
21–35 years	111	54.7
36–50 years	66	32.5
More than 50	26	12.8
Education		
Diploma	12	5.9
Bachelor	153	75.4
Master	36	17.7
Ph.D	2	1.0

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted to get the mean and standard deviation for dependent and independent variables, which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Factor	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std
SMMA	203	1.17	5.00	3.48	.680
Brand equity	203	1.00	5.00	3.01	.939
Brand Awareness	203	1.40	5.00	3.64	.744
Purchase Intention	203	1.00	5.00	3.43	.977

Source: Created by authors

Table 2 shows the descriptive data. The variable Brand Awareness has the highest mean (3.6) and standard deviation (.74), followed by SMMA, which has a mean (3.48) and standard deviation (.680). Brand equity has the smallest mean (3.01), and Purchase Intention has a mean (3.43) and standard deviation (.97).

Measurement Model

We first evaluated item loadings on their respective constructs to validate the measurement model and assess indicator reliability. Next, we calculated Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) to examine the internal consistency of the constructs. Lastly, we computed the average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct to assess convergent validity. The AVE values, ranging from 0.501 to 0.566, were deemed acceptable, and CR values exceeded the threshold of 0.84 (Hair et al., 2014), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of validity and reliability test

Constructs	Items	Loadings	(AVE)	(CR)	(CA)
SMMA	SMM1	0.721	0.543	0.855	0.787
	SMM2	0.813			
	SMM3	0.812			
	SMM4	0.687			
	SMM5	0.633			
Brand equity	BE1	0.843	0.718	0.884	0.809
	BE2	0.848			
	BE3	0.850			
Brand Awareness	BA1	0.887	0.649	0.880	0.821
	BA2	0.745			
	BA3	0.837			
	BA4	0.743			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.964	0.855	0.959	0.943
	PI2	0.933			
	PI3	0.901			
	PI4	0.900			

Source: Created by authors

Discriminate validity assesses the extent to which constructs in a model are distinct from one another, ensuring that they measure different concepts. In this study, It used the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio method, a robust approach suggested for variance-based SEM like PLS-SEM. In the HTMT approach, discriminant validity is confirmed if the HTMT values between constructs are below 0.90. According to the results, the constructs in the model met this threshold, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. This means each construct SMMA, Brand Equity, Brand Awareness, and Purchase Intention is distinct, validating the uniqueness of each factor in influencing consumer purchase intention. This finding supports the model's robustness by confirming that the construction measure separates underlying dimensions, thereby strengthening the reliability of the results. Table 4 shows the HTMT.

Table 4 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Source: Created by authors

Constructs	1	2	3	4
Brand awareness				
Brand equity	0.337			
Purchase intention	0.528	0.619		
SMMA	0.350	0.503	0.578	

Structural Model

The structural model assesses the relationships between the constructs within a theoretical framework, aiming to test the hypotheses outlined in the study. In this research, PLS-SEM was employed using SmartPLS 4 software, focusing on predicting the influence of SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness on purchase intention (Hair et al., 2014). Path coefficients represent the strength and direction of links between constructs. In this study, the path coefficients were positive, indicating that SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness all have a positive influence on purchase intention. Specifically, brand equity showed the strongest link with purchase intention ($\beta = 0.370$), followed by brand awareness ($\beta = 0.307$) and SMMA ($\beta = 0.260$). Each path coefficient was tested for statistical significance using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples), a method that enhances the accuracy of significance testing in PLS-SEM. High T-values (e.g., above 1.96 for a significance level of 0.05) and P-values below 0.05 indicated that all relationships were statistically significant. For instance, the bond between brand equity and purchase intention had a T-value of 6.983 and a P-value of 0.000, indicating strong support for this bond. R^2 values represent the percentage of variance in the dependent variable (purchase intention) that can be explained by the independent variables (SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness). A higher R^2 value indicates that the model has a strong predictive power. While the exact R^2 values were not detailed, they would typically be analyzed in the model to understand the overall explanatory power of the constructs on purchase intention. The structural model analysis confirmed that SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness have a significant and positive influence on purchase intention. This insight supports the effectiveness of these factors in enhancing consumer purchase behavior, providing valuable implications for marketers seeking to optimize digital strategies. The model's robustness, confirmed through statistical significance and explained variance, strengthens the validity of the findings and provides actionable insights for strategic marketing initiatives, as shown in Figure 2 and Table 5.



Figure 2: Structural Model

Source: Created by authors

Table 5 Structural Model

Path		Beta	SE	T-Value	P-value	Findings
H1	SMMA -> Purchase Intention	0.260	0.065	3.997	0.000	Supported
H2	Brand equity -> Purchase Intention	0.370	0.053	6.983	0.000	Supported
H3	Brand Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.307	0.066	4.661	0.000	Supported

Source: Created by authors

Table 5 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing, displaying the path coefficients (Beta values), standard errors (SE), T-values, P-values, and the findings for each hypothesized link between variables. H1 indicates a positive impact of SMMA on purchase intention. T-value: 3.997, above the critical threshold of 1.96, indicating statistical significance, meaning that SMMA significantly and positively affects consumers' purchase intentions. H2 shows that brand equity has a more substantial positive impact on purchase intention, with a T-value of 6.983, which is well above 1.96, confirming strong statistical significance. This indicates that brand equity is a key determinant in enhancing purchase intention, with a more substantial effect than SMMA. H3 shows a positive association between brand awareness and purchase intention, with a T-value of 4.661, which exceeds the threshold, confirming statistical significance. This demonstrates that brand awareness has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention. All three hypotheses were supported. These results underscore the importance of establishing substantial brand equity and awareness through social media marketing, as these elements can effectively influence consumers' purchase intentions.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings offer critical insights into the impact of SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness on consumer purchase intention, particularly within the Saudi Arabian context. These results align with and extend existing literature on digital marketing's role in shaping purchase behavior, highlighting notable implications for

practitioners and scholars. The positive correlation between SMMA and purchase intention highlights the strategic role of social media in influencing consumer behaviour. This finding aligns with previous research (Alfeel & Ansari, 2019; Wei, Kian Lam, & Mey, 2025), emphasizing that social media platforms enable brands to engage, inform, and motivate potential customers effectively. However, the relatively moderate Beta value suggests that while social media activities are impactful, they may not independently drive purchase decisions as strongly as other factors, such as brand equity. This may indicate that consumers in Saudi Arabia prioritise social media engagement but still rely on other brand attributes or prior brand perceptions when making final purchase decisions (Majeed, Owusu-Ansah, & Ashmond, 2021; Rai *et al.*, 2025). Further exploration could examine how content type, frequency, and platform choice influence this relationship.

Brand equity emerged as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, indicating that a brand's perceived value, reputation, and trustworthiness have a significant impact on consumers' likelihood of making a purchase. This finding is consistent with the established view that substantial brand equity fosters consumer loyalty and willingness to pay, particularly in competitive markets where brand differentiation is crucial (De Assis & Vilela, 2025; Millanyani & Maulana, 2024; Rizwan *et al.*, 2021). The finding suggests that the impact of brand equity on purchase intention may be reinforced by Saudi consumers' inclination towards well-established and trusted brands, potentially due to cultural or market-specific reasons (Ismael *et al.*, 2025; Shuyi, Mamun, & Naznen, 2024; Zeqiri *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, companies should prioritize brand-building initiatives that foster credibility and loyalty, particularly in regions where brand reputation dominates consumer choice. Brand awareness was also found to significantly affect purchase intention, highlighting the importance of visibility and recognizability in driving purchasing decisions. Brand awareness is a foundational step in the consumer journey, often creating the initial touchpoint that leads to further engagement and eventual purchase. This is particularly relevant in digital settings, where consumer attention is highly fragmented (Omoruyi & Chinomona, 2019). However, the study's results suggest that without robust brand equity, awareness alone may not be enough to compel consumers to act. Consequently, marketers should focus on increasing brand visibility and ensuring that brand awareness campaigns are aligned with efforts to build brand equity and strengthen consumer trust.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by integrating SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness into a single model and analyzing their individual and combined effects on purchase intention. The findings reinforce the multi-faceted nature of purchase intention, suggesting that consumer behavior in the digital age cannot be fully understood through isolated variables. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for marketers in Saudi Arabia and similar markets. Brands should invest in SMM to boost engagement and focus on strategies that strengthen brand equity and awareness, as these factors have a more profound impact on purchase behavior. For instance, companies might focus on campaigns that engage users on social media and build positive brand perceptions, creating a holistic brand experience that resonates with consumers.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights, it has several limitations. First, the study sample was limited to the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across other regions or countries with different cultural or social media usage patterns. Future research could replicate this study in other areas or countries to validate the findings in varied contexts. Additionally, the study focused on three variables: SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness, but other factors, such as customer loyalty, brand satisfaction, and influencer endorsement, may also play significant roles in shaping purchase intention. Including these additional variables in future models could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the purchase decision-making process in digital environments. This study highlights the synergistic effects of social media marketing, brand equity, and brand awareness in shaping consumer purchase intention. By aligning brand-building efforts with strategic social media engagement, companies can effectively enhance their influence over consumer behavior in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that SMMA, brand equity, and brand awareness play significant and positive roles in shaping consumers' purchase intentions, particularly within the Saudi Arabian market. Among these factors, brand equity emerged as the most influential driver, emphasizing the importance of building a strong brand reputation to foster consumer loyalty and trust. Brand awareness also significantly impacts purchase intention, suggesting that

a brand's visibility is crucial in the digital consumer journey. SMMA, while impactful, has a more moderate influence, indicating that while engagement on social media is valuable, it is most effective when integrated with broader brand-building strategies.

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