

# MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND EQUITY ON THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CUSTOMER BUYING INTENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL FIRMS

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## Abstract

The current research aims to provide a comprehensive insight into the effect of social media marketing on customer buying intention. Furthermore, the study explores empirically and explains the mediating influences of brand equity, particularly the role of brand image and awareness, on customer buying intention. The research was explored using a quantitative approach. A convenience sampling technique was adopted. The valid responses received were 237. The hypothesis testing followed Structural Equation Modelling. The findings concede that all social media marketing sub-constructs significantly affect buying intention, whereby accessibility has the strongest influence. Brand equity mediates the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention. The findings concede that all social media marketing sub-constructs significantly affect buying intention, mediated by brand equity, particularly by building brand image and brand awareness. The proposed model provides new insights into the social media marketing drivers affecting buying intentions and engagement with an entrepreneurial brand. This research reaffirms that social media marketing can hugely influence the success of Jordanian entrepreneurial firms.

**Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Brand Equity, Entrepreneurship, Buying Intentions, Jordanian Context.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is growing in popularity amongst the younger generation in Jordan (Growhome, 2020). The World Bank has started a new programme to promote entrepreneurship by assisting over 200 entrepreneurial startups (Rahman, 2020).

Entrepreneurship refers to the opportunities that individuals and businesses seek regardless of existing resources, resulting in the injection of innovations and ideas into the market and substantial economic growth for the firm (Nambisan, 2017)

One of the tools that is used to successfully achieve an entrepreneurial level is the internet. It is a powerful tool utilized for marketing purposes that facilitates the employment of social media platforms that provide bilateral communication that help developing customer loyalty

(Vivek et al., 2014). It supported organizations in transitioning from traditional marketing approaches to more virtual ones (Pham & Gammoh, 2015), resulting in the birth of a new phenomenon known as Social Media Marketing (SMM). Although SMM is widely discussed in the literature, few researchers have looked at its influence on purchasing intentions. Moreover, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the influence of SMM on purchasing intentions and brand equity in the Jordanian context. As a result, the goal of this study is to investigate the impact of SMM on customer buying intentions in the context of Jordanian entrepreneurial firms. Furthermore, comprehending brand equity via awareness and image may explain the link between the independent and dependent variables.

This study is structured as follows: it reviews the empirical and conceptual literature before the research methodology and methods are described. This is followed by the discussion of the findings and conclusions, including consideration of research limitations and future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Social Media Marketing (SMM)**

Wibowo et al., (2021) conducted a research that underlined the importance of open communication (i.e. transparency) and information sharing in a digitally empowered society. Nonetheless, information sharing, product/service marketing, customer service amusement, and benefiting from the relationship between the business organization or brand and the client are all key aspects of SMM (Shen & Bissell, 2013; Khraiwish et al., 2022).

SMM is defined by academics as the use of social media to promote brands (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). As previously stated, this compels marketers to properly analyze the long-term effects of SMM on purchasing intent in online communities (Ramsunder, 2011). According to Kim et al. (2015), interactions via social media platforms can influence consumers' purchase intention. SMM's direct connection has long-term consequences (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Ra'd Almestarihi et al., 2021).

#### **2.1.1 Openness**

Openness is defined as a convenient mechanism that enables users to create and share content with others Barnes (2011).

Firms must comprehend the notion of "openness" in order to make useful judgments. Several studies have been conducted to explore the positive impact of social media openness on businesses and organizations. They discovered that it facilitates product development and that knowledge exchange is beneficial in this process (Treem and Leonardi 2012; Bonson et al., 2012; Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022). As a result, research reinforces the notion that openness is essential for an effective SMM strategy.

### 2.1.2 Speed

Taprial and Kanwar (2012) define speed as the rate at which information is readily available and shareable. Furthermore, impatience is becoming a frequent attribute across all classes of consumers (Ma et al., 2020). As a result, this study contends that providing real-time communication could accelerate consumer decision-speed (Ma et al., 2020).

In innumerable service systems, customers can undergo a certain amount of time for a service. If the service is not provided on time, customers respond by abandoning the system (Ma et al., 2020). According to one research, rapidity of reaction is critical if businesses want to expand their reach. This factor of speed in SMM and information sharing is prevalent in a variety of product and service industries (Wibowo, 2021).

According to the study, speed - as a sub-construct - accelerates the dissemination of information or writing feedback, which has a substantial impact on the efficacy of SMM. Considering virtual connections are faster than face-to-face exchanges because of technological advancements, decision-making in the virtual world is significantly faster (Heydari et al., 2011). The traditional WOM approach, on the other hand, does not capture those opinions since they are immaterial and evaporate.

### 2.1.3 Accessibility

Schultz et al., (2012) emphasized the significance of information accessibility as a critical component of social media efficacy and influence on purchasing intentions. Contradictorily, the growth of the internet has constructed an excellent context for businesses to generate and obtain information (Llopis-Amorós et al., 2019). Although access to social media does not necessitate any specific abilities, this aspect of social media accessibility can be associated with digital literacy (Nielsen & Schroder, 2014). Even in nations where access to social media is not a constraint, generalizing people's capacity to 'easily' use a platform is imprecise (Nielsen & Schroder, 2014; Lopez et al., 2011).

According to Parra-Lopez et al. (2011), access to information is critical for analyzing intents since it facilitates access to data and information. Moreover, user-friendly platforms will encourage people to contribute to content. Spina (2018) research proposed that businesses should establish accessible websites and platforms by maintaining basic language and aesthetics and eliminating patterns such as captions and transcripts.

### 2.1.4 Participation

Participation refers to the interaction between interested parties and the extent to which consumers are involved in the development of services (Stelzner, 2010). Furthermore, according to Tynan et al. (2010), participation contributes to greater consistency participation and engagement among consumers. Thus, businesses should evaluate all relevant variables in order to encourage customer's participation and engagement during the communication process.

In the context of social media, There are two sorts of consumer participation: direct and indirect. In terms of the former, direct transactions are the acts of the consumer during the

purchase process. In the latter case, indirect transactions include customers' suggestions via e-WOM. In addition, indirect transactions entail the search for specialized information during decision-making and after-sales support (Zhang et al., 2014).

Firms build platforms that suit consumers' objectives for value generation to stimulate customer participation (Hosseini, 2013; Hammouri et al., 2021). Users also contribute to online communities by sharing positive word of mouth about their previous encounters with brands. According to this study, social media increases customer participation, which may contribute to better purchase intentions.

## **2.2 Customer Buying Intention**

Customers' purchasing intentions are defined by Shafiq et al. (2011) as a desire to acquire a product or service. Buying intentions are affected by factors such as product packaging, customer knowledge, or feedback. The purchasing decision-making process is as follows: Customers first receive knowledge about the product/service, then form an opinion about it, and then act on what they have learned. As a result, this study contends that using user-generated content as a strategic emphasis established and built by customers in response to a certain brand or company impacts understanding of the product, perception, and feeling towards it, and behaviors that lead to it.

Abdullah et al. (2016) and Hammouri et al. (2021) discovered that interaction with technology, namely mobile commerce, had a significant influence on customers' purchasing intentions and postulated a powerful association between interactivity and purchasing intention. This was also validated by Zhang et al. (2014). As a result, the interaction of social media advertising forms purchasing intentions toward the offerings marketed via social media advertisements.

Usman and Permatasari (2019) validated the impact of brand image on customer purchasing intent. Hence, components in social media do influence purchasing intentions.

## **2.3 Brand Equity**

Keller (2013) defines brand equity as "the differential influence that brand knowledge has on customer response to that brand's marketing." Social media has two distinct effects on brand equity:

For starters, social media connects brands and their potential customers. Second, social media increases brand awareness, which influences customers' emotions and impressions of a brand. As a result, the existence of social media raises brand recognition. Furthermore, brand equity serves three functions. First, it will attract customers. Second, it reminds customers of the company's products. Finally, it connects customers to businesses Kimpakorn and Tocquer (2010) Nonetheless, SMM was discovered to have a considerable impact on two crucial elements of brand equity: brand awareness and brand image (Godey et al., 2016; Hammouri et al., 2022).

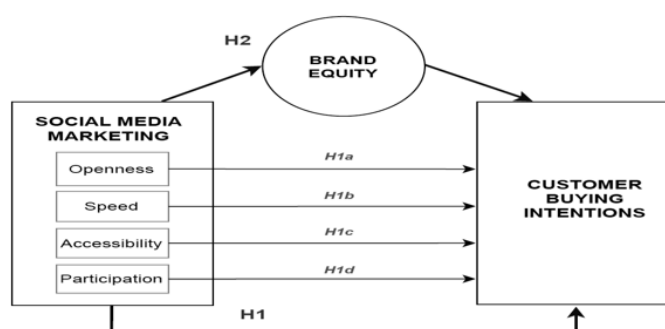
### 2.3.1 Brand Image

Customers' view of a given brand is characterized as brand image (Landwehr et al., 2011). Accordingly, a favorable brand image generates brand loyalty, which increases brand equity (Landwehr et al., 2012). As a result, in today's business market, developing a brand image is one of the most important strategic concerns for businesses. According to Cho et al. (2015), brand image influences customer satisfaction and may restrict customers' willingness to pay a premium price and suggest the company to others. Ismail & Spinelli (2012) illustrated that brand image does not focus on customers' value but rather on the customers' perceptions and sentiments towards tangible and intangible features and elements of the brand. Lee et al. (2011) concluded the stronger the brand image, the greater the possibility of a customer's purchasing intention. As a result, brand image has a significant impact on client purchasing intentions. Therefore, brand image has a significant impact on consumer purchasing intentions.

### 2.3.2 Brand Awareness

According to Arai and Kaplanido's (2013) study article, brand awareness refers to the capacity to recognize and differentiate a given brand in a specific category. Various research on the link between brand and social media relationships showed that experiences and knowledge published on social media about a product or brand affect prospective customers' opinions and purchasing intentions. Furthermore, Momany and Alshbou (2016) discovered that social media presence corresponds favorably with brand awareness. Consequently, the following section outlines and explains the conceptual model/framework, particularly the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, with a mediating variable, and their sub-constructs. Accordingly, the following research framework has been developed to investigate all relationships proposed in earlier studies (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Proposed Research Model**



Subsequently, the following section outlines the methodology and data collection and analysis methods.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Measures

A quantitative method was utilized, particularly a structured questionnaire, to investigate the relationships proposed in this research. A five-point likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) was used. The questionnaire was designed into three sections. The first section captured demographic data of the sample population such as age, education level, and gender. The second section consisted of the variables examined in the study. The independent variable (SMM) dimensions consisted of 4 constructs and 15 items (questions). These were: 1) Openness - measured using five items. 2) Speed - measured using three items. 3) Accessibility - measured using two items. 4) Participation - measured using five items. The second variable was the mediator "Brand Equity", which consisted of two constructs and 14 questions. 1) Brand Awareness - measured using six items. 2) Brand Image - measured using eight items. Finally, the last variable in this study, "Buying Intention", measured using two items.

#### 3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Jordan is an emerging market according to the MSCI Index 2020 (Amadeo, 2020) and the study focused on entrepreneurial firms' SMM. A sample of 237 respondents who benefited from Jordanian entrepreneurial firms formed the sample for this research. Subsequently, the study collected data and information from Jordanian residents, which reported and evaluated the effect of SMM dimensions on their buying intention. Noteworthy is the response rate of the questionnaire; all responses were included as the response rate was 100%, with no outliers detected. Subsequently, the following section presents the findings of the study.

### 4. FINDINGS

This research study collected and analyzed 237 respondents collected from the sample population. The summary of the sample profile is presented below.

#### 4.1 Demographic

**Gender:** The percentage of females was 74.68%, while the percentage of males was 25.32%, indicating a considerable gender imbalance.

**Age:** 40.51% of respondents were between the ages of 31 and 40, while 36.29% were between the ages of 18 and 30. Over 50 years constituted 5.91% of the sample, while 41-50 years represented 17.30%.

**Education Level:** respondents that hold a Bachelor's degree made up 54.01% of the population, while master's degree holders constituted 27.85%. Doctoral degree holders made up 4.22%. People with a college degree comprised 5.06% and high school or lower qualifications were 8.86%.

**Knowledge of using computers and social media:** Excellent knowledge was 55.70%, very good knowledge was 34.60%, and good knowledge was (9.70%). The last category did not account for any percentage.

## 4.2 Construct Validity and Reliability

### 4.2.1 Reliability Tests

This study comprised four broad factors that are, SMM, Brand Equity, Customer Buying Intention, and each has sub-constructs. Carden et al., (2019) prescribe the Cronbach's alpha test for reliability as the ideal test for internal consistency. Tavakol & Dennick (2011) argue that the optimal minimum threshold for reliability is 0.70, and for each construct, the minimum corrected item-total correlation must be 0.30. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reliability Testing**

	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Openness	5	0.867	0.867	0.904
Speed	3	0.864	0.865	0.917
Accessibility	2	0.785	0.761	0.821
Participation	5	0.899	0.902	0.926
Brand Awareness	6	0.780	0.838	0.847
Brand Image	8	0.930	0.931	0.942
Social Media Marketing	15	0.826	0.841	0.938
Customer Buying Intention	2	0.855	0.892	0.914
Brand Equity	14	0.867	0.875	0.907

The results show with respect to the Cronbach's alpha, the highest was for brand image ( $\alpha = 0.930$ ), and the second was for participation ( $\alpha = 0.899$ ). However, the least rated reliability test was for the construct brand awareness ( $\alpha = 0.780$ ). According to the aforementioned findings, all the constructs were internally consistent and dependable since the minimal criterion was 0.70. The composite reliability analysis further verified the structures' dependability, and according to Brown (2012), the minimal criterion is 0.70. According to the findings in Table 1, the accessibility construct had a minimum composite reliability of 0.821, and since no constructs had an alpha value below 0.70, this showed that all of the constructs utilized in this study were dependable and internally consistent.

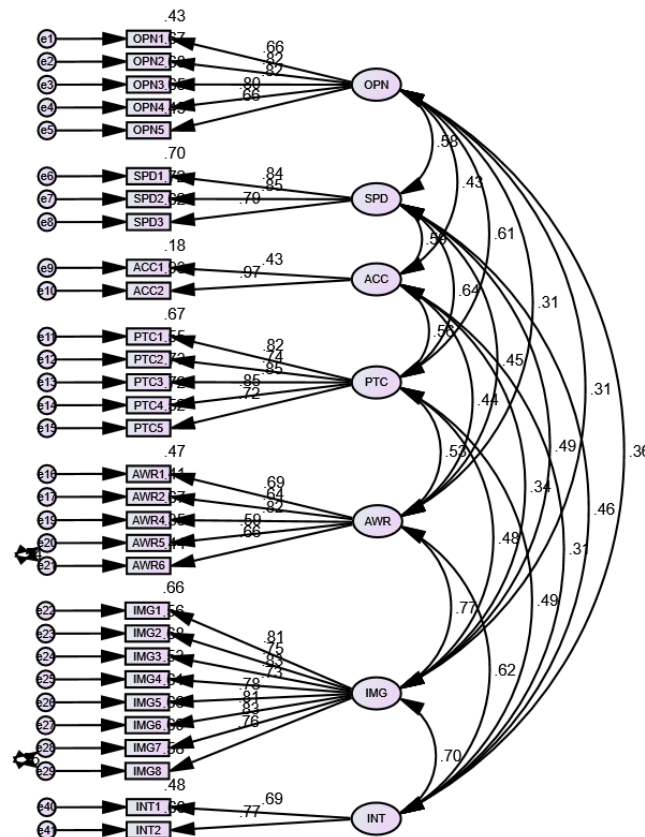
### 4.2.2 Validity Tests: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The validity of the constructs was tested for both convergent validity and discriminant validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Brown, 2012). Convergent validity tests the strength of the relationship between measurement items for the same construct where they should be correlated Lee (2017). Kline (2016) points that the convergent validity is tested by both the path coefficients and the average variance extracted (AVE). For convergent validity to be attained, the unstandardized path coefficients should be greater than 0.60, and the standardized path coefficients should be greater than 0.40 (Pearce, 2013; Hair et al., 2018). On the other hand, with regards to the discriminant validity, this tests whether the constructs are similar or different from each other (Hair et al., 2018). The constructs are expected to be independent and not related and to achieve this, three approaches are used, either the covariance, or the Fornell-Larcker criterion or the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio

(StataCorp, 2015). For these measures, the maximum threshold is 0.85 (Comrey, 2013; Kline, 2016).

This study consisted of three major constructs and these were social media marketing (SMM), Brand Equity (BE), and Customer Buying Intention (INT). SMM was measured by four sub-constructs, that are, Openness (OPN), Speed (SPD), Accessibility (ACC) and Participation (PTC). Brand equity was measured by two sub-constructs, that are, Brand Awareness (AWR) and Brand Image (IMG). On the other hand, (INT) did not have sub-constructs. Since the research constructs and sub-constructs were measured as latent variables, CFA was carried out using SPSS Amos and the initial measurement model is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Initial CFA Measurement Model



The corresponding path coefficients are presented in Table 2 below

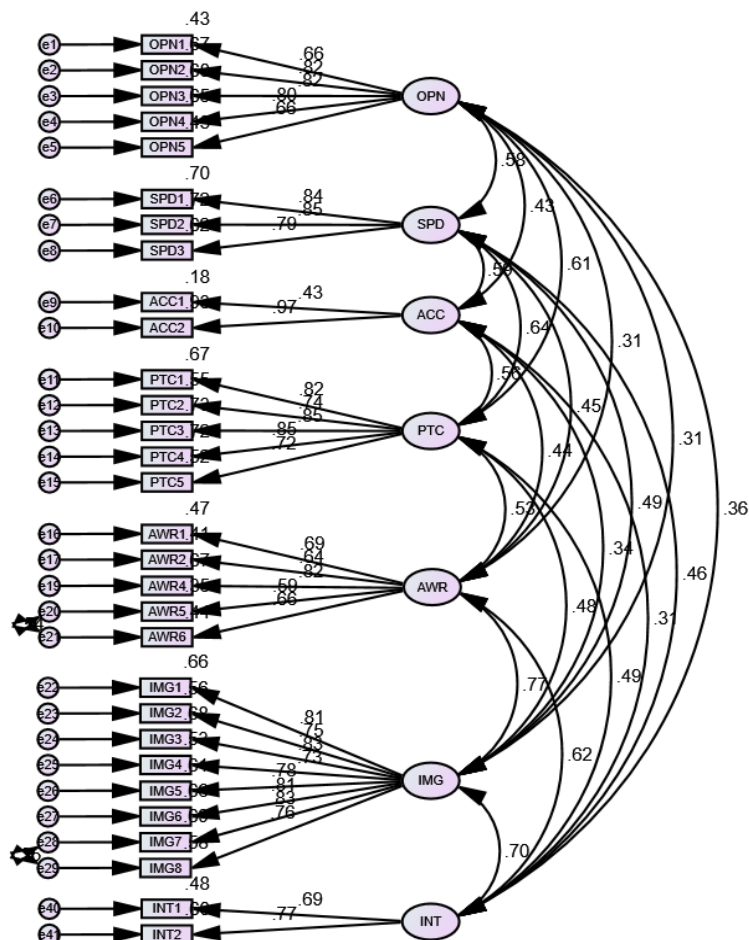


**Table 2: Initial CFA Measurement Model – Convergent Validity**

				Estimate	Standardised	S.E.	C.R.	P
Openness	OPN1	<---	OPN	1.000	.657			
	OPN2	<---	OPN	1.334	.820	.126	10.585	.000
	OPN3	<---	OPN	1.356	.825	.128	10.633	.000
	OPN4	<---	OPN	1.345	.804	.129	10.429	.000
	OPN5	<---	OPN	1.106	.658	.122	9.090	.000
Speed	SPD1	<---	SPD	1.000	.836			
	SPD2	<---	SPD	.994	.844	.069	14.513	.000
	SPD3	<---	SPD	.973	.791	.072	13.451	.000
Accessibility	ACC1	<---	ACC	1.000	.426			
	ACC2	<---	ACC	1.867	.970	.413	4.525	.000
Participation	PTC1	<---	PTC	1.000	.817			
	PTC2	<---	PTC	.946	.741	.075	12.599	.000
	PTC3	<---	PTC	.983	.855	.064	15.338	.000
	PTC4	<---	PTC	.937	.852	.061	15.276	.000
	PTC5	<---	PTC	.914	.721	.073	12.582	.000
Brand Awareness	AWR1	<---	AWR	1.000	.684			
	AWR2	<---	AWR	.955	.637	.111	8.641	.000
	AWR3	<---	AWR	.302	<b>.180</b>	.118	2.557	.011
	AWR4	<---	AWR	1.200	.814	.114	10.562	.000
	AWR5	<---	AWR	.973	.601	.119	8.161	.000
	AWR6	<---	AWR	1.082	.666	.121	8.966	.000
Brand Image	IMG1	<---	IMG	1.000	.811			
	IMG2	<---	IMG	.931	.744	.073	12.751	.000
	IMG3	<---	IMG	.999	.824	.068	14.690	.000
	IMG4	<---	IMG	.906	.732	.072	12.495	.000
	IMG5	<---	IMG	.845	.782	.062	13.658	.000
	IMG6	<---	IMG	.960	.813	.067	14.405	.000
	IMG7	<---	IMG	1.050	.830	.071	14.831	.000
	IMG8	<---	IMG	.956	.761	.073	13.101	.000
Customer Buying Intention	INT1	<---	INT	1.000	.537			
	INT2	<---	INT	1.633	.999	.167	9.760	.000

The convergent validity was violated in brand awareness where the standardized path coefficient for AWR3 was  $\beta = 0.180 < 0.40$ . Since these items were less than 0.40, they were eventually excluded from the analysis and the subsequent CFA measurement model showing the revised results is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Final CFA Measurement Model



All of the path coefficients in the final measurement model, as reported in Table 3, fulfilled the minimal standardized route coefficient criterion. The minimum path coefficient for openness was OPN1 ( $\beta = 0.657$ ), the minimum path coefficient for speed was SPD3 ( $\beta = 0.791$ ), and the minimum path coefficient for accessibility was ACC1 ( $\beta = 0.426$ ), participation was PTC5 ( $\beta = 0.914$ ), brand awareness was AWR5 ( $\beta = 0.601$ ), brand image was IMG4 ( $\beta = 0.732$ ), and customer buying intention was INT1 ( $\beta = 0.537$ ).

**Table 3: Final CFA Measurement Model – Convergent Validity**

				Estimate	Standardised	S.E.	C.R.	P
Openness	OPN1	<---	OPN	1.000	.657			
	OPN2	<---	OPN	1.334	.820	.126	10.585	.000
	OPN3	<---	OPN	1.356	.825	.128	10.633	.000
	OPN4	<---	OPN	1.345	.804	.129	10.429	.000
	OPN5	<---	OPN	1.106	.658	.122	9.090	.000
Speed	SPD1	<---	SPD	1.000	.836			
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	PTC3	<---	PTC	.983	.855	.064	15.338	.000
	PTC4	<---	PTC	.937	.852	.061	15.276	.000
	PTC5	<---	PTC	.914	.721	.073	12.582	.000
Brand Awareness	AWR1	<---	AWR	1.000	.684			
	AWR2	<---	AWR	.955	.637	.111	8.641	.000
	AWR4	<---	AWR	1.200	.814	.114	10.562	.000
	AWR5	<---	AWR	.973	.601	.119	8.161	.000
	AWR6	<---	AWR	1.082	.666	.121	8.966	.000
Brand Image	IMG1	<---	IMG	1.000	.811			
	IMG2	<---	IMG	.931	.744	.073	12.751	.000
	IMG3	<---	IMG	.999	.824	.068	14.690	.000
	IMG4	<---	IMG	.906	.732	.072	12.495	.000
	IMG5	<---	IMG	.845	.782	.062	13.658	.000
	IMG6	<---	IMG	.960	.813	.067	14.405	.000
	IMG7	<---	IMG	1.050	.830	.071	14.831	.000
	IMG8	<---	IMG	.956	.761	.073	13.101	.000
Customer Buying Intention	INT1	<---	INT	1.000	.537			
	INT2	<---	INT	1.633	.999	.167	9.760	.000

From the foregoing findings, convergent validity was obtained for the revised measurement model. The results for the discriminant validity are presented in Table 4. From the outcome, using the HTMT approach, the maximum coefficient was observed between (SPD) and (PTC) (HTMT = 0.325) and using the Fornell–Larcker approach, the maximum coefficient was observed between (AWR) and (IMG) (FL = 0.773). In this regard, all the coefficients were less than the maximum threshold of 0.85 (Byrne, 2006; Kline, 2016). Therefore, the discriminant validity was not violated. From the findings, it can, therefore, be confirmed that all the research constructs used in this study were valid. More importantly, were the items, which according to the convergent validity results, were also valid measurement items for their respective constructs.

**Table 4: Final CFA Measurement Model – Discriminant Validity**

			<b>HTMT</b>	<b>Fornell–Larcker</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P</b>
OPN	<-->	SPD	.265	.578	.044	5.963	.000
OPN	<-->	ACC	.111	.426	.033	3.404	.000
OPN	<-->	PTC	.253	.612	.041	6.202	.000
OPN	<-->	AWR	.105	.313	.029	3.664	.000
OPN	<-->	IMG	.132	.315	.033	3.945	.000
OPN	<-->	INT	.083	.261	.025	3.322	.000
SPD	<-->	ACC	.188	.590	.049	3.808	.000
SPD	<-->	PTC	.325	.642	.047	6.940	.000
SPD	<-->	AWR	.184	.447	.037	4.970	.000
SPD	<-->	IMG	.254	.495	.044	5.834	.000
SPD	<-->	INT	.152	.392	.033	4.562	.000
ACC	<-->	PTC	.161	.557	.043	3.768	.000
ACC	<-->	AWR	.102	.437	.030	3.410	.000
ACC	<-->	IMG	.099	.338	.031	3.214	.001
ACC	<-->	INT	.064	.290	.022	2.932	.003
PTC	<-->	AWR	.196	.528	.035	5.638	.000
PTC	<-->	IMG	.221	.476	.039	5.735	.000
PTC	<-->	INT	.135	.386	.030	4.563	.000
AWR	<-->	IMG	.291	.773	.042	6.995	.000
AWR	<-->	INT	.145	.513	.029	5.049	.000
IMG	<-->	INT	.188	.532	.034	5.509	.000
INV	<-->	INT	.204	.254	.037	5.557	.000

Thus, from the preceding analyses, both convergent validity and discriminant validity were satisfactory, and therefore, construct validity was also satisfactory. Overall, only four measurement items were dropped from the study, but all the constructs were retained.

#### 4.2.3 Descriptive Statistics

The respective results for all the constructs and sub-constructs are presented below.

##### Social Media Marketing

The summary statistics for the social media marketing construct, along with the four sub-constructs is presented in Table 5 below. With respect to openness, the overall mean rating for openness ( $\mu = 3.63$ ;  $\sigma = 0.810$ ) was satisfactory given that this was greater than the midpoint.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics - Social Media Marketing**

	Mean	SD
Openness	3.63	.810
Speed	3.97	.799
Accessibility	3.70	.772
Participation	3.69	.691
Social Media Marketing	3.74	.596

As for speed, ( $\mu = 3.97$ ;  $\sigma = 0.799$ ). The overall mean rating for the sub-construct accessibility was ( $\mu = 3.70$ ;  $\sigma = 0.772$ ). Finally, the overall mean rating for the sub-construct participation was  $\mu = 3.69$  ( $\sigma = 0.691$ ).

The overall mean rating for the construct social media marketing was  $\mu = 3.74$  ( $\sigma = 0.596$ ).

#### Brand Equity

The second construct was brand equity with two sub-constructs. The summary statistics are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics - Brand Equity**

	Mean	SD
Brand Awareness	3.45	.647
Brand Image	3.68	.683
Brand Equity	3.52	.578

The overall mean rating for brand awareness was ( $\mu = 3.45$ ;  $\sigma = 0.647$ ), and this was a positive rating being greater than the midpoint. The overall mean rating for brand image was ( $\mu = 3.68$ ;  $\sigma = 0.683$ ), and this was a positive mean rating. Of the two brand-equity sub-constructs, the highest mean rating was for brand image ( $\mu = 3.68$ ;  $\sigma = 0.683$ ), then brand awareness ( $\mu = 3.45$ ;  $\sigma = 0.647$ ). The aggregate mean rating for the brand equity construct was ( $\mu = 3.52$ ;  $\sigma = 0.578$ ), and since this was greater than the midpoint, this meant that the participants rated brand equity positively.

#### Customer Buying Intention

The last construct was the dependent variable customer buying intention.

**Table 7: Descriptive Statistics – Buying Intentions**

	Mean	SD
Overall Buying intention	3.65	.791

The overall mean rating for the customer buying intention was ( $\mu = 3.65$ ;  $\sigma = 0.791$ ), that is greater than the midpoint, it can be confirmed that there were positive sentiments among the participants regarding customer involvement.

Structural Equation Modelling

The main independent variable was social media marketing, while the main dependent variable was Customer Buying Intention. With a mediator of Brand equity. The research hypotheses tested were:

**H1: Social media marketing factors have significant positive impact on customer buying intention.**

H1a- openness has significant positive impact on customer buying intention.

H1b- Speed has significant positive impact on customer buying intention.

H1c- Accessibility has significant positive impact on customer buying intention.

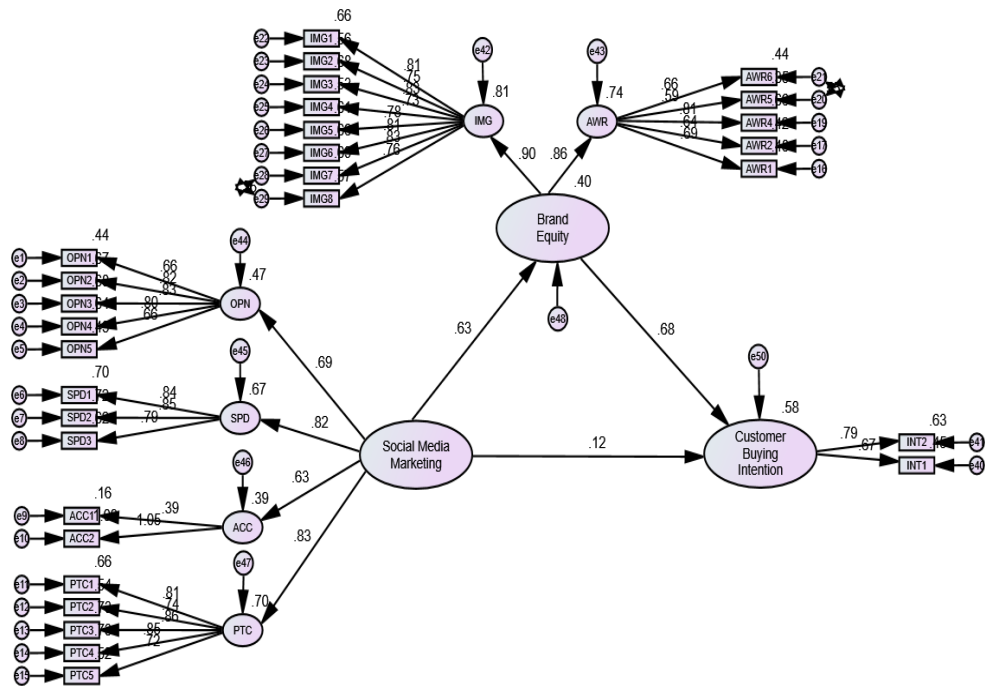
H1d- Participation has significant positive impact on customer buying intention.

**H2: Brand equity is mediating the effect of SMM on customer buying intention.**

**Hypothesis 1: The Direct Effects**

The structural equation model showing the broader hypotheses, which are the main effects by the broad constructs is presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: SEM – Main Model (Model 1)**



The corresponding results are tabulated below.

**Table 8: SEM Main Effects – Model 1**

			Estimate	Standardized	S.E.	C.R.	P	R-Square	Overall R <sup>2</sup>
BE	<---	SMM	.899	.645	.152	5.918	.000	.416	.742
INT	<---	BE	.950	.450	.118	8.051	.000	.203	
INT	<---	SMM	1.062	.843	.119	8.907	.000	.711	

From the outcome, the relationship between (SMM) and customer buying intention (INT) was positive and statistically significant ( $\beta_{SMM} = 0.843$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship between (SMM) and brand equity (BE) was statistically significant and positive ( $\beta_{SMM} = 0.645$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and so was the relationship between brand equity and customer buying intention (INT), which was positive and significant ( $\beta_{BE} = 0.450$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The primary results for the first hypothesis of this investigation were proven to be statistically significant based on the preceding results. As a result, there was a statistically significant association between (SMM) and consumer purchasing intention. Furthermore, the total r-square of 0.742 indicated that the other factors explained 74.2% of the variation in the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 1a-1d: Effects of SMM Sub-Constructs

Figure 5 depicts the SEM evaluating the sub-hypotheses for social media marketing.

**Figure 5: SEM SMM Sub-Hypothesis Model (Model 2)**

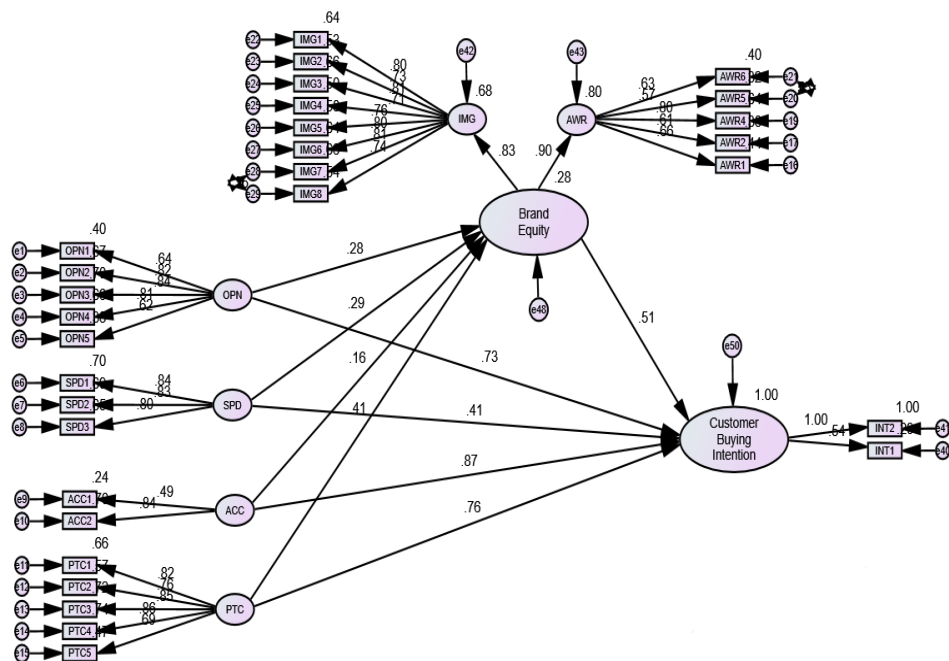


Table 9 below presents the respective path coefficients and their significance.

**Table 9: SEM SMM Sub-Constructs – Model 2**

			Estimate	Standardized	S.E.	C.R.	P	R-Square	Overall R <sup>2</sup>
BE	<---	OPN	1.037	.284	.064	3.343	.000	.081	.817
BE	<---	SPD	.208	.291	.055	3.785	.000	.085	
BE	<---	ACC	.176	.163	.090	1.966	.049	.027	
BE	<---	PTC	.326	.410	.064	5.092	.000	.168	
INT	<---	BE	.954	.511	.129	7.385	.000	.261	
INT	<---	OPN	.857	.734	.070	12.179	.000	.539	
INT	<---	SPD	.956	.409	.120	7.967	.000	.167	
INT	<---	ACC	.948	.866	.062	15.220	.000	.750	
INT	<---	PTC	.967	.758	.076	12.797	.000	.575	

In terms of the influence of SMM sub-constructs on consumer purchasing intention (INT), all associations were both positive and statistically significant. The most significant effect was seen with accessibility ( $\beta_{ACC} = 0.866$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by participation ( $\beta_{PTC} = 0.758$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), openness ( $\beta_{OPN} = 0.734$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and speed ( $\beta_{SPD} = 0.409$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, for the influence of the sub-constructs of SMM on brand equity (BE), the major effect was observed with participation ( $\beta_{PTC} = 0.410$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and the second-highest was speed ( $\beta_{SPD} = 0.291$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), then the third was openness ( $\beta_{OPN} = 0.284$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), and the least was accessibility ( $\beta_{ACC} = 0.163$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship between brand equity and customer buying intention (INT), was positive and significant ( $\beta_{BE} = 0.511$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Furthermore, it can be confirmed that there was a statistically significant relationship between openness, speed, accessibility, and participation and customer buying intention. The overall R-square of 0.817 informs us that 81.7% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by all the other variables.

### Hypothesis 2: Testing Mediation Effect of Brand Equity

The second hypothesis tested the mediation effect of brand equity on the relationship between (SMM) and customer buying intention (INT). To test this, Darlington and Hayes (2017) recommend the use of the Sobel test using the Hayes Process Macro for SPSS. The mediation test was carried out and the results are presented in Figure 4.10 below.



**Figure 6: Mediation Effect of Brand Equity**

VARIABLES IN MEDIATION MODEL							
Y	INT						
X	SMM						
M	BE						
DESCRIPTIVES STATISTICS AND PEARSON CORRELATIONS							
	Mean	SD	INT	SMM	BE		
INT	3.5820	.5238	1.0000	.6648	.8856		
SMM	3.7447	.5958	.6648	1.0000	.4915		
BE	3.5193	.5782	.8856	.4915	1.0000		
SAMPLE SIZE							
237							
DIRECT AND TOTAL EFFECTS							
	Coeff	s.e.	t	Sig(two)			
b(YX)	.5844	.0428	13.6407	.0000			
b(MX)	.4769	.0551	8.6509	.0000			
b(YM.X)	.6677	.0260	25.6754	.0000			
b(YX.M)	.2660	.0252	10.5420	.0000			
INDIRECT EFFECT AND SIGNIFICANCE USING NORMAL DISTRIBUTION							
	Value	s.e.	LL95CI	UL95CI	Z	Sig(two)	
Effect	.3184	.0389	.2422	.3946	8.1925	.0000	
BOOTSTRAP RESULTS FOR INDIRECT EFFECT							
	Data	Mean	s.e.	LL99 CI	LL95CI	UL95CI	UL99CI
Effect	.3184	.3139	.0615	.1481	.1837	.4242	.4643

The steps in testing the mediation were: Firstly, the total effect between the independent (X) and dependent (Y) variables needs to be estimated and has to be statistically significant before the analysis is preceded any further. From the outcome, the total effect of the relationship between (SMM) and (INT) was indeed statistically significant ( $\beta_{YX} = 0.584$ ,  $t = 13.641$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The unstandardized beta coefficient is positive and  $p = 0.000$ , enforcing significance.

Second, Path A needs to be determined. This is the direct effect of SMM (X) on the mediation variable Brand Equity (M). This was also found to be statistically significant ( $\beta_{MX} = 0.477$ ,  $t = 8.651$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The unstandardized beta coefficient is positive and  $p = 0.000$ , applying significance.

Third, this step has two sub-sections. 3a) is assessing the direct effect of the mediating variable Brand Equity (M) on the dependent variable (INT) which is known as Path B. This occurs while controlling the independent variable (SMM) and examining the relationship between those variables. Here, the relationship was statistically significant ( $\beta_{YM.X} = 0.667$ ,  $t = 25.675$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The unstandardized beta coefficient is positive and  $p = 0.000$ , applying significance. The same methodology applies for Path C which is 3b). This path assesses the direct effect of the independent variable (SMM) (X) on the dependent variable (Y), while controlling for the mediating variable (M). This was statistically significant ( $\beta_{YX.M} = 0.266$ ,  $t = 10.542$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Lastly, with respect to the indirect effect of SMM (X) on Buying intentions (Y) through Brand equity (M), the relationship was statistically significant ( $\beta_{b(MX)} \cdot b(YM.X) = 0.318$ , CI [0.242, 0.395],  $Z = 8.193$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it follows from these results that the null hypothesis can be rejected. The null hypothesis of the Sobel test is the indirect effect of (X) SMM on (Y) buying intentions with a mediator variable (M) brand equity equals zero.

The researcher confirms that the mediating effect of BE on the relationship between (SMM) and (INT) was statistically significant. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported.

### **Hypothesis 1: Direct relationship between SMM and Customer buying Intention**

The results showcased that (SMM) had a positive and statistically significant relationship on (INT) ( $\beta_{SMM} = 0.843$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Additional testing revealed the relationship between (SMM) and (BE) was statistically significant and positive ( $\beta_{SMM} = 0.645$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The relationship between (BE) and (INT), was positive and significant ( $\beta_{BE} = 0.450$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The overall R-square of 0.742 informs us that 74.2% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by all the other variables.

### **Hypothesis 1a-1d: Direct relationship between SMM sub-constructs and Customer buying Intention**

All sub-constructs of SMM displayed a positive direct effect on buying Intentions (INT). The major effect was seen with accessibility ( $\beta_{ACC} = 0.866$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), while the least was speed ( $\beta_{SPD} = 0.409$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Furthermore, for better knowledge, the direct effect of sub-constructs of SMM on (BE) showed the major effect was observed with participation ( $\beta_{PTC} = 0.410$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and the least was accessibility ( $\beta_{ACC} = 0.163$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Lastly, the testing showed the relationship between (BE) and (INT) was positive and significant ( $\beta_{BE} = 0.511$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This additional analysis provides a better understanding of the relationships within the conceptual model.

### **Hypothesis 2: Brand equity is mediating the impact of SMM on customer buying intention.**

The mediation analysis produced the following in the 4-step analysis:

The total effect of the relationship between (SMM) and (INT) was statistically significant ( $\beta_{YX} = 0.584$ ,  $t = 13.641$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The direct effect of SMM on the mediation variable (BE) was also statistically significant ( $\beta_{MX} = 0.477$ ,  $t = 8.651$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

The direct effect of the mediating variable (BE) on the dependent variable (INT), while controlling for the independent variable (SMM), the relationship was statistically significant ( $\beta_{YM.X} = 0.667$ ,  $t = 25.675$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The direct effect of the independent variable (SMM) on

the dependent variable (INT), while controlling for the mediating variable (BE), was statistically significant ( $\beta_{YX.M} = 0.266$ ,  $t = 10.542$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Lastly, the indirect effect of SMM on INT through BE, the relationship was statistically significant ( $\beta_b (MX) \cdot b (YM.X) = 0.318$ , CI [0.242, 0.395],  $Z = 8.193$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it follows from these results that the null hypothesis can be rejected, and mediation is confirmed. Consequently, the following section discusses the findings of the study.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research study investigated the interrelationships between SMM, brand equity, customers buying intentions in entrepreneurial firms in Jordan. The conceptual model aimed to identify the driving characteristics of SMM that drive future patronage in the context of entrepreneurial firms in Jordan. It also sought to examine the mediation effect of brand equity on the relationship between SMM and customers' buying intentions.

The aim of this study is to examine whether the commercial worth that stems from consumer perception of the brand name, instead of the product or service, is influential in an entrepreneurial setting. For a sample of 237, the study affiliated with previous research on the causal relationship between the variables through different phases of the research. Considering the earlier conclusions and findings, the aim of this study is addressed below and a detailed discussion following each section follows below.

### Hypothesis 1: SMM and Customer Buying Intention

When analyzing H1, the findings illustrate the significant positive effect of SMM on Buying Intentions; SMM explained 71% R<sup>2</sup> of variance in buying intentions.

When the direct analysis was conducted to assess hypothesis one, all other direct relationships in the model were explored resulting in a positive effect of all variables on buying intentions where an overall R<sup>2</sup> accounted for 74%. This showcases that all these variables affect customers' behavior. They are extremely valuable conclusions for practitioners and entrepreneurial firm owners in Jordan. The target market, customer expectations, SMM, with brand image and awareness form a solid starting point for strategizing to understand buying intentions and building brand loyalty

These findings are backed by Kim and Ko's (2012) study, which discovered that SMM influences purchasing intentions. Manzoor et al., (2020) suggest a similar idea in their study on the impacts of SMM and its antecedents. The studies concluded that SMM has a greater effect on purchasing intentions than trust. Such findings support the notion that social media interactions on these platforms may gather ideas, opinions, and impressions about a brand or product (Keller, 2013).

### Hypothesis 1a -1d: SMM sub-constructs and Customer Buying Intention

The relationships between SMM sub-constructs and BE, SMM sub-constructs and buying intentions, brand equity and buying intentions and buying intentions were calculated in the analysis. Despite all relationships being positive and statistically significant, the overall r-

square of 0.817 informs us that 81.7% of the variance in the dependent variable was explained by all the other variables. This means the sub-constructs of SMM explain more of the variance in buying intention (81.7%) in comparison to examining SMM as one construct (71%), this finding implies that entrepreneurial firms should develop specific SMM to understand customers intentions. Therefore, the segmentation of SMM variables will produce more refined conclusions and very effective strategies.

### **Hypothesis (1a) Openness and Customer Buying Intention**

Similar to the findings of Chan et al. (2013), this study discovered that openness had a substantial beneficial influence on purchasing intentions. This means that open avenues of contact and information sharing encourage customers to reconnect with the brand (Chan et al, 2013).

Interestingly, when analyzing the descriptive statistics of the construct, it was observed that OPN, (3) which states "I feel I can exchange information openly" displayed the lowest mean ( $\mu = 3.51$ ;  $\sigma = 1.028$ ). This suggests that participants couldn't relate with the statement strongly. As such, entrepreneurial firms in Jordan could create an open environment that supports sharing of feedback creating transparent relationships.

### **Hypothesis (1b) Speed and Customer Buying Intention**

The effect of speed on (INT) was statistically significant and positive ( $\beta_{SPD} = 0.291$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding ties in with the study conducted by Arora et al., (2018), speed within a SMM context can be related to the firm's size. Larger businesses will communicate and reply faster to content in comparison to smaller companies. This can be a logical reasoning as the studies in the research are small entrepreneurial firms. Although speed does have a significant positive effect, it has the least effect in comparison with all other SMM sub-constructs.

Customers are less likely to perceive a risk linked with a brand if information is available on social media sites quickly. This indicates that they are more inclined to engage with that brand in the future. This study's findings are consistent with those of Chen et al., (2014), who concluded that openness and speed are major variables impacting consumer risk using social media.

When analyzing SPD (01), "I can quickly browse the product and information I need on the social media platforms" exhibited the lowest mean. Therefore, Customers may feel that communication from entrepreneurial firms in Jordan is slow, and product information may be limited. This recommends that more initiatives are necessary to check and engage social media sites (Arora et al., 2018).

### **Hypothesis (1c) Accessibility and Customer buying Intention**

The effect of accessibility on customer buying intention was positive and significant ( $\beta_{ACC} = 0.866$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This construct produced the highest significance value amongst all other constructs in this study. The effect of accessibility in this study ties in with the research conducted by Krypton & Satra, (2018). Their study explored how Onarely et al. (2018) revealed that social media e-marketing amplified shopping habits and had an impact on future

behaviors to connect with the business. This variable has the greatest impact on consumer purchasing intention due to the fact that the majority of the population are from a young age and these demographics utilize multiple social media sites to interact with others and acquire some knowledge. Therefore, online social savviness makes accessing social media platforms very easy, and joining community groups of interest more achievable for these groups. How? Companies achieve this by forging positive rapport with millennials when they develop innovative and ethical social media marketing strategies (Arora et al., 2018).

"I felt it was easy to join the groups and communities that I am interested in" exhibited the highest mean ( $\mu = 3.98$ ;  $\sigma = 0.826$ ). This means entrepreneurial firms in Jordan should develop a marketing strategy that focuses on creating online communities that align with the interest of their customers.

### **Hypothesis (1d) Participation and Customer buying Intention**

Participation has significant positive impact on customer buying ( $\beta_{PTC} = 0.758$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus customers may strengthen their interaction with the brand by actually engaging in the entrepreneurial enterprises' social media site, according to this result (Kujur, 2016). This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Zheng et al. (2013), who investigated the function of user involvement in social media platforms in generating brand loyalty. The study discovered that the qualities of social media material had a significant impact on consumers' online activity. Therefore, entrepreneurial firms in Jordan should encourage active participation in online platforms to boost participation (Kujur et al., 2013).

When analyzing the descriptive statistics for the sub-construct, the highest mean was for item (PTC 04) "I feel I can help and support the communities I care about" ( $\mu = 3.81$ ;  $\sigma = 0.785$ ). The sample population strongly associates with this item. This could be the result of the education, millennial age group and the importance of being able to voice concerns (Zheng et al., 2013).

### **Hypothesis 2: Mediation of Brand Equity**

The mediation of brand equity on the relationship between SMM and buying intentions is significant ( $\beta_b (MX) \cdot b (YM.X) = 0.318$ , CI [0.242, 0.395],  $Z = 8.193$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This result is supported by various research in the field of social media research (Poturak & Softić, 2019; Keller, 2016). Poturak & Softić (2019) found that social media content influences brand equity, and brand equity forms a full mediation on the relationship between e-WOM and buying intentions. Majeed (2021) concluded SMM attributes (entertainment and social interaction) had a negative and insignificant association with brand equity and buying intentions. However, the positive significant relationship between brand equity and buying intention is unquestionable in many SMM research (Majeed et al., 2021; Poturak et al., 2016).

Brand equity is an intermediary variable that explains how SMM affects buying intentions. Also, this draws the conclusion that including brand equity better explains the SMM drivers of customers buying intentions, providing a comprehensive understanding of the customer mind-set.

When analyzing the descriptive statistics of brand equity, the highest mean was under brand image (BE14) "I can quickly recall the logo of that specific product". Hence, practitioners can conclude that focusing on pictures and unique logos can build a prominent brand image and affect customer buying intentions.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Conceptual Implications**

A study looked at how SMM explains future purchasing intentions in entrepreneurial enterprises and developed a multidimensional model with a high degree of complexity that offers enhanced insight. The study emphasizes the viewpoint of young Jordanian mainstream customers, their choices, and motivators for re-engaging with a brand. Furthermore, the relevant environment has not before been explored, particularly in terms of entrepreneurial enterprises and their distinctive structure in Jordan.

The diverse results from studying the aforementioned relationships backs and extends previous research (Schultz et al., 2012; Taprial et al., 2012; Kim & Ko 2012; Poturak et al., 2019) Moreover, Openness, speed, accessibility and participation had different effects, depending on the examined variable, such as brand equity, buying intentions etc. The research gap suggested by Olanrewaju et al. (2020) was explored from an SMM/entrepreneurial perspective. The recommended model represents an analysis of SMM and extends on Ahmed et al., (2017) study by embracing a multidimensional approach. Specific features of the firm-customer interaction and expectation carved interesting findings.

This study concludes that customer engagement, brand image and awareness, accessibility to groups and media platforms, readability of information, and other attributes proposed in this study drastically influence customers' purchase decisions.

### **6.2 Practical Implications**

The scarcity of traditional jobs in Jordan for university graduates is encouraging businesses to establish a thriving entrepreneurial environment with greater chances. This relates to the significance of implementing a proper social media strategy to establish and optimize brand equity and improve customers' purchase intentions.

Jordanian entrepreneurial firms should concentrate on providing valuable content in order to create and preserve their brand equity (Growhome, 2020). They should study and become acquainted with the target market, as well as accommodate to their expectations, such as platform accessibility and desires and requirements (Kim & Ko, 2012).

SMM is a method of connecting businesses with their customers. The significance of brand equity in influencing consumer purchasing intentions varies depending on the target market and consumer profile, necessitating a personalized strategy (Thao & Anh, 2020; Godey et al., 2016; Wibowo et al., 2021)

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The sample population was biased in terms of gender, age, and education. The majority of participants were females under the age of 40 who were highly educated and computer competent. As a result, generalizing the findings should be done with caution. Future research might change the sampling strategy by regulating the sample population or gathering data through entrepreneurial enterprises. Furthermore, a longitudinal research might be conducted to better understand the impact of (SMM) on Jordanian entrepreneurial enterprises before and after the implementation of SMM techniques. As a result, future research might depend on comparison data to uncover similarities and differences. Future research might integrate other factors into the conceptual model, such as the trustworthiness of online purchases and celebrity endorsement. Incorporating such constructions will offer another dimension to the concept model, leading to further growth and refinement.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between SMM and purchasing intentions. It created a conceptual model based on gaps in the literature. The conceptual model investigated several SMM sub-constructs that may impact customers' purchasing inclinations. In addition to offering a comprehensive study and assessment of brand equity and its impact on this relationship (mediation) impacting the degree of consumers' intentions (moderation). The study used a survey method to evaluate latent links and their influence on customers' purchase intentions. An online questionnaire was used to collect data, which was then evaluated using statistical data analysis techniques. According to the findings, SMM sub-constructs had a strong beneficial influence on consumer purchasing intentions. Finally, the study concluded that all presented hypotheses were supported. By employing Darlington & Hayes's (2017) suggestion of utilizing the Sobel Test through the Hayes Process Macro for SPSS, The study investigated the mediation of brand equity on the relationship between SMM and customer buying intention – to deduce a positive and significant impact. In other words, brand equity had a large positive mediation influence on customer purchasing intentions. This study investigates the motivations of SMM marketing in a Middle Eastern environment, as well as the requirements for facilitating effective business strategies. Overall, the research has produced considerable conceptual and industrial knowledge, as well as a solid framework for future research.

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