The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Electronics Purchase Decisions

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumer responses and their related behavioral outcomes. The theoretical framework is based on the SOR theory and was tested against some of the more well-known consumer electronics (CEs) brands in China. Data were collected from 405 users in China through an online survey. The data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. The results of the study show that SMM has a direct positive impact on consumer purchase decisions (PD) in the Chinese CEs market. SMM can indirect positively influence PD by perceived value (PV), brand image (BI) and brand trust (BT). This study fills the knowledge gap regarding the mediating roles of PV, BI and BT between SMM and PD through the SOR framework, and makes contributions to the SMM literature and the marketing of Chinese consumer electronics products.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Consumer electronics, Perceived value, Brand image, Brand trust, Purchase decision

1. Introduction

In modern society, people are surrounded by the Internet. People create new data every day through the internet, web or social media channels. These data are built through relationships and everyone in society is a catalyst in this interactive process(Castro, 2022). Social media encourages the establishment of ties among users from various backgrounds, resulting in a strong social structure(Kapoor et al., 2018). People now spend a great deal of time on social media, exchanging and exploring information continually. People are increasingly accustomed to using social media to meet emotional needs or obtain information, such as relationships with close companions, reviews and suggestions for products/services and locations, or staying up to date on the latest news or entertainment. Hence, social media is widely recognized as a mechanism that contributes to businesses' marketing objectives and strategies, particularly in terms of customer engagement, customer relationship management, and communication (Filo et al., 2015). Stakeholders can enhance business and brand value through the platform by communicating, sharing information, providing personalized recommendations and generating customer word of mouth about existing and new products and services(Yadav & Rahman, 2017;Burinskienė et al., 2024). Additionally, social media helps create, develop, and maintain long - term customer relationships, build brand awareness, influence consumer attitudes and behavior, obtain feedback, enhance existing products and services, and increase sales(Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In the era of mobile Internet, the particularity of CEs is manifested by the huge number of high-sticky customers(Merkevičius et al., 2024). The information sharing and dissemination among consumers through social media helps to increase their cognition, understanding and trust in brands (Fu & Lai, 2016;Aistė & Vida, 2023). Accordingly, for the CEs industry, SMM plays an important role in influencing a company's brand value and customer response(Sharma et al., 2022). However, scholarly research on the role of SMM in CEs corporations is currently less focused and remains largely unexplored, there are still no studies that focus on the CEs industry(Pre et al., 2022). In this process, we plan to use a quantitative approach to collect data and information, where BT and BI will be used as mediating variables, with the aim of determining the impact of SMM of CEs on Chinese consumers' PDs in China. Based on this, this study will deeply explore the impact of SMM on consumers' purchasing decisions on Chinese social media platforms in the CEs industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social media marketing and Consumer electronics

CEs brands are selected as the research category in this study. CEs are electronic equipment intended for purchase and usage by end users or consumers for non-commercial or professional reasons (Techopedia, 2014). There are also many CEs brands, which adds to the difficulty of choice for consumers, leading them to rely on customized recommendations from social media (Trivedi & Sama, 2020). According to this, the consumption patterns and consumption decisions of CEs consumers are largely affected by various information of brands on the Internet (Paudel & Thapa, 2025).

The development of social media has changed the way consumers of CEs interact or acquire information. The positive e-word of mouth generated by users on social media platforms notably affects brand attitudes and purchase intentions of CEs products(Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017;Wenjia et al., 2025;Kexue et al., 2025). Perceived Ease of use, social media advertising, and e-word of mouth all directly impact the overall performance of online retail businesses in the CEs industry(Pre et al., 2022). Additionally, in the CEs industry, mentions in tweets on social media platforms to increase follower engagement have become important, such as Samsung's alliance with prominent Korean group BTS through advertising to be part of its products or to be the face of the brand(Garcia-Rivera et al., 2022). When planning marketing communications for CEs, there are obvious advantages to choosing expert influencers(Trivedi & Sama, 2020).

2.2. The stimulus-organic-response (S-O-R) model

The S-O-R model consists of three structures, namely stimulus, organism and response, which determine the behavioral outcome of an event(Vonoga, 2021). As shown in Figure 1, stimulus (S) is an organism's external environmental component. Organism (O) is a psychological transformation mechanism that allows the user to internalize stimuli and convert them into information. Response (R) describes the user's reaction to the external stimulus information contained in the relevant response behavior(Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Thus, previous knowledge, thinking skills, and self-efficacy all have moderating effects on behavioral responses (Attiq et al., 2017). Although the environment ultimately drives organisms' responses, individual and group characteristics can exert a positive or negative influence (Laato et al., 2020).

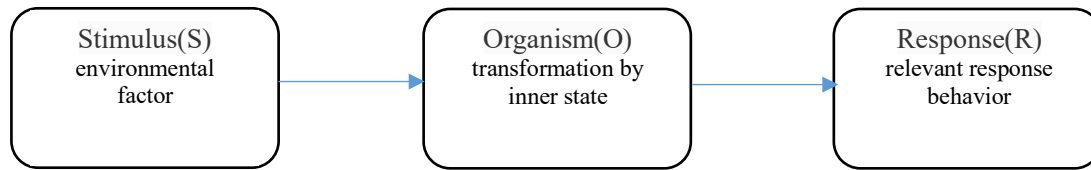| Stimulus(S) environmental factor	→	Organism(O) transformation by inner state	→	Response(R) relevant response behavior

Fig.1: The S-O-R model

The SOR model has been extensively examined in consumer research in order to better understand consumer attitudes and behavior(Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2021). Customers' emotional and cognitive states are influenced by the atmospheric signals of the online store, which has an impact on their purchases decisions(Eroglu et al., 2003). Furthermore, SMMA influence the mechanism by which consumers engagement behavior, which is positively correlated with consumers' participation intention, and the intensity of SMM strengthens the relationship between consumers' participation intention and participation behavior. The interaction between social media and consumers can increase consumers' PV of products and provide consumers with an immersive environment, thus stimulating consumers to continue to purchase products through social e-commerce(Hewei & Youngsook, 2022). Based on the SOR framework, the stimulus generated by SMM will directly affect the inner state of consumers, and influence the consumer-based brand equity and consumer inspiration, sequentially forming the purchase intention(Sharma et al., 2022). Research on SMMA, customer relationship quality, and brand loyalty (BL) can also be included in the SOR framework, SMMAs have a positive impact on customer relationship quality, which mediate between SMMAs and BL(Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2021).

Therefore, SOR model provides a clear theoretical basis and a rigorous research perspective for analyzing how SMM affects customer perception and thus consumer purchasing decision-making behavior(Hewei & Youngsook, 2022). It is appropriate for examining the extensive relationship between SMM and consumer purchase behavior indicated in our study based on its utilization and significance(Sharma et al., 2022). This study uses SMM as the external stimulus, PV、 BI and BT as the organism, and the PD of CEs products as a response. Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

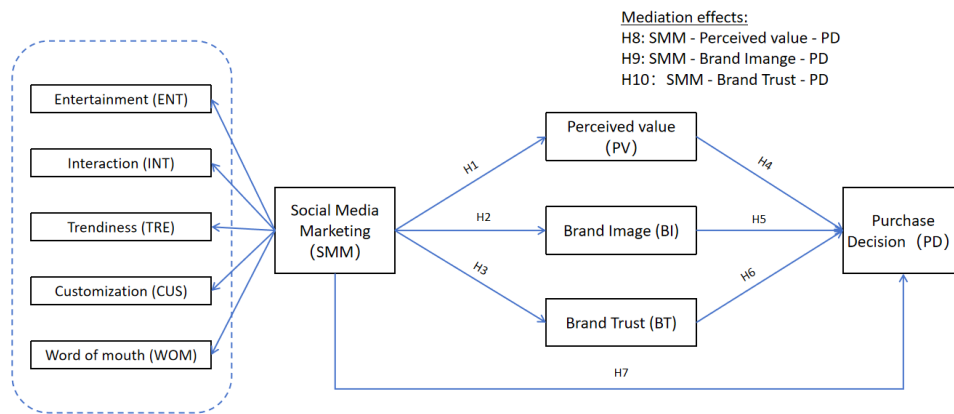# 3. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

Fig.2: Conceptual Framework

3.1. Social media marketing and Perceived value

Many scholars regard PV as an important indicator of business marketing. PV is based on the customer's PV of a product or service and may be characterised as a trade-off between what people think the rewards and costs are(Chen & Lin, 2019a). In essence, PV is a psychological evaluation that exists in the ownership of the product and the chosen product or service, it also comes from the consumer himself (Tynan et al., 2010).

As far as consumer behavior is concerned, value is the key factor that affects individual choice and behavior. Enterprises can use the experience value of customers to understand their preferences, so as to improve the added value of products, raise the value of goods and improve the experience effect (Shobeiri et al., 2013;Wittmer and Rowley, 2014). However, the effects of SMM on PV have been largely ignored in most studies. The creation of ideas, feedback and self-developed content for brands on social media platforms drives consumers' perceived brand value (France et al., 2018). SMM activities have a significant impact on PV(Chen & Lin, 2019a). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: SMM is positively related to PV.

3.2. Social media marketing and Brand image

A series of studies have shown that BI is formed and enhanced by consumers' exposure to marketing communications, including advertising and promotional content(Raji et al., 2019a). As social media platforms have become increasingly important in organizing the dissemination of brand-related messages and engaging consumers in promotional activities, these platforms have become a key bulwark for communicating different types of marketing communication messages to consumers (Rohm et al., 2013).

Businesses promote content by offering discounts or product trials on social media brands' pages (Raji et al., 2019b). Therefore, marketing communication on social media platforms plays an important role in successfully shaping BI and has an impact on consumers' behavioral intentions(Raji et al., 2019a).To increase recognition of a brand, social media is a vital instrument(Fanion, 2011). Enterprises' interactive marketing strategies on social media platforms such as Facebook will have a positive impact on BI (Hartzel et al., 2011). In other words, social media is an effective way for enterprises to interact with customers and is conducive to the development of a positive BI (Fortezza & Pencarelli, 2015). SMM activities have a positive impact on brand awareness and BI (Seo & Park, 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: SMM is positively related to BI.

3.3. Social media marketing and Brand trust

Social media interactions play a crucial role in fostering BT (Calefato et al., 2015). Once the target market consumers have trust in the brand, it means that the enterprise can more easily and accurately convey the marketing information and leave a good brand impression in the minds of consumers (Ebrahim, 2020). Customers' BT could be promoted by creating and disseminating entertaining social media advertisements and contents to meet their demands (Wottrich et al., 2017). SMM is recognized as a useful method for creating consumer relationships (Ismail, 2017).

Engagement on social media will foster trust and alleviate uncertainties that may impede customer interactions with brands (Khadim et al., 2018). Social media is viewed by consumers as a source of information, and its credibility plays an important role in marketing practices(Ebrahim, 2020). SMM's four structures: Brand Community, Entertainment, Interaction and customization are very effective for BT and brand loyalty, significantly and positively impacting BT and brand loyalty(Sohail et al., 2020).

From what has been discussed above, it can be concluded that SMM has a positive effect on BT(Sohail et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: SMM is positively related to BT.

3.4. Perceived value and Purchase decision

Value exists when the benefit of the purchase of a product or service is perceived to be superior to the money spent(Hanaysha, 2018a). PV refers to the psychological assessment and feelings of consumers regarding the perceived advantages of acquiring products or services(Ali et al., 2013). Previous research has shown that PV is a key structure that influences user behavior in a variety of situations. PV significantly affects user satisfaction (Lin & Wang, 2006; Carlson et al., 2015).

Furthermore, PV can also be divided into utilitarian value and hedonic value, both of which have an impact on user behavior. For example, utilitarian and hedonic values positively effect B2C users' desire to make recurring purchases (Chiu et al., 2014). The perceived utilitarian and hedonistic buying ideals can substantially influence shopper pleasure in retail environments (Kesari & Atulkar, 2016). The tendency to use mobile social network services is also significantly influenced by utilitarian and hedonistic values (Lin & Lu, 2015). Therefore, providing additional value is essential for cultivating client loyalty as well as fulfilment (Dube & Renaghan, 2000). The PV of products increases consumers' willingness to pay in their PDs(de Medeiros et al., 2016). Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: PV has a positive effect on PD.

3.5. Brand image and Purchase decision

If every product of a company can leave an impression in the minds of consumers, the target market and potential consumers will increase significantly, and the company will gain more profits. Previous literature has shown that a good BI leads to positive customer satisfaction. Customers try to derive value from BI, and this value can be reflected through promotional tools and customer satisfaction and building customer loyalty(Dash et al., 2021). The influence of BI on purchase intention is also very important and is crucial for retaining customers and increasing purchase intention (Dash et al., 2021).
The uniqueness of a brand is driven by a projected image, which is crucial in a competitive market where businesses are all selling similar products or services. Some scholars have found that the positive relationship between BI and consumers' self-image contributes to consumers' behavioral intention towards the brand (Paul, 2019). Therefore, a strong BI helps the brand gain consumers' trust and recognition, thus influencing consumers' purchasing decisions (Kumar et al., 2020). Hence, a good BI can make it easy and effective for marketers to carry out promotion activities to consumers

and improve customer loyalty to a large extent. The hypothesis to be tested in this direction is as follow:

H5: BI has a positive effect on PD.

3.6. Brand trust and Purchase decision

Brand trust can be defined as the consumers' readiness to depend on the brand. BT comes when consumers believe in the brand provider (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). How consumers react to interactions between different brands depends on trust in the brand(Hanaysha, 2022). Trust is an important factor in shaping customer behaviour (Jadil et al., 2022). BT will regulate the influence of brand equity on consumer response (Upadhyay et al., 2022a), thus affecting consumer willingness and brand loyalty (Sharma, 2021).

A strong brand can increase customers' trust in products and help them better understand and visualize what they are buying (Berry,2000). BT is the intermediary between brand equity and customer response(Ebrahim, 2020). Brand equity influences future purchases by building relationships in the form of BT (Esch et al., 2006). There is a positive and direct relationship between BT and customer response (i.e., brand preference, willingness to pay premium and brand loyalty)(Upadhyay et al., 2022a). Overall, BT has a positive impact on purchasing decisions (Pop et al., 2022). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: BT has a positive effect on PD.Perceived value, Brand image, Brand trust

3.7. Social media marketing and Purchase decision

Social media communication has a profound impact on consumers' purchasing intentions and decisions(Sharma et al., 2022). Many businesses are starting to make social media the primary focus of their marketing strategy, market their products and services to remain competitive in a challenging business environment and build a good image among the public(Hanaysha, 2018a). In addition, Some worldwide companies hire SMM specialists and consultants to gain better advise on the content and functions of social media advertising, so as to enhance the efficiency of marketing campaigns (Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2012).

Nowadays, social media platforms are being used by marketers to communicate with customers and conduct promotions (Shareef et al.,2019). Using these platforms, companies can promote their brands and successfully engage in two-way communication with their target audience (Hasan & Sohail, 2021). The authenticity of such two-way communication will lead to a higher degree of consumer loyalty and ultimately stronger purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2012; Hutter et al., 2013; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). To sum up, SMM is considered to be one of the most economical communication methods and an excellent ways of gathering client information (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). Therefore, SMM plays an important role in shaping PD (Khatib, 2016; Yogesh & Yesha, 2014). Based on the above discussion, the hypothesis is proposed:

H7：SMM is positively related to PD.

3.8. The mediating effect of Perceived value, Brand image and Brand trust

There have been previous studies on the mediating effects of perceied value, BI and BT. It was found that PV can be used as an intermediary variable to mediate the relationship between purchase intention and SMM. Some scholars studied the impact of corporate citizenship, SMM, sales enhancement and shop environment on PV and customer retention in the retail industry. The results show that PV has an obvious positive effect on customer retention. PV mediates the relationship between SMM and customer retention(Hanaysha, 2018c). BI is a complete intermediary variable, and there is a significant relationship between SMM and purchase intention through BI. BI can mediate the relationship between SMM and purchasing decisions(Savitri et al., 2022).

Social media advertising content and social media sales promotion content mediate consumers' purchasing preferences and purchasing behaviors through BI. Thus, advertising content and

promotional information on social media platforms can improve its BI and trigger consumers' expected reactions and behaviors(Raji et al., 2019). Consumer focus on brands in social media and other online places is primarily driven by BT (Chahal & Rani, 2017). It was confirmed that BT facilitates the connection between SMM attributes and brand equity(Hafez, 2021). SMM has a huge impact on customer response by increasing brand equity and BT(Upadhyay et al., 2022a). Based on the existing literature review, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed:

H8: PV mediates the relationship between SMM and PD.

H9: BI mediates the relationship between SMM and PD.

H10: BT mediates the relationship between SMM and PD.

4. Methodology

4.1. Measures

All of the measured construction items selected in this study are from the mature scale(Table 1). We recorded all of these responses using a five-point Likert scale, from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Table 1: The questionnaire with all of the final items.

Construct		Items	Supporting literature
Social media marketing (SMM)	**Entertainment (ENT)**	ENT1	Kim and Ko (2012); Cheung et al., (2020)
		ENT2	
		ENT3	
		ENT4	
	Interaction (INT)	INT1	Kim and Ko (2012); Cheung et al., (2020)
		INT2	
		INT3	
		INT4	
	Trendiness (TRE)	TRE1	Kim and Ko (2012); Cheung et al., (2020)
		TRE2	
		TRE3	
	Customization (CUS)	CUS1	Kim and Ko (2012); Cheung et al., (2020)
		CUS2	
		CUS3	
		CUS4	
		CUS5	
	Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)	WOM1	Kim and Ko (2012); Cheung et al., (2020)
		WOM2	
		WOM3	
Perceived value（PV）		PV1	Moslehpour et al. (2018)
		PV2	
		PV3	
Brand image (BI)		BI1	Kim and Hyun (2011); Moslehpour et al., (2021)
		BI2	
		BI3	
		BI4	
Brand trust (BT)	**Brand reliability(BTR)**	BTR1	Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003); Upadhyay et al. (2021)
		BTR2	
		BTR3	

	BTR4	
Brand intentions(BTI)	BTI1	Munuera-Aleman et al. (2003); Upadhyay et al. (2021)
	BTI2	
	BTI3	
	BTI4	
Purchase decision (PD)	PD1	Hanaysha (2018)
	PD2	
	PD3	
	PD4	
	PD5	

4.2. Data collection

This study was released through Questionnaire Star, a well-known questionnaire collection website in China, and the questionnaire was distributed from May 17, 2024 to July 30, 2024. A total of 517 participants completed the survey, out of which 112 participants indicated that they had never learned about CEs through social media platforms (answering no to question 7 question automatically ended the answer sheet), which was excluded from this study, thus, a total of 405 valid questionnaires were collected. The personal data of the respondents were collected to infer valid conclusions about the results of the study. The descriptive characteristics of the respondents are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive characteristics of the respondents

	Total = 405	
Demographic	**Frequency**	**(%)**
Gender		
Male	211	52.1
Female	194	47.9
Age		
18-25 years	70	17.3
26-30 years	114	28.1
31-40 years	151	37.3
41-55 years	50	12.3
55 or above	20	4.9
Marital status		
Single	85	21
Married	320	79
Level of education		
High school diploma or below	21	5.2
College degree	144	35.6
Bachelor	191	47.2
Post graduate or above	49	12.1
How often use social media		
< 1 Hour per day	58	14.3
1–3 hours per day	131	32.3
3–5 hours per day	161	39.8
> 5 Hours per day	55	13.6
Annual income level		
< 50,000 yuan	46	11.4

50,000 - 100,000 yuan	143	35.3
100,000 - 200,000 yuan	189	46.7
200,000 - 300,000 yuan	21	5.2
> 300,000 yuan	6	1.5
Platforms you receive the most information about CEs		
wechat	124	30.6
tiktok	107	26.4
rednote	58	14.3
weibo	34	8.4
QQ	73	18
others	9	2.2
Favorite CEs brands		
HUAWEI	63	15.6
Xiaomi	103	25.4
OPPO	50	12.3
Apple	82	20.2
Sumsung	57	14.1
Sony	45	11.1
others	5	1.2

The survey respondents were 52.1% male and 47.9% female. Most of them had a bachelor's degree (47.2%), followed by a college degree (35.6%). The most prevalent age category of respondents was 31 to 40 years old (37.3%), followed by 26 to 30 years old (28.1%) and 18 to 25 years old (17.3%), reflecting the fact that China's domestic active social media users are predominantly young and middle-aged, and that young and middle-aged people pay more attention to social media than older people. Thanks to the rapid development of smartphones in China, 39.8% of respondents use social media for 3-5 hours every day, and 32.3% of people use social media for 1-3 hours every day. We can also see from Table 2 that the top three social media used by respondents are WeChat (30.6%), Shake (26.4%) and Xiaohongshu (14.3%). The favorite CEs brands are Xiaomi (25.4), Apple (20.2%), and Huawei (15.6).

5. Result

The SPSS22.0 and AMOS26.0 software were employed for analyzing and estimating the measurement and structural models.

5.1. Measurement model assessment

Before evaluating the hypotheses, we assessed the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model. The assessment of convergent validity was conducted through three criteria: composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and external loadings. Hair et al. (2016) established the thresholds for AVE, CR, and external loadings at 0.5, 0.7, and 0.7, respectively. In this study, all CR values exceeded 0.7, and the AVE values for all constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.5. Individual values for external loadings were slightly below 0.7 and were retained as recommended by Hair et al. (2016), i.e., if these items were deleted there would be no increase in CR or AVE, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Constructs reliability and validity

Construct Name	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
ENT	ENT1	0.727	0.828	0.547
	ENT2	0.723		
	ENT3	0.779		
	ENT4	0.727		
INT	INT1	0.749	0.846	0.578
	INT2	0.759		
	INT3	0.770		
	INT4	0.763		
TRE	TRE1	0.773	0.807	0.582
	TRE2	0.771		
	TRE3	0.744		
CUS	CUS1	0.791	0.885	0.606
	CUS2	0.804		
	CUS3	0.742		
	CUS4	0.790		
	CUS5	0.764		
WOM	WOM1	0.812	0.837	0.631
	WOM2	0.818		
	WOM3	0.751		
PV	PV1	0.735	0.804	0.577
	PV2	0.752		
	PV3	0.791		
BI	BI1	0.757	0.802	0.504
	BI2	0.676		
	BI3	0.702		
	BI4	0.701		
BTR	BTR1	0.799	0.863	0.612
	BTR2	0.796		
	BTR3	0.724		
	BTR4	0.807		
BTI	BTI1	0.759	0.852	0.591
	BTI2	0.764		
	BTI3	0.761		
	BTI4	0.790		
PD	PD1	0.695	0.848	0.528
	PD2	0.726		
	PD3	0.729		
	PD4	0.727		
	PD5	0.756		

From the above table, it can be seen that the AVE values for mean variance extraction ranged from 0.504 to 0.631, all of which were greater than 0.5, and the CR values for joint reliability ranged from 0.802 to 0.885, all of which were greater than 0.7, which indicates that the variables of the present study have a good convergent validity.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was employed to assess the distinguishing validity. The establishment of discriminant validity demonstrates the distinctiveness of the construct, as evidenced by the square root value of each construct exceeding the non-diagonal cross values of the other

constructs, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Discriminant validity results based on Fornell–Larcker criterion

	ENT	INT	TRE	CUS	WOM	PV	BI	BTR	BTI	PD
ENT	*0.739*									
INT	0.626	*0.760*								
TRE	0.662	0.599	*0.763*							
CUS	0.628	0.600	0.644	*0.779*						
WOM	0.509	0.489	0.562	0.587	*0.794*					
PV	0.264	0.140	0.178	0.138	0.031	*0.760*				
BI	0.291	0.238	0.277	0.191	0.078	0.457	*0.710*			
BTR	0.184	0.084	0.206	0.186	0.104	0.315	0.263	*0.782*		
BTI	0.198	0.095	0.094	0.083	0.079	0.305	0.298	0.652	*0.769*	
PD	0.371	0.301	0.299	0.273	0.119	0.659	0.463	0.369	0.372	*0.727*

As shown in the table above, it may be concluded that there is good discriminant validity between the latent variables in this study because the correlation coefficients between them are smaller than the square root value of the AVE of each latent variable.

5.2. Structural model assessment

The goodness-of-fit indices of the CFA and structural models can be seen according to Table 5:

(1) The measurement model (χ2 = 677.064, df = 657, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation [RMSEA] = 0.009, Goodness-of-Fit Index [GFI] = 0.922, Normative Fit Index [NFI] = 0.915, Comparative Fit Index [CFI] = 0.997, Incremental Fit Index [IFI] = 0.997, Amended Goodness-of-Fit [AGFI] = 0.908, Tucker-Lewis Index [TLI] = 0.997), indicating that the model has a good validated factor analysis fit, and good model fit for entertainment, interactivity, trendiness, customization, word-of-mouth, PV, BI, brand reliability, brand intent, and PD as a whole.

(2) The structural model (χ2 = 803.216, df = 688, [RMSEA] = 0.020, [GFI] = 0.908, [NFI] = 0.900, [CFI] = 0.984, [IFI] = 0.984, [AGFI] = 0.895, [TLI] = 0.983), indicating an overall good model fit.

Table 5: Goodness-of-Fit Indices

	x^2(df)	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	GFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	AGFI	TLI
CFA	677.064(657)	1.031	0.009	0.922	0.915	0.997	0.997	0.908	0.997
SEM	803.216(688)	1.675	0.020	0.908	0.900	0.984	0.984	0.895	0.983

Figure 3 illustrates the outcomes of the hypothetical structural model assessment, with asterisks denoting estimated path coefficients for relevant pathways.
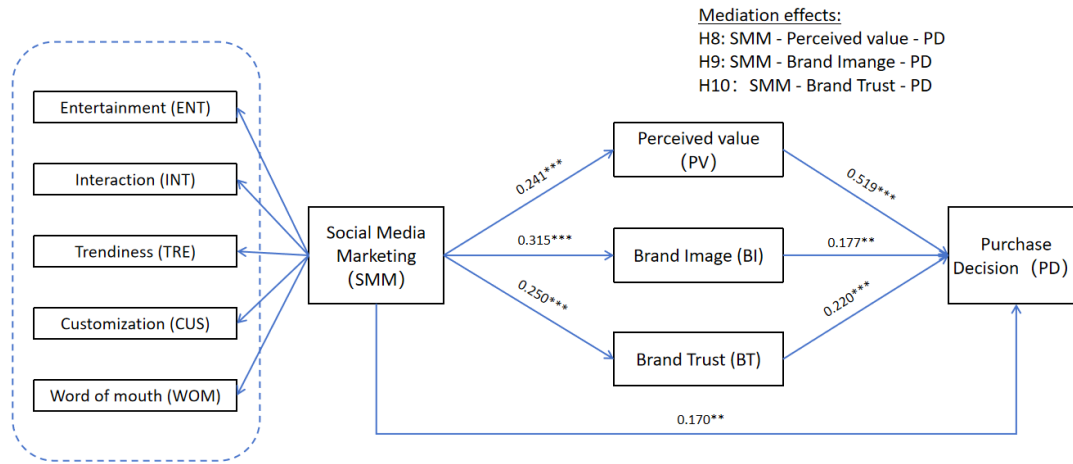
Fig.3: Path coefficients

The outcomes of assessing the structural model are presented in Table 6. From the results of the path analysis, hypotheses H1-H7 are all significant. Based on the theory of SMM on PV, SMM has a standardized path coefficient of 0.241 (p=***) which means it has a positive effect on PV. According to the hypothesis of SMM on BT, SMM has a significant beneficial impact on BT with a standardized path coefficient of 0.250 (p=***).With a standardized path coefficient of 0.315 (p=***), SMM significantly increases BI from the hypothesis of SMM on BI.PV positively affects PD with a standardized path coefficient of 0.519 (p=***).The PV hypothesis shows a substantial positive effect on PD with a standardized path coefficient of 0.519 (p=***). The hypothesis of BI on PD shows a favourable effect with a standardized path coefficient of 0.177 (p=0.001); and the hypothesis of BT on PD shows a substantial beneficial effect with a standardized path coefficient of 0.220 (p=***). The hypothesis regarding SMM impact on PD indicates a significant positive effect, evidenced by a standardised path coefficient of 0.170 (p=0.004).

Table 6: Hypotheses testing

Path	Hypothesis	Standardized Regression Weights	t-values	p-values	Results
SMM → PV	H1	0.241	3.795	***	Supported
SMM → BI	H2	0.315	4.804	***	Supported
SMM → BT	H3	0.250	3.440	***	Supported
PV → PD	H4	0.519	8.103	***	Supported
BI → PD	H5	0.177	3.267	0.0011	Supported
BT → PD	H6	0.220	3.724	***	Supported
SMM → PD	H7	0.170	2.892	0.0038	Supported

5.3. Mediating effect analysis

In order to verify the mediating role of PV, BI and BT between SMM and PDs, this study adopts the test proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). First, if the p-value of the indirect effect of SMM on PD is significant, the first condition for the existence of mediating effect can be satisfied. Then the lower and upper bound values are observed and if the lower and upper bound values between them are not zero, the existence of mediation effect can be confirmed and proved. The results in Table 7 confirm that there is an indirect effect of PV between SMM and PD (p-value = 0.000,LL = 0.073, UL = 0.280) and therefore, H8 is accepted. The findings also show that the effect of SMM on PD is also moderated by BI and BT (p-value= 0.004,LL = 0.022,UL = 0.150, and p-value= 0.001,LL = 0.023,UL = 0.149),

therefore, H9 and H10 are also accepted.

Table 7: The mediating effect analysis.

Path	Hypothesis	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P-value	Results
SMM → PV → PD	H8	0.1538	0.0732	0.2804	0.0004	Supported
SMM → BI → PD	H9	0.0687	0.0224	0.1504	0.0045	Supported
SMM → PT → PD	H10	0.0675	0.0231	0.149	0.0010	Supported

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the SOR theory, this study investigates the direct and indirect effects of SMM of CEs products on consumers' PDs and examines whether PV, BI and BT mediate between them in the Chinese market. This study makes a significant theoretical and applied contribution to our knowledge of how SMM influences consumer behaviour and purchase intention. Through empirical tests, it can be concluded that SMM has a positive impact on consumer PDs in the Chinese CEs market, and can positively influence PDs by positively influencing PV, BI and BT. Specifically, first, just as SMM has been shown to positively influence consumers' purchase intentions or PDs in other countries or other domains(Cheung et al., 2021; Hanaysha, 2022; Hasan & Sohail, 2021; Moslehpour et al., 2020; Palalic et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2022; Shuyi et al., 2022)，SMM by Chinese CEs brands has also been shown to positively and positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour. In addition, SMM of CEs products also has a significant positive impact on PV, BI and BT. This means that the entertainment, interactivity, trend line, trending and word-of-mouth of SMM increases consumers' PV, and when consumers see marketing advertisements or promotions for CEs products on social media, they tend to deepen their impression of the BI as well as their trust in the brand. This finding is supported by many researchers(BiLgiN, 2018; Guha et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2018; Upadhyay et al., 2022b;).At the same time, PV, BI and BT in turn contribute positively to the PD. Many researchers have found the same result that PV plays an important role in influencing consumers' PD(Hanaysha, 2018b)，positive BI helps to differentiate the brand from other competing brands(Guha et al., 2021)，and BT is important in building and maintaining a strong and lasting relationship between the customer and the service provider(Hanaysha, 2022). Finally, PV, BI and BT act as mediators that indirectly influence the role of SMM in PDs. SMM has a significant effect on PV, which in turn influences purchase intention(Chen & Lin, 2019b), BI mediates the relationship between SMM and PD(Savitri et al., 2022), and this mediating effect holds even when it is not industry or product specific(Zhang et al., 2019).

The findings of this study make a significant contribution to the development of SMM in China, both in theoretical and practical terms. In terms of theoretical implications, the study discusses in detail the role of SMM in promoting PV, BI, and BT, as well as their mediate impact on purchase intention. Firstly, although there are numerous dimensions of SMM measurement scales in the social media literature, which may vary from industry to industry, this study primarily utilised the five-dimensional measurement scale developed by Kim and Ko (2012) to measure the SMM activities of CEs in China. Secondly, it extends the theoretical understanding of the concept of SMM in the industry context of CEs by linking SMM activities to PV, BI, and BT. Thirdly, the present study is distinctive in its focus on prevalent social media platforms within China (tiktok, rednote, etc.), a departure from the focus of previous literature on Facebook or YouTube. This contributes to the existing literature in the field of SMM. From a practical standpoint, SMM, as a mainstream form of marketing for contemporary CEs products, has the potential to positively influence customers' purchase intentions. In developing marketing strategies, companies should place greater emphasis on SMM initiatives and allocate more financial resources to technology and talent acquisition. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize the significant role that PV, BI and BT play in amplifying

the impact of SMM on customers' PDs.

Despite the fact that all the hypotheses of this study are supported, there are some limitations. The CEs companies that were selected for this study were chosen during a questionnaire survey and are large companies with a certain level of brand awareness and stable market share. The empirical results show that consumers' PV, BI, and BT for SMM are positive, but further research is needed to ascertain whether this is also the case for small and medium-sized companies that are not so well known(Upadhyay et al., 2022b). Furthermore, the advent of AI technology has given rise to novel SMM techniques, such as digital avatar, which has gained significant popularity in recent times. This technology facilitates the acquisition of customers through the marketing activities of digital virtual web celebrities. However, this aspect has not been addressed in the present study. Consequently, subsequent research endeavors may concentrate on the circumstances of small and medium-sized enterprises whilst contemplating the transformations in SMM and the influence of augmented reality technologies, such as digital avatars, virtual reality technologies, and artificial intelligence technologies, on consumer behavior.

Authors' contributions
Conceived & designed the experiment: Asad Ur Rehman, Ihtisham Ullah
Analysed & interpreted the data: Asad Ur Rehman, Zhou Yuan
Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data: Ayesha Nawal, Mohd Anuar Bin Sulaiman, Wondemsew Mesafint Kebadie
Wrote the paper: Zhou Yuan

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics Approval and Statement
This study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Management and Science University (MSU), Malaysia **(Reference No.: EA-L1-01-GSM-2024-04-0021)**. The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013 revision). All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants were informed that they could leave the survey incomplete and withdraw from the study at any time without providing clarification. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were strictly maintained throughout the study.

Declaration of Interests
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability statement
Data available upon reasonable request from the first author, Zhou Yuan.

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