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THE ROLE OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, PERCEIVED VALUE, TRUST, AND INFLUENCER MARKETING IN DETERMINING PURCHASE INTENTION IN SOCIAL COMMERCE

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Abstract

The paper aims to improve understanding about the causes why customers intend to purchase online through social media networks. The study examined factors affecting purchase intention namely: country of origin effect, trust, perceived value, and influencer marketing on the willingness of buyers to purchase clothes through social commerce. A questionnaire was established for data collection, and 400 forms were collected in Lebanon, and were analyzed using SEM to examine the relationships in the conceptual framework suggested. Results designated that country of origin, trust, and perceived value were three significant precursors of customers' purchase intention in the context of social commerce. Moreover, country of origin and perceived value can impact trust beliefs; and influencer marketing could enhance perceived value of commodity purchased. This research suggests vital inferences to both scholars and professionals and highlights the implications of factors' motivating intention to buy from vendors in social media networks. The paper is amid the early efforts to evaluate the effect of country of origin on intention to purchase among consumers in social commerce settings.

Keywords

Online Shopping, Country of Origin, Trust, Perceived Value, Influencer marketing, Social Commerce, Social Media, Purchase Intention

The Role of Country of Origin, Perceived Value, Trust, and Influencer Marketing in Determining Purchase Intention in Social Commerce

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1. INTRODUCTION

Retail is changing at a speeded frequency due to alterations offered by high-tech tools and emergent customer behaviors, and innovative tools are promising in enhancing our future (The Deloitte Consumer Review, 2018). The rise of social commerce succeeding the technology's evolution and demand signifies the digital era (Kassim et al., 2017). Technology is changing quickly, with great transformation foreseen for the retailing format, this lead to a severe threat to the traditional retail industry and the employment of people in this sector (Kaur and Kumar, 2019). According to Digital Marketing Report (2019) by Hootsuite, the number of universal internet users is 4.388 billion, and the number of social media users is 3.484 billion. These numbers show the high penetration levels of social media in the lifestyle of humans. Social Commerce is considered to be a subcategory of e-commerce; it implements web 2.0 frames and tools to help in online interactive contacts and offerings for obtaining and swapping shopping experiences (Horng and Wu, 2020). S-commerce enables shoppers to perform one or more of the following activities: (1) observe research patterns of others, their considerations, and their buying behavior, (2) sharing user's purchases or info about it; (3) networking with other buyers (Da Costa Teves, 2013).

To comprehend more the social commerce context, the study will focus on four main antecedents namely: country of origin, perceived value, trust, and influencer marketing; these factors are considered to be the most deliberated elements in online buying intention and adds country of origin as a novel factor which wasn't studied previously in the social commerce field. First of all, purchasing over social media this way means that consumers are more vulnerable to fraudulent practices (Sembada & Koay, 2020); so trust is vital factor, because there is uncertainty around online transactions, consumers are hesitant to purchase online due to mistrust of online platforms (Pons et al., 2018). Secondly, when inspecting consumer behavior frameworks, value is critical factor that influences the people choices and behavior; and sellers could utilize it to learn more about customer preferences and make modifications to enhance the added value of the product or service delivered or the overall experience (Chen & Lin, 2019). The novel consumption environment of social commerce could alter buyer perceived value in relevance to new different purchase situations, in addition to the amendment of the components constituting perceived consumer value in online settings (Alshibly, 2015). Thirdly, Influencers are nowadays opinion leaders and role models exercising impact on the decision-making routes of individuals; marketers are conscious about fetching their products nearer to their prospective clienteles, and

devote extra capitals in influencer marketing campaigns (Belanche et al., 2020). Finally, earlier work did not investigate the country of origin effect on the intention to purchase in social commerce settings, representing a gap in the literature needed to be filled.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theoretical Background

The main research theme deployed in S-commerce field was the use behavior theme constituting around 49% of the total papers written; and the use behavior theme includes words such as: actual behavior; consumer attitude; customer loyalty; where behavioral intention is the most popular measure adopted in user behavior research theme (Han et al., 2018). Behavioral theories such as the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the theory of planned behavior (TPB), technology acceptance model (TAM), and the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) were applied in a number of the studies made in the domain of S-commerce (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). This theoretical base will be used to build our conceptual framework, mainly the UTAUT2 model, by which two variables could be deployed from this model namely: 1- “social influence” i.e. the way consumers are influenced by important others; and 2- “price value” i.e. the cognitive tradeoff between benefits and cost for customers (Venkatesh, et al. 2012). By the same token, we employed influencer marketing and perceived value to inspect if those two constructs affect the behavioral intentions of consumer in S-commerce, in addition, the study added a common tested factor which is the trust beliefs, and a newly added factor in this domain which is perceptions about the country of origin of the products sold.

2.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intentions (PI) are regularly evaluated and used by marketers as a feedback for decisions about products and services and their anticipated purchases by customers (Morwitz, 2014). Moreover, purchase intention can be considered as “the possibility of a person to perform a specific behavior” (Chen et al., 2018). Moreover, Pavlou (2003) states that online purchase intention refers to “the consumers’ willingness to be involved in an online transaction”. The purchasing behavior of online consumers is linked to how clients make their choices regarding what product or services to purchase online (Meskaran et al, 2013). Therefore, it is critical to scrutinize the purchase intentions of customers to anticipate customer buying willingness; as this would help in anticipating the actual purchase decision which leads to high sales value and volumes.

2.3 Country of Origin (COO)

Since 1960's, country of origin effect (COO) was investigated earlier in marketing research. The first to examine such a topic was Schooler in 1965. His article shows that regional uncertainties, distrusts, and hostilities create unseen walls against better trade within Central American Common Market (CACM), and claims that the prevailing predispositions concerning the people of a certain nation influence the attitude toward its goods (Schooler, 1965). Bilkey & Nes (1982) argued that COO of a product can be referred to "the informational cue on a product, and usually is communicated by the phrase, Made in (name of country)". Stereotypical beliefs are developed by customers about products from certain countries in terms of product attributes influencing the evaluation of products and brands (Yasin et al., 2012). Country of origin image stereotype refers to any stimulus or preference on product assessment resulting from country-of-origin image (Xie et al., 2018). Many researchers use COO as an umbrella notion to designate research that combines both the Product Country Image and COO Image (Motsi, 2016). However, in this study will consider the COO of the products as a solo extrinsic cue to investigate the influence on purchase intention of clothes in social media. Extrinsic cues are not physically a part of the product such as country of origin, brand name, and price, whereas intrinsic cues are physical characteristics as performance and style (Lee and Lou, 1995).

Functioning in extremely competitive local and overseas marketplaces global businesses need to comprehend consumers' perceptions and assessments of foreign-made goods (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008). Lin and Chen (2006), argue that COO image have a noteworthy positively impact purchaser buying choice (Lin & Chen, 2006, Shahrokh et al., 2014). COO does seem to be a significant informational cue for quality and value ratings, moreover; a positive COO image reimburses a weak brand (Ahmed et al., 2002). In USA, Kabadayi & Lerman (2011) examined the effect of country of origin information on purchase intention of toys of Chinese or German origin; and the findings showed a strong positive effect of country of origin on intention to buy a certain "made-in" product. COO cue is influential in the online environment when it comes to consumers' purchase intentions (Yu et al., 2013). COO positively affects assessments of product quality and value, and impacts purchase intention (Abdelkader, 2015; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Esmailpour & Jobeni, 2017; Sinrungtam, 2013). Therefore, this study can hypothesize:

H1: Country of origin has a direct positive effect on purchase intention in social commerce.

H2: Country of origin positively influences customer perceived value in social commerce.

A firm's Country of Origin reputation and consumer trust are required to create interrelationships between foreign businesses and customers (Torres & Gutiérrez, 2007). Rosenbloom & Haefner (2009) claim that trust in products of global brands assisted in lessening the ambiguity associated with high involvement products, and they inferred that COO was correlated with the concept of trust; and the two variables are both reliant on the geographic area of the individuals. COO reputation and consumer trust are essential to create interrelationships between foreign businesses and customers, whereby animosity or hostility of certain nations toward products coming from abroad can reduce trust in foreign products (Jiménez & San-Martin, 2016; Torres & Gutiérrez, 2007), and COO's brand reputation impacts trust in the developing market more than in the developed market (Jimenez & San-Martin, 2014). Hence, the following research hypothesis is suggested:

H3: Country of origin has a positive direct impact on customer Trust in social commerce.

2.4 Trust

Potential purchasers need to trust vendors in their accountability to fulfill their needs, they expect reliable behavior, for example in sending products fast, and by keeping their words, in a way to reduce uncertainty relevant to e-transaction as whole (Gefen & Straub, 2004; Zhoa et al., 2020). Caused by certain quality deficits; no business these days may sense full safety from a commercial catastrophe, and trust could diminish the damaging effect of such a catastrophe and defend the seller (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). Trust possesses a substantial positive impact on purchase intentions in online environments (Chen, 2012; Mosunmola et al., 2019; Suh et al., 2015). Consumer's trust in combination with other factors is likely to have robust effects on shopper's buying intention and decisions (Rachbini, 2018). Additionally, trust can reduce consumers' sense of threat when intending to buy from vendors (Xu & Wang, 2018). A number of sellers have effectively exploited S-commerce to improve their commercial activities; however, some of them were unsuccessful in their S-commerce policies and received plentiful complaints about trust, security, and privacy in information exchange (Hajli et al., 2017). Therefore, trust can decrease online consumers' worries about the commercial exchange, and lessen the complication of communication with retailers, thus encouraging the accomplishment of online transactions. Consequently, it is suggested that:

H4: Customer Trust has a positive direct influence on purchase intention in social commerce.

2.5 Customer Perceived Value

Consumer perceptions of value have been studied in behavioral landscape within the field of marketing, and have been widely researched to discover its capability to contribute in gaining an improved understanding of the purchase decision making process of shoppers (Zauner et al., 2015). Zeithaml (1988) defined Perceived value as “the overall assessment of the utility of a product based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given”. This is considered being the most common used uni-dimensional definition in marketing research. Nevertheless, this study will follow Chen et al. (2018) definition of perceived value, which refers to: “the net gain the customer expects to receive from using social commerce websites” as it is the most relevant definition related to our research regarding shopping clothes on social networking sites. In the online shopping context for clothing businesses; there is a positive relationship between the perceived value on one side and trust in another (Karaboğa et al., 2017). Trust is positively influenced with perceived value directly (Al Huwaishel & Al Meshal, 2018; Prameka et al., 2016). Mosunmola et al. (2019) explored the effect of perceived value dimensions (utilitarian and hedonic value) on trust and found a positive relation between the two variables. Thus, this research will suggest the following:

H5: Customer perceived value will positively influence Trust in social commerce.

In retail contexts, perceived value enhances store purchase intentions (Baker et al., 2002). Many online stores apply number of marketing tactics, such as price discounts, free delivery, free sample, and various payment options, to convey superior shopper value of e-shopping and enhance shoppers' purchase intentions (Wu et al. 2014). Perceived value and trust are positively affecting online purchase intention where perceived value is a key precursor; simply, the more the perceived value, the higher is the intention to shop online (Chen, 2012; Ponte et al., 2015; Yun, 2011). Wu et al. (2014) suggested a framework to apprehend the influences of perceived value and transaction cost variables on online repurchase intention. Results showed that consumers' perceived value positively affects purchase intention and cost constituents negatively affects purchase intention. In the context of social commerce, Gan & Wang (2017) argued that perceptions of value have noteworthy positive influences on purchase intention. As a result, the study hypothesizes the following:

H6: Customer perceived value positively affect the purchase intention in social commerce.

2.6 Influencer Marketing

Companies hope that the influencers through promoting companies' goods would generate purchase intention for their followers. Sammis et al. (2016) referred influencer marketing to the "art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share messages with their audiences in the form of sponsored content". Also, Influencer Marketing refers to "the identification and use of specific key individuals who hold influence over potential buyers of a brand or product to aid in the marketing activities of the brand and act as a powerful mechanism for electronic word of mouth" (Evans et al., 2017). Social media influencers have established themselves as possible endorsers, and believed to be the best cost-efficient and effective marketing trends (Lim et al., 2017). Companies devote a huge sum of money in influencer marketing activities, whereby businesses seek recommendations for their products or services from persons with a large number of followers in a certain social network (Muller et al., 2018). Arora et al. (2019) argue that marketing specialists are dynamically discovering these social media platforms for inducing customers to interact and buy; and latest studies entitles that opinion leaders can be convincing peers about certain subjects especially in the domain of fashion marketing. Social media influencers spent years evolving and building interactions with their followers, their endorsements can inspire purchase intention and stimulate followers to take a particular action (Chi et al., 2011; Top Influencer Brand Guide, 2017). Perceived value is expressively influenced by credibility perceptions of informational and social resources, such as influencers (Yun, 2011). In fact, celebrity involvement is positively related to customer perceived value (Yen & Teng, 2015). Therefore, the study proposes the following:

H7: Influencer marketing positively affect customer perceived value in social commerce.

Influencer marketing positively influences purchasing intentions and attitudes in the fashion and beauty industry; consumers in various age groups hold positive beliefs towards blogs, expressing that they feel bonded to the bloggers and their blogs. In addition, higher age groups access blogs more than others, desiring to stay up to date with the trends and looking for information (Paço & Oliveira, 2017). Instagram celebrities can influence young female purchase behavior, and modern celebrities such as bloggers, YouTubers hold the highest influence regarded as more credible, while females on Instagram prefer to follow Influencers with superior content in terms of visual characteristics and motivating reviews (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). It is believed that social media influencers impact purchase intention of consumers (Chi et al., 2011; Lim et al., 2017). Robelo (2017) point out that perceived "attractiveness" and "trustworthiness" of influencers are

the scopes of credibility that better explain purchase intention of shoppers' purchase intention. Lee (2018) confirmed that information quality delivered by influencer and influencer credibility are important to create information usefulness perceived by customers; which in turn expressively and positively affected the customers' purchase intentions. Influencers are capable to grow closer ties with their followers, which leads to forming beneficial, trustworthy and reliable connections, inspiring followers to discover novel brands/products they may buy or recommend to others (Belanche et al., 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H8: Influencer marketing positively affects customers' purchase intention in social commerce.

2.7 Research Framework

Based on the earlier hypothesized relationships between various constructs; a conceptual framework is constructed (Figure 1).

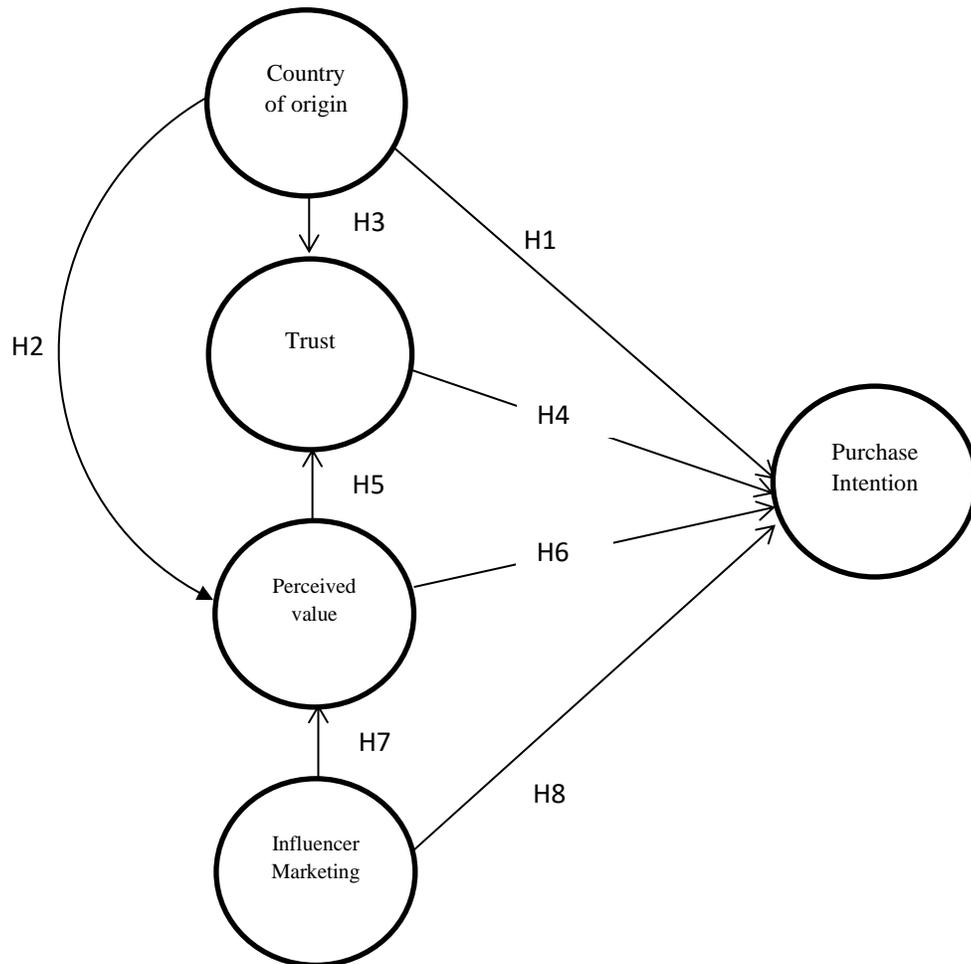


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Population and Sampling

Population refers to the collection of members that matches a set of specifications put by researcher (Polit & Hungler, 1999). Population of this study is defined as all individuals living in Lebanon, who are above 16 years, use social media networks, and who are willing, interested, having sufficient experience in buying clothes through s-commerce in Lebanon. The numbers show that the desired population age range; constitutes around 5,113,000 persons i.e. 75.91 % of the total 6,848,981 Lebanese population (UN, 2018). According to Wearesocial (2020), 66% of the Lebanese individuals are considered to be active social media users, thus, 3,881,278 will be the approximate total anticipated number of the research population. In this research, non-probability sampling is being chosen because there is no sampling frame available. Purposive Sampling is the technique that will be used in this research. In majority of marketing research studies, the estimate of the population's characteristics is at 95% confidence level with an acceptable error up to 5%. Using a simplified formula developed by Yamane (1967), the suggested sample size will be as follows: $n = N / 1 + N (e^2)$, where n is the sample size, N is the total population, and e is the level of precision or the marginal error of 5% (i.e. 0.05). Therefore, the recommended sample size would be equal to: $n = 3,881,278 / 1 + 3,881,278 (0.05^2) = 399.38$. Thus; the research sample size will be 400.

3.2 Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire in this study entails questions that are related to the research background. Thus, it will be distributed to the respondents who are eligible to answer and matches the research criteria. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 is about demographic information, such as age, gender, marital status, education, area of residence, income level, and the preferred shopping platform and device, and Part 2 of the questionnaire (shown in Appendix), shows the measurements adopted for evaluating the factors affecting purchase intention toward clothing in Lebanese social commerce context. The items to measure the constructs were established using inputs from existing validated scales in the literature.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Sample Profiling

The respondents profile is exhibited in Table 1 which shows the breakdown of the respondents in terms of gender, age, marital status, area of residence, educational level, and the monthly income.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents (N=400)

Attribute	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	187	46.8
	Female	213	53.3
Age	15 to < 25	112	28.0
	25 to < 35	198	49.5
	35 to < 45	69	17.3
	45 to < 55	19	4.8
	55to < 65	1	0.3
	66 and more	1	0.3
Marital Status	Single	211	52.8
	Married	168	42.0
	Divorced	10	2.5
	Widowed	1	0.3
	In a relation	10	2.5
Education	Elementary school	3	0.8
	High School	40	10.0
	Bachelor Degree	216	54.0
	Master Degree	115	28.8
	PhD Degree	26	6.5
Area	Beirut	204	51.0
	Mount Liban	57	14.3
	Bekaa	119	29.8
	North	7	1.8
	Akkar	3	0.8
	Nabatieh	1	0.3
	South	9	2.3
Income	<500 \$	84	21.0
	500\$ - 1500\$	186	46.5
	1501\$ -2000\$	69	17.3
	2000\$- 2500\$	29	7.3
	2501\$-3000\$	16	4.0
	3001\$-3500\$	4	1.0
	3501\$-4000\$	3	0.8
	more than 4000\$	9	2.3

*Note: Each 1 USD equals to 2000 Lebanese Lira at the time of the data collection for the survey

The participants were as follows: 53.3% were females and 46.8% are males; 52.8% were single and 42% were married. The majority of respondents are young; 67.5% of them were aged between 15 and 35 years. With respect to the educational level, 54% of the respondents are having a bachelor/college degree. 51% of the respondents were residing in Beirut, followed by 29.8% who resides in Bekaa region. The main income level group was the one between 500\$ and 1500\$, which constitutes 46.5% of total respondents.

Table 2: Preferred social media networks and Devices used when shopping online

Attribute	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Preferred shopping platform	Facebook	177	44.3
	Facebook-Insta	59	14.8
	Facebook-Insta-Others	2	.5
	Facebook-Insta-Snapchat	8	2.0
	Facebook-Insta-Twitter	11	2.8
	Facebook-Insta-Twitter-Snapchat	1	0.3
	Facebook-Others	2	0.5
	Facebook-Snapchat	2	0.5
	Facebook-Twitter	22	5.5
	Insta	92	23.0
	Insta-Others	5	1.3
	Insta-Snapchat	1	0.3
	Twitter	2	0.5
	Others	16	4.0
	Preferred device when shopping through social media	Desktop	2
Tablet		2	0.5
Mobile		311	77.8
Mobile-Desktop		41	10.3
Mobile-Desktop-Tablet		4	1.1
Mobile-Tablet		8	2.0
Others		32	8.0

Table 2 reveals the most used social media networks and devices for online shopping purposes. Facebook and Instagram are the most two popular platforms used for shopping on social media; and mobile is the most used device.

4.2 Results

In order to analyze the gathered data, structural equation modeling (SEM) technique using maximum likelihood estimation method was selected. SEM constitutes the testing of the measurement model by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and testing the structure model i.e. testing the structural relationships between the five constructs. The software IBM AMOS 24 was used to analyze the collected data

4.2.1 Measurement model assessment

4.2.1.1 Reliability

This research tested internal consistency of measurement scales through calculating Cronbach's alpha for the constructs, which is considered to be acceptable if it scores a value higher than 0.6 (Berthoud, 2000b). The outcomes in Table 3, display that all the Cronbach's alpha levels are above 0.6, indicating an acceptable level of resemblance amid the items assessing the factors. It is important to note that PV1 was deleted from the PV scale, because it had the weakest correlation and its deletion improved the reliability score for PV. Hence, it will be carried further for the subsequent analysis.

4.2.1.2 Validity

The results of CFA indicated the measurement model proposed by the study was found to provide a good fit with the data (CMIN/DF = 2.923, CFI = 0.915, RMSEA = 0.069, SRMR = 0.052), and the fit measurements matched the permissible cutoff benchmarks (Hair et al, 2014). To scrutinize validity measures, the study examined the score of average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and factor loadings of items. We examined CR value which refers to "the total amount of true score variance in relation to the total scale score variance" (Brunner and Sub, 2005). Composite reliability is favored to be greater than a score of 0.7; however, 0.6 is acceptable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 3 shows that all the values of CR for the constructs show satisfactory levels of composite reliability, exhibiting convergent validity of the constructs. Moreover, as an indicator of convergence; average variance extracted (AVE) was assessed; which refers to "the mean variance extracted for the items loading on a construct", and it should be greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014); and is calculated as the sum of the squared loadings of items in the same construct divided by the number of the items (Pheng & Chua, 2018). All the AVE

measures are above 0.5 and sensibly convergent on their corresponding constructs, except for perceived value; however, Fornell & Larcker (1981), argue that even though AVE of a factor is less than 0.5, but its composite reliability is greater than 0.6, the convergent validity of the construct is still sufficient. Furthermore, the CFA results (Table 3) backs the convergent validity because all the factor loading values of the measurement items exceed 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014). Hence, the convergent validity for the five constructs was proved using the above mentioned criteria, and expressing acceptable levels for each criterion. Table 3 summarizes all the scores for Cronbach's alpha, CR, AVE, and factor loadings for the constructs and its items.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Scores of constructs

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Composite reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Trust	T1	0.706	0.858	0.857	0.503
	T2	0.742			
	T3	0.731			
	T4	0.720			
	T5	0.663			
Perceived Value*	PV2	0.549	0.601	0.605	0.336
	PV3	0.526			
	PV4	0.655			
Influencer Marketing	IM1	0.671	0.883	0.881	0.603
	IM2	0.827			
	IM3	0.847			
	IM4	0.799			
	IM5	0.745			
Country of Origin	COO1	0.730	0.901	0.900	0.646
	COO2	0.855			
	COO3	0.812			
	COO4	0.837			
	COO5	0.778			
Purchase Intention	INT1	0.857	0.882	0.880	0.713
	INT2	0.837			
	INT3	0.839			

*PV1 was removed from the analysis because it had the weakest correlation with the other items by which the score of reliability was improved to 0.605.

To inspect discriminant validity, we deploy two ways: the first using the criteria of Fornell & Larcker (1981), which is to examine the correlation between factors and compare it with the square root of AVE of the different factors, where the square root of each AVE score should be higher than the correlations; and the second way is to compare AVE with Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), which is the square of inter-correlation between two constructs, by which MSV should be less than AVE scores (Hair et al., 2014). Table 4 demonstrates the correlations among constructs against the square roots of AVE on the diagonal; all the score of each square root of AVE are larger than the correlations coefficients between the constructs. Furthermore, it is obvious that the MSV values are less than AVE values for all the constructs which indicates the presence of discriminant validity. As per the results argued above the discriminant validity is also proved for the measurements.

Table 4: Correlations and Square root of AVE

	CR	AVE	MSV	PI	COO	T	PV	IM
PI	0.882	0.713	0.259	0.844				
COO	0.901	0.646	0.116	0.333	0.803			
T	0.858	0.503	0.258	0.507	0.341	0.709		
PV	0.601	0.336	0.306	0.397	0.235	0.360	0.580	
IM	0.883	0.603	0.307	0.358	0.329	0.400	0.553	0.776

Diagonal scores in bold are the square root of AVE. The Off-diagonal score are the correlations between constructs.

4.2.2 Structural model assessment

4.2.2.1 Structural model goodness of fit

To assess the structural model fit; specific indices were inspected: CMIN/DF i.e. chi-square/degrees of freedom, comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). As shown in Table 5 all the fit indices are within cutoff criteria. Hence, the structural model demonstrated a good fit.

Table 5: Model Fit Measures

Measure	Estimate	Cutoff criteria (Hair et al., 2014)	Interpretation
<u>CMIN/DF</u>	3.119	CMIN/DF close to 3:1 ratio	Acceptable
<u>CFI</u>	0.905	CFI > 0.9	Acceptable
<u>SRMR</u>	0.098	<0.1	Acceptable
<u>RMSEA</u>	0.073	<0.08	Acceptable

Examining the results in Table 5, it is shown that CFI value of 0.905 surpassed the suggested threshold of 0.9; in addition; RMSEA value of 0.073 was lower than 0.08 indicating an adequate model fit. Moreover, and the CMIN/DF is close to 3:1 ratio, and SRMR is 0.098 which is less than 0.1, In summary, and as it is obvious from the Table 5 results, the hypothesized model for the study displays a good fit with the data gathered.

4.2.2.2 Testing structural relationships

Table 6 presents the estimated values of the standardized parameters of the relationship model and the outcomes from the hypotheses confirmed. It is clear that Country of Origin has a significant positive impact (β 0.151, $p \leq 0.01$) on purchase intention (H1 is supported) and also positive influence (β 0.254, $p \leq 0.001$) on Trust (H3 is supported). However, results indicate that COO has no impact on Perceived value; it was not significant at $p \leq 0.1$.

Trust possess a weighty positive effect (β 0.349, $p \leq 0.001$) on purchase intention (H4 is supported). Perceived value holds a noteworthy positive influence on Trust (β 0.380, $p \leq 0.01$) and also a positive direct impact (β 0.209, $p \leq 0.05$) on purchase intention (H5 and H6 are supported). Moreover, it is revealed that influencer marketing has a significant influence (β 0.585, $p \leq 0.001$) on perceived value (H8 is supported), yet; results revealed that there is no significant relationship between influencer marketing and purchase intention (H9 is not supported).

Table 6: Results of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. Beta β	Results
H1	Country of Origin (+)→Purchase Intention	0.151 **	Supported
H2	Country of origin (+)→ Perceived Value	0.070	Not Supported
H3	Country of Origin (+)→Trust	0.254 ***	Supported
H4	Trust (+)→Purchase Intention	0.349 ***	Supported
H5	Perceived value (+)→Trust	0.380 ***	Supported
H6	Perceived Value(+)→Purchase Intention	0.209 *	Supported
H7	Influencer Marketing (+)→Perceived Value	0.585 ***	Supported
H8	Influencer marketing(+)→Purchase Intention	0.057	Not Supported

Notes: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.010$, * $p \leq 0.050$, † $p \leq 0.100$

5. DISCUSSION

Earlier research didn't examine the effect of country of origin on the purchase intention of customers who are shopping clothes online through social media, and rarely inspected the impact of influencer marketing in this context. In order to produce understandings on this, the paper steered an empirical research on online shopping of clothes in social commerce. The outcomes display numerous exciting verdicts as follows. Six (H1, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7) out of eight hypotheses were supported.

Essential finding of the study was that Country of origin is found to be an important factor and it affects positively purchase intention; and this is concordant with former research (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2002; Lin & Chen, 2006; Shahrokh et al., 2014). In addition, country of origin found to be having a positive impact on trust. The outcome is along with the results of prior research (e.g. Torres & Gutiérrez, 2007; Jimenez & San-Martin, 2014; Jiménez & San-Martin, 2016). However, contrary to our suggestions and inconsistent to earlier literature (e.g. Abdelkader, 2015; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Esmailpour & Jobeni, 2017; Sinrungtam, 2013), the results revealed that country of origin did not have a significant influence on perceived value. This outcome can be probably accounted for the measurement scale used when assessing COO variable. Inserting the name of the country where the goods comes from i.e. "made in" label (e.g. China vs. Turkey), might change the responses and results in terms of value perceptions.

The results also approve the suggestion that Trust is a key determinant of purchase intention. This is consistent with the results from earlier literature (e.g. Mosunmola et al., 2019; Rachbini, 2018; Suh et al., 2015; Xu and Wang, 2018; Zhoa et al., 2020). Likewise, in consonance with existing literature (e.g. Karaboğa et al., 2017; Lien et al., 2015; Mosunmola et al., 2019; Ponte et al., 2015; Prameka et al., 2016), the hypothesized relationship between perceived value and trust is significant, and it is revealed that perceived value affects positively trust. Similarly, the results approve that perceived value impacts positively purchase intention, and this finding is along with results from past studies (e.g. Chen, 2012; Gan & Wang, 2017; Wu et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is exposed that Influencer marketing impacts positively perceived value, which is supported by prior literature (e.g. Chi et al., 2011; Yen & Teng, 2015; Yun, 2011). However, the effect of influencer marketing on purchase intentions is not significant. This is along with the results from Danniswara et al. (2020), but contradicts the results from Paço & Oliveira (2017), Djafarova & Rushworth (2017), Robelo (2017), Lim et al. (2017), and Lee (2018). This insignificant result might stem from the perceptions regarding the influencer marketing activities. Lebanese customers might consider the presence of many influencers in the digital world and their product evaluations as pure commercial activities, which is based on the influencer revenue attained from their cooperation with sellers or brands in social media. Thus, this can hinder consumers from considering influencer marketing as a direct determinant of their buying intention.

5.1 Academic and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the study introduced a new factor which is the country of origin to the domain of social commerce studies; this factor was not investigated before. The results showed a positive impact of Country of origin on the intentions to purchase through social media platforms. This is a novel contribution in the domain of s-commerce. Furthermore, the study was the first study in Lebanon to examine the intentions to purchase in social media. This adds valuable insights to the academic field, especially for researchers in the emerging markets and Middle East region.

In practice, the results show a variety of factors inducing customers to shop through social media and engaging in social commerce activities. Practitioners and online businesses on social media platform can use the findings to comprehend the pillars of consumer behavior in social networking sites. The current study spots the role of county of origin and how it increases the level of trust beliefs and intention to buy. Communicating the country of origin of the products; being sold online, will increase the customers' willingness to purchase. Also, the country origin

of the products, will improve the trust beliefs in the consumer behavior process. Additional practical input of this research is that the outcomes underline the status of trust in online relationships between businesses and customers. Enhancing trust could be achieved through many ways. Online vendors should improve two way communications with customers, and listen to their comments. Also, a money-back guarantee policy is fruitful in online settings; it will help customers to build confidence in sellers and in the transactions done with them. In addition, Trust could be enhanced by conveying country of origin information of the product sold, due to the country label effect on customer trust evaluations.

Also, e-vendors should appreciate shoppers' anticipations and perceptions of value. To upsurge buyers' perceived value, online stores on social media should offer competitive prices of clothes, and convey sense of urgency among customers through communicating terms such as “limited time only” and “special offer” for online followers. Also, manager should emphasize quality and authenticity of their product in online settings. Businesses would capitalize on using influencer marketing activities to support the value in the eyes of their customers. Influencer marketing can serve relationship marketing. Online sellers may select the appropriate influencer for the brand strategy, and should sensitize their ability to transfer perception of value to customers. Managers should blend influencer marketing activities with corporate segmentation strategies, objectives, and budgets. Businesses should recognize how shoppers act in social media and how they differ in their purchase intentions. Marketers should capture monetary value from millions of daily social interactions globally and to preserve sustainable growth in the marketplace. By not doing so, managers put themselves to the risk of losing their customers in favor of their competitors.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study investigated the shopping of clothing in social commerce in Lebanese Market. Consequently, the results might not be generalized to other states; hence; we advocate a cross-country study to approve the model effectiveness. Also, in addition to the four precursors of purchase intentions which have been tested, other possible causes might be affecting shoppers intention, such as social support, social presence, social proof, perceived risk, perceived enjoyment, and online behavioral advertising. Additionally, customer online engagement which is reflected by likes, follows, and electronic word of mouth are potential factors that might impact buyer decisions in social media. Future research would engage constructs beyond purchase intentions, such as actual purchase. Moreover; the study employed a 5-point Likert-scale; the future research would examine the scales using a 7-point Likert-scale to acquire enhanced

outcomes. The target industry of this study was clothing; henceforth, we propose that upcoming work of online shopping in social commerce settings investigate a different merchandise category or a comparison study between two different countries to be made.

6. Conclusion

Social commerce is an attention-grabbing field of commerce, and more research in this interactive environment is needed to better understand the consumer behavior in such settings. Our study proposed a model to comprehend purchase intentions of customers in s-commerce in Lebanon. Results indicated that country of origin is a determinant of willingness to buy clothes online via social networking sites. Better customer relationship and higher intentions to buy could be strengthened by enhancing trust which also is enhanced by country of origin of goods sold. Moreover, perceptions of value will improve willingness to purchase, and will also enhance the trusting relationship in the social media context; by which a valuable product will aid in the creation of a medium of trust between businesses and customers. Moreover, Influencer marketing will drive value in the social commerce context. Online shops would enhance the perception of value by increasing influencer marketing activities. Social media influencers are helping business to gain real followers who are potentially turned to potential and actual buyer in the long run. Also, they help in creating a valuable image for businesses in the minds of customers. All the earlier argued marketing tactics would serve to stimulate purchases, and enhance the sellers' financial bottom lines.

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Appendix: Questionnaire's Items

Trust (T); sourced from Pappas et al. (2017).

T1- I believe that vendors on social media would act in my best interest.

T2- I expect that vendors on social media are well meaning.

T3- I would characterize vendors on social media as honest.

T4- Overall, social media sites are effective in providing trustworthy vendors from which I can purchase.

T5- On social media, I can find excellent vendors for purchasing products/services.

T6- Vendors on social media would keep their commitments.

Perceived Value (PV), sourced from Chen et al. (2018)

PV1- Shopping on social commerce websites takes a reasonable amount of time.

PV2- Prices on social commerce websites are reasonable.

PV3- Shopping on social commerce websites does not require much effort.

PV4- Overall, shopping on social commerce websites is worthwhile.

Influencer Marketing (IM), sourced Muller et al. (2018)

IM1- The social media influencers are dependable.

IM2- The social media influencers appear trustworthy.

IM3- The social media influencers appear honest.

IM4- The social media influencers appear experienced.

IM5- The social media influencers appear experts.

Country of Origin (COO), sourced from Coster et al. (2015)

COO1- I think a lot of what country fashion clothes come from.

COO2- Which country fashion clothes come from is important for me.

COO3- Which country fashion clothes come from, affects my opinion.

COO4- Which country fashion clothes come from is an important part of my purchase decision.

COO5- I always take into account where fashion clothes come from.

Purchase Intention (PI), sourced from Ashoer and Said (2016)

PI1- I would like to purchase a product from social media.

PI2- I would like to recommend my friends or family to purchase a product from social media.

PI3- If there is a product that I want to purchase; I would like to use the social media.