Influence of Attitude Homophily on Purchase Intention: The Mediating Roles of Social Media Influencers' Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Expertise

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to determine the impact of attitude homophily (AH) on purchase intention (PI), and to investigate the mediating effects of trustworthiness (TR), attractiveness (AT), and perceived expertise (PE) of a social media influencer (SMI) on the relationship between AH and PI. The study's respondents selected subscribers of the well-known Filipino YouTuber, and they were identified using a purposive sampling technique. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to gauge predictive-causal hypothesized relationships. The findings revealed that AH has a considerable influence on SMIs' TR, AT, and PE of SMIs, whereas the latter three variables have a large influence on PI. This study also demonstrated that TR and AT act as mediators between AH and PI. However, the mediating effect of PE between AH and PI was not supported. This study developed a research model based on the theory of persuasion, which was constructed to investigate the impact of SMIs' TR, AT, and PE on PI, as well as their moderating effects on AH and their followers' PI.

Keywords: *marketing, advertising, purchase intention, social media influencer, SMIs, attitude homophily, perceived expertise, Youtube*

INTRODUCTION

In this rapidly evolving digital age, social media has emerged as an important online tool with a significant impact on our lives, notably for corporate marketers and advertising firms (Harb et al., 2019; Jones & Harvey, 2019; Le Giang Nam, 2018). Brands and customers increasingly rely on social media sites to

share information about their products and verify their instinctive purchasing decisions (Poulis et al., 2018). In recent years, of customers (Hermanda et al., 2019; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Le Giang Nam, 2018; Poulis et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2020; Ventre & Kolbe, 2020). However, there is a dearth of literature on the impact of attitude homophily on purchase intention (Koay et al., 2021; Masuda et al., 2022). In addition, the mediating effect of other criteria, such as the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of SMIs, on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention is unexplored. Furthermore, despite the growing popularity and involvement of SMIs in several Philippine brands, this topic has not been investigated adequately. Thus, the current study fills these gaps in the literature, as it is important to understand the role of SMI attitude homophily in the purchase intention of followers. The current undertaking serves as a springboard in understanding the roles of SMIs in the marketing initiatives of companies and brands and how SMIs' presence on social media and their characteristics and traits translate into greater purchase intentions among prospective customers.

Literature Review

The present study is based on persuasion theory, which provides a basis for understanding persuasion effects on all aspects of social interaction, including attitudes and behavior (Gardikiotis & Crano, 2015). One branch of persuasion theory that we employed is the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), which suggests that the influence mechanisms of persuasion can be divided into two: central (*with higher elaboration likelihood*) and peripheral (*with low elaboration likelihood*), based on the type of information a person processes (Shi et al., 2018). According to this concept, there are two ways to persuade people: higher elaboration likely requires the use of a conscious thinking structure, whereas those with lower elaboration rely solely on others and do what they see as others doing (Teeny et al., 2016). This theory also examined the persuasion cues associated with the influence of SMIs on social media, highlighting the positive relationships between homophily and purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Personal characteristics and characterizations of the source of the message are more influential as cues than the arguments themselves (Mosler, 2006; Petty, 2013). Masuda et al. (2022) found that persuasion theory posits that followers of SMIs observe influencers' traits and characterize the influencers based on their assessments. For instance, followers purchase more when they believe that the influencer is credible, and this perception of credibility is formed in the minds of followers based on observations of the influencer's personal qualities. Using this theory, we examine how SMIs' followers' purchase intentions are driven by their attitude homophily, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived expertise.

Attitude Homophily

Attitude homophily is defined by Ladhari et al. (2020) as the extent to which a person perceives that another person shares his/her attitudes, and it reflects the extent to which a person perceives that another person shares his/her social background (similar social class, economic situation, and status). The fundamental idea is that people are more likely to associate or group themselves with people who are similar to them than with people with whom they have no similarities, and people choose to interact with those who are similar to them and change themselves to become more similar to their interaction partners (Barzily & Ackerman, 2018). Filieri et al. (2018) concluded that information obtained from homophilous online sources was preferred and more influential on consumers' decision-making processes than information obtained from heterophilous sources, and that consumers may find recommendations from sources (influencers) similar to them to be more influential because they fit their interests, attitudes, and preferences.

SMIs' Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness relates to SMIs' perceived honesty and goodwill, reflecting their level of concern for

their audience (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). It is also a determinant of followers' buying intention (Schouten et al., 2020). The trustworthiness felt by consumers indicates that SMIs can provide substantial and diverse impacts, which stimulates them to show more trust and positive attitudes toward brands and products when launched (Jin et al., 2019). Moreover, the trustworthiness of SMIs is related to several consumer behavioral intentions and brand equity. Several studies found that source credibility or the trustworthiness of influencers impacts consumers' brand trust (Reinikainen et al., 2020), brand attitudes (Schouten et al., 2020), brand affection (Wu & Wang, 2011), brand awareness (Lou & Yuan, 2019), positive word-of-mouth (Cosenza et al., 2015) and purchase intention (Balaban & Mustăţea, 2019). Previous studies have proven that trustworthiness is an essential characteristic of SMIs that impacts a number of behavioral intentions, and through the influencer, impacts brand equity in many ways. Additionally, Hudders et al. (2020) argued that trustworthiness is a significant component of the source expertise.

It has been contended that attitude homophily is positively linked to trustworthiness. This has been confirmed in a study by Sokolova and Kefi (2020), where attitude homophily was identified as a powerful factor for SMIs' larger number of followers and their success on social media. The effects of homophily not only translate into emotional attachment (Ladhari et al., 2020) but also the credibility and trustworthiness of SMIs (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The perceived trustworthiness of influencers increases when they are homophily with their followers. It serves as a crucial quality of SMIs that influences a variety of individuals' behavioral intentions and has several effects on brand value (Balaban et al., 2021). Furthermore, attitude homophily positively affects trustworthiness, because it refers to the recognition of similarities between influencers and followers in terms of values (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The internalization process refers to values similar to those found in other people. It is also evident in the study by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) that attitude homophily is significantly related to influencer credibility. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H1a. *Attitude homophily has a significant and positive effect on SMIs' trustworthiness.*

SMIs' Attractiveness

SMIs' attractiveness of SMIs refers to the appearance of a media influencer, wherein physical attractiveness is also found, which is associated with credibility and expertise (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Specifically, attractiveness is derived from features such as charisma and the attractive figure of media influencers (Kim & Kim, 2021). SMIs may possess a strong appeal, so consumers would feel visual self-satisfaction (Ki & Kim, 2019), thus creating a connection with these influencers. In addition, the physical attractiveness of an influencer serves as a stimulus to gain audience support (Woodroof et al., 2020), a factor that may affect consumer behavioral intentions and a force that translates to favorable consumer attitudes (Taillon et al., 2020). Moreover, the attractiveness of SMIs has been associated with an increase in word-of-mouth (Taillon et al., 2020), trust in SMIs (Lou & Yuan, 2019), and purchase intention (Singh et al., 2020). On the other hand, Torres et al. (2019) pointed out that the attractiveness of influencers is not entirely about physical appearance; it also covers their cognitive appeal. Contributing to SMIs being endorsers, SMIs' likeability plays a crucial role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards a particular brand.

In the study by Johnson et al. (2012), people with a dominant attitude were attracted to those with the same dominant attitude, while people with a submissive attitude were attracted to others with the same submissive attitude. People are attracted to others in a wide variety of domains including attitudes (Heine et al., 2009). The more people perceive that an influencer is similar, the more they would like to know

the influencer (Tellis, 2003). According to Zhang et al. (2021), consumer brand attitudes are only influenced by how consumers perceive their relationship with SMIs, including their homophily. Therefore, we postulate the following.

> **H1b.** *Attitude homophily has a significant and positive effect on SMIs' attractiveness.*

SMIs' Perceived Expertise

Expertise refers to the extent to which the informant can provide valid information (Nugraha & Agus, 2020). It is also defined as the degree of perceived understanding, skills, and knowledge of the endorser (Masuda et al., 2022). SMIs' expertise of SMIs is related to competence, which directly influences the level of conviction needed to persuade consumers to purchase whatever is endorsed (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Furthermore, perceived expertise and authenticity are usually accompanied by trustworthiness in predicting positive outcomes in social media marketing (Schouten et al., 2020). Credibility, including expertise, is positively related to purchase intention. Thus, a lack of expertise can reduce influencers' perceived credibility of influencers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Wang et al. (2008) studied credibility and homophily as two underlying mechanisms of social influence, and found homophily grounded credibility (including expertise). Homophily is closely related to source expertise, which is a significant predictive factor in celebrity endorsements (Zhang et al., 2021). Attitude, value, background, and appearance have been found to influence SMIs' perceived expertise (Ladhari et al., 2020). Empirical evidence suggests that attitude towards the expertise of SMIs is a significant predictor of purchase intent (Magano et al., 2022). Furthermore, an endorser's trust or credibility influences consumers' attitudes toward SMIs' perceived expertise (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Therefore, we assume that:

> **H1c**. *Attitude homophily has a significant and positive effect on SMIs' perceived expertise.*

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention denotes the likelihood that consumers will plan to buy or be willing to buy a specific product or service in the future (Wu et al., 2011). Purchase intention, according to Qader and Zainuddin (2011), is a person's goal to take action within a given timeframe and the chance that they will execute the behavior. The intention to buy is a combination of customer interests and the opportunity to purchase a product, and is generally associated with "customer" behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes that aid in accessing and evaluating products (Sharma et al., 2020). This is relevant because purchase intention often leads to actual purchases (Barzily & Ackerman, 2018). According to Wu et al. (2011), purchase intention can be used as an important indicator for predicting consumer behavior. When customers have a positive purchase intention, they form a positive brand commitment that drives them to purchase. As a result, purchase intent serves as the foundation for demonstrating purchasing behavior (Martins et al., 2019).

Trustworthiness encompasses the uprightness, sincerity, and acceptability of the proposed audience's influence (Onu et al., 2019). Customers usually feel that SMIs are trustworthy sources of information and that whatever information they pass on is as real as the source. In contrast, followers' level of trust in the influencer has an unparalleled, full-blown impact on customer behavior and intentions across a wide range of industries (Onu et al., 2019). Brands would like to promote highly followed and admired influencers who are trusted non-partisan opinion leaders to talk about and advocate their products on social media platforms (De Veirman et al., 2017). Previous studies have examined the credibility of influencers, especially their trustworthiness, as a factor in followers' purchase intentions (Djafarova &

Rushworth, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Reichelt et al., 2014; Schouten et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Hence, we postulate the following hypothesis:

H2. *SMIs' trustworthiness has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention.*

The personal characteristics of influencers are considered peripheral cues in the persuasion theory. Followers categorize SMIs based on their personal attributes (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Physical attractiveness, audience participation, and influencer transparency have been explored as key effect elements in recent studies on SMIs (Augustine, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2019; Woodroof et al., 2020). The attention of an audience member is more likely to be drawn to an SMI with a stunning appearance (Lim et al., 2017). Physical appearance can be influenced by an influencer's originality, content, and currency. Similarity, familiarity, likeability, physical beauty, sensuality, and elegance are sources of attractiveness (Peetz, 2012). Furthermore, attractive endorsers are more likely to lead consumers' purchase intentions (Van Der Waldt et al., 2009). Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

H3. *SMIs' attractiveness has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention.*

According to Sari et al. (2021), endorsers' knowledge increases the authenticity of product claims, thereby increasing the persuasiveness of advertising. Furthermore, expertise has a significant and favorable impact on purchasing decisions. Influencers' perceived expertise also affects their reputations (Immanuel & HS, 2021; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020). Perceptions of an endorser's expertise affect the audience's impression of the product's quality and purchase intentions (Magnini et al., 2010). Expertise and familiarity favorably affect purchase intention. Marketers may concentrate on endorsers with these attributes because they are more convincing and can influence their purchase intent (Kaldeen & Gunapalan, 2019). As long as consumers perceive SMIs to be attractive and have expertise, they will be encouraged to connect with their content and, as a result, will have a favorable intent to buy the goods promoted by these credible influencers (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Accordingly, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4. *SMIs' perceived expertise has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention.*

According to Shoenberger and Kim (2022), attitude homophily is associated with the reasons individuals follow an influencer. A person's intent to purchase increases when they claim that they follow an influencer because they feel that they have the same opinion of their status. Attitude homophily also affects endorsers' trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, and endorser credibility affects purchasing intent (Kharisma & Kurniawati, 2021). People who belong together in their connections tend to make similar purchases, and attitude homophily can explain these similarities. Homophily influences product preferences and purchase intentions (Ma et al., 2015).

Previous studies have shown that attitude homophily has a significant and positive effect on trustworthiness (Balaban et al., 2021; Lou & Kim, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), attractiveness (Johnson et al. 2012; Tellis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2021) and expertise (Masuda et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2021). Moreover, there are numerous studies that support trustworthiness (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Onu et al., 2019; Schouten et al., 2020), attractiveness (Lim et al., 2017; Peetz, 2012; Van Der Waldt et al., 2009; Woodroof et al., 2020) and expertise (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Kaldeen & Gunapalan, 2019; Magnini et al., 2010) as positively influencing buying intent.

Based on the preceding discussion and synthesis, we hypothesize the following:

> **H5.** *SMIs' trustworthiness has an indirect effect on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention.*

> **H6.** *SMIs' attractiveness has an indirect effect on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention.*

> **H7.** *SMIs' perceived expertise has an indirect effect on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention.*

Based on the extensive literature review and hypotheses presented, the research framework illustrates the five constructs and their possible relationships. Figure 1 presents the indirect effect of attitude homophily on purchase intention, mediated by the effects of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise.
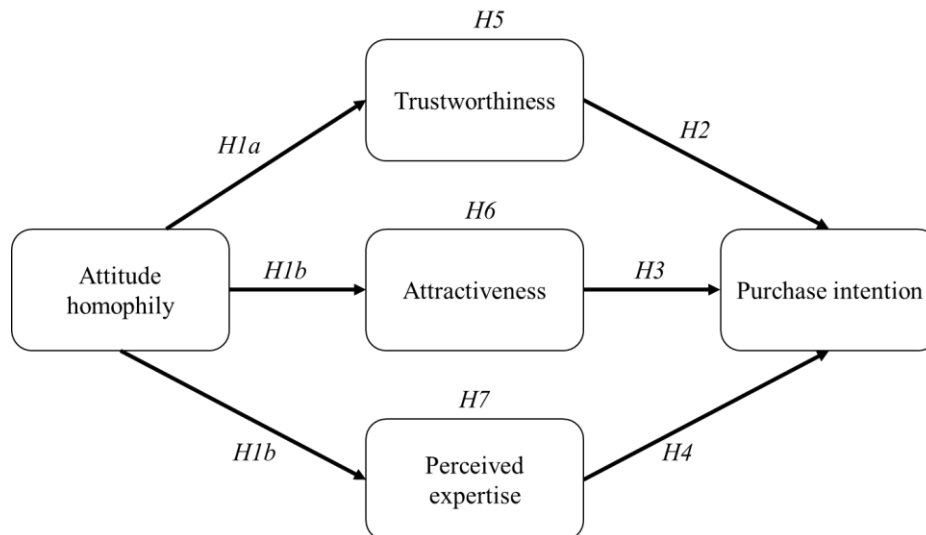

Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework

METHODS

Participants

The participants of the current study were selected as YouTube subscribers of Viy Cortez. Viy Cortez was a content creator in the Philippines. She is a vlogger and social media celebrity, best known for her YouTube channel "Viy Cortez," where she promotes her lifestyle, little life success, and challenge videos. As of 20th July 20, 2022, she had 6.02 million YouTube subscribers (YouTube, 2022). She is one of the country's sought-after influencers. In fact, she was named one of the Philippines' top YouTube stars in 2020 (Licup, 2021).

Her massive following allows companies such as Ever Bilena to hire her as one of their brand ambassadors. In addition, she uses her social media presence to promote her own businesses, including Viyline cosmetics, Viyline clothing, Don C, and 2 in 1 Gluta Lipo (Tuazon, 2020). This means that her

followers are ideal people to take part in this research, as they can provide insight into the impact of her attitude homophily and the mediating effect of her trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise on their purchase intention.

The participants were identified using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used when a researcher selects a participant based on their characteristics or experience. To avoid a large margin of error, we use homogeneous sampling, which is a category of purposive sampling. This is based on the idea of focusing on people with specific qualities who would be most suited to assisting with the research (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling method was utilized because the participants selected for this study were at least 18 years old, had a YouTube account, were avid subscribers to Viy Cortez's channel, and were acquainted with the brands she promoted. The questionnaire was prepared on Google Forms and distributed via social media. The forms were distributed from May 25, 2022, to June 13, 2022. A total of 412 of the 459 responses were completed and accurately answered, producing a response rate of 89.96%.

A sufficient sample size was determined using inverse square root and gamma exponential methods. We used the inverse square root and gamma exponential methods of Kock and Hadaya (2018) to determine the minimum sample size for PLS path modeling. The estimated sample sizes for the inverse square root and gamma-exponential methods were 183 and 170, respectively, with a minimum absolute significant path coefficient of 0.184, a significance level of 0.05, and a power level of 0.80. Thus, an actual sample size of 412 was sufficient to explain the model's results.
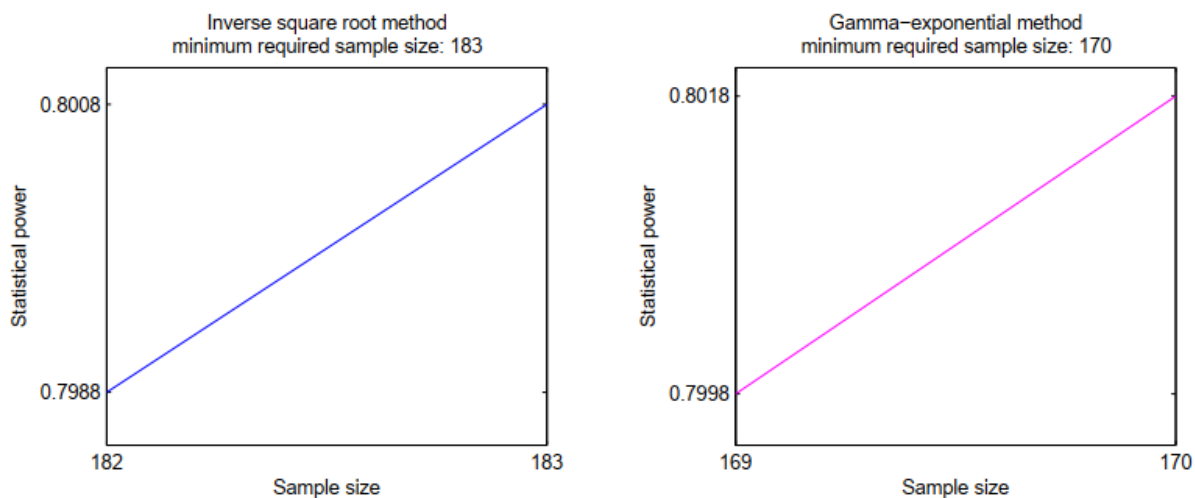

Figure 2. Sample Size Estimation

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study participants. The table shows that the majority of the respondents were Gen Zs or those who belonged to the age group of 18 to 25 (57.28%), followed by millennials (26-41 years old) at 39.56%. Most of the respondents were female (78.40%) and 69.42% were single. Furthermore, the percentages of those who were employed and those who were students were nearly identical at 36.89 % and 35.68 %, respectively. There is also A significant number of participants that are self-employed (25.49%).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Age		
Gen Z (18-25 years old)	236	57.28
Millennials (26-41 years old)	163	39.56
Gen X (42-57 years old)	13	3.16
Sex		
Female	323	78.40
Male	89	21.60%
Civil Status		
Single	286	69.42%
Married	122	29.61%
Separated	3	0.73%
Widowed	1	0.24%
Employment Type		
Self employed	105	25.49%
Employed	152	36.89%
Student	147	35.68%
Unemployed	8	1.94%

The online, self-administered survey questionnaire prepared through Google Forms consisted of three main sections. The first section consisted of yes or no questions to establish whether the respondent was eligible to participate in the study. The second section itemizes the respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, marital status, and type of employment. The third section focused on the study variables. The constructs were measured using twenty-one questions. The questions that assess attitude homophily on a four-item scale, trustworthiness on a three-item scale, and expertise on a four-item scale were adopted from Lou and Kim's study (2019). Duran and Kelly's (1988) study developed an eight-item attractiveness scale. The two-item purchase intention scale was based on Casalo et al. (2017). Masuda et al. (2022) refined these questions to measure the impact of influencer attributes on purchase intention in social media marketing. All items in the five constructs were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 representing strong agreement and 1 representing strong disagreement.

Research Design and Statistical Approach

This study utilized a predictive-causal research design. The aforementioned research design was used to evaluate the effect of respondents' attitude homophily and the hypothesized mediating effects of the SMI's attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise on the relationship between followers' attitude homophily and purchase intention. The primary goal of predictive research is to examine future outcomes that can be used for screening, selection, or monitoring (Hamaker et al., 2020). By contrast, causal analysis seeks to investigate causal relationships, so it frequently includes one or more independent variables and their interactions with one or more dependent variables (Oppewal, 2010).

Furthermore, we employed partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to generate parameter estimates for the research model. PLS-SEM is a causal-predictive approach that stresses prediction in statistical model estimation and is structured to provide causal explanations (Hair et al., 2019). The PLS-SEM was done using WarpPLS 8.0 (Kock, 2022), and the descriptive statistics of the respondents were evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0 (IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows,

2017). In addition, we used PLS-SEM because composite-based SEM approaches are the most recommended and effective methods for testing mediation and conditional process models (Sarstedt et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Scrutiny of the Measurement Model

When assessing the measurement model, construct validity and reliability were considered. Construct validity was evaluated using convergent and discriminant validity tests. The loadings of each item for each latent construct were used to assess convergent validity. Item loading must be equal to or greater than 0.5, and the p-value must be less than or equal to 0.05 to be considered acceptable (Amora, 2021; Hair et al., 1987; 2009; Kock, 2014). Based on the results in Table 2, the latent constructs AH, AT, TR, PE, and PI were within acceptable convergent validity thresholds.

Average variance extracted (AVE) values were assessed to determine the discriminant validity of the measurement model. According to Kock and Lynn (2012), the AVE values must be equal to or greater than 0.5. As Table 2 shows, the coefficient of AVE for all constructs met the required threshold.

Furthermore, based on the study of Fornell and Larcker (1981), Kock (2014), Kock and Lynn (2012), Nunnally (1978), and Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) on values of the reliability coefficient, CR must be equal or above 0.7 to be acceptable. Table 2 demonstrates that all variables, AH (CR = 0.941), AT (CR = 0.947), TR (CR = 0.872), PE (CR= 0.953), and PI (CR= 0.972), are above the suggested level, indicating that all latent constructs are reliable.

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Item loading*
Attitude homophily: AVE = 0.800; CR = 0.941		
	AH1	0.907
	AH2	0.911
	AH3	0.910
	AH4	0.849
Attractiveness: AVE = 0.718; CR = 0.947		
	AT1	0.818
	AT2	0.776
	AT3	0.811
	AT4	0.874
	AT5	0.889
	AT6	0.893
	AT7	0.862
Trustworthiness: AVE = 0.872; CR = 0.953		
	TR1	0.921
	TR2	0.933
	TR3	0.947
Perceived expertise: AVE = 0.872; CR = 0.953		
	PE1	0.903
	PE2	0.904

	PE3	0.928
	PE4	0.922
Purchase Intention: AVE = 0.945; CR = 0.972		
	PI1	0.972
	PI2	0.972

Note: *All loadings are significant (p<0.001)*

Likewise, the heterotrait (HTMT) criterion was used to test the discriminant validity of the constructs. Compared to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, Ab Hamid et al. (2017) claim that the HTMT criterion can adequately determine the discriminant validity of the constructs. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the optimal HTMT ratio is less than 0.85. Hence, the HTMT criterion results in Table 3 demonstrate the discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity using HTMT Ratios

	AH	AT	TR	PE	PI
AH					
AT	0.383				
TR	0.337	0.370			
PE	0.198	0.434	0.466		
PI	0.421	0.399	0.491	0.499	

Scrutiny of the Structural Model

Figure 3 and Table 4 show the direct effects and Table 5 shows the indirect effects that reveal the parameter estimates of our conceptual framework. The results of the data analysis showed that attitude homophily significantly influences SMIs' trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.312$, $\varrho < 0.001$), attractiveness ($\beta = 0.373$, $\varrho < 0.001$), and perceived expertise ($\beta = 0.198$, $\varrho < 0.001$). The data also show that there is a positive relationship between attitude homophily and trustworthiness, attitude homophily and attitude, and attitude homophily and perceived expertise, with a small effect ($f^2 = 0.097$), ($f^2 = 0.139$), ($f^2 = 0.039$), respectively, indicating that the followers' level of attraction, trust, and perceived expertise in relation to an SMI increases in direct proportion to the degree to which they identify with and feel a similarity with the SMI. Thus, H1a-H1c are supported.
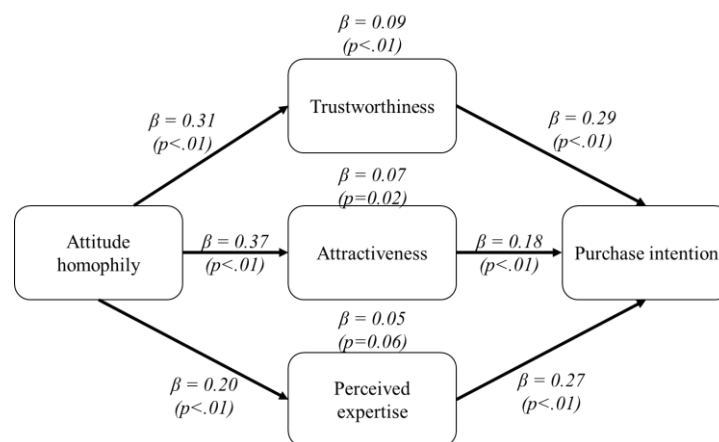

Figure 3. The Structural Model

The findings also revealed that trustworthiness has a positive relationship with purchase intention (β = 0.286, ϱ < 0.001), with a small effect (f² = 0.133). This finding suggests that trustworthiness has a positive and beneficial effect on purchase intention. Therefore, H2 was supported. Moreover, the results also show that attraction significantly affects purchase intention (β = 0.0.184, ϱ < 0.001), but also has only a small effect (f² = 0.072). Thus, the greater the followers' attraction to the SMI, the greater their purchase intention. Thus, H3 is supported. Similarly, an SMI also significantly affects purchase intention (β = 0.266, ϱ < 0.001) with a small effect (f² = 0.072), implying that the greater the followers' perceived expertise on a certain SMI, the greater their purchase intention will be; hence, supporting H4, which states that SMIs' perceived expertise has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing – Direct Effects

Hypothesis	β	p	t-ratio	f²	Decision
H1a. AH → TR	0.312	<0.001	6.604	0.097	Supported
H1b. AH → AT	0.373	<0.001	7.969	0.139	Supported
H1c. AH → PE	0.198	<0.001	4.132	0.039	Supported
H2. TR → PI	0.286	<0.001	6.040	0.133	Supported
H3. AT → PI	0.184	<0.001	3.839	0.072	Supported
H4. PE → PI	0.266	<0.001	5.593	0.126	Supported

In addition, the indirect effect of trustworthiness in the link between attitude homophily and purchase intention has been shown to be statistically significant (β = 0.089, ϱ = 0.005). This highlights the fact that, with a small effect size (f² = 0.035), trustworthiness mediates the link between attitude homophily and purchase intention. Thus, H5 is supported. Likewise, the attractiveness of SMI had an indirect effect on the connection between attitude homophily and purchase intention (β = 0.069, ϱ = 0.023). This implies that SMIs' attractiveness partially mediates the connection between attitude homophily and purchase intention with a small effect (f² = 0.027). However, the results did not corroborate the indirect effect of perceived expertise on attitude homophily and purchase intention (β = 0.053, ϱ = 0.064). Therefore, perceived expertise does not mediate the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention. Thus, H7 is not supported.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing – Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	β	p	SE	f²	Decision
H5. AH → TR → PI	0.089	0.005	0.034	0.035	Supported
H6. AH → AT → PI	0.069	0.023	0.035	0.027	Supported
H7. AH → PE → PI	0.053	0.064	0.035	0.021	Not supported

The full collinearity variance inflation factor (FCVIF) was evaluated as part of the overall structural model evaluation (Table 6). The FCVIF must have a value of 3.30 or less to be considered acceptable (Kock, 2015). According to the findings, the FCVIF coefficients of attitude homophily, attractiveness, trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and purchase intention were all within an acceptable range. Therefore, the employed constructs passed the common-method bias test.

R-squared (R^2), also known as the coefficient of determination, was also calculated. The R^2 coefficients for attractiveness, trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and purchase intention are all greater than 0.02, indicating practical relevance. Furthermore, the fact that the Q^2 coefficients have values greater than zero

supports their sufficiency and significance (Kock, 2022). Consequently, the constructs met the R^2 and Q^2 requirements.

Table 6. CFVIF, R^2, Q^2

Construct	CFVIF	R^2	Q^2
Attitude homophily	1.287		
Attractiveness	1.362	0.139	0.142
Trustworthiness	1.428	0.097	0.099
Perceived expertise	1.486	0.039	0.041
Purchase intention	1.578	0.331	0.331

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the study revealed that attitude homophily has a significant and positive effect on SMIs' trustworthiness. This indicates that when there is a recognition of similarities between influencers and followers in terms of value, trustworthiness will follow. The results also imply that attitude homophily serves as a convincing factor for SMIs' success and popularity on social media because it adds credibility to their content. It is recognized that the more similarities the SMI shows with followers, the more they become trustworthy from their followers' perspective. This was also supported by prior studies that concluded that attitude homophily is significantly related to influencer credibility (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ladhari et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

This study shows that attitude homophily has a significant and positive impact on SMIs' attractiveness. This indicates that an SMI's attractiveness to its followers is positively connected with attitude homophily. In other words, when a follower shares similarities with an SMI, it appears to be attracted to the SMI. When followers' perception of an SMI's similarity to themselves is significantly greater, they are more likely to be attracted to the SMI. People who share the same interests are more driven to each other, considering how they match at a certain point. This also applies to previous studies stating that people are more interested in knowing more about an influencer they perceive to be similar to them (Johnson et al., 2012; Heine et al., 2009; Tellis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2021).

Moreover, according to the findings, attitude homophily had a significant and positive effect on SMIs' perceived expertise. This suggests that a follower's likeness to an SMI leads to the assumption that the SMI is an expert in their subject. As a result, the greater the similarity detected in an SMI, the greater their expertise in that SMI. Similarly, previous studies have concluded that attitude homophily can boost an SMI's perceived expertise, implying that as an outcome of their followers' recognition of similarity in their attitudes, the SMI is becoming more expert in their field from the perspective of their followers (Wang et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2021; Ladhari et al., 2020; Magano et al., 2022; Goldsmith et al., 2000).

The study's findings also reveal that SMIs' trustworthiness significantly and positively affects purchase intention. This demonstrates that the level of purchase intent among an SMI's followers increases proportionately with followers' perception of the SMIs' trustworthiness. This also implies that access to and assessing products is frequently linked to customer behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes. Likewise, previous studies have explored the credibility of influencers, particularly their trustworthiness, as a factor in followers' intent to acquire a product or service, and it has been found to be the most essential factor (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Reichelt et al., 2014; Schouten et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Moreover, this study shows that SMIs' attractiveness has a significant and positive effect on purchase intention. This indicates that SMIs' attractiveness of SMIs is more likely to be one of the driving forces behind a consumer's intention to make a purchase. SMIs with a striking appearance are more likely to capture the attention of an audience. This provides evidence in support of the findings of more recent research suggesting that SMIs' physical attractiveness, audience participation, and influencer transparency have a significant impact on purchase intention (Augustine, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2019; Woodroof et al., 2020).

The findings also indicate that consumers' perceptions of SMIs' level of expertise had a significant and positive effect on their intention to make a purchase. This indicates that a customer's desire to buy is a direct outcome of their perception of the SMIs' level of expertise. In addition, the connection between the two constructs supports the assumption that an individual's perception of SMIs' expertise can have a positive effect on their behavior when reaching a certain judgment about a purchase. This is similar to previous studies on the significance of customers' perceptions of expertise and how this directly affects their purchasing intent (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Immanuel & HS, 2021; Kaldeen & Gunapalan, 2019; Magnini et al., 2010; Sari et al., 2021; Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2020).

Notably, the findings indicate that the trustworthiness and attractiveness of an SMI have an indirect influence on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention. The influence of SMIs' trustworthiness and attractiveness strengthens the relationship between consumers' attitude toward homophily and purchase intention. In light of this remarkable finding, SMIs should recognize that their trustworthiness and attractiveness not only influence the attitude homophily of their audiences, but are also sufficient to stimulate customers' purchase intention. Prior studies have also identified that trustworthiness and attractiveness indirectly influence the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention (Balaban et al., 2021; Kharisma & Kurniawati, 2021; Ma et al., 2015; Schouten et al., 2020; Woodroof et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the results of this study also showed that perceived expertise had no indirect effect on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention. This only indicates that, although perceived expertise drives purchase intention, it does not mediate the link between attitude homophily and purchase intention. Therefore, even though attitude homophily can drive purchase intention, as indicated in previous studies (Kharisma & Kurniawati, 2021; Ma et al., 2015; Shoenberger & Kim, 2022), perceived expertise does not help improve the relationship between the two. In contrast, previous studies indicate an indirect effect of perceived expertise on the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention (AlFarraj et al., 2021; Kaldeen & Gunapalan, 2019; Kharisma & Kurniawati 2021; Ma et al., 2015; Masuda et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2008).

Practical and Theoretical Implications
The primary purpose of this research is to ascertain the effect of attitude homophily on the purchase intention of social media followers. It also intends to investigate the role of other variables, such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived expertise of SMI, in mediating the relationship between attitude homophily and purchase intention. The results showed that attitude homophily has a significant impact on SMIs' trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived expertise and that these three characteristics have a significant impact on purchase intention. The research also found that trustworthiness and attractiveness can mediate the association between attitude homophily and purchase intention. However, perceived expertise did not serve as a mediator in the relationship between the two variables. This suggests that a follower's feeling of similarity to an SMI helps raise their purchase

intention, and that this feeling of similarity will further increase with the support of the SMI's attractiveness and credibility.

It is also essential to note that the function of social media platforms in the field of advertising is rapidly transforming and that SMIs have been shown to be effective brand ambassadors. As a result, this research will be of great use to marketers to locate the appropriate SMI to represent their products in accordance with their target market. In addition, the findings of this study will assist in gaining a better understanding of the potential reactions of customers to products. Advertisers can look for an SMI that demonstrates attractiveness and trustworthiness to drive their customers' intention to buy. Moreover, since attitude homophily improves the attraction and trust of a follower to an SMI and these two characteristics are also proven to have an effect on the follower's purchase intention, marketers can look for an SMI that they believe may be similar to their target consumers. SMIs can also use this study to assess the similarity between their followers and themselves, and use them to improve their attractiveness and trustworthiness, eventually driving their followers' purchase intentions. SMIs can create content highlighting the attitudes or personalities that they believe are similar to those of their followers. This is especially useful for SMIs that want to start their own businesses and become brand ambassadors for their products.

A key theoretical contribution of this study establishes the importance of personal attitudes and behaviors, such as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of SMIs, as mediators between attitude homophily and purchase intention. The study supports the theory of persuasion, wherein SMIs' trustworthiness and attractiveness serve as motivators and are found to have a positive influence on their followers. This means that the more a follower feels akin to an influencer, the more they trust and attract them. As a result, an SMI that displays similarity with its followers strengthens their followers' attraction and trust, which leads to purchase intention. Thus, having an endorser who possesses attitude homophily toward the target consumer will enhance the consumer's drive to buy the product. This will help marketers effectively advertise their products and increase their potential sales.

Limitations and Future Research Prospects
This study has some limitations, which can be further explored. It focuses only on the followers of the well-known Filipino YouTuber. As a result, future researchers should undertake additional investigations with various SMIs in the Philippines or other countries. In addition to YouTube, future researchers can also investigate the effectiveness of SMIs on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Likewise, future researchers could explore other variables, such as product recall and brand image. In addition, they can employ brand credibility as a mediator between attitude homophily and purchase intention, in addition to trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived expertise.

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