



Social Media Marketing Activities, Brand Image, Online Trust, and E-Reputation: A Conceptual Model for the Moroccan Digital Context

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Abstract: *The proliferation of social media as a strategic brand-building arena has generated a substantial body of empirical work, yet the theoretical architecture linking specific Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMAs) to brand e-reputation through the sequential mediation of brand image and online trust remains underdeveloped, particularly in emerging market contexts. Drawing on Engagement Theory, Online Trust Theory, and Reputation Theory, this paper develops and justifies a comprehensive conceptual model in which five SMMA dimensions, namely trendiness, customization, entertainment, eWOM, and influencer marketing, are hypothesized to shape brand image, which in turn drives both online trust and e-reputation. Online trust is further posited to mediate the brand image and e-reputation relationship. The model yields nine testable hypotheses operationalized through twenty-eight reflective measurement items. Grounded in the Moroccan digital landscape, the proposed framework advances theory by integrating constructs previously examined in isolation and offers a replicable methodological template for emerging-market researchers.*

Key Words : *social media marketing activities; brand image; online trust; e-reputation; conceptual model; Morocco; emerging markets*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has fundamentally reconfigured the way brands and consumers interact. What began as a set of communication platforms has evolved into the primary arena where brand perceptions are formed, contested, and amplified. Marketing scholarship has followed this transformation closely. Yet after two decades of accumulated research, Bartoloni and Ancillai (2024) conclude from their systematic review of 169 studies that the social media marketing literature remains highly fragmented, with scholars investigating isolated facets of the phenomenon while neglecting the broader causal chains through which marketing activities translate into strategic brand outcomes. This article addresses one of the most consequential of these neglected chains: the path leading from social media marketing activities to e-reputation.

The Moroccan context offers a particularly compelling setting for this inquiry. Morocco counts 35.3 million internet users, a penetration rate of 92.2 percent that positions the Kingdom among the most connected nations in Africa and the MENA region (DataReportal, 2025). More than eight in ten Moroccans use social media, and with a median age of 29.8 years, the country's digital population is young, mobile-first, and intensely engaged with brand content (DataReportal, 2025). This engagement is increasingly transactional and trust-dependent: the share of Moroccans purchasing online rose from 15.1 percent in 2019 to 24.9 percent in 2024, an increase of 3.7 million shoppers that observers attribute in large part to growing consumer trust in digital platforms (ANRT, 2025). This trend signals that trust, rather than mere exposure, has become a pivotal variable in the Moroccan digital marketplace. Yet academic understanding of how brand-related social media activity shapes trust and reputation outcomes in Morocco, and in emerging markets more broadly, remains remarkably thin. Even systematic reviews of consumer research acknowledge that the MENA region has been largely overlooked by mainstream scholarship (Elhoushy & Lanzini, 2021), and the few existing Moroccan studies are exploratory and qualitative in nature.

Beyond the contextual gap lies a more fundamental theoretical one. Research on social media marketing activities (SMMAs) has converged on a set of perceptual dimensions, typically entertainment, customization, interaction, trendiness, and electronic word-of-mouth, whose effects have been traced to brand awareness, brand image, brand equity, and purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2012; Godey et al., 2016; Cheung et al., 2019; Sanny et al., 2020). Three limitations cut across this body of work. First, the dependent variables examined are almost exclusively transactional. E-reputation, the cumulative and collective judgment that stakeholders form about a brand online (Fombrun, 1996; Dutot & Castellano, 2015), has rarely been positioned as the final outcome of SMMAs, even though reputation constitutes one of the most valuable intangible assets a firm can hold in digital markets (Castellano & Dutot, 2017). Second, although trust has been

shown to mediate the effects of social media marketing on loyalty and purchase behavior (Ebrahim, 2020; Sohaib & Han, 2023), no study to our knowledge has examined online trust as the mechanism linking brand image to e-reputation. Faisal and Ekawanto (2021) explicitly called for trust to be integrated as a mediating variable in future SMMA models; this article answers that call. Third, influencer marketing, despite its commercial weight and the robust evidence that influencer credibility shapes consumer attitudes (Han & Balabanis, 2024), is seldom treated as a distinct SMMA dimension, leaving models incomplete at a time when influencers have become central actors in brand communication.

This article therefore develops a conceptual model in which five SMMA dimensions, namely trendiness, customization, entertainment, eWOM, and influencer marketing, are hypothesized to shape brand image, which in turn drives both online trust and e-reputation, with online trust mediating the relationship between brand image and e-reputation. The model is grounded in the articulation of three complementary theoretical lenses: Engagement Theory (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016), Online Trust Theory (Walsh et al., 2009; Gupta et al., 2017), and Reputation Theory (Fombrun, 1996; Castellano & Dutot, 2017). It yields nine testable hypotheses operationalized through twenty-eight reflective measurement items, designed for empirical validation through partial least squares structural equation modeling.

The contribution is threefold. Theoretically, the model integrates constructs that prior research has examined in isolation, proposing e-reputation as the terminal outcome of a sequential process that existing frameworks truncate at brand image or purchase intention. Contextually, it anchors this process in Morocco, extending the external validity of SMMA research beyond the Western and East Asian settings that dominate the literature. Methodologically, it provides a fully operationalized and replicable measurement apparatus for researchers working in emerging digital markets. This article also extends our earlier work (Amahjour & El Khalkhali, 2024), which reviewed the theoretical foundations of social media and e-reputation and identified the absence of integrative models as a priority for future research.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The next section presents the theoretical foundations of the model. We then develop the conceptual model and its nine hypotheses. The final section concludes, discusses the contributions and limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The proposed model rests on the articulation of three theoretical perspectives. Each one explains a distinct segment of the causal chain linking social media marketing activities to e-reputation, and their combination provides the conceptual architecture that existing fragmented approaches lack.

2.1 Engagement Theory

Engagement Theory holds that value on social media platforms is no longer delivered unilaterally by firms but co-created through user participation and interaction (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). In this perspective, a brand's social media presence generates value to the extent that it stimulates a state of heightened user involvement, which Di Gangi and Wasko (2016) decompose into individual involvement and personal meaning. Marketing activities act as the levers of this engagement. Content that is current and fashionable, tailored to individual preferences, enjoyable to consume, relayed by other users, or endorsed by credible figures, gives consumers both functional and emotional reasons to interact with the brand. This theoretical lens justifies the five SMMA dimensions retained in our model, namely trendiness, customization, entertainment, eWOM, and influencer marketing, as engagement-generating mechanisms whose perceptual traces accumulate into the consumer's mental representation of the brand (Kim & Ko, 2012). Engagement Theory thus explains the first segment of the chain: how marketing activities on social platforms shape brand image.

2.2 Online Trust Theory

Trust occupies a central position in environments characterized by uncertainty and the absence of physical interaction, which is precisely the condition of digital exchanges (Walsh et al., 2009). Online Trust Theory posits that consumers form trust toward a brand when its online conduct displays consistency, honesty, and a perceived commitment to protecting their interests (Gupta et al., 2017). Crucially for our model, trust is not built in a vacuum. It emerges from the evaluations consumers have already formed about the brand, which makes brand image a natural antecedent of online trust. This sequencing is well established in the branding literature: a positive brand image exerts a favorable influence on consumer trust, a relationship consistent with the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Esch et al., 2006). Recent empirical work extends this logic to digital settings by showing that the effects of social media marketing on relational outcomes operate through trust rather than around it (Ebrahim, 2020; Sohaib & Han, 2023). Online Trust Theory therefore accounts for the intermediate segment of the chain and provides the rationale for positioning online trust as the mediating mechanism of the model.

2.3 Reputation Theory

Reputation Theory conceptualizes reputation as a perceptual and cumulative asset, the aggregate judgment that stakeholders form about an organization on the basis of its past actions and anticipated behavior (Fombrun, 1996). Transposed to digital environments, this judgment becomes e-reputation: a collective evaluation continuously fed by online interactions, user-generated content, and the brand's own digital conduct (Dutot & Castellano, 2015; Castellano & Dutot, 2017). Two properties of e-reputation matter for our model. First, it is formed by stakeholders rather than controlled by the firm, which distinguishes it

from brand image as an individually held perception. Second, it is cumulative, meaning it integrates both the direct impressions consumers hold of the brand and the trust those impressions have generated over time. Reputation Theory thus justifies e-reputation as the terminal variable of the model and explains why it should receive both a direct path from brand image and an indirect path through online trust.

2.4 Articulating the Three Perspectives

Taken together, the three theories form a layered explanation of how marketing activity becomes reputational capital. Engagement Theory accounts for the formation of brand image through SMMA. Online Trust Theory explains how that image is converted into a relational asset. Reputation Theory describes how image and trust crystallize into a collective judgment that constitutes one of the most valuable intangible resources of the digital firm. No single theory covers the full sequence, and it is precisely this articulation that constitutes the conceptual contribution of the present model.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Building on the three theoretical perspectives outlined above, this section develops the nine hypotheses that constitute the proposed model. The argument proceeds in four stages. We first theorize the influence of each of the five SMMA dimensions on brand image (H1 to H5). We then establish brand image as an antecedent of online trust (H6), online trust as an antecedent of e-reputation (H7), and brand image as a direct determinant of e-reputation (H8). Finally, we specify the mediating role of online trust in the brand image and e-reputation relationship (H9). For each construct, we provide a working definition, articulate the causal mechanism grounded in theory, and draw on prior empirical evidence before stating the hypothesis.

3.1 Social Media Marketing Activities and Brand Image

Brand image refers to the set of perceptions and associations that consumers hold about a brand, reflecting how the brand is understood and evaluated in their minds (Keller, 1993). In digital environments, these associations are increasingly formed through the marketing activities a brand deploys on social platforms. Drawing on Engagement Theory, we contend that each SMMA dimension constitutes a distinct mechanism through which consumers engage with the brand, and that this engagement leaves perceptual traces that consolidate into brand image.

Trendiness. Trendiness denotes the extent to which a brand communicates current, up-to-date, and topical content on social media (Naaman et al., 2011). Consumers increasingly turn to social platforms precisely because the information they find there is perceived as more timely and relevant than that of traditional channels (Godey et al., 2016). When a brand consistently delivers content aligned with the latest trends, it signals vitality and market

leadership, fostering a perception of the brand as modern and forward-looking. In the Moroccan setting, where social commerce flows through fast-moving visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, the capacity of a brand to remain current is especially salient for the impression it leaves. We therefore propose:

H1: Trendiness has a positive influence on brand image.

Customization. Customization captures the degree to which a brand tailors its content and services to the individual preferences of consumers (Kim & Ko, 2012). Personalized communication conveys attentiveness and responsiveness, fostering the impression that the brand understands and values the individual. From an engagement standpoint, customization heightens personal relevance, which deepens involvement and enriches the consumer's mental representation of the brand (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Prior work indicates that customized social media efforts strengthen favorable brand attitudes by satisfying consumers' expectations of relevance (Kim & Ko, 2012). Accordingly:

H2: Customization has a positive influence on brand image.

Entertainment. Entertainment refers to the extent to which a brand's social media content is experienced as enjoyable, fun, and engaging (Manthiou et al., 2013). Entertaining content generates positive affect, and this affect becomes associated with the brand in the consumer's memory, contributing to a favorable image (Keller, 2013). Enjoyment is a primary motivation for consumer participation in social media brand communities, and the emotional resonance it produces is a powerful input into the affective dimension of brand image (Manthiou et al., 2013). We therefore hypothesize:

H3: Entertainment has a positive influence on brand image.

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM encompasses the reviews, recommendations, and brand-related content that consumers exchange on social platforms (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Because it originates from peers rather than from the firm, eWOM is perceived as more credible and trustworthy than brand-generated communication (Cheung et al., 2008). This perceived authenticity makes eWOM a particularly influential input into brand image, as positive peer evaluations reinforce favorable associations and strengthen the consumer's confidence in their own perception of the brand (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). The prominence of user-generated content on Moroccan social platforms heightens the relevance of this mechanism. Thus:

H4: eWOM has a positive influence on brand image.

Influencer marketing. Influencer marketing involves the collaboration between brands and social media figures who enjoy credibility and a dedicated following (Han & Balabanis, 2024). The mechanism through which

influencers shape brand image is best explained by Source Credibility Theory, which holds that messages delivered by sources perceived as trustworthy, expert, and attractive are more persuasive and more readily internalized by audiences (Han & Balabanis, 2024). When a credible influencer endorses a brand, the favorable attributes of the source transfer to the brand, enriching its image. A recent meta-analysis confirms that influencer credibility is the most robust predictor of attitudinal outcomes in this domain (Han & Balabanis, 2024), while qualitative evidence gathered among Moroccan millennial consumers indicates that influencer-follower interactions shape brand perceptions in culturally specific ways (Benlemrid & Omerakı Çekirdekci, 2025). This mechanism is especially pertinent in Morocco, where micro-influencers with local audiences command substantial legitimacy. We therefore propose:

H5: Influencer marketing has a positive influence on brand image.

3.2 Brand Image and Online Trust

Online trust refers to the consumer's willingness to rely on a brand in the digital environment, based on perceptions of its reliability, honesty, and benevolence (Gupta et al., 2017). We position brand image as a direct antecedent of online trust. A favorable brand image functions as a signal of quality and consistency that reduces the uncertainty inherent in online exchanges, providing consumers with a basis for extending trust (Walsh et al., 2009). This logic is well established in the branding literature, where a positive brand image has repeatedly been shown to foster brand trust, in line with the commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Esch et al., 2006). In social media settings specifically, the evaluations consumers form of a brand have been found to translate into trust, which subsequently shapes relational outcomes (Ebrahim, 2020; Sanny et al., 2020). We therefore hypothesize:

H6: Brand image has a positive influence on online trust.

3.3 Online Trust and E-Reputation

E-reputation is the collective and cumulative judgment that stakeholders form about a brand online, aggregating their perceptions, experiences, and interactions in the digital sphere (Fombrun, 1996; Castellano & Dutot, 2017). We argue that online trust is a key antecedent of e-reputation. Consumers who trust a brand are more inclined to recommend it, to generate favorable eWOM, and to defend it in online discourse, all of which feed the reputational judgment that the broader community forms (Gupta et al., 2017). Trust thus operates as the relational foundation upon which a favorable e-reputation is built, since reputation aggregates the trust that individual consumers place in the brand into a shared collective evaluation (Castellano & Dutot, 2017). Accordingly:

H7: Online trust has a positive influence on e-reputation.

3.4 Brand Image and E-Reputation

Beyond its indirect influence through trust, we contend that brand image exerts a direct effect on e-reputation. The favorable associations that constitute a strong brand image translate directly into the perceptions that shape the brand's reputational standing online (Fombrun, 1996). While brand image is an individually held perception and e-reputation a collectively formed judgment, the former feeds the latter: consumers who hold a positive image of a brand contribute, through their individual evaluations and online behaviors, to the aggregate reputation that emerges at the community level (Dutot & Castellano, 2015). Empirical work in adjacent streams has confirmed that brand image is a powerful determinant of downstream brand outcomes (Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021), supporting a direct path to e-reputation alongside the mediated one. We therefore propose:

H8: Brand image has a positive influence on e-reputation.

3.5 The Mediating Role of Online Trust

The structure of the preceding hypotheses implies that online trust mediates the relationship between brand image and e-reputation. Brand image shapes e-reputation both directly (H8) and indirectly, by first fostering online trust (H6), which in turn enhances e-reputation (H7). Because the model specifies both a direct and an indirect

path, we anticipate partial rather than full mediation: brand image contributes to e-reputation in its own right, while a meaningful portion of its influence is transmitted through the trust it generates. This conceptualization is consistent with the view that trust accelerates and reinforces the conversion of favorable brand perceptions into reputational capital without fully accounting for it (Gupta et al., 2017; Castellano & Dutot, 2017). We therefore hypothesize:

H9: Online trust mediates the relationship between brand image and e-reputation.

3.6 The Proposed Conceptual Model

Taken together, the nine hypotheses delineate a sequential model in which social media marketing activities, through their five dimensions, shape brand image; brand image fosters online trust and contributes to e-reputation; and online trust both enhances e-reputation and mediates the path from brand image to it. The model thus traces a complete causal chain from the marketing activities a brand deploys on social platforms to the reputational capital it accumulates online, with brand image and online trust serving as the sequential mechanisms that connect the two ends of the chain. Figure 1 presents the model graphically, displaying the four latent constructs, the five SMMA dimensions, and the nine hypothesized paths.

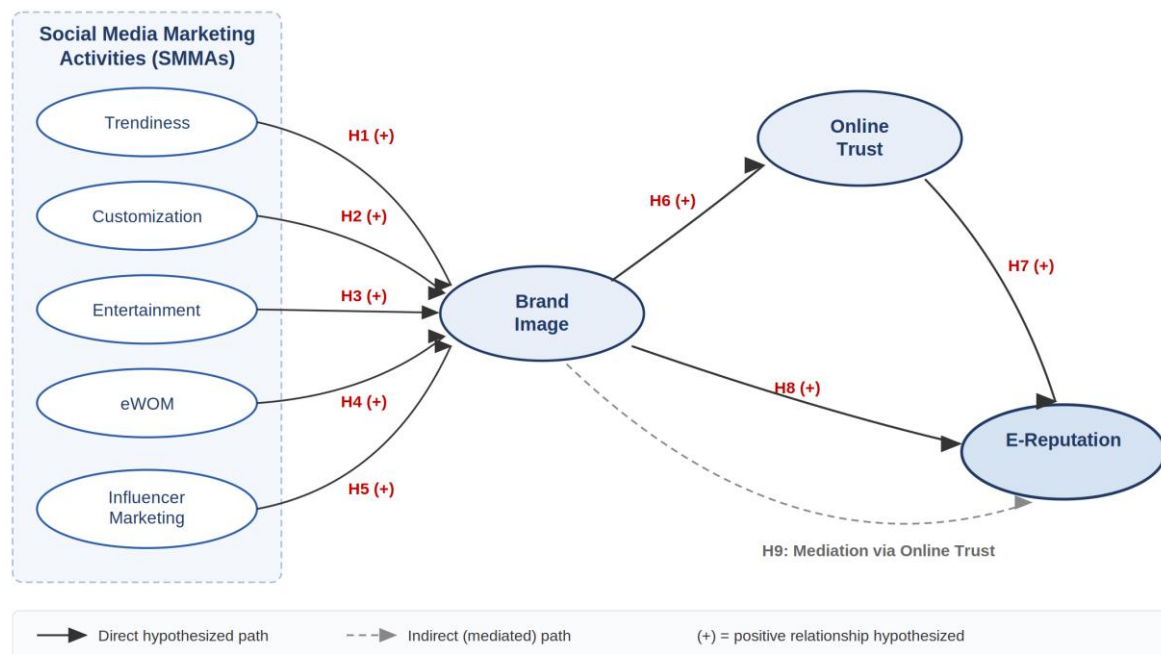


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model

The model is operationalized through twenty-eight reflective measurement items. Four of the five SMMA dimensions, namely trendiness, customization, entertainment, and eWOM, together with brand image, are measured using items adapted from the validated scales of Kim and Ko (2012) and Godey et al. (2016). Online trust is measured with items adapted from Gupta et al. (2017), and e-reputation follows Dutot and Castellano (2015). Because no established scale isolates influencer marketing as a distinct SMMA dimension, the three items measuring this construct were developed by the authors on the basis of Source Credibility Theory, capturing the perceived

credibility, trustworthiness, and persuasive influence of brand-affiliated influencers (Han & Balabanis, 2024). In line with established practice for newly developed scales, these items will be subjected to the full battery of reliability and validity assessments, including outer loadings, average variance extracted, composite reliability, and discriminant validity testing, prior to any structural interpretation (Hair et al., 2019). All items are assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 1 summarizes the constructs, the item codes, the measurement items, and their sources.

Table 1. Constructs, measurement items, and sources

Construct	Code	Measurement item	Source
Trendiness	SMMA_T1	The brand's posts are always trendy.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_T2	This brand follows the latest social media trends.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_T3	The content is innovative and up-to-date.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
Customization	SMMA_C1	This brand adapts its content to my personal preferences.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_C2	I receive personalized content from this brand.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_C3	This brand seems to understand my needs.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
Entertainment	SMMA_E1	The brand's social media content is entertaining.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_E2	I enjoy viewing this brand's posts.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_E3	The content is fun or engaging.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	SMMA_W1	I often see other users talking about this brand.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_W2	This brand's social media presence positively influences my opinion.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	SMMA_W3	Online reviews and recommendations about this brand are frequent.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>

Construct	Code	Measurement item	Source
	SMMA_W4	I often share or comment on this brand's content.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
Influencer Marketing	SMMA_I1	This brand collaborates with credible influencers.	<i>Self-developed by the authors</i>
	SMMA_I2	Influencers representing this brand seem trustworthy.	<i>Self-developed by the authors</i>
	SMMA_I3	Influencer posts make me more curious about the brand.	<i>Self-developed by the authors</i>
Brand Image	BI1	This brand gives me a good impression.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	BI2	I have a positive image of this brand.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	BI3	I perceive this brand as reliable and professional.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
	BI4	This brand is consistent in its social media communication.	<i>Kim & Ko (2012); Godey et al. (2016)</i>
Online Trust	TRUST1	I trust the information shared by this brand on social media.	<i>Gupta et al. (2017)</i>
	TRUST2	I believe this brand keeps its promises.	<i>Gupta et al. (2017)</i>
	TRUST3	This brand seems honest in its online communication.	<i>Gupta et al. (2017)</i>
	TRUST4	I believe this brand protects its customers' interests.	<i>Gupta et al. (2017)</i>
E-Reputation	REP1	This brand has a good online reputation.	<i>Dutot & Castellano (2015)</i>
	REP2	The reviews I read about this brand are mostly positive.	<i>Dutot & Castellano (2015)</i>
	REP3	This brand is well-perceived by the online community.	<i>Dutot & Castellano (2015)</i>
	REP4	I would recommend this brand on social media.	<i>Dutot & Castellano (2015)</i>

Note. All items are measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Items were originally administered in French and are presented here in English translation.

4. CONCLUSION

This article sets out to address a gap that two decades of social media marketing research have left open: the absence of an integrative framework explaining how the marketing activities brands deploy on social platforms translate into reputational capital online. Existing models have traced the effects of SMMA on brand awareness, brand image, and purchase intention, but they stop short of e-reputation, and they treat trust as an outcome rather than as the mechanism through which brand perceptions become reputational assets. Drawing on Engagement Theory, Online Trust Theory, and Reputation Theory, we proposed a conceptual model in which five SMMA dimensions shape brand image, which in turn fosters online trust and contributes to e-reputation, with online trust mediating the brand image and e-reputation relationship. The model articulates nine hypotheses and is operationalized through twenty-eight reflective measurement items, making it directly amenable to empirical testing.

The theoretical contribution of this work operates on three levels. First, to the best of our knowledge, no prior study has linked social media marketing activities, brand image, online trust, and e-reputation within a single framework. By specifying a complete causal chain rather than a fragment of one, the model responds directly to the call of Bartoloni and Ancillai (2024) for research that overcomes the fragmentation of the field. Second, positioning online trust as a mediator between brand image and e-reputation answers an explicit call in the literature (Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021) and clarifies a mechanism that has been assumed rather than theorized. Third, the model treats influencer marketing as a distinct SMMA dimension rather than folding it into interaction or eWOM, a refinement warranted by the scale of influencer activity in contemporary brand communication and by the robust evidence that source credibility governs its effects (Han & Balabanis, 2024). Beyond these three contributions, the articulation of the three theories is itself a conceptual proposition: no single perspective accounts for the full sequence from marketing activity to reputation, and their layered combination is what allows the chain to be theorized as a whole.

The framework also carries practical significance for brand managers, particularly in emerging digital markets. By distinguishing the five SMMA dimensions and specifying their common outcome, the model allows practitioners to reason about where marketing resources produce reputational returns rather than merely transactional ones. It further suggests that brand image and online trust are not parallel objectives but sequential ones, implying that efforts to build reputation without first establishing a coherent and credible brand image are unlikely to succeed. In the Moroccan context, where consumer trust in digital platforms has emerged as a decisive factor in the growth of online commerce (ANRT, 2025), this sequencing carries immediate managerial relevance.

Several limitations should be acknowledged, and each opens a research avenue. The most fundamental is that the model is conceptual and awaits empirical validation. Data collection among Moroccan consumers active on social media is currently underway, and the model will be tested through partial least squares structural equation modeling, a method suited to complex models with reflective constructs and no assumption of multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2019). That validation will rely on a non-probability convenience sample, since no exhaustive sampling frame of Moroccan social media users exists. While this approach is standard in exploratory digital marketing research, it constrains the statistical representativeness of the sample and will require explicit acknowledgment when the results are interpreted. A second measurement limitation concerns the influencer marketing construct: because no established scale isolates it as a distinct SMMA dimension, the corresponding items were developed for this study and will require full psychometric validation before their structural coefficients can be interpreted. Replication of the model in other settings would strengthen confidence in this scale.

The model is further bounded by its context and its design. It is anchored in a single national setting, and although this anchoring is a deliberate contribution given the neglect of the MENA region in mainstream consumer research (Elhoushy & Lanzini, 2021), it also limits the generalizability of the findings that will emerge from testing it. Comparative studies across North African or other emerging markets, and across industries with contrasting consumption logics such as telecommunications, retail, and fashion, would establish whether the proposed relationships hold under different cultural, institutional, and sectoral conditions. The cross-sectional design implied by the model constitutes a further boundary: e-reputation is by definition a cumulative construct, and a longitudinal approach would capture its formation over time in ways that a single measurement cannot. Finally, the model adopts the consumer's perspective exclusively. Integrating the viewpoint of marketing practitioners, through qualitative inquiry, would contextualize the statistical relationships and illuminate the strategic reasoning behind the SMMA consumers perceive. A subsequent phase of this research programme pursues precisely that direction, complementing the quantitative test with semi-structured interviews among Moroccan digital marketing professionals.

Two further extensions merit attention. First, the model could be enriched by introducing purchase intention or brand loyalty as downstream consequences of e-reputation, thereby linking reputational capital to behavioral outcomes and closing the loop between perception and action. Second, moderating variables such as product involvement (Cheung et al., 2019), platform type, or consumer demographics may condition the strength of the hypothesized paths and deserve systematic investigation. By offering a theoretically

grounded and fully operationalized model, this article provides the foundation upon which such extensions can be built, and takes a step toward a more integrated understanding of how brands earn reputation in the digital age.

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