Social Commerce Constructs and Consumers' Purchase Intention from Minimalist Brands

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The social media and social online communities have engaged both consumers and corporations. Social media has established new platforms for e-commerce. Moreover, individuals' interaction on the cyber space has modified e-commerce, elevating that to an appropriate platform for social commerce. On the other hand, business incorporations have found the use of minimalism application in designing, which removes unnecessary aspects, attracts more audience. Therefore, drawing on literature the author propounds a new adopted model to portray a more transparent vision of social commerce. In so doing, SEM methodology is employed to gauge the proposed model. Findings reveal that social networking sites persuade people to have interactions and to produce content in online social platforms. Consumers gain advantages of social commerce constructs for such interactions, which augment the level of trust, brand loyalty, and their purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands.

Keywords: Social Commerce Construct, Social media, E-commerce, Minimalist Brand, Brand loyalty

1 Introduction

Contemporary progress in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has opened new vistas for e-commerce. The pervasiveness of social networking sites (SNSs) has provided occasions for novel business models of e-commerce, which are branded as social commerce (SC) (Liang and Turban, 2011). SC, in nature, is a compound of commercial and social activities constituted by the interactions of people on the cyber space where consumers share their views about products in forums, review others' experiences and opinions about services and goods, rate and recommend products based on their own perceived quality. One of the fortes of social commerce, influencing other consumers, is social interaction of people (Hajli, et al., 2014) which co-creates value with brands (Wang and Hajli, 2014).

Trust is a pivotal point for users in e-commerce (Pavlou, 2003; Gefen and Straub, 2000), which makes a constructive relationship between consumers and brands. Although there are different definitions of trust in e-commerce literature (see Gefen and Straub, 2004; Ba and Pavlou, 2002), its most plenary definition implies integrity, ability and benevolence (Gefen, 2002). SC plays a significant part in affecting the level of trust, especially in e-commerce where risks are higher (Mutz, 2005), due to the social interactions of consumers (Hajli et al., 2014). Recently, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of study regarding this area of research by scholars such as Gefen (2002), Gefen et al. (2003), Kim (2012), and Morid and Shajari (2012). As people finds customer experiences, reviews and information of others in forums and communities, a change in their perception of a specific brand may result (Hajli, 2015). For example, when a solid member of a reliable online community replies a marketer by giving positive feedback, this process influences other members' attitude and they may gain a higher level of trust (Lu et al., 2010). To verify trust on the cyber space, it is vital to have some mechanisms providing valid indicators to discern brands (Ba and Pavlou, 2002). In so doing, SCCs are considered as a helpful instrument because it provides ratings, recommendations, and referrals, which enlighten the reasons of being trustworthy and reputable to brand-owners. The information exchanges of customers on internet and SCCs influence users' behavior. Research confirms that the pursuit of activities in SNSs boost purchase intention of consumers (Han & Windsor, 2011). Thus, trust plays a large part in an online content.

Technology acceptance model (TAM) is a successful and core notion in forecasting individuals' willingness to utilize a system (Pavlou, 2003). Purchase intention is a construct of TAM, meaning a customer's determination to engage in online purchasing on SNSs (Hajli, 2015). TAM is known as a solid theory in e-commerce realm (Martins et al., 2014; Hsiao and Yang, 2011; Park et al., 2009). Hence, given trust as a crucial facet of this territory which stimulates individual's purchase intention, the present study investigates the trace of consumers' interactions through SCCs to display the impact of trust on purchase intention for minimalist brands in e-commerce platforms.

Generally, brand is a humane relationship with a company in which the visual representation of the brand creates a part of this relationship. Business incorporations have detected minimalism as an attractive factor to absorb more audience. Minimalist brands are designed on the basis of minimalism instruction. Minimalism is a movement that was formed in arts in the US at 1950s. Minimal designing is a kind of designing, which removes unnecessary aspects. The most apparent feature of minimalism is accent on simplicity and naivety beside attention to identic figure. Minimalist designing helps brands to be simplified by user's mind and be distinctive in unit groups (Sani and Shokooh, 2016). For instance, minimalism can be observed in logos of Apple, Microsoft, and IBM. The graphical displays of a company's distinctive identity by means of fonts, images, and colors provide substantial information about a company that brings about the consumers to recognize the company's base brand[1]. The growth of online business deals and increase of users have caused many of active corporations in e-commerce to turn to the minimalist designing in order to be remembered by consumers because the brands that use minimalism create a great association in consumers' memory. According to a research, consumers' purchase behavior is also influenced by loyalty to brand (Malik et al., 2013). The consumers gain loyalty to a brand because of its uniqueness, style, or the ease of use of that particular brand. Brand loyalty is a cardinal factor for the corporations to meet their aim therefore the corporation endeavor to maintain its customers satisfied. The brand loyalty is defined as the extent of affinity to a particular brand, which is explained by costumers' re-purchase behavior regardless of promotion effort of the competitors (Hajli et al, 2014).

The present paper will be especially concerned with SCCs and study their role on trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands. SCCs encompass forums and communities, referrals and recommendations, and ratings and reviews. Hence, in this research, the author tries to find answers for these questions: (i) Do SCCs affect consumers' trust, brand loyalty, and their purchase decisions for minimalist brands? (ii) Do trust and brand loyalty affect social commerce intention? These questions display the main ideas of the research. Answering these questions fills the gap in the previous works that had focused on studying the aforementioned factors in a general perspective rather than paying attention to more a specific facet. Consequently, this paper aims to find answers for the questions in terms of minimalist brands which is a novel concept in branding and business.

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[1] . http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-logos-business-577.html

2 Research Model

This study has improved a social commerce adoption model to augment our understanding of the effect of SC and social relationships within cyber space on the minimalist brands. This context studies the SCCs to ascertain the importance of the constituting constructs on minimalism brands in a SC milieu. Besides SCCs, which are forums and communities, rating reviews, recommendations and referrals, purchase intention, and trust (Hajli, 2015), the author added brand loyalty as an on-going issue in SC. Fig.1 represents the research conceptual model.
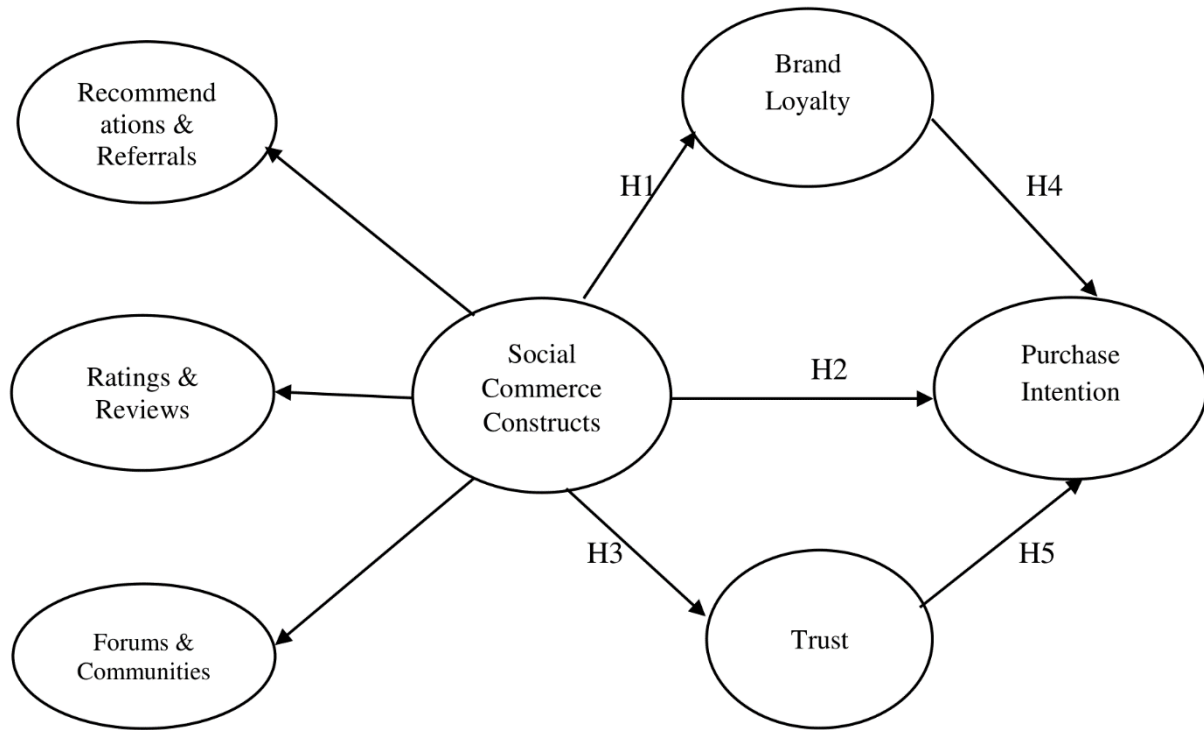

Fig. 1. Social commerce proposed model for minimalist brands.

The popularity of social media and their ability to connect kindred individuals as well as similar business persuade organizations to participate in social online networks. Making customers loyal to brands is a function of cardinal importance in social media as branding society in social networks increases the consumers' brand loyalty through reinforcing their trust (Laroche et al., 2012). In fact, customers' word of mouth influences brand loyalty and trust positively (Kim and Park, 2013). Thus, the first hypothesis is formed as follows:

H1. SCCs have a positive effect on the brand loyalty.

The advent of Web 2.0 and social media enable individuals to generate content on the cyber space, providing users with feelings of potency and pleasure (Füller et al., 2009) while affecting their purchase intention (Huang and Benyoucef, 2015) as research proves that social media provides a platform for social activities that lead to economic consequence of the product selling (Chris et al., 2008). By using SCCs, consumers will become a recommendation system which influences the buyers' behavior (Hajli and Sims, 2015). Furthermore, involvement of individuals in online platforms, with exchanging rating and reviews, has a major impact on the others' decision. Therefore, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2. SCCs have a positive effect on the user's purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands.

Consumers' trust is also under the influence of SCCs. Customer's ratings affects the trust, which increases or decreases sales (Swamynathan et al., 2008). Moreover, the social presence of an e-commerce platform and its virtual applications cause users to be more secure because the social presence in SCCs augments the trust (Gefen and Straub, 2004). In this regard, the research can postulate third hypothesis:

H3. SCCs have a positive effect on the user's trust.

Brand loyalty is the main reason of marketing communication where the customers have a sense of belonging in the particular brands. Brand loyalty is defined as an effect of trust that consumers lay in one brand over others (Lasser et al., 1995). Brand loyalty reflects a re-purchase commitment in the future purchase that indicates costumers will not mutate their priorities in various occasions and keep buying their desired brands (Oliver, 1999). It has also been divided into behavior and attitude factors, the former denotes repurchase behavior, and the latter represents psychological

commitment to brand (Chi, 2009). Loyalty implies that costumers prefer a particular brand and are willing to purchase the products of that brand repetitively (Kan, 2003; Lin, 2005). Consequently, this study hypothesizes fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4. Brand loyalty has a positive effect on the user's purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands.

Trust in online communities increases costumers' behavioral certitude of purchase intention in e-vendor website. Having higher trust or lesser perceived risk are important aspects in e-commerce. By reading others' reviews and ratings of a particular brand in social communities and forums, people awareness of SNSs is likely to increase. Researches prove that trust is of a momentous role in elevating purchase intention (Lu et al., 2010; Shin, 2010). Therefore, it seems trust have an remarkable impact on SC since researchers in the e-commerce literature make an allusion to the significant relationship between online shopping behavior and trust (Ba and Pavlou, 2002).

H5. Trust of users in SNSs has a positive effect on purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands.

3 Research Method

3.1 Methodology of research

To examine the relationships among the model constructs, an empirical study was organized. For this purpose, a survey was designed. The author carried out a questionnaire to gather the data explained as follows.

3.1. Measurement development

A questionnaire was distributed to measure the constructs of the present study. A five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5) was used in the questionnaire .SCCs are composed of forums and communities, referrals and recommendations, and ratings and reviews. People involvement in social platforms is the base of the SCCs measurements. The measurement process evaluated involvement of users in producing content, rate, review, and recommend brands. Trust and brand loyalty are mediator variables. Benevolence and credibility were the measuring factors for trust in SNSs. The author used re-purchase willingness, recommend intend, and willingness to pay more to measure brand loyalty. Finally, purchase intention from minimalist brands, which measures the consumer's purchase intention and their inclination to pay on SNSs, is the dependent variable of this study.

3.2 Data collection procedure

The data are culled via a questionnaire conducted in Tehran in July 2016. Before distributing the final draft of the survey, the author implemented a pilot study to scrutinize that the questions and sentences were discernible to participants. The survey distributed in an electronic version to maximize the number of respondents. In total, 422 questionnaires were gathered but some of the responses were dropped due to incompleteness. The valid participants were 384 including 221 males and 163 females. The sample comprises participants between 18 and 60 years old, with 37% of eighteen to twenty-five years, 49% of twenty-six to thirty-five years, 12% of thirty-six to forty-five years, and 2% of forty-six to sixty years.

3.3 Data analysis and findings

In behavioral science research, one of the most powerful & appropriate analysis method is multivariate analysis, because the nature of such subjects is multivariate and it cannot be solved using the bivariate analysis method. in regard to low-volume data, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) has been used with Smart PLS 3 Software in order to confirm or reject assumptions in the present study, which applies the Partial Least Squares (PLS). PLS have been developed to deal with problems in special data such as low-volume data, missing data, non-normal data as well as study of multi-collinearity between independent variables (Hair et al. 2014). At first, validity & reliability of measurement models, constructs and reagents are propounded in this section. Then, confirmation or rejection of hypothesis is examined in the "structural equations".

4 Findings

4.1 Measurement Models

To measure the convergent validity, two indices are used. The first index is Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Convergent validity is accepted if values are greater than 0.5 for each variable (Henseler et al., 2015, which is shown in table (1)). In the confirmatory factor analysis, if factor loadings are more than 0.4, it alludes to construct validity of research variables (Hulland, 1999; Ebrahimi and Mirbargkar, 2017; Ebrahimi et al., 2018b; all reagents are greater than 0.4 in this study table (1)). To measure the reliability of questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and composite

reliability were used in the current research, which were estimated using the PLS for the whole questions related to each variable. As it is clear, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha & composite reliability are more than 0.7 (Hai et al., 2014; Khajeheian and Ebrahimi, 2019) hence, the reliability of measurement tool is confirmed.

Table 1- Examination of convergent validity and reliability

| Variables	Items	Factor loading	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	CR
Recommendations & Referrals	Q01	0.889	0.674	0.812	0.884
	Q02	0.959			
	Q03	0.914			
	Q04	0.400			
Ratings & Reviews	Q05	0.830	0.678	0.836	0.893
	Q06	0.862			
	Q07	0.925			
	Q08	0.654			
Forums & Communities	Q09	0.810	0.743	0.884	0.920
	Q10	0.865			
	Q11	0.917			
	Q12	0.852			
Brand loyalty	Q13	0.845	0.681	0.883	0.914
	Q14	0.816			
	Q15	0.848			
	Q16	0.805			
	Q17	0.811			
Trust	Q18	0.885	0.817	0.944	0.957
	Q19	0.880			
	Q20	0.936			
	Q21	0.930			
	Q22	0.888			
Purchase Intention	Q23	0.896	0.883	0.933	0.952
	Q24	0.931			
	Q25	0.902			
	Q26	0.921			
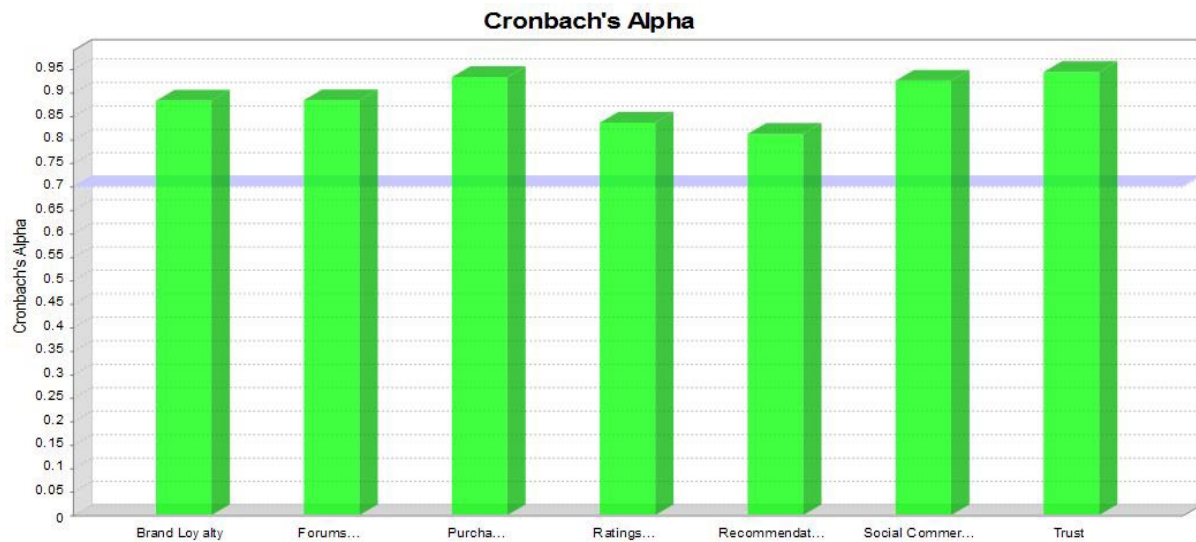
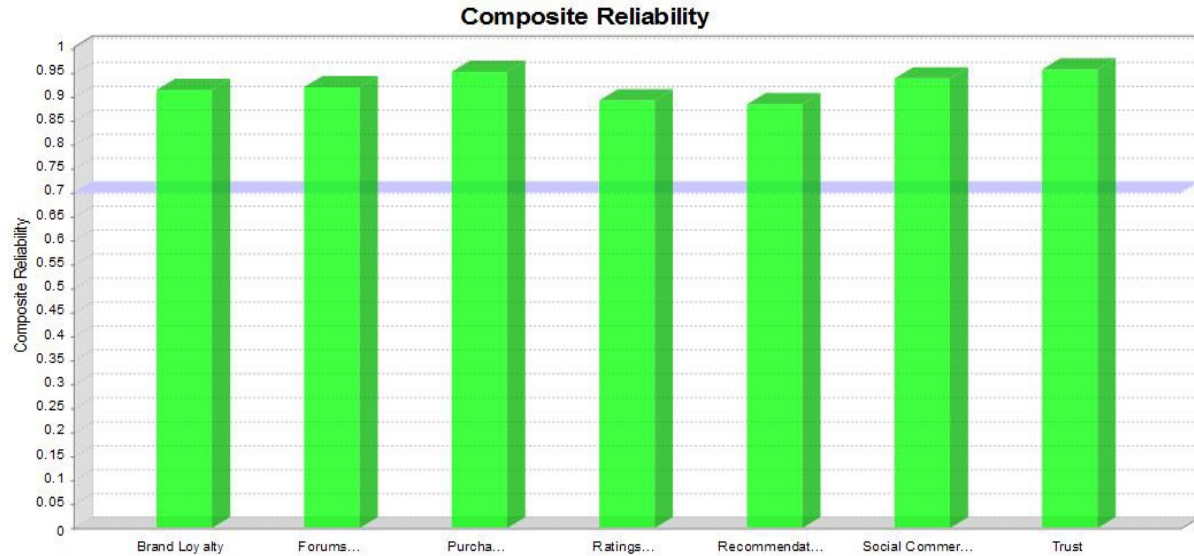Figure 1- Confirmed value of Cronbach's Alpha

Figure 2- Confirmed Value of composite reliability

4.2 Discriminant validity

Fornell-Larcker (1981) table has been used to examine the discriminant validity. According table (2), results indicate that root mean square extracted for all variables is greater than its correlation coefficients compared to other variables representing the suitable survey validity for variables.

Table 2- discriminant validity based on Fornell-Larcker table.

Variables	Brand loyalty	Forums	Purchase Intention	Rating	Recommendations	Trust
Brand loyalty	**0.825**					
Forums	0.761	**0.862**				
Purchase Intention	0.730	0.758	**0.913**			
Rating	0.797	0.818	0.641	**0.824**		
Recommendations	0.671	0.622	0.608	0.702	**0.821**	
Trust	0.816	0.763	0.814	0.696	0.659	**0.904**

4.3 Structural Model and examination of research hypotheses

Path coefficient and T-Statistics are used to study the research hypotheses, which are presented in figures (3) & (4). If t-statistic is >1.96 and t-statistics are >2.58 confidence level will be significant at % 5 and 0.01 respectively. According to outcome for variables' interaction test in the standard estimation mode, number inside the endogenous variables denotes the coefficient of determination or R^2 which shows how much dependent variable is determined by independent variable. Indices of A) structural model including coefficient of determination and B) Stone-Geyser's index (Q^2) including construct cross validated redundancy (CC-Red) and construct cross validated communality (CC-Com) are mentioned in table (3). In addition, SRMR has been used to assess whole model including inner structural model and outer measurement model and values <0.08 is considered optimum for this index (Hair et al., 2018). In the present research, SRMR and saturation model are reported 0.109 and 0.105 for estimated model outcome respectively which suggests average fit for measurement and structural model. Also, indices such as BIC, HQ and AIC related to model selection criteria are negative which proves the goodness of model fit.

Table 3- indices of structural model

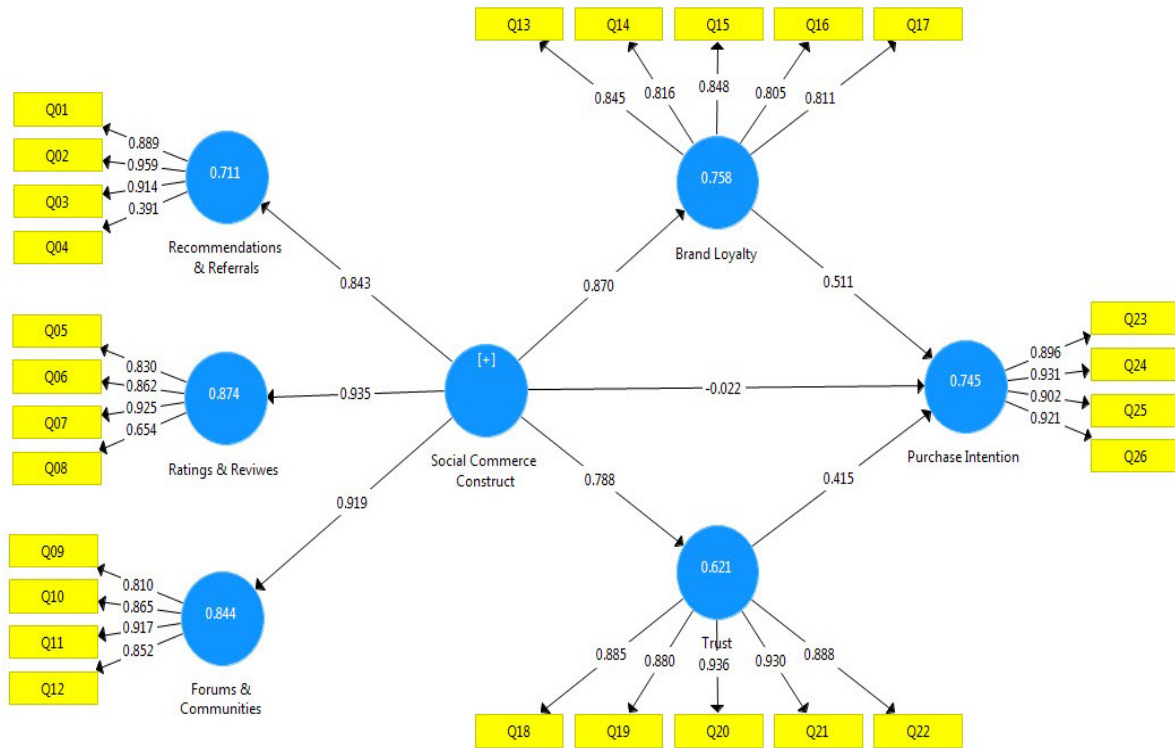| Variables	R2	R2 Adjusted	CC-Red	CC-Com
Brand loyalty	75.8%	75.7%	0.477	0.495
Forums & Communities	84.4%	84.4%	0.590	0.532
Purchase Intention	75.4%	74.3%	0.575	0.657
Rating & Reviews	87.4%	87.4%	0.557	0.455
Recommendations & Referral	71.1%	71%	0.437	0.468
Trust	62.1%	62%	0.470	0.671

Figure 3- Value of Path Coefficient (and values of factor loading) for study model.
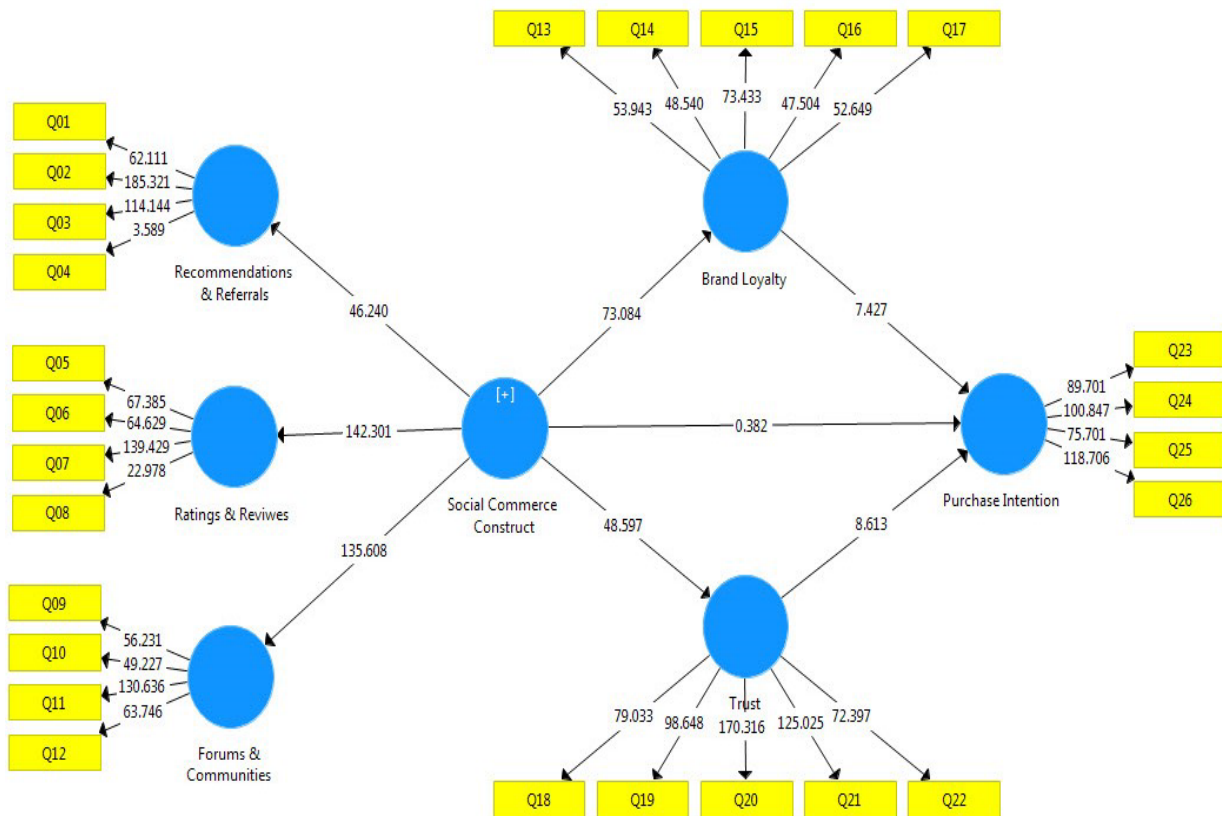
Figure 4- values of t-statistics for study model

In order to test study hypotheses, the direct effect was evaluated. According to the results of table (4), the first hypothesis and the effect of social commerce structure on trust (H1: β = 0.788, SD =0.016, t = 48.597, p = 0.000) have been supported based on t>3.29 & p<0.05 for %0.99 confidence level. Concerning the second hypothesis and the effect of social commerce structure on purchase's intention, (H2: β = -0.022, SD = 0.057, t = 0.382, p = 0.702), this hypothesis has not been supported with regard to t<1.96 & p>0.05 for %95 confidence level. Results also indicate that the third ((H3: β = 0.870, SD = 0.012, t = 73.084, p = 0.000), the fourth (H4: β = 0.511, SD =0.069, t = 7.427, p = 0.000) and fifth hypotheses (H5: β = 0.415, SD = 0.048, t = 8.613, p = 0.000) have been confirmed. The present study has examined the results of IPMA matrix. This matrix studies the function of research variables in statistical population (Ebrahimi et al., Hair et al., 2018). With respect to figure (5), it can be said that the variable for social commerce structure in the studied population is of the highest importance targeting the purchase's intention (variable) while, it doesn't enjoy the suitable function in intended population and attention need to be paid to it.
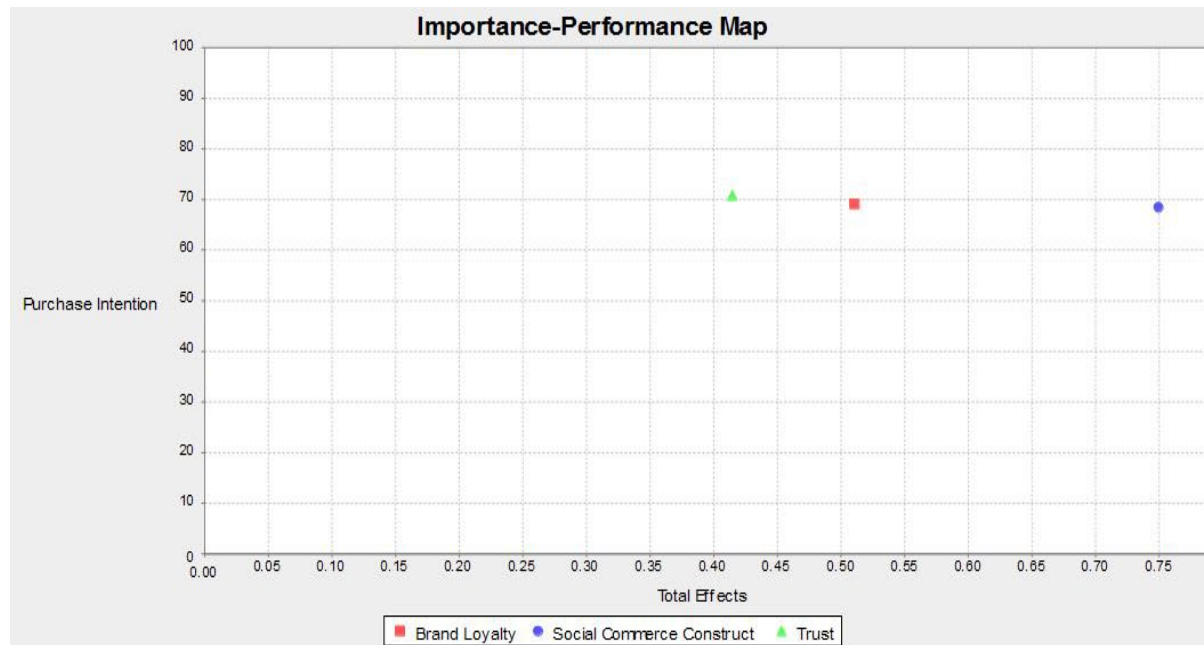
Figure 5- IPMA (Matrix) results.

Table 4- Results of research hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Direct effect ر	t-statistic	انحراف معيار	p-values	Result
H1	0.788	***48.597	0.016	0.000	Supported
H2	-0.022	0.382	0.057	0.720	Not supported
H3	0.870	***73.084	0.012	0.000	Supported
H4	0.511	***7.427	0.069	0.000	Supported
H5	0.415	***8.613	0.048	0.000	Supported

Note: t>1.96 at * p<0.05; t>2.58 at **p<0.01; t>3.29 at ***p<0.001; two-tailed test

5 Discussion

Currently, costumers are not being seen as eternal users; they have a special standing in marketing plans. In this paper, the authors have developed a social commerce adoption model to study consumer's behavior in confronting minimalist brands. The results obtained indicate that users are participating in SNSs increasingly to spread their information, experiences, and referral pertaining to a brand with their peers. The survey results confirmed the consumers' transmission from an impassive state to a passive and content generator status. SNSs have been attracting people to online communities and social platforms swiftly because they eases consumers' interaction with others and make them more active users in creating content through social media. Social relationships earned by SCCs drive value for businesses as well, since consumers' content generation affects other consumers' purchase decision.

By increasing connections with users, online vendors create a better customer relationship management (CRM). Using minimalist method in designing brands may engage individuals' attention more on the online communities. In SCCs environment, users share their experiences about different brands freely. This suggestive atmosphere simplifies some hard choices like intention to buy. The proposition that SCCs augments costumers' intention to buy has been substantiated by empirical analysis. Therefore, this milieu prompts trust and intention to buy increase in users of minimalist brands. In sum, this study shows that SCCs are the potential to attract people to minimalist brands, enhance purchase intention from minimalist brands, and affect consumers' trust and loyalty to brand in terms of minimalist brands.

This paper emphasizes the importance of social communities provided by cyber space and internet for social commerce and offers three contributions to the empirical literature. First, the results indicate that organizations should manage social online communities effectively due to its striking effect on consumers' purchasing decisions. Second, the

present study propounds a new model taking into account novel implications in social commerce and branding. The research provides contribution to the literature of SC by discussing how SCCs influence brand loyalty, trust, and purchase intention from minimalist brands through an empirical study. Third, no research has been found that surveyed the minimalist brands, however this research studies this concept and examines social commerce constructs role in purchase intention out of minimalist brands.

6 Implications

This paper studies social commerce to present a more transparent image of e-commerce. In this research, several constructs of technology acceptance model (TAM) were adopted in order to depict the impact of social commerce constructs on brand loyalty, trust, and purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands. Minimalist designing helps brands to attract more attention and audience due to its simplicity. Ratings and reviews, recommendations and referrals, and forums and communities, are the pivotal factors of the adopted model. The proposed model has six constructs to evaluate the role of SCCs, brand loyalty, and trust on consumers' purchase intention from minimalist brands. The empirical findings, using SEM and PLS software show a significant and positive impact of SCCs on consumers' purchase intention in terms of minimalist brands. The results indicate that loyalty to brand influences consumers' purchase intention positively, while empirical results do not support the same effect for trust. Finally, the fact that SCCs affects brand loyalty and trust positively and significantly constitutes the last valuable finding of this study. These findings cast some lights on the study of minimalist brands position in social commerce. This study has some limitations, for instance, the author used a five-point Likert-scale. To get more reliable results, a seven-point Likert-scale is recommended for the future research. It may be interesting to study the same concept using PLS, which is more effective when the data have a non-normal distribution or the sample size is small.

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