THE ROLE OF REFERENCE GROUPS AS CREDIBLE SOURCES IN AFRICAN WOMEN'S NATURAL HAIR CARE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR

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REMARKS

The reader is informed of the following:

- The thesis is structured in the form of three articles. Article 1 is presented in Chapter 2, Article 2 is presented in Chapter 3, and Article 3 is presented in Chapter 4. A shortened version of these articles may be published in accredited academic journals with co-authors, following the examination, adaptations, and journal review process.

- The article-based nature of this thesis requires that sufficient information be provided in each article for it to be read as a stand-alone document, as well as part of the thesis. This inevitably results in some duplication of key information mentioned in different parts of the thesis. This duplication of information is most notable in the literature that contextualises the research problem and relevant theory, along with information about the methods used, the main findings and contributions of the study.

- To ensure consistency in referencing, the Harvard referencing style is applied throughout the thesis. A reference list is provided at the end of each chapter. As this study is a PhD written by article, each article contains its own reference list. For this reason, Chapter 1 and Chapter 5 also include a reference list at the end of each.

- A letter confirming professional editing is included in Appendix C.

- The prescribed and signed declaration regarding plagiarism is included in Appendix D.

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of information on Black women's natural hair care products globally and in South Africa has created the need for a better understanding of the role of reference groups' source credibility in Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. Reference groups' source credibility has long been studied by consumer researchers and marketing practitioners because credible sources of information are important in impacting consumer behaviour. Source credibility has been defined in several ways in the literature; this study focuses on attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness as a reference group's source credibility subdimensions.

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. The secondary objectives were (1) to investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products; (2) to investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products; and (3) to examine the effects of normative (female family member - FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The study used three social theories: social identity theory, social cognitive theory, and social influence theory. The three social theories provided a social theoretical lens that explained the effect of the social environment on an individual's cognitive, affective, and evaluative behaviours.

The study used a deductive approach to assess the hypotheses generated from the literature. The primary data was collected using online, self-administered questionnaires from the target population – specifically, Black African women with natural hair (that is, not chemically straightened hair). Convenience sampling was done through a consumer panel of a third-party service provider. In line with the third secondary objective of the study, one group of respondents received a questionnaire with a scenario about an FFM as their reference group, while the other group of respondents received a scenario with an SMI as their reference group. There were 306 usable responses from the FFM questionnaire and 305 usable responses from the SMI scenario questionnaire.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to assess the hypothesised relationships in the study. The results indicated that the SMI's attractiveness did positively influence the purchase

intentions of Black African women towards natural hair care products recommended by the SMI with natural hair. The findings of this study also revealed that sense of belonging with the SMI with natural hair, in the form of social identification and perceived similarity, was not a cause of the effect of SMI source credibility on purchase intentions. Second, the SMI's source credibility interacted with affective involvement to influence purchase intentions. The findings also revealed that affective involvement with natural hair care products mediated product involvement with natural hair care products and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Third, the effects of the FFM's and the SMI's expertise and trustworthiness on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products were not evident. Furthermore, the study's findings revealed that attitudes towards natural hair care products were a mechanism for the effect of SMI expertise, FFM trustworthiness, and SMI trustworthiness on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

This study contributes towards a better understanding of reference groups' source credibility and its role in Black African women's consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products. The study has made several theoretical contributions to the reference groups and source credibility literature on the role of reference groups' source credibility as antecedents and moderators. Furthermore, the study has provided insights into the effects of normative reference groups' and comparative reference groups' source credibility. The study provides marketing practitioners of Black African women's natural hair care products with recommendations on using credible reference groups to drive purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The recommendations include a) creating natural hair care communities using reference groups with which consumers resonate and connect; b) using credible reference groups to get consumers to feel emotionally involved with natural hair care products in order to drive purchase intentions; and c) using different reference group source credibility subdimensions during the consumer journey. Despite methodological limitations, such as its cross-sectional design, this study contributes theoretically and practically to providing a better understanding of the role of reference groups as credible sources in Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. This study thus allows for informed marketing strategies to be adopted by marketing practitioners in the Black African women's natural hair care industry.

LIST OF KEY TERMS

The key terms of this study are defined in this section to provide a common understanding of and consistency in the meaning of the terms.

Black

Black is a race, a socially constructed concept that groups people (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998:18) – specifically, individuals of African origin (National Institutes of Health, 2015). In this study, 'Black' refers to individuals of African origin living either in or outside Africa.

Black African women

The population group 'Black African' is native South Africans, which means individuals born in South Africa. In this study, Black African women are specifically defined as Black African females that were born in South Africa, Black Africans who are native South Africans (Union of South Africa, 1950:277).

Natural hair

In this study, natural hair is defined as Black individuals' hair in its natural state, not chemically straightened hair. Black individual hair is described and defined as coily hair (Green, 2020:3; Jackson, 2017:45; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Rowe, 2015:21).

Natural hair movement

The natural hair movement in this study is a community of Black women who no longer engage in relaxing or chemically straightening their hair, thus leaving it in its coily state (Byrd & Tharps, 2014:2; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Rowe, 2015:2-5; Thompson, 2009:835).

Natural hair care products

Natural hair care products in this study are defined as products that cater for Black women's natural hair – meaning natural hair care products that cater for the non-relaxed or non-chemically straightened hair of Black women, and that are used to enrich and boost their naturally coily hair.

Consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is defined as the process of obtaining and synthesising information in pursuit of purchasing and using a product or a service. Consumer behaviour includes how and why consumers purchase and use products and services (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006:4; Moutinho,1987:5; Sethna & Blythe, 2016:12).

Reference groups

Reference groups may be defined as individuals or a collective of individuals who are a point of reference for individuals to form attitudes and values that also impact behaviour (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:2; Human, 2014:225; Joubert, 2013:26). Two types of reference group are considered in this study: normative reference groups and comparative reference groups. Normative reference groups are those that largely influence and define the consumer's values and behaviours, such as family and those who live in the same household with the individual. Comparative reference groups are those against which consumers compare or benchmark their values, attitudes, and behaviours, such as colleagues or social media influencers (Human, 2014:225). 'Normative reference groups' in this study refers to female family members with natural hair and those close relations who live in an individual's household, while 'comparative reference groups' refers to social media influencers with natural hair.

Source credibility

Source credibility is the communicator's positive attributes that influence the receiver's acceptance of the information (Hu, Chen & Davison, 2019:308; Ohanian, 1990:41). Source credibility has three subdimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1991:46). Source credibility for this study denoted the credibility of the reference groups (female family members with natural hair and social media influencers with natural hair).

Social identification

Social identification is the process in which individuals define and classify themselves with reference to their shared characteristics with other individuals (Deaux, 1996:77). In this study, social identification is defined as Black African women's identification with a reference group with natural hair, and specifically their identification with the social media influencer with natural hair.

Perceived similarity

Perceived similarity is the extent to which an individual identifies with another person by believing that they have things in common (Montoya, Horton & Kirchner, 2008:891; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:261). In the context of this study, it is the degree to which the

Black African woman perceives herself to have things in common with the social media influencer with natural hair, such as having natural hair and buying or using natural hair care products.

Product involvement

Product involvement is the interest the consumer has in a specific product category (Bruwer, Chrysochou & Lesschaeve, 2017:830). In this study, it is about the interest that Black African women have in natural hair care products.

Cognitive involvement

Cognitive involvement is the degree of a consumer's information-processing activities pertaining to products being incorporated in the purchase decision (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1709; Kim & Sung, 2009:506-507). In this study, it is about Black African women processing information about natural hair care products.

Affective involvement

Affective involvement refers to the level of a consumer's emotional state that is stimulated by a product – that is, the feeling a consumer has towards a product (Huang, 2006:389; Kim & Sung, 2009:506-507). In this study, it relates to Black African women's feelings towards natural hair care products.

Attitude

Consumers tend to have relatively consistent evaluations of almost anything in the world – that is, attitude. Consumers can have favourable or unfavourable reactions to any action, object, or person (Ajzen, 1991:188; Baron & Branscombe, 2012:140; Kim & Chung, 2011:42; Rammile & van Zyl, 2010:160). In the context of this study, it is about the attitudes that Black African women have towards natural hair care products.

Purchase intentions

Purchase intentions can be defined as consumers' deliberate plan to try to purchase a product at a specific time or in a specific situation (Spears & Singh, 2004:56; Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014: 260). In the context of this study, purchase intentions are a Black African woman's intentions to purchase the natural hair care products that are recommended by a reference group.

Social context

Social context is the environment that serves as a social framework for individuals or for interpersonal behaviour, and this environment frequently influences the feelings and behaviours that occur within it (American Psychological Association, 2015:993). 'Social context' in this study refers to Black African women with natural hair and their consumption behaviour with respect to natural hair care products.

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CHAPTER 1
CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1   INTRODUCTION

Globally, Black women are going through a transformation of embracing their natural hair and abandoning hair relaxers. For black individuals, natural hair entails coily hair – that is, hair in its natural state and that is not chemically straightened hair (Green, 2020:3; Jackson, 2017:45; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Rowe, 2015:21). The Black hair care industry in the United States is estimated to be worth US$2.5 billion (Mintel, 2018), however, it is projected to remain flat through 2027 (Mintel 2022). For African women, hair is a platform through which they seek to participate in and contribute to the global economy of meaning and things (Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014:54). Natural hair care products require a great number of resources and much investment, such as time, money, and trial-and-error (Shoba, 2020), largely because hair is a psychosocial communication tool (Molamodi, Fajuyigbe, Sewraj, Gichuri, Sijako, Galliano & Laurent, 2021:323) that is a powerful symbol of individual and group identity (Synnott, 1987:381), and has been linked to influencing social behaviour in some traditional African settings (Mbilishaka, Clemons, Hudlin, Warner & Jones, 2020:591). Hair care and resulting consumption behaviour is a means through which African women seek to participate in and contribute meaning to the global economy (Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014:54).

The shift in hair trends from chemically treated hair to natural hair has affected the sales and marketing of hair straightener products in South Africa (Jadezweni, 2018). The emerging consumption behaviour of Black individuals' natural hair care products resulted in a decline in hair relaxers and hair chemicals sales in South Africa in 2018 (Jadezweni, 2018). In South Africa, the hair care market is projected to be worth US $630 million by 2028 and is expected to achieve a compounded annual growth rate of 6.18% between 2023 and 2028 (Mordor Intelligence, 2023). According to Mordor Intelligence's *South African hair care 2020* market report, there is an increasing trend in the natural ethnic (curly) hair care segment, which has led to a growth in demand for natural hair care products. The South African market thus offers a frugal area for considering the role of reference groups in African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. The consumption of natural hair care products in South Africa has seen massive growth in recent years and is forecast to continue increasing as more Black African women drop chemical straighteners for the natural hair approach (Tefu, 2020). The rise in urbanisation, a younger population, and increased disposable income have created a demand for more hair care products (Mordor Intelligence, 2020). Despite this growth in the

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natural hair care industry, there is limited research on the Black hair care industry, with multinational companies such as L'Oreal looking to conduct more research on African hair and skin (Mhlungu, 2017). The rise in sales of natural hair brands could result in marketing shifting its activities to the emerging natural hair trend to ensure that they cater for consumers with natural hair and their needs. There is thus a need to understand Black women and their consumption behaviour towards hair care products and/or brands (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020:366; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:63; Thomas, 2020:173).

In South Africa, the number of known hair salons catering for Black individuals' ethnic hair is around 37,000; this figure possibly excludes informal hair salons in homes (Services SETA, 2016:20) and some women getting their hair done on the streets (Chutel, 2018). Most of these informal hair care sectors cater to Black African women, and the current data does not reflect the worth of the market (Chutel, 2018; Services SETA, 2016). Consequently, South Africa's economy greatly benefits from Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. In addition, the consumption behaviour of natural hair care products in South Africa, whether in the formal or the informal hair care industry, has not been fully explored. Thus this study has chosen this underexplored phenomenon. Engagements, communication, and content shared through social media platforms has had a great impact on developing the natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:562; Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:29) – that is, the community of Black women who are embracing their natural hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2014:2; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Rowe, 2015:2-5; Thompson, 2009:835). The influence of reference groups, such as hair opinion leaders and content creators, has played an important role in the growth of the natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:562; Green, 2020:2; Jackson, 2017:48; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:174). Petzer and De Meyer (2013:383) postulate that the emergence and consumption behaviour of the Black middle class in South Africa requires businesses to adapt their marketing strategies to cater to this consumer segment's needs and wants. To achieve this, marketers need to overcome some of the marketing challenges faced in South Africa. One such approach for marketers is to gain access to the consumers' reference groups and to use them to generate positive word-of-mouth about their products (Petzer & De Meyer, 2013:386). Thus this study has chosen social theories (social identity theory, social cognitive theory, and social influence theory) to understand the impact of reference groups on the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. The theories would provide insights into the impact of the social environment on the consumer – in this case, the Black African woman with natural hair.

Reference groups play a role in shaping the formation of values and the adoption of certain lifestyles (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). Different types of reference group influence individuals differently, depending on the information source. Thus the impact of different reference groups might be different with respect to purchase intentions (Hoonspon & Puriwat, 2016:158). According to Deutsch and Gerard (1955:629), reference groups have two types of influence on consumers, namely informative influence and normative influence. Informative influence is the transferring of information among group members and acceptance of the information as evidence about reality. Normative influences (from those who are close to an individual, such as family members, and who broadly define the individual's values) involve conforming to group norms and expectations (Appiah, Ozuem, Howell & Lancaster, 2019:465; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955:629). Normative influence is further categorised into two subdimensions: value-expressive (feeling) and utilitarian (thinking) influence (Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Park & Lessig, 1977:103). Individuals are likely to perform a behaviour if it will result in a particular value outcome and if their significant reference group will value the behaviour (Kim & Han, 2010:999). Individuals are susceptible to the influence of reference groups in purchasing products (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:137). Group members who provide useful and credible information often find their recommendations being considered with a high level of confidence (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). Thus credibility plays a significant role in determining conformity (Park & Lessig, 1977:103). Previous research has found that the influence of reference groups has an impact on a consumer's behaviour and purchase behaviour (Yang, He & Lee, 2007:335; Zhao, Stylianou & Zheng, 2018:27).

Individuals can assume the characteristics and behaviours of the group they belong to and, in turn, derive their social identity from that group membership (Brown, 2020:10; Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams, 1986:274; Vernuccio, Pastore, Pagani & Barbarossa, 2015:708). Group membership has been previously used as a proxy to measure identity (Reed, Lange, Ketchie & Clapp, 2007:289). Consumers try to find connections to a group that result in a sense of belonging to that group (Lyu, 2012:38); and, in turn, the consumer identifies socially with the group (Kim, Han & Park, 2001:196). This is grounded in the social identity theory that group membership relates to the value the group brings about in an individual (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283). The true power and uniqueness of social identity theory is that of interactionism, meaning that the individual influences their social environment and the social environment influences the individual (Oakes, 2002:820). The interactionism of social identity theory is aligned to social cognitive theory – the triadic reciprocity of interpersonal factors, behaviour, and the social environment (Bandura, 1989:1175). In addition, social influence theory is related to this phenomenon, postulating that the social environment influences the consumer and causes changes in the consumer (Kelman, 1958:59).

Influences from individuals in the social environment whose behaviours are modelled can impact the internal processes and the behaviour of individuals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:5). Hu, Chen and Davison (2019:320) posited that peer influence drives consumers to accept others' information and norms. They added that for, social influence to be effective, it must come from a credible source and that the source must provide informational and emotional support. Their research enhanced the knowledge of social influence by showing that peer influence can overpower a consumer's thought and decision-making process. Decision-making for Black African women with natural hair is an involving process that requires a motivation to search for information about natural hair (Thomas, 2020:44).

Involved consumers engage in several activities (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:52), which include what they think and feel about the different aspects of a product. Consumer involvement is a multidimensional concept that has the ability to explain various behavioural outcomes (Broderick & Mueller, 1999:98); and each facet of involvement brings some specific information (Laurent & Kapfner, 1985:52). It has two motivational components that affect consumer decisions: a cognitive/affective motive and a utilitarian/value-expressive motive (Kim & Sung, 2009:505). The utilitarian/value-expressive motive consists of the utilitarian component, which deals with product involvement, while the value-expressive facet deals with brand choice (Kim & Sung, 2009:502). Product involvement is the relevance, importance and interest a consumer has in a product category (Drossos, Kokkinaki, Giaglis & Fouskas, 2014:423). The cognitive/affective involvement component encompasses the manner in which consumers both think and feel (Perse, 1990:559). Different levels of cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) involvement can lead to different ways of seeking and processing information (Hamzelu, Gohary, Ghafoori Nia & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2017:287). Cognitive involvement is induced by an individual going through information processing and achieving the complete thought sequence from need recognition to post-decision behaviour (Park & Young, 1983; Shrosbree, 2014:5). Consumers continually look for information that is related to their purchase decision, and high cognitive involvement means that consumers are engaging in information gathering (Jiang, Chan, Tan & Chua, 2010:41). Affective involvement is induced by an individual's feelings and their emotional achievement (Park & Young, 1983). The feeling state in consumers is present in every shopping experience, and a positive affective involvement generally leads to purchase intentions (Jiang *et al.*, 2010:41).

Attitudes have played a significant role in the history of social psychology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974:59) and can be gathered from what others say or do; they are not directly observable (Asiegbu, Powei & Iruka, 2012:39). Individuals can have attitudes towards a variety of things

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(Fabrigar, Krosnick & MacDiugall, 2005:19), and their attitudes can be either negative or positive, favourable or unfavourable (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:40; Wassenaar, Kempen & Van Eeden, 2019:438). Reference groups play a significant role in the shaping of certain behaviours and the formation of attitudes. Furthermore, their influence varies across different products and services (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132-134).

The present study, therefore, intended to enhance the body of knowledge on reference groups. Reference groups as credible sources are important because they affect consumers' social identification, perceived similarity, product involvement, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, attitude, intentions to purchase, and behaviour (Human, 2014:225). This research contributes to the understanding of the role of reference groups as credible sources on consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. The interrelationships of consumers' identification, perceived similarity, attitudes, involvement, and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products are revealed in the study. Furthermore, this research adds to the body of knowledge by focusing on the consumption behaviour of Black women, which is a relatively under-researched area in the field of consumer behaviour (Addie *et al.*, 2019:352).

For practitioners, this study contributes to the creation of marketing-related activities that are underpinned by reference groups as credible sources for the consumption of Black African women's natural hair care products. The study also contributes to understanding consumer communities that engage in product knowledge sharing that influences purchase and usage behaviour.

The next section of this chapter is the problem statement of this study. It is followed by the literature review and the theoretical context that provides the foundation of this study. The methodology follows thereafter, with the processes that were used for the investigation; and finally, an outline of the rest of the thesis.

2   PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

Reference groups play an important part in impacting a consumer's attitudes, behaviours, and intentions towards to a product (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30). Previous research has established relationships between reference groups' source credibility and consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions, and behaviour (Fink, Koller, Gartner, Floh & Harms, 2020:154; Ohanian, 1991:47; Sokolova & Kefi,

2020:9). Thus, it was important for this study to understand the role of credible reference groups.

According to Ohanian (1991:52), research was required into other celebrities and products to provide clarity on the generalisability of their research's source credibility and purchase intention findings. Despite numerous studies that have been conducted to measure the effect of source credibility on purchase intentions, to the best of the researcher's knowledge – and following a search of research databases – not many peer-reviewed studies exist that seek to understand the direct effect of all three source credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) on purchase intentions, especially for natural hair care products. A search on various databases for peer-reviewed articles that contained the words 'attractiveness', 'expertise', 'trustworthiness', and 'purchase intention' from 1950 to 2023 generated results with fewer than 50 articles that contained a combination of all of these keywords (see Annexure D for an overview of these and other articles related to the keywords of this thesis). Previously a few studies, such as those of Adam (2022:54), AlFarraj, Alalwan, Obeidat, Baabdullah, Aldmour and Al-Haddad (2021:6), Daimi and Tolunay (2021:69), He and Jin (2022:8), and Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang and Soutar (2020:167), used all three credibility subdimensions to ascertain their direct impact on purchase intentions. For example, Weismueller *et al.* (2020:167) used all three of Ohanian's (1990:50) source credibility subdimensions to understand their impact on purchase intentions towards the general product endorsement of low- to medium-involvement products on Instagram, while AlFarraj *et al.* (2021:6) used all three subdimensions on purchase intentions towards aesthetic dermatology clinics. Some studies have used a subset (one or two) of the source credibility subdimensions as antecedents of purchase intentions (Masuda, Han & Lee, 2022:6; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:274), while the outcomes of other studies that have used all three subdimensions have not included purchase intentions as an outcome (Koay, Teoh & Soh, 2021:5; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:18; Wiedman & Von Mettenheim, 2020:712). Koay *et al.* (2021:5) had online impulse buying as the outcome; Wiedman and Von Mettenheim (2020:712) focused on brand satisfaction, brand image, and brand trust as outcomes; and Wang and Scheinbaum (2018:18) had brand credibility and brand attitude as outcomes. Therefore, this study used Ohanian's (1990) source credibility (through attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) to determine the impact of reference groups as credible sources on consumption behaviour.

All three source credibility subdimensions were chosen for two main reasons that play an important role in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. Hair is an important psychosocial communication tool (Molamodi *et al.*, 2021:323)

that helps individuals to develop their social construction (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:342). The first reason is that Black individuals' hair was a physical feature that was considered unappealing during the apartheid era, specifically because of the natural hair (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:343). Thus, the physical appearance of the reference groups that recommended natural hair had to be taken into consideration for this study. Second, for Black individuals, hair has a historical and socio-political association that has resulted in their not fully embracing their natural hair; and that led to a lack of knowledge about Black individuals' natural hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:843). It was important for this study to understand the reference group's perceived skills and knowledge, and their believability, reliability, and honesty, when recommending Black African women's natural hair care products. Therefore, it was important for the study to choose a source credibility construct that assessed physical appearance using attractiveness, expertise for knowledgeability, and trustworthiness for believability. The usage of all three source credibility subdimensions would enable the marketer to understand the various specific facets of the reference group's source credibility that would impact consumption behaviour. This could lead to a current problem of marketers not knowing which levers to focus on when they developed their content marketing strategy.

The support groups to which Ellington (2014:560) refers in her study are the different types of reference group that consumers use as sources of information. The role of reference groups – in this instance, social network sites' content creators and producers – was significant and important in the natural hair movement. The creators of the content could reach high numbers of Black women globally through online platforms that provided information on natural hair and educated them about natural hair (Ellington, 2014:563; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:1). In turn, natural hair communities and support groups were created as a result of the collaboration between the producers of the content and its consumers. Black South African women use blogs as a source of information for various purposes (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:19). These purposes include learning about natural hair products, the hairstyles that can be worn, the products the consumer needs to use, and information about hair salons that cater for natural hair. Previous research has shown that reference groups play an influential role in the purchase of products and are perceived to be credible sources of information (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Sir, 2018:30; Human, 2014:225). Fernandes and Panda (2019:134) suggest that research needs to be conducted to understand either the mediating role or the moderating role of reference groups during buying decisions. Ellington (2014:563) suggests that further research is required to gain an understanding of reference groups, such as online and in-person support groups, because this would add knowledge to the natural hair movement. Thus, this study has focused on the role of the characteristics of

credible reference groups as antecedents (predictors) and moderators (an in-depth understanding related to how reference group source credibility affects the strength of relationships) in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products.

In line with Ohanian's (1991:53) recommendation that marketing practitioners and researchers focus on celebrity spokespersons' credibility, this study has focused on another comparative reference group: social media influencers (Human, 2014:225). The proliferation of social media influencers endorsing products, thus changing or driving consumers' behaviour and affecting their purchase intention, has led to social media influencers being the focus of this study (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi & Thrassou, 2021:2). Although celebrities have been widely researched as reference groups (Cuomo *et al.*, 2019; Ohanian, 1991:47; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sir, 2018:30), this study focused on SMIs as a comparative reference group because they are perceived to be more credible than celebrities, and because consumers identify with SMIs and find that they have more similarities with SMIs than they have do with celebrities (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:274). Various studies have found that the source credibility of social media influencers has had a positive effect on a consumer's purchase intentions (Fink *et al.*, 2020:154; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). Social media influencers have played a significant role in changing perceptions and providing knowledge about natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46); therefore, it was worth considering them in this study in order to understand the effects of their source credibility on the consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products.

Belonging to a group is reinforced by the consumer's social identity, and it is a way for individuals to form an understanding of their environment (Kromidha & Robson, 2016:610; Oakes, 2002:812; Rees, Haslam, Coffe & Lavallee, 2015:1086). Social identification (Kim *et al.*, 2001:196) and perceived similarity (Lyu, 2012:38) are an individual's sense of belonging. Reed *et al.* (2007:286) posit that, for normative information to have an effect on intentions and actual behaviour, there needs to be a strong identification with a reference group. SMIs have been found to have a positive impact on the consumer's purchase intentions because the consumer perceived them to be credible, identified with them, and found that they shared similarities (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:274). This indicates that social identification – that is, relating to and connecting with a reference group and its perceived similarities, and having common characteristics with the reference group – does impact the consumer's purchase intentions. In this study, it is argued that social identification and a perceived similarity with the reference group will have an impact on the consumer's intentions to purchase natural hair care products through the use of these products, driven by the affiliation and resemblances they have with the reference group. This study has assumed that, when a consumer belongs to a group, and

identifies and finds similarities with a credible reference group, their intentions to purchase a product would be high. Understanding the mediating factors of social identification and perceived familiarity with the reference group would thus assist in knowing the interceding factors between reference groups as credible sources and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The literature concurs that consumer involvement is a central part of consumer consumption (Broderick, 2007:344; Hourigan & Bougoure, 2012:132; Isaacson, Jordaan & Van Heerden, 2018:112). Gbadamosi (2013:240) suggests that further research is needed to understand consumer involvement in the African context, and particularly emphasises the need for research on African women's level of involvement in certain purchase or buying contexts. Women are more socially connected with society than men are, and they are more involved in shopping; they also depend on their friends' influence in buying cosmetics (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:134). In South Africa, Black middle-class women are becoming an important economic force because of their increased earnings; they account for 40% of all women's consumer spending (Theron, 2008). Black consumers' hair spending is six times more than that of white consumers in South Africa (Mhlungu, 2017; Thomas, 2020:140). Black women experience higher levels of anxiety and a greater financial and social burden than white women do with regard to hair because their decision not to partake in activities such as swimming and exercise is due hair maintenance (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2017:11). Black women struggle to find products for their hair (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2017:11) and since the natural hair market is growing in South Africa, natural hair care products continue to be expensive (Thomas, 2020:140). Despite this, there is limited research on South African Black women with natural hair (Thomas, 2020:108). With the significant growth in the consumption of natural hair care products, the need for research related to that consumption has become imperative (Addie *et al.*, 2019:3502; Thomas, 2020:172), and it needs to include consumer involvement. This study thus sought to examine the effects of consumer involvement at a more granular level, examining consumer involvement from a product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement perspective. Furthermore, in a ground-breaking source credibility study, Ohanian (1991:51) recommended the use of products that require the consumer to be more involved. Thus, this study chose to focus on natural hair care products, which are involved products for Black women.

Jiang *et al.* (2010:47) found that cognitive involvement and affective involvement positively influenced purchase intentions. Cognitive and affective involvement were also found to play a mediating role between active control (the ability to choose information and guide interaction)

and purchase intentions (Jiang *et al.*, 2010:48). Kim and Sung (2009:517) tested involvement as a multidimensional construct that included cognitive and affective involvement, suggesting that further research needed to be done on cognitive and affective involvement.

The impact of attitudes on purchase intentions has been extensively researched through the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) in different settings and product categories, including attitudes towards purchasing halal food (Alam & Sayuti, 2011:12); attitudes towards online purchases (George, 2004:200); attitudes towards the purchase of green products (Paul, Modi & Patel, 2016:126); and attitudes towards buying organic skin/hair care products (Kim & Chung, 2011:41). Kim and Chung (2011:44) proposed that future research be done on attitude and purchase intentions, as part of the relationships with the TPB, for products beyond organic personal care products. In the context of mall shopping behaviour in China and Thailand, attitude was found to play a mediating role between a consumer's personal values and the money they spent in the mall (Cai & Shannon, 2012:43).

Previous research has found that normative groups such as family and comparative groups such as social media influencers have an impact on the consumer's purchase intentions and behaviours (Fink *et al.*, 2020:154; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9; Wong & Aini, 2017:774). With the importance of family in the consumer's consumption behaviour (Human, 2014:225) and the rise of social media influencers as information providers and product endorsers (Vrontis *et al.*, 2021:2), this study also focused on the structure of the relationships affected by these two reference groups, which might have unearthed the differences and similarities between these two reference groups.

According to several scholars (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:2; Human, 2014:225; Hsu, Kang & Lam, 2006:475; Joubert, 2013:26), family members are the consumer's most influential reference group for consumption behaviour, because they impact the consumer's values and attitudes. The effects of the family as a reference group for sourcing information on purchase intentions have been extensively researched in various disciplines, domains, and fields (Bashir, Lodhi & Mahmood, 2017:176; Gil, Andres & Salinas, 2007:195; Hsu *et al.*, 2006:474; Rahmi, Sekarasih & Sjabadhyni, 2016:20). Mothers have played a significant role in the decision-making process for Black women and their natural hair (Thomas, 2020:166). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge there has been only limited research that has investigated the effects of a family's (as a reference group) source credibility on purchase intentions. In line with Ellington's (2014:563) suggestion for further research on in-person and online support groups, the family has been chosen as the in-person support group (normative

reference group), and SMIs have been chosen as the online support group (comparative reference group).

Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019:266) recommended that further research be done to understand whether celebrity or influencer endorsement is less credible than that of people whom consumers know personally or in real life. There is a need to understand further the similarities and differences between normative and comparative reference groups as credible sources, because there have been only a few studies on possible changes in relationships as a result of the influence of a normative or a comparative reference group, and how they impact consumer behaviour (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:262; Hsu *et al.*, 2006:475), especially through the lenses of social theories (social identity, social cognitive, and social influence). This study identified a further gap in the research relating to the investigation of normative reference groups and comparative reference groups as credible sources in changing the attitudes of the consumer. Different effects are expected for comparative reference groups and for normative reference groups. Normative reference groups are a point of reference for an individual's foundational values and attitudes (Hsu *et al.*, 2006:482; Human 2014:225; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171); therefore, it is expected that they would be more likely to influence a consumer with regard to issues involving values and attitudes than the comparative reference group would. Despite the abundant research on the influence of the source credibility of celebrities on purchase intentions, little empirical evidence exists about the effect of the source credibility of reference groups such as family and social media influencers on purchase intentions. This study differs from other source credibility studies in that it has investigated both normative (family) and comparative (social media influencers) reference groups' source credibility in the context of African women in South Africa.

The above discussion illustrates the vast gaps in the literature on the role of reference groups as credible sources in purchase intentions towards natural hair care products; on the role of mediators – namely, social identification with the reference group, perceived similarity with the reference group, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, and attitudes towards natural hair care products. *The aim of this study was to determine the effects of reference groups as credible sources in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products.* The main research question was: *What is the role of reference group source credibility in Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour?*

3   THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review analyses, synthesises, and evaluates the current literature to articulate an argument for undertaking the study. The literature review covers the theoretical background of the study and the definitions of concepts, including the constructs and their sub-dimensions. The constructs used in the study are reference groups as credible sources, social identification, perceived similarity, product involvement, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, attitude, and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The literature review begins with the natural hair movement, which informs the context of this study.

3.1   Natural hair movement

Hair is an important matter, the most powerful symbol of individual and group identity (Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014:53; Synnott, 1987:381). "Black hair is an integral part of Black culture" (Green, 2020). Hair is an important part of the identity of women in African cultures; to Black people, hair is a symbol of resistance, identity, tribe, spirituality, and one's family background and social status (Bellinger, 2007:65; Dash, 2006:35; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:44). Hair dressing in Africa has always been the work of trusted friends or relatives (Sieber & Herreman, 2000:67). Therefore, reference groups have always played a role in the natural hair community of Black women.

In various studies, Black hair is described and defined as 'coily' (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45; Rowe, 2015:21). The hair type scale, developed by Walker (2017), uses numbers and alphabets to categorise hair according to how tight or loose and how straight or coily it is, ranging from 1A to 4C. According to the hair type chart (Figure 1), Black hair is from 3A on the scale, indicating hair that is loose and curly, to 4C, indicating hair that is tight and curly (Ariane, 2010; Walker & Wiltz, 1997). See Figure 1 for the different hair types.

Figure 1: Hair type chart

Source: Shea Moisture (2020)

Hair has been used for centuries as an indicator of race and social status (Green, 2020:23; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Rowe, 2015:3). Statistics South Africa defines race as population groups that are characterised by cultural, linguistic, geographic, socio-economic, and demographic characteristics and differences (Simelane, 2002:6). In South Africa's Population Registration Act of 1950, which was a way to classify individuals into different population groups, the pencil test was used, among other methods, to determine one's race (Alubafi, Ramphalile & Rankoana, 2018:5; Ndlovu, 2008; Smythe, 1991:220; Union of South Africa, 1950:278). The pencil test was a process in which officials put a pencil in an individual's hair. If the pencil fell out, they would be classified as either Coloured or Indian; and if it remained stuck in the hair, they would be classified as Black (Alubafi *et al.*, 2018:5; Ndlovu, 2008). This resulted in hair being an integral part of one's racial identity and of their sense of belonging in their environment (Green, 2020:1; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:86; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160). In this instance, hair determined one's population group (race), which in turn impacted their social status, their social identity, and their behaviour.

According to the Population Registration Act, the population group 'Black' or 'Black African' is native South African, which means Black individuals who were born in South African (Union of South Africa, 1950:277). Therefore, in this study 'Black African' is defined as Black Africans who were born in South Africa.

As stated by Addie *et al.* (2019:352), not much marketing research has been done on Black women as a consumer group, and limited research is available about the consumption behaviour of Black women. Black women exchange information amongst themselves about the latest trends, while also seeking the approval of other Black women, which is very important to them (Thomas, 2020:61). This shows the power of word-of-mouth and a

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dependence on interpersonal dialogue as reliable sources of information for middle-class Black women (Thomas, 2020:61). This trend is no different for Black women when it comes to information about natural hair.

The acceptance of Black hair in its natural state, which means that it has not been chemically manipulated or straightened, has resulted in various natural hair movements over the years (Byrd & Tharps, 2014:2; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Thompson, 2009:835). In America during the time of slavery, Black hair determined the social status and employment opportunities for African Americans, especially women. The curlier the hair, the less social status a person had; and they would then work in the fields while those African Americans with less curly hair had more opportunities and could work inside the slave owner's home, which was a privilege (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:843).

Madam C.J. Walker, a philanthropist, political activist, millionaire, and entrepreneur, recognised the link between hair and self-empowerment (Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:161; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:835). In the early 1900s, Walker developed the patent hot comb, also known as the pressing comb – a product that she not only sold but also used to demonstrate the importance of self-care and self-acceptance to her customers, and encouraged women to market and sell the product (Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Nimocks, 2015:35). The products she sold included the hot comb and a hair softener (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2009:835). In the 1960s, George E. Johnson's company, Johnson Product and Summit Lab, developed the hair relaxer, a chemical that straightens Black hair (Obukowho, 2018:30; Thompson, 2008:1). Hair relaxers became the norm for Black people for years until the birth of the natural hair movement, which advocated for Black hair love and pride, resulting in the decline of hair relaxer sales (Ellington, 2014:554; Johnson *et al.*, 2017:2). In South Africa, the proponent of Black hair in the 1980s was Herman Mashaba, the founder of the iconic Black hair brand 'Black Like Me' (Grange, 2012). According to the Black Like Me website, they were the pioneers of real ethnic (Black) hair care needs (Black Like Me, 2020). However, only after 30 years in business did Black Like Me develop a range of products called 'BLM for Naturals' to cater for the booming trend of the natural hair movement (Black Like Me, 2020).

The first wave of the natural movement was in the 1950s, driven largely by the civil rights movement, when the Afro (Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:50) and braids were symbols of the rejection of Eurocentric standards of beauty and of advocacy for natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46, Johnson *et al.*, 2017:2; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:50; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157;

Thompson, 2009:835). The second wave of the natural hair movement came in the 1980s, when the popularity of Jheri curls, a glossy loosely curled look, grew (Rowe, 2015:29; Thompson, 2009:835). The internet was a crucial part of the third wave of the natural hair movement, starting in the early 2000s, when social media platforms were used to reach Black women not only to promote products but also to educate, provide knowledge, and empower Black women about their natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51; Rowe, 2015:1). The third natural hair movement encouraged more women to join the movement, and created many natural hair communities where women could connect with one another, share information about their natural hair, and have a sense of community (Ellington, 2014:554). Part of this belonging was driven by natural hair opinion leaders, content creators, and reference groups who influenced the growth of the movement (Ellington, 2014:562; Green, 2020:2; Jackson, 2017:48; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:174). Figure 2 is the visual representation of three important events that played into the natural hair movement.

Figure 2: Visual representation of three important events playing into the natural hair movement.

First wave example — Source: Kwame Brathwaite (2023)

Second wave example — Source: Tiny Roots (2023)

Third wave example — Source: Sinovuyo Mondliwa (2019)
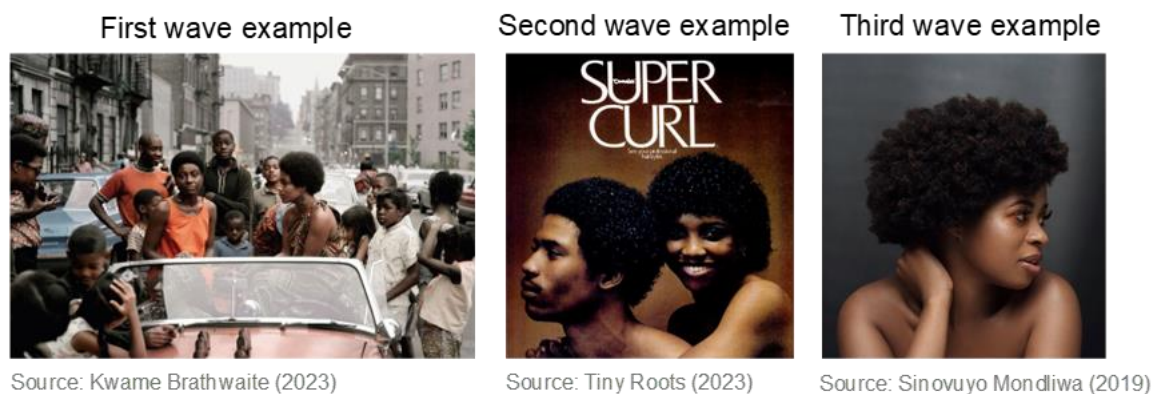
African American women lack the knowledge to take care their natural hair care (Ellington, 2014:552): it requires a great amount of good grooming (Khumalo, 2010; Thomas, 2020:132) and is difficult to maintain; so consumers need good products to maintain their natural hair (Thomas, 2020:132). Black women value natural hair care products for the maintenance and nurturing of their hair (Thomas, 2020:62). Black women primarily seek natural hair care education and product recommendations from vloggers and other social media influencers online (Thomas 2020:174), while family have always been there to offer hair information.

Membership in campaigns and movements for Black consciousness and the 'resurrection' of the Black identity is increasing globally (AdAge, 2020). It is important for the marketing

discipline to cater to and portray a true reflection of the Black consumer in advertising (Addie, 2020). The proliferation of the natural hair movement and its marketing needs has made it the ideal context on which to focus for this study. In order to keep abreast of and respond to the changes in the movement and to consumers within the movement, there needs to be an in-depth understanding of consumption behaviour in this context (Addie *et al.*, 2019:366; Ellington, 2014:562). This study focuses on the natural hair movement to enable marketers to stay abreast of the emerging shifts and trends of consumers' consumption behaviour. The next section of the literature review surveys the foundational theory for this study.

3.2   Consumer behaviour

The marketing concept originated from the development of three business-orientation philosophies: the production and product concept, from the 1850s to the 1920s; the selling concept, from the 1930s to the 1950s; leading to the marketing concept, from the 1950s onwards (Fullerton, 2013:213; Helgesen, Nesset & Voldsund, 2009:27; Shrosbree, 2014:5). The marketing concept is defined as a marketing management philosophy that emphasises that businesses should know their consumers' needs and wants and deliver the desired satisfaction better than their competitors (Roberts-Lombard, 2010:24). In 1961, James Engel founded the consumer behaviour discipline, calling for the integration of motivational research into business management by adopting a systematic approach to understanding and analysing consumers' motivations (Fullerton, 2013:213). Several years later he became the lead author of the ground-breaking consumer behaviour textbook (Fullerton, 2013:213). This resulted in the birth of consumer behaviour and the growth of the field to what it is today. Consumer behaviour is now entrenched in the marketing concept.

Consumer behaviour is defined as the process of obtaining and synthesising information in pursuit of purchasing and using a product or a service; it is the way in which and why consumers purchase and use products and services (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel, 2006:4; Moutinho,1987:5; Sethna & Blythe, 2016:12).

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:6) define the field of consumer behaviour as "…the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society". Those authors state that consumer behaviour is more than the buyer-and-seller relationship: there are other factors that influence or impact consumer behaviour, beyond the linear process of buyer-and-seller. The individual's self-concept, a dynamic multifaceted phenomenon of self (Markus & Wurf, 1987:301), and

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their lifestyle have a great impact on the generation of needs and desires that might necessitate satisfaction through consumption decisions (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:26). The self-concept and the lifestyle are based on a variety of psychological, physical, sociological, and demographic influences. These influences are broader and more encompassing aspects of consumer behaviour that play a crucial role in the process. The definition looks at consumers not only as individuals but also collectively as groups or organisations. This is aligned with this study's aim to understand the influence of reference groups on an individual's consumer behaviour.

The definition of Bennett and the American Marketing Association (AMA) (1995) states that consumer behaviour is "…the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior and environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives". The definition infers that consumers are self-motivated individuals who are in an ever-changing environment owing to their thinking, feelings, and subsequent actions. There is a continuous interaction that is derived from ongoing engagement and stimulation between the consumer and their social environment. This interaction leads to the exchange of a resource, whether cognitive or affective, by a consumer for something that is beneficial to them, such as a product or a service (Gbadamosi, 2018:157; Sethna & Blythe, 2016:9; Tyagi & Kumar, 2004:26). This definition is aligned with this study, and with and the social theories used in this study, because it looks at consumer behaviour as a dynamic and holistic approach that involves an exchange between the consumer and their environment. In this case, the environment could be defined as the social environment in which the consumer lives, the reference groups in the natural hair movement, and the roles they play in the everyday interactions in which consumers engage. The social theories conceptualise consumer behaviour as it happens naturally in the consumer's daily life. The definition focuses on three aspects that underpin a consumer's daily life; the main aspect is doing (action or behaviour, etc.); the second is a possession with which to do something (a product); and the third is that the acting or possession occurs in a social context (Kleine, Kleine & Kernan, 1993:211).

For the purpose of this paper and its objectives, consumer behaviour is defined as a combination of the two definitions of consumer behaviour given above: those of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:6) and AMA (1995). The definition is that consumers consume products to satisfy their needs in an ever-changing environment as a result of their thinking, feelings, and subsequent actions. This is because of continuous influence from the consumer's social environment. The combined definition is aligned with the study's social theories, as consumers will use their social environment to engage in evaluation processes to determine the most valuable outcome of their situation. The combined definition helps to understand holistically

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the impact and influence of reference groups as credible sources, which are the environment of the consumer's behaviour; the mediating role of social identification; the impact and influence of perceived similarity; the impact and influence of the consumer's cognitive and affective involvement; and the impact and influence of their attitude to the product – that is, the impact and influence of all of those factors on their purchase intentions, which is their exchange process in a dynamic environment.

3.2.1 Consumer decision-making

It is important to look at consumer decision-making models to understand the key factors that influence how consumers obtain and synthesise information about a product from their social environment in order to satisfy their needs. Understanding consumers' decision-making steps assists marketers in effectively communicating with consumers to drive them to purchase their products (Stankevich, 2017:10). The consumer behaviour model chosen for this study is the consumer decision-making model of Shrosbree (2014:16). The consumer decision-making process provides this study with an approach to understanding how Black African women with natural hair will satisfy their need for gathering and processing information about natural hair care products (Shrosbree, 2014:16).

The consumer decision-making process has three main stages: input, processing, and output. Each of these stages has its own facets. The input stage is the external influences phase, in which consumers recognise that they have a need. This phase has two major sources of information: the organisation's marketing efforts (product, promotion, price, and channels of distribution) and the sociocultural environment (reference groups, social class, culture, and subculture) (Shrosbree, 2014:16). The marketing efforts are a direct attempt by marketing organisations to reach, inform, and persuade consumers to purchase and use their products (Ungerer, 2014:414). The sociocultural environmental input consists of a wide range of non-commercial inputs, which are less tangible but important factors whose influence is internalised by the consumer, affecting their evaluation of a product in order to adopt or reject it (Ungerer, 2014:414). For this study, the external influences are the natural hair care products from hair brands or companies and the reference groups (comparative and normative).

The process stage of the model involves how consumers make their decision; it is a cyclical process through which the consumer goes. The internal psychological processes (motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes) impact the recognition of a need, when the consumer identifies that they have a problem, and the pre-purchase search for information and the evaluation of alternatives. The experience gained during the phase of evaluating the

alternatives then affects the consumer's current psychological attributes. These factors in the consumer decision-making stage then influence the external factors in the input stage (Shrosbree, 2014:16). The dynamic interaction between these two stages is aligned with the study's social theories that individuals influence their social environment and that the social environment influences them (Bandura, 2001:14; Estrada, Woodcock, Hernandez & Schultz, 2011:208; Oakes, 2002:820).

The third and final stage of the process is the output, post-decision process, which involves the actual purchase and post-purchase behaviour. The purchase behaviour involves the actual purchase of the product for trial purchases (limited usage to explore the product) or for repeat purchases (adopting the product).

In addition to the consumer decision-making process, the marketing field has the consumer journey, which is generally mapped. The consumer journey map illustrates the path that consumers follow in engaging with a company (Richardson, 2010:2). Because the natural hair movement is in its infancy in South Africa (Williams, 2018), this study has chosen the product adoption process (Ungerer, 2014:388) to illustrate the consumer journey in adopting natural hair care products. The consumer journey consists of five stages: awareness, interest (consideration), evaluation (conversion), trial, and adoption (Ungerer, 2014:388). 'Awareness' is the first exposure the consumer has to the product. 'Interest' refers to the consumer being interested in the product and considering it by searching for information. The 'evaluation' stage is when the consumer is convinced that the product will satisfy their needs. The 'trial' stage is when the consumer purchases the product and uses it on a limited basis. 'Adoption' is when the consumer decides to use the product permanently. According to Richardson (2010:4), the consumer journey is non-linear; for example, some consumers might move straight from awareness to purchase if they have a strong recommendation. Figure 3 illustrates the consumer journey.

Figure 3: The adoption process model

Awareness → Interest → Evaluation → Trial → Adoption

Source: Ungerer (2010:388)

The consumer decision-making process and the consumer product-adoption journey offer the study an in-depth understanding of the factors that influence Black African women when they

are gathering information about natural hair care products. They also indicate which part of the journey Black African women are in so that marketers can interact with them appropriately by using relevant influences to provide relevant content at the relevant stage.

Content is about communicating a sentiment or emotion by using information that is useful and relevant to the consumer (Raath, 2022). Understanding content would assist marketers when they develop their content marketing strategy. "*Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action*" (Content Marketing Institute, 2022). Content marketing is used to deliver information to make the consumer more insightful; and so it is important for marketers consistently to deliver valuable ongoing information to the consumer (Baltes, 2015:116). It is what the company produces to narrate its story (Baltes, 2015:112) and to succeed; so content marketers need to focus their efforts on creating brand stories that engage consumers with relevant, useful, and valuable content that helps consumers to solve their problems (Vinerean, 2017:95). In this case, content marketers for Black African women's natural hair care products would need to engage with those women using credible sources of information that provide relevant and useful information that satisfies their needs for natural hair.

Understanding the combination of the consumer decision-making process, the consumer journey map, and the content marketing strategy would assist marketing practitioners when creating their content marketing strategy for Black African women's natural hair care products. This study would enable marketers to select and use ideal natural hair care advocates (that are the sociocultural influence) to effectively engage with Black African women about natural hair care products. By sharing credible, relevant and valuable information that satisfies the Black African women's needs, which in turn will assist to move them along the consumer journey.

The difficulty of the consumer's decision is also influenced by how they acquire the information from the environment (Payne, Bettman & Johnson, 1991:52).

The next section discusses the reference groups (which are the sources of information for the study) and the two different reference groups that are explored in this study.

3.3   Reference groups

Many consumer decisions unequivocally involve multiple individuals (Payne *et al.*, 1991:52) such as reference groups (Shrosbree, 2014:16). Reference groups may be defined as individuals or a collective of individuals who act as a point of reference for individuals to form attitudes, values and impact behaviour (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:2; Human, 2014:225; Joubert, 2013:26). Reference groups have norms or standards to which individuals are expected to conform and adhere (Joubert, 2013:26). Objects that are associated with the social group (the reference group) represent an opportunity for a consumer to express their membership of the group (McGowan, Shiu & Hassan, 2017:245). There are two types of reference group: normative and comparative. Normative reference groups are those that largely influence and define the consumer's values and behaviours, which are family and those who live in the same household with the individual. Comparative reference groups are those that consumers use to compare or benchmark their values, attitudes, and behaviours against, such as colleagues or social media influencers (Bearden & Etzel, 1982:184; Childers & Rao, 1992:198; Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971:381; Human, 2014:225). Because normative and comparative reference groups affect consumers in different ways, this study aims to examine the effects that the two reference groups have on purchase intentions and usage behaviour towards natural hair care products, and to understand their credibility as a source of information and how they might impact purchase intentions towards such products.

Furthermore, reference groups are categorised by membership status. There are two types of status: of a membership group and of a symbolic group (Human, 2014:225). A membership group is one to which an individual belongs or of which they qualify to be a member – for example, a stokvel group or the natural hair movement. The second type of membership status is the symbolic group. An individual might not become a member of this kind of group, even if they identify with it; they would simply adopt or mimic the group's values, attitudes, and behaviour (Human, 2014:225; White & Dahl, 2006:405). For example, an individual could adopt or mimic the attributes and behaviours of a music group such as Freshly Ground but never be part of that group. Table 1 below shows the different types of reference group considered in this study.

Table 1: Types of reference group

Type of reference group	Normative	Comparative
Membership	Family + household relations	Not applicable in this study
Symbolic	Not applicable in this study	Social media influencers

The normative reference group that was selected for this study was the family, and the comparative reference group that was selected was social media influencers (SMI). 'Family' is defined as the individuals to whom one is close and who form the initial structure of one's reference group, such as parents, children, and siblings (Kembau & Mekel, 2014:1171). Family is the most important reference group because they have the most influence on an individual's values and expectations (Hsu *et al.*, 2006:475). Parents, in the socialisation of their children, affect the information search (Cotte & Wood, 2004:79). The family plays a crucial role in the purchase of products (Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). In the purchase of touchscreen phones, Lutfie and Hidayat (2017:172) established that the role of family was vital, and that vendors should consider the role that family play in the consumer purchasing decision, because they play multiple roles such as initiator, influencer, buyer, and user. According to Kim and Kang (2001:41), the most effective way to reach Black individuals in the United Sates in advertising is through family and friends, because Black Americans have strong family values. The influence of family was higher than that of other reference groups such as friends or travel agents, because family influence is strongly related to an individual's psychological traits, such as their values and attitudes (Hsu *et al.*, 2006:482; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). The importance of family in South Africa is one of the most common value systems (Petzer & De Meyer, 2013:384). Petzer and De Meyer (2013:388) recommend that marketers use word-of-mouth or recommendations from peers and reference groups for marketing communication, as they play an important role in shaping the consumer's cultural background.

Social media influencers are third-party endorsers and opinion leaders who use social media platforms to shape consumers' attitudes (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg, 2011:90; Xu & Pratt, 2018:958). Social media influencers can be categorised as socially distant reference groups that have little or no direct interaction with the individual, but that can play a role in the consumer's behaviour during purchasing decisions (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). Xu and Pratt (2018:966) found in the context of travel products that a strong alignment between the consumer and the endorser could lead to a more positive attitude towards travel products and an increased likelihood of purchasing the product. However, Hermanda, Sumarwan and Tinaprillia (2019:85) found that there was no significant relationship between SMIs and purchase intentions towards cosmetic products. Social media influencers' source credibility was found not to have a significant effect on purchase intentions towards products; this could be explained by such social media influencers not having adequate knowledge and expertise of the product (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017:29). Lim *et al.* (2017:29) also found that the source attractiveness of an SMI had no significant impact on purchase intentions towards the product. These were similar to the findings of Ohanian (1991:51) that the source credibility dimension of attractiveness had no impact on

purchase intentions towards products. In previous research, SMIs were found not to be credible sources of information, and they had no impact on the purchase intentions of consumers (Hermanda, *et al.,* 2019:85; Lim *et al.*, 2017:29). However, for the purpose of this study, and given the role that social media reference groups such as opinion leaders and SMIs played in the growth of the natural hair movement, the study includes SMIs (Ellington, 2014:562; Green, 2020:2; Jackson, 2017:48; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:174).

Reference groups are important in consumer behaviour: they play an important role in influencing the purchase of products, because consumers tend to conform to the group's behaviour (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Sir, 2018:30). Reference groups are perceived by consumers to be credible sources during their consumption decision process (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Human, 2014:225), they can influence a consumer's consumption behaviour, and that influence impacts the level of conformity in the group (Solomon, 2018:5). Curth, Silveira and Pinheiro (2019) established that social identity in a virtual community positively affects the purchase intentions of its members, and that the sense of belonging provided by the community produces positive purchase intentions. Peer pressure has a great influence on the purchase intentions of consumers (Gillani, 2012:329). Thus, it is expected that, if a consumer is influenced by the reference group and in turn identifies with the reference group, this would intensify their intentions to purchase a product suggested by the group.

The next section discusses source credibility and its subdimensions.

3.4   Source credibility

Access to digital platforms means that consumers can access the latest information about any topic to keep abreast of what is happening globally. However, as empowering and powerful as this is, there are many disadvantages to it, one of which is the rapid increase in the amount of fake news and misinformation (Scientists Collective, 2020). Consumers are inundated with information and misinformation from multiple sources. To sift through the flood of information and to limit the time needed to process it, consumers use heuristic approaches (Masuda *et al.*, 2022:3; Payne *et al.*, 1991:57), such as source credibility, to identify misinformation (Stefanone, Vollmer & Covert, 2019:138). Consumers who like certainty use uncertainty avoidance techniques such as deferring to other consumers (for example, reference groups) and using heuristics (for example, source credibility) to resolve uncertainty quickly (Hogg, 2000:229).

'Source credibility' is a term used to denote the communicator's positive attributes that influence the receiver's acceptance of their information (Hu *et al.*, 2019:308; Ohanian, 1990:41). It is the extent to which a receiver (a consumer) trusts and believes the source of the information; the source's honesty and objectivity have a great influence on how the message is received (Human, 2014:225). Consumers use a multitude of factors to determine the credibility of information. These include the source of the message, the receiver, the message itself, and the context of the message (Stefanone *et al.*, 2019:138). The focus of this study is the source of the message; and in this case, the source is the consumer's reference group (the family or an SMI). Reference groups are frames of reference that are perceived to be credible sources of information by consumers (Human, 2014:225). The social theories used in this study suggest that consumers will be more receptive to the information they receive from the reference group because they want to comply with its norms and behaviours; they want to acquire knowledge from the group with which they interact and they will likely experience changes in attitude because of the group's influence. Sources whom consumers know personally are the most useful source of information about cosmetics or hair products, based on the trust that the consumer has in the communicator (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:262). To measure the credibility of the reference group, this study uses the construct of source credibility.

The source credibility construct used in this study is from the source credibility theory of Ohanian (1990:49), and it will be used to examine the credibility of reference groups in consumption behaviour as a source of information or inspiration or change in behaviour. The theory states that credible sources are more effective and induce more behavioural change than less credible sources (Ohanian, 1990:48; Ohanian, 1991:46). Source credibility has three dimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. The 'attractiveness' of a source refers to physical interest in or desire for the source; the 'expertise' of a source is defined as the authoritative skills and knowledge the source possesses; and the 'trustworthiness' of a source refers to their integrity and objectiveness (Cho, Kwon & Park, 2009:3753; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Ohanian, 1991:46).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the source credibility of comparative reference groups such as celebrities and opinion leaders in relation to consumer behaviour (Adam, 2022:54; Cuomo *et al.*, 2019; Daimi & Tolunay, 2021:69; Ohanian, 1991:47; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sir, 2018:30). They have, for example, investigated the influencers' source credibility subdimensions on purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry (AlFarraj *et al.*, 2021:4); investigated the influence of beauty vloggers on purchase intentions (Rahmi *et al.,* 2016:13); explained the brand outcomes of celebrity endorsements in the airline industry

(Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:16); and investigated the role of celebrity credibility in the attitude towards the celebrity and purchase intentions for sustainable consumption (Cuomo *et al.*, 2019). The source credibility of celebrities and SMIs has a positive effect on a consumer's purchase intentions (Fink *et al.,* 2020:154; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). However, comparing the two comparative groups, SMIs are perceived to be more credible than traditional celebrities (Rahmi *et al.*, 2016:14). Consumers feel that they identify with and feel more similar to social media influencers than they do traditional celebrities, and are more willing to purchase products endorsed by SMIs than traditional celebrities (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:274). Consumers who highly connect their self-definition with the group's definition perceive themselves as the ideal (prototypical) group member, and align their attitudes, feelings, and behaviours with the ideal group image (McGowan *et al.*, 2017:245). They use this to avoid subjective uncertainty (McGowan *et al.*, 2017:245). In this instance, the consumer will align their attitudes, feelings, and behaviours with the credible reference group with which they feel connected and accept its information to avoid uncertainty.

In South Africa, the natural hair movement is in its infancy (Williams, 2018); therefore, consumers need credible sources of information to provide them with empowering and educational information. This study postulates that, if reference groups (family and SMIs) are found to be credible sources, they will affect Black African women's consumption behaviours towards natural hair care products.

The next section discusses consumer involvement and its subdimensions that are relevant to this study.

3.5   Theoretical foundations for the social context of this study

The social theories underpinning this study are social identity theory, social cognitive theory, and social influence theory. Social theories were used in the study because hair is an important aspect of people's lives that they use to develop social constructions (i.e., interacting with others in a social environment to form a reality) that impact their lives (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:342). The three social theories were used to understand the social phenomenon of the natural hair movement, which is the social environment of this study. Black African women in the natural hair movement provide the social context for this study – that is, the general environment that is the social framework for interpersonal and individual behaviour (American Psychological Association, 2015:993). They are the types of setting in which people are engaged.

3.5.1 Social identity theory

The first theory underpinning the first article of this study is social identity theory, It was developed by Tajfel & Turner (1986). The theory was used to study intergroup behaviours and to understand the effect of group membership on an individual's cognitive, affective and evaluative behaviours from a social psychology point of view (Brown, 2020:6-11; Dutot, 2020:2; Tajfel & Turner, 2004:276). Individuals may assume the characteristics and behaviours of the group they belong to and in turn derive their social identity based on the group membership (Brown, 2020:10; Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams, 1986:274; Vernuccio, Pastore, Pagani, & Barbarossa, 2015:708). The theory indicated that people perceive themselves as individuals and other times as adopt a social identity where they see themselves as group members. The theory assumes that group membership is connected with a positive or a negative value, such as connection with the group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283). The fundamental grounding of social identity theory, which is widely used in social psychology, is an individual's perception of belonging to a group, and it also explains the individual's identification with the group (Kim *et al.*, 2001:197; Lyu, 2012:26; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). As applied to this study, this theory holds that one would expect that reference groups would influence the Black African women's consumption behaviour of hair products because Black African women want to belong in reference groups and be influenced by reference groups that provide positive value connotation.

Social identity consists of the preferences that come from unity with the groups to which an individual belongs; it is influenced by the social context in which the individual is immersed, and its primary objective is to express belongingness to a group (Ehala, 2018:17). When consumers categorise themselves in a social context, they transform their self-concept and assimilate all aspects of their attitudes, feelings, behaviours to the in-group's archetype (Hogg, 2000:226). Group identities are organised in various dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, and gender. A sociological categorisation (race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) only gains psychological significance once it has been accepted as self-defining (Oakes, 2002:812). For Black women, hair is part of their identity as much as race and gender are part of their identity (Summers, Davis & Kosovac, 2022:211).

Social identity theory is about meaning; it is about individuals forming meaning through the active use of group membership (Oakes, 2002:812). It is the meaningful self-definition that individuals share with others, that steers them to classify themselves into groups (Deaux, 1996:777). In this instance, Black African women have identified with and given meaning to their hair, resulting in their identifying with the reference groups in the natural hair movement

(Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:44). Thus, this study expects that social identification with the reference group would affect consumption behaviour.

Previous research using social identity theory emphasises that there is a need for companies or brands to build a collective identity with consumers in order to drive consumer behaviour (Chaney, Sanchez & Maimon, 2018:138; Dutot, 2020:9; Reinders & Bartels, 2016). The theory has been applied in different contexts and settings. However, the findings in these studies were similar, in that collective identity or group membership did have an impact on the consumer and their consumption behaviour (Chaney *et al.*, 2018:138; Dutot, 2020:9; Reinders & Bartels, 2016). Addie *et al.* (2019:353) used social identity theory to investigate how Black women's consumer–brand identity influenced purchase intentions towards hair care products. They found that, when a consumer's identity is aligned with the brand's identity, that positively affects the consumer's intentions to purchase a product. Social identity theory provides a picture of the connection between one's sense of self and one's possessions (Kleine *et al.*, 1993:212). Consumers use brands (and products) to construct, endorse, and communicate their social identities (McGowan *et al.*, 2017:246) – that is, they use products to create an image of themselves that is aligned with the group's ideal image.

Social identities separate a person out (for example, a golfer, a music group member, a Black African woman with natural hair); they are derived from social roles, and ultimately, a person is a sum of all of their endorsed identities (Kleine *et al.*, 1993:212). Social identities are supported by a collection of behaviours (Champniss, Wilson & Macdonald, 2015:93). Consumers will derive their social identity from their group membership, through the influence of the reference group with which they identify, and in turn will behave in line with that group membership (Brown, 2020:10; Brown *et al.*, 1986:274; Vernuccio *et al.*, 2015:708). This might indicate that the influence of a reference group that forms the consumer's social identity will affect their consumption behaviour. The relationship between Black African women and their sense of identity that is defined by their hair results in social identity theory being an appropriate theoretical lens for this study (Bellinger, 2007:65; Dash, 2006:35; Green 2020:3; Matshego, 2020; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:44). The theory explains the connection that the consumer will have with the reference group and, in turn, a sense of belonging. The connection with the reference group is not merely an association with the group. However, the reference group is found to be a trusted and knowledgeable source of information that consumers find interesting. Therefore, social identity theory provides insight into the mediating role of social identification and perceived similarity with the reference group in the relationship between reference groups as credible sources and the consumption behaviour of Black African towards natural hair care products.

3.5.2   Social cognitive theory

The second theory underpinning this study is the social cognitive theory, developed by Bandura (1989:1175). The social cognitive theory was used to study the role played by the social environment on motivation, learning, and self-regulation individuals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:1). Social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in respect of triadic reciprocal interaction (Bandura, 1989:1175; Bandura, 2001:266). The fundamental premise of social cognitive theory (SCT) is the dynamic triadic causation between the individual's internal personal factors, their behavioural patterns, and the social environment (Bandura, 2001:14; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:5). 'Internal factors' refers to the cognitive, affective, and biological events of the person (Bandura, 1989:1175; Bandura, 2001:14; Yakut, 2019:19). As applied to this study, this theory holds that one would expect that reference groups as the social environment would influence the Black African women's cognitive, affective, and behaviours towards natural hair care products.

The dynamic triadic causation depends on the interaction of the three factors – the personal factors influencing behaviour and the social environment, the behaviour influencing the personal factors, and the environment affecting personal factors and behaviour (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:2). This is aligned with the consumer decision-making model of Shrosbree (2014:16), which holds that external influences (which include reference groups and products) affect consumer decision-making (which includes the psychological processes), which in turn impacts behaviour. Most external influences affect behaviour through the cognitive process, and not directly (Bandura, 2001:267).

The interactive and dynamic triadic causation leads to group attainment, through the shared intentions, knowledge coordination, and collaboration of skills by its members (Bandura, 2001:14). This means that social learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of these three components: the individual, the behaviour, and the social environment. The SCT extends the conception of individual actions to collective actions (group actions) (Bandura, 2001:14). Social information is acquired through the interaction or observation of others (Yi, Gong & Lee, 2013:343). Social information is information acquired from an individual's social environment through interaction with or observation of others (Ferguson & Barry, 2011:82). According to the SCT, individuals will use the information about norms, values, expectations, and behaviour outcomes gained from others in the social environment to guide their behaviour (Yakut, 2019:19; Yi *et al.*, 2013:343). Influences from those individuals in the social environment whose behaviours are modelled can affect

processes and outcomes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:5). People are likely to attend to individuals they believe are competent (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:5). Moscarini (2007:69) posits that competence implies credibility, and thus individuals are more likely to pay attention to information-sharers who are credible.

In marketing, learning is the process by which a consumer acquires consumption knowledge and experience that they want to use for future-related behaviour (Crous, 2014:162). People expand their knowledge by absorbing a wealth of information derived from their personal experience and vicariously through others' experiences (Bandura, 2001:267). They use competent (thus credible) individuals to solve problems, to evaluate outcomes, and to select suitable options without having to go through a laborious behavioural search for information (Bandura, 2001:267). This in turn reduces their process of getting involved.

In this study, the focus is on the environment influencing the individual's internal factors and behaviour intention. The SCT, as an observational learning theory, is used in this study to understand how the social environment (the reference group with natural hair) will influence (through recommendations) the personal factors of the individual (product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement) and the behaviour (purchase intentions) of Black African women towards natural hair products.

3.5.3   Social influence theory

The third theory underpinning this study is the social influence theory of Kelman (1958:52). The theory is social influence theory was developed by Kelman (1958:58-60). The theory was used to study the role of peer influence on the social behaviour of individuals (Hu, Cheng & Davidson, 2019:299; Hwang, 2014:467; Zhao, Stylianou & Zheng, 2018:17). The theory indicated that individual's attitudes, feelings and behaviours can be changed through the three types of social influence: compliance, identification, and internalisation (Kelman, 1958:57-58). The theory provides a foundation for understanding individuals' social behaviour relating to identity (Hwang, 2016:467). Social influence occurs when an individual changes their behaviour as a result of stimulation by another person or a group (Kelman, 2006:11). Social influence is a link between the individual and the broader social environment (Estrada *et al.*, 2011:208). It is a process that can be used to for both positive and negative actions, and it can be used to change an individual's attitude or behaviour (Snijders & Helms, 2014:1). It is about the change in an individual's feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours from interacting with others (Chou, Wang & Tang, 2015:366). Individuals' social attitudes are formed in relation to social norms (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:147). A social norm is an

expectation of appropriate behaviour in a group context (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:147). Norms do not only describe a group: they also define the group's identity and behaviour (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:147). As applied to this study, this theory holds that one would expect that reference groups would influence the outcome of the Black African women's consumption behaviour because they will use the three types of social influence during the purchase process to change their attitudes and behaviours towards natural hair care products.

Social influence is affected by three methods of persuasion: compliance, identification, and internalisation (Kelman, 1958:53). Each persuasion method is a unique way in which an individual is socialised into a social environment (Estrada *et al.*, 2011:208; Kelman, 2006:11). Compliance is when an individual conforms to the social influence of others to get a reward (Goodwin, 1987) such as approval or support (Shen, Cheung, Lee & Chen, 2011:159) from others who are important to them (Zhou, 2011:68). Identification occurs when an individual's identity is integrated with that of the social environment, such as a social group (Estrada *et al.*, 2011:208), and when the individual has a sense of belonging to the group (Shen *et al.*, 2011:159) and they accept that influence to establish and maintain a satisfying mutual relationship with the group (Goodwin, 1987:379; Snijders & Helms, 2014:2; Zhou, 2011:68). Internalisation occurs when the individual's values are in sync with the group's values (Goodwin, 1987:379; Shen *et al.*, 2011:159; Zhou, 2011:68). Internalisation is the strongest influence, and it is when an individual accepts and beliefs the opinions of others (Snijders & Helms, 2014:2). Internalisation reflects the alignment between the social group's values and the individual's values (Estrada *et al.*, 2011:208), and it occurs when the individual accepts the influence because their value systems are congruent with those of the social group. Individuals who are newly exposed to a social environment internalise the values from the social group when they authentically accept the group's preferences, and these values become the guiding principles in the individual's life (Estrada *et al.*, 2011:209).

Each of these persuasion methods has a source of power, which is the extent to which the recommender can influence the individual (Kelman, 1958:54). The power to reward or punish leads to compliance; the power of attractiveness leads to identification; and the power of credibility leads to internalisation (Kelman, 1958:54). Therefore, this study focuses specifically on internationalisation, since it explains the power of source credibility. Reference groups' source credibility may thus play a role in consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products through internalisation.

Social influence can be used to understand the change in an individual's attitudes and behaviour (Kelman, 1958:59). In this instance, source credibility through internalisation can

be used to understand the changes that reference groups bring about in Black African women's attitudes towards natural hair care products and their intentions to purchase such products. This study used social influence theory to provide insights into how the social influence of credible reference groups leads to changes in Black African women's attitudes and behaviour – specifically, changes in attitudes and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

3.6   Social identification

Social identification is an individual's sense of belonging to a certain group (Kim *et al.*, 2001:196). Belongingness is a psychological state that gives individuals a sense of togetherness (Lyu, 2012:26) and helps them to achieve group identification (Lyu, 2012:26). Mael and Ashforth (1992:104) define social identification from an organisational perspective; organisational identification is belongingness to an organisation such that individuals define themselves in respect of their organisational membership. There are five types of social identification: ethnic and religious (for example, Black African); political (for example, feminist); vocational and avocational (for example, hairdresser or psychologist); through personal relationships (for example, mother); and through stigmatised groups (for example, homeless people) (Deaux, 1996:778). Social identification has been researched in numerous contexts. In the marketing field, the concept has been widely used to understand an individual's identification with a brand – that is, their sense of belonging to a brand (He & Li, 2011:681; He, Li & Harris, 2012:655; Homburg, Wieseke & Hoyer, 2009:29; Kim *et al.*, 2001:197; Mael & Ashforth, 1992:122).

Social identification is a strong influencer of positive attitudes, of a willingness to portray a good group image, and of spending behaviours (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011:699). For organic food products, social identification had direct and indirect effects on consumers' purchase behaviour (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011:704). Huang (2012:256) found that social identity – which refers to a consumer's self-esteem and commitment to a group – had an effect on purchase intentions. Identification results in a more positive product evaluation by the consumer, and it also increases purchase intentions towards identity-linked products (McGowan *et al.*, 2017:245) – that is, the things that consumers perceive to be useful in portraying their social identity (Kleine *et al.*, 1993:212). In this case, the identity-linked product would be natural hair care products for Black Africa women. This study expects that social identification will affect the purchase intentions of Black African women towards natural hair care products. Identification with SMIs was found to be more strongly determined by perceived similarity because they were seen as more relatable and approachable.

3.7 Perceived similarities

As consumers seek similarities with other consumers, that can generate a sense of belonging and increase the need for group membership (Lyu, 2012:38). Individuals identify with groups to gain valued outcomes, such as interpersonal connections. 'Similarity breeds connection' (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001:415). Individuals categorise themselves according to the groups to which they belong, based on their similarities to those in the groups, thus developing their sense of belonging to those groups (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau & Zhang, 2012:579). Based on the consumer's similarity to a group's archetype (the ideal mental image), they will self-categorise themselves into social groups and then use these groups as a basis to define themselves (McGowan *et al.*, 2017:243). Individuals believe that those who are similar to them will provide rewarding interactions and that they are more likely to convey information with which they can resonate (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005:326-328). When consumers feel that they have the same values, interests, and characteristics as an endorser, they are more likely to assume the endorser's attitudes and behaviours (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261).

Perceived similarity is the extent to which an individual identifies with another person by believing that they have things in common (Montoya, Horton & Kirchner, 2008:891; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261). In the context of this study, it is the degree in which the Black African woman perceives herself to have things in common – such as having natural hair and buying or using natural hair care products – with the female family member or SMI. In the study by Schouten *et al.* (2020:269), perceived similarity was also found to mediate the relationship between the type of endorser (celebrity or SMI) and product attitude. In this study, it is assumed that perceived similarity with a family member or a SMI will mediate or have an impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Group members tend to interact with those whom they perceive as similar to them (Shen, Huang, Chu & Liao, 2010:54); they exchange information with and are influenced by those who have similar norms, values, and beliefs (Liu, Luo & Cao, 2018:4; Shen *et al.*, 2010:58). Individuals prefer to interact socially with those who are perceived to be similar to them (Hanks, Line & Yang, 2017:124); this has been found to be a key attribute of consumer behaviour in virtual communities (Ladhari, Massa & Skandrani, 2020:7), which are online groups in which consumers find a sense of belonging (Curth *et al.*, 2019). According to Grigoryan (2020:1123), perceived similarity is the essence of group formation. In self-categorisation theory, individuals classify themselves according to social groups that are either similar or different; the groups so formed encapsulate the intragroup similarities and intergroup differences.

Individuals are more receptive to a message if they identify with the endorser of the message (Ladhari *et al.*, 2020:7). A theoretical deduction by Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021:1124) is that social media facilitate a sense of intimacy between an influencer and a follower because they are more accessible, and because there is a sense of social proximity to the influencer. Perceived similarity has been found to have a positive effect on a consumer's purchase intentions (Liu *et al.*, 2018:6).

Social identification and perceived similarity have become an important part of this study, since support from social media groups (communities) for the natural hair community played a major role in influencing African American women to go natural (Ellington, 2014:560). Mbunyuza-Memani (2019:29-31) found that Black South African women benefitted from natural hair online blogs and communities, not only from receiving lessons and support about natural hair, but also from the creation of bonds of sisterhood and finding the communities to be places where their identity was positively affirmed.

The next section discusses consumer involvement.

3.8   Consumer involvement

The consumer's involvement in consumption behaviour towards Black African hair care products is a key focus of this study. 'Consumer involvement' is defined as a person's perception of the relevance of an object, based on their inherent needs, values, and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985:342). It is a bridging experience between the consumer's environment and the stimulus (Krugman, 1965:355). Laurent and Kapferer (1985:52) argue that, when a consumer is involved, they engage in several behaviours. For decades it has been a topic of interest among consumer researchers, who have focused largely on its significant influence on consumer information-processing and purchasing behaviour (Bruwer, Chrysochou & Lesschaeve, 2017:832).

Consumer involvement in purchase decisions results in the consumer searching, collecting, and processing more information in order to find the most suitable product. Individuals are predisposed to search for information that supports or confirms their opinions or beliefs (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1722). Various factors affect a consumer's involvement when they are trying to obtain a product, such as the characteristics of the products, the characteristics of the consumer, and the situational environment of the decision that is being made (Gbadamosi, 2013:240). A highly involved consumer will evaluate the social and psychological environment of the purchase and the consumption of a product (Dholakia, 2001:1341; Hong, 2015:324).

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Thomas (2020:44) suggests that the purchase of Black women natural hair care products needs a high level of involvement. Likewise, Shoba (2020) posits that the purchase of natural hair care products requires a great amount of investment and research. Involvement thus encompasses time and effort

Product involvement is the interest that a consumer has in a specific product category (Bruwer *et al.,* 2017:830). In this study, product involvement is the interest that a Black African woman has in natural hair care products. The significance of a particular product category might vary in an individual's life with changing attitudes towards self, their sense of identity, and how they relate to the rest of the world (Traylor, 1981:51). Coulter, Price and Feick (2003:163) state that product involvement is driven by social environmental factors and that social influence plays an important role in facilitating product involvement. Product involvement is affected by the connection between the product category and the consumer's key life themes, roles, and identities (Coulter *et al.*, 2003:154). Product involvement is, in essence, the consumer's response to the product (Quester & Lim, 2003:22).

The more interest a consumer has in a product, the more involved they will be in the purchase (O'Cass, 2004:878). Highly involved consumers search for more product information than less involved consumers, and they tend to evaluate competing alternatives (Zaichkowsky, 1985:347). The increase in the resources used by highly involved consumers, through needing more information or time to solve the problem, requires increased cognitive effort to do so (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1721). However, mere interest in a product category is not sufficient to explain fully how product choices are made (Bruwer *et al.*, 2017:830). Thus consumer involvement should not be viewed as a single index of high or low involvement, but rather as multiple dimensions and layers that give a better understanding of the dynamic nature of consumer involvement. This ensures that all facets of involvement are simultaneously taken into account (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:52).

Laurent and Kapfner (1985:43) propose a four-facet profile of consumer involvement: the perceived importance of a product, the perceived risks associated with purchasing the product, the symbolic value assigned to the product by the consumer, and the product's emotional appeal, which predicts the consumer's behaviour. This study used a multifaceted definition of consumer involvement, a multidimensional construct with two main subdimensions: cognitive involvement and affective involvement (Broderick, 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:98; Mittal & Lee, 1989:385; Park & Young, 1986:12; Thompson & Hamilton, 2006:532). The cognitive process is associated with rational, utilitarian thinking, and the affective process is associated with emotional, hedonic/value-expressing feeling (Park, Shin & Ju, 2014:29).

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Communication research suggests that, when people are involved, they both think and feel, and they use both dimensions of involvement. This study expects that the consumer will be involved by thinking about natural hair care products or by feeling a certain way towards such products (Perse, 1990:559). Different levels of cognitive and affective involvement can lead to different ways to seeking and processing information (Hamzelu *et al.,* 2017:287). For this study, it is assumed that the different levels of cognitive and affective involvement for Black African women will lead to different ways of searching for and processing information about natural hair care products and using those products for their natural hair.

Cognitive involvement is the extent of a consumer's information-processing activities that are incorporated into the purchase decision-making (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1709; Kim & Sung, 2009:506). Cognitive involvement is divided into two sub-dimensions: risk involvement and normative involvement (Broderick, 2007:347). Risk involvement is the risk associated with selecting the product and the likelihood of a consumer making the wrong choice (Broderick, 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43; Mittal & Lee, 1989:347). For example, a consumer might search for a natural hair care product that will not strip their hair of its natural oils or dry out the hair because they want to reduce the risk of damaging their hair. Avoiding uncertainty is related to a preference to identify with groups (Hogg, 2000:230); hence the need to use a credible reference group with which the Black woman identifies to search for natural hair products. Normative involvement is about the importance and symbolic meaning of a product, given the consumer's values or emotions (Broderick, 2007:347-348; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43; Mittal & Lee, 1989:347). For example, an environmentally conscious consumer might engage in collecting information to find an eco-friendly product that will satisfy their environmentally friendly values.

'Affective involvement' refers to the level of a consumer's emotional state when stimulated by a product – the feeling a consumer has towards a product (Huang, 2006:389; Kim & Sung, 2009:506). There are two types of affective involvement: enduring involvement and situational involvement. Celsi and Olson (1988:211) refer to affective involvement as 'felt' involvement; they state that felt (affective) involvement is a function of situational involvement and enduring involvement. Enduring involvement is the connection the consumer has with the product and the hedonic benefits the product provides across all purchases; it is intrinsically motivated (Broderick, 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Huang, 2006:384; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43). For example, an environmentally conscious consumer might meticulously engage in information-collecting and -processing over a long period to find an eco-friendly product that will suit her needs. Situational involvement is the degree of interest for a short period of time,

during which the consumer engages in the activities to achieve a specific goal; it is extrinsically motivated (Broderick 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Huang 2006:384; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43). For example, a consumer searching for a hairstyle that will suit an occasion such as a matric ball is a form of situational involvement.

Laurent and Kapferer (1985:47) state that a highly involved consumer is likely to be influenced by their reference group. A consumer's product choice is influenced by reference groups through the individual's conformity to and accepting product information from the reference group (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136). Huang (2012:256) suggests that social influence provides an explanatory structure that guides individuals to behave and feel in a social context. This social influence can affect how a consumer processes information that is influenced by the reference group. Cognitive involvement and affective involvement influence purchase intentions (Park *et al.*, 2014:35). In the natural hair movement, Ellington (2014:561) found that involvement in natural hair social network sites helped to ease the experience of women who were transitioning from chemically treated hair to natural hair. Previous studies have shown that cognitive involvement and affective involvement play a mediating role in the purchase of products (Jiang *et al.,* 2010:48; Park *et al.*, 2014:35).

In addition to this study wanting to understand the influence of consumer involvement on purchase intentions, it seeks to understand the mediating role of cognitive involvement and affective involvement between product involvement and purchase intentions, moderated by reference group source credibility. The way in which consumers process information, whether cognitive or affective, contributes to the interest they have in a product and, in turn, has an impact on the purchase intentions of consumers. Huang (2012:266) indicated that consumer involvement had a significant impact on purchase intentions – and, more specifically, that affective involvement had a much higher impact than cognitive involvement. Mou, Zhu and Benyoucef (2019:579) established that affective involvement had a significant effect on purchase intentions in cross border e-commerce, while cognitive involvement did not. Therefore, the involvement construct needs to be assessed as a multidimensional construct to capture the richness of the concept (Quester & Lim, 2003:25).

The next section discusses attitude.

3.9   Attitude

Given consumers' relatively consistent evaluation of almost anything in the world, they can have favourable or unfavourable reactions towards any action, object, or person (Ajzen,

1991:188; Baron & Branscombe, 2012:140; Kim & Chung, 2011:42; Rammile & Van Zyl, 2010:160). Some attitudes are stable and resistant to change, meaning that they are relatively consistent. This means that if a consumer prefers natural hair care product A over natural hair care product B, it is expected that they would be more likely to buy product A than product B. However, some situations prevent consistency between attitude and behaviour: other attitudes might be unstable and show variability, depending on the situation (Baron & Branscombe, 2012:140; Tshivhase, 2014:195). According to Tshivhase (2014:194), attitudes towards a purchase behaviour are learnt in various ways, one of which is through information acquired by word-of-mouth from others. This means that a reference group as a credible source could have an impact on the consumer's attitude towards natural hair care products.

The importance of a consumer's attitude in predicting purchase intentions is expected to vary across behaviours and situations (Ajzen, 1991:188). Attitudes are important in predicting the consumer's purchase intentions (Ajzen, 1991:188): positive attitudes lead to strong purchase intentions (Paul *et al.*, 2016:126; Valaei & Nikhashemi 2017:527). Consumers who have positive attitudes about a product tend to have stronger purchase intentions (Valaei & Nikhashemi 2017:527). An increase in positive attitude leads to an increase in the intentions to perform a behaviour (Dada & Jazi, 2022:198). This was found to be true for the focus consumer of the current study: when Black female consumers have positive attitudes toward a personal care brand, the probability of purchase intentions is strong (Addie *et al.*, 2020:358). In this study, it is postulated that attitudes towards natural hair care products will contribute towards the relationships between the two reference groups' source credibility and the consumer's purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The next section discusses purchase intentions.

3.10 Purchase intentions

Behaviour is guided by intentions, and any changes in intentions will result in changes in behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2012: 449). Behavioural intentions account for a considerable amount of fluctuation in behaviour. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991:181; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:166). The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) are two well-known models that have the ability to predict purchase intentions (Ajzen, 2012: 450).

'Purchase intentions' is the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product or service in the future (Bataineh, 2015:128; Chang & Wildt, 1994:20; Dennis, King, Jayawardhena & Wright, 2007:516); they can be defined as consumers' deliberate plan to try to purchase a product at

a specific time or in a specific situation (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014:260; Spears & Singh, 2004:56), and they are used to measure whether there will be demand for a product (Morwitz, 2014:181).

According to Paul and Rana (2012:414), various factors might influence a consumer's purchase intention. The inclination for a consumer to purchase products might also be a result of the consumer engaging in activities such as information collection, synthesising information about products, and evaluating the different products (Diallo, Chandon, Cliquet & Philippe, 2013:427). This is the process of involvement in which consumers engage. In this study it was assumed that cognitive and affective involvement would have an impact on the purchase intentions of a consumer.

The literature review has shown that there is a gap in the understanding of the role of reference groups as a credible source, and thus there is a need to fill it. This would provide an understanding of the impact they have as credible sources of information. The gap relates to understanding reference groups as credible sources of information and how they affect the consumer's identification of and perceived similarity with the reference group. In turn this would affect the purchase intentions of Black African women towards natural hair care products. Research by Jiang *et al.* (2010:47) found that cognitive involvement and affective involvement positively influenced purchase intentions. However, little research has been conducted on the mediating role of cognitive and affective involvement in Black African women's purchase intentions towards their hair care products. In this study it was assumed that, when a consumer finds that the reference group is attractive, has expertise about a product, and is trustworthy, the consumer is more likely to be influenced by the reference group. This would also affect how the Black African woman processes information, whether rationally or emotionally, and their attitudes towards the products. The more that the consumer is involved rationally or emotionally or has favourable attitudes towards the product, the more they are likely to purchase the product. This study thus sought to fill the gaps in the literature about Black African women's natural hair care products in South Africa.

4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

4.1   Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour.

4.2   Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of this study, in support of the primary objective, were:

- To investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To examine the effects of normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research methodology that was used to collect and analyse the information for the study. A research methodology shows the direction in which the research went to obtain its outcome; and it acts as a guide to the research process and the techniques and tools that were used (Sileyew, 2019; Van Wyk, 2012:13). The methodology section outlines the methods that were used for the literature review, and states the methods that were used to collect the primary data for empirical investigation.

5.1   Secondary data collection: Literature study

Secondary data is the process of collecting data or information from existing sources (Clow & James, 2014:63, Tight, 2019:95). The type of secondary data collection process that was used was through a literature review. The purpose of a literature review is to conduct an appraisal of what other researchers have done pertaining to the study topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020:82). A literature review was conducted to formulate the theoretical background that was used as a foundation to develop the hypotheses and the theoretical framework for this study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020:82). The literature review used various sources, such as peer-reviewed academic journals, theses, dissertations, and published books and articles.

In an effort to enhance the study and make it theoretically sound, an empirical investigation was conducted through the primary data collection. The next section outlines the approaches that were used to collect the data.

5.2   Primary data collection: Empirical investigation

5.2.1   The study's philosophy

The outline of the research design and the method to collect the primary data followed the 'research onion' approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015:124). Figure 4 below illustrates the different layers of the research onion. It enables the researcher to state and explain to other researchers why they made certain choices for their research study, thus making the study credible and giving it gravitas (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019:128).

Figure 4: Research onion
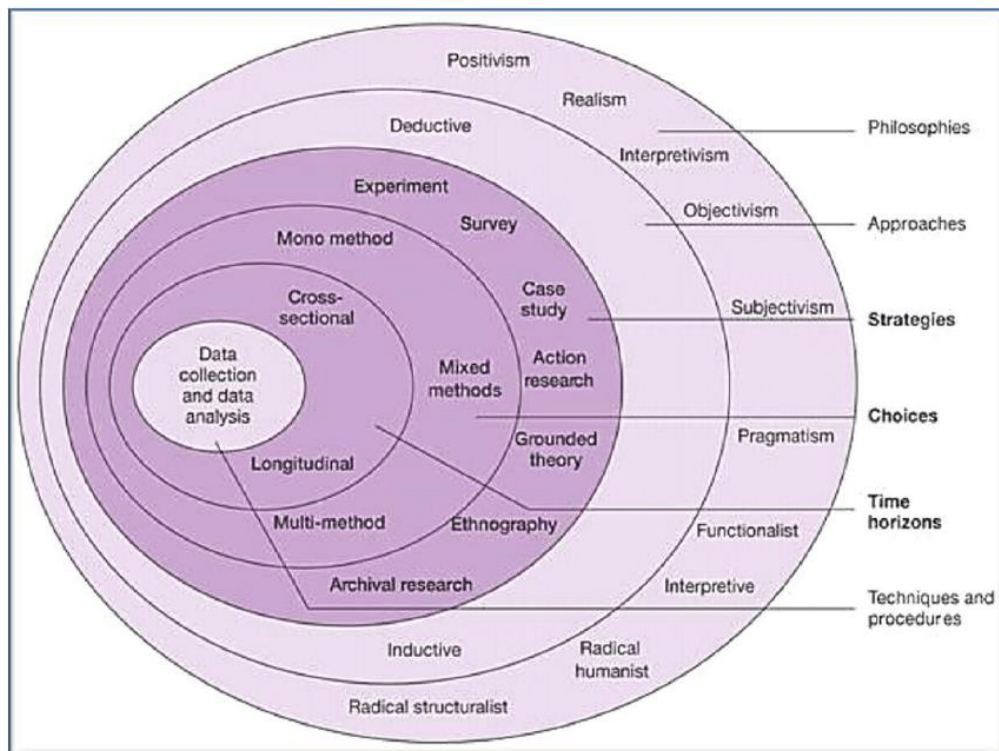
Source: Saunders *et al. (2019)*

The first layer of the research onion is the research philosophy, which refers to the beliefs and assumptions about generating new knowledge in a field (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:128). The essence of research philosophy is the approach in which data about the studied phenomenon should be collected, analysed and utilised (Dudovskiy, 2018). The philosophy provides the researcher with a philosophical solution on why the researcher should conduct the research. (Holden, 2004:2). Developing a philosophical perspective requires the researcher to make several assumptions about the nature of society and the nature of science (Holden, 2004:3). Society is changing rationally or in constant conflict to free themselves. The nature of science either has an objective or subjective approach to research (Holden, 2004:3). These assumptions then lead to the type of philosophy that is appropriate for the research. The study

was informed by three social theories (social identity theory, social cognitive theory and social influence theory) and thus the study has made an assumption society is changing rationally and that science has an objective approach to research.

There are five research philosophies: positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism. The research philosophy that was adopted by this study was the positivist philosophy, which is based on scientific and objective observations. It is a scientific and empirical method that is designed to produce objective large-scale data and information (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:144; Žukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitienė, 2018:128). Critics argue that, unlike interpretivism, positivism, which focuses on objective social facts, does not quite explain in depth the experience or why the situation is happening (Hasan, 2016:323; Little, Vyain, Scaramuzzo, Cody-Rydzewski, Griffiths, Strayer & Keirns, 2014:26). The interpretivist research philosophy was also considered for this study. However, because of the subjective nature of interpretivism, its qualitative approach, and its focus on richly explaining a phenomenon, the data would be heavily impacted by the researcher's viewpoint (Hasan, 2016:321; Little *et al.*, 2014:26; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:144); thus the interpretivist approach was not selected for the study because it did not fit the objectives of the study. The positivist approach was chosen because of its objective view of the social environment, and its law-like approach that uses scientific and empirical investigations such as mathematics and statistical analysis to find causal relationships, predictions, and correlations (Hasan, 2016:320; Little *et al.*, 2014:23; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:145). The focus of this study was to determine the different types of relationship between reference groups as credible sources for Black African women's natural hair care products and the resulting consumption behaviour; therefore, the positivist approach was the most suitable one for this study.

The second layer of the research onion is the approach to theory development, which focuses on whether a study wants to test a theory or build a theory. This layer encompasses three approaches: deduction, abduction, and induction (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:152). The deductive approach is a theory-testing approach in which the researcher collects information through a literature review, generates hypotheses and a conceptual framework, and collects data to verify or falsify the theory (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:153). Figure 5 below illustrates the process of the deductive approach. The advantages of using the deductive approach are that there is a need to explain the causal relationships between concepts and variables. These concepts and variables need to be operationalised, enabling them to be measured factually and so making it possible to generalise them to the study's specified population context (Dudovskiy, 2018; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:154). The deductive approach was used in this study to test

empirically the hypotheses and the theoretical frameworks that were formulated from the theory in the literature review (Dahlberg & McCaig, 2010:20; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:153).

Figure 5: The deductive approach

| Theory | → | Hypothesis | → | Observation/ test | → | Confirmation/ rejection |

Source: Dudovskiy (2018)

The third layer of the research onion is the methodological choice; this is where the researcher chooses the methodology – whether it is quantitative, qualitative, or a mixture of both methods (Saunders & Tosey, 2013:58; Žukauskas *et al.*, 2018:160). This study collected the data through a single data collection method using a quantitative technique – that is, a mono-quantitative method. Quantitative research methods depend on collecting and analysing numerical data to investigate a social phenomenon or to test a hypothesis (Frey, 2018:1349). The findings using a quantitative method are considered objective, and they can be generalised to the study population (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:134). This study used the single quantitative method: it found it the most appropriate because it sought to investigate empirically by collecting primary data on, the effects of reference groups as credible sources on the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products, based on hypotheses that were formulated from the literature review.

The next layer of the research onion is the strategies that a researcher can use to collect information and data to answer or address a research question (Saunders & Tosey, 2013:59). The different strategies are experiment, survey, archival research, case study, ethnography action research, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:130). The research strategy that was used in this study was a survey. Surveys are a systematic way of collecting information from the population or a sample of the population for the purpose of developing quantitative summaries of phenomena (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau, 2011:2). The advantages and disadvantages of using surveys depend on the type of survey that will be used (Jones, Baxter & Khanduja, 2013:6). The advantages of interviewer-administered surveys include that they have a higher response rate, complex questions can be asked, and visual aids can be used during the interview. The disadvantages of interviewer-administered surveys are that they are not time- and cost-efficient, and training is required by the interviewer so that they do not produce bias (Jones *et al.*, 2013:6). The advantages of using electronic or online surveys are that they enable the researcher to reach a larger target, use visual aids, and generate responses more quickly. However, the

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disadvantages are that there is a lack of access to the subjects, and there might be a lower response rate (Jones *et al.*, 2013:6). This study used a survey, as this enabled the gathering of a large amount of data to answer the research question and test the hypothesis. Its accessibility to a large target and the low response rate were mitigated by the use of an online panel. This choice of strategy was aligned with that of previous studies that used surveys to collect information about natural hair, Black women, or their identities (Addie *et al.*, 2019:360; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93; Johnson *et al.*, 2017:4).

The final layer of the research onion, before reaching the data collection and data analysis core, is the time horizon, which is the time frame or period in which the researcher will conduct the study (Saunders & Tosey, 2013:59). There are two types of time frame that a researcher can use: longitudinal or cross-sectional. The cross-sectional approach is a snapshot view that answers a research question at a single point in time, which is generally a short pre-defined duration for data collection (Saunders & Tosey, 2013:59). The cross-sectional research approach was used to collect the information, as this study sought to understand consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products at a given point in time.

5.2.2   Target population and development of the sample plan

According to Lavrakas (2008:591), the definition of a population is a collection of individuals about whom extrapolations are made. The subset of the target population that is linked to the sample frame, is called the sample (Lavrakas, 2008:876). The definition of a sample is the predetermined collection of units where surveys are used to gather information about (Lavrakas, 2008:591). As per this definition of the target population and sample, this study focused on adults (18 years or older), specifically Black South African women who had natural hair. 'Black South African women with natural hair' relates to females born in South Africa and classified as Black (Union of South Africa, 1950:277) that do not relax or chemically straighten their hair. The target population was chosen for the study because of the relationship between Black women and the natural hair movement whether it be historically, culturally or societal (Addie *et al.*, 2019:354; Jacobs-Huey, 2006:4; Patton, 2016:45; Thompson, 2008:2). Furthermore, the target population selected in the study allowed the research aims and objectives to be addressed. Due to lack of literature on Black South African women and the consumption behaviour of natural hair care products within South Africa, it was important for the study to measure and quantify the various factors that are affected by reference group source credibility from a consumer behaviour perspective about the phenomena. The unit of analysis for the study was Black South African women with natural hair who participated in the natural hair movement and in addition for the SMI questionnaire, the individuals had to have an Instagram account to ensure they would be familiar with the SMI scenario. The unit of

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analysis for the study was obtained from a third-party panel through a reputable research company. Research funding was needed to execute the survey through a third-party panel. The reason for using panel data for this study was that it minimised the risks associated with survey participation, such as incomplete questionnaire, missing data, screening the respondents, getting the correct respondents and reaching the required sample size (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016:337). The study follows an article route with three different articles, the study collected the study using a once off cross-sectional method to collect all the data for the three articles at once.

The sample size is the number of units that are chosen for the data to be collected (Lavrakas, 2008:782). The ideal sample size for a survey is dependent on a number of factors, such as the number of constructs and variables in the questionnaire. As a rule of thumb by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006:113) the sample size must have more observations than the number of variables in the study and the minimum absolute sample size is 50 observations. They suggest a minimum of five or at least ten observations per variable (Hair *et al.*, 2006:113). For the study to satisfy statistical requirements such as having a robust significant level of $\alpha=0.05$, a moderate effective size of 0.35 and the recommended minimum power level of 0.8 it needs to achieve a sample size of approximately 290 to 300 observations (Hair *et al.,* 2006:12). As per one of the secondary objectives of this study, to examine the effects of normative (female family member – FFM) and comparative (social media influencer – SMI) reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products, to find their respective effects on hypothesised relationships. Further consideration must be given to the sample size, the group sizes must be equal and also adhere to all other considerations as discussed. Therefore, the minimum sample size for each of the groups, normative reference group and comparative reference group, was 300 observations.

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of units, such as individuals from a population. There are two types of sampling method: probability sampling, which selects units randomly; and nonprobability sampling (Lavrakas, 2008:784). Non-probability sampling is a technique that does not give all of the units in the population an equal chance to be selected in the sample (Daniel, 2012:66). In the absence of a sampling framework, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used, similar to previous studies (Addie *et al.*, 2019:353; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1132; Wang *et al.,* 2017:13). Addie *et al.* (2019:353) used convenience sampling to understand the effect of brand–consumer identity on purchase intentions, mediated by brand attitude, for hair care products. In a study by Johnson and Bankhead, (2014:93), convenience sampling was used

to determine the relationship between hair esteem and Black women's self-esteem and discrimination experiences.

The non-probability sampling technique has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using this technique for this study were that the study targeted specific units of the population; it is useful when the units of the population are scattered and it is difficult to gain access to them, and there are limited resources (such as time and money) for the study; and when the sampling frame is not available (Daniel, 2012:67). The disadvantages of using nonprobability sampling are that the sample would not be representative of the entire population, the findings of the study could not be extrapolated to the population, and it would not be possible to estimate the sampling error (Daniel, 2012:67-69). There are three types of nonprobability sampling: quota sampling, purposive sampling, and convenience sampling (Lavrakas, 2008:524). A convenience sampling technique is one that draws the sample from the population without randomisation and the research continues until the required sample size is achieved (Daniel, 2012:82; Frey, 2018:403; Lavrakas, 2008:524). This study used a nonprobability convenience sampling technique to collect information. The motive for choosing this technique was the advantages of the technique, which, in this instance, far outweighed the disadvantages.

5.2.3 Measuring instrument

Measuring instruments are tools that are used to collect the primary data. The data for the study was collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed so that the respondents could answer the questions on their own without needing the researcher's intervention or assistance (Lavrakas, 2008:804). A questionnaire is the link between the research and the data that is collected for a study (Drew, Hardman & Hosp, 2008:124). The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions that were both multiple-choice and scale questions.

The reliability of the construct indicates its consistency, while its validity indicates its accuracy and confirms what it is supposed to measure (Drew *et al.,* 2008:112). The constructs were measured using a seven-point unlabelled Likert scale, ranging from 1 denoting 'strongly disagree' to 7 denoting 'strongly agree'. In previous studies, a seven-point Likert scale was used in relation to natural hair (Addie *et al.*, 2019:360; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93). The scales' wording was adapted to suit the natural hair care context of this study.

This study adapted various scales from the literature to measure the constructs. Social identification used Mael and Ashforth's (1992:122) six-item scale, and perceived similarity adapted Schouten *et al.*'s (2020:261) four-item scale. Wang and Scheinbaum's (2018:24) source credibility scales – adapted initially from McCracken (1989) and Ohanian's (1990) attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness scales – were used to measure the reference group's source credibility. Zaichkowsky's (1985:346) five-item product involvement scale was adapted for this study. The cognitive involvement and affective involvement scales were adapted from Broderick (2007:371-372). The attitude scale was adapted from Chang's (2017:493) four-item scale; however, the original attitude scales were adapted from Crites, Fabrigar and Petty's (1994) attitude scale. This study adapted Diallo *et al.*'s (2013:437) four-item purchase intentions scale. Table 2 shows the various constructs that were used in the study.

Table 2: Table of measuring instruments

Construct	Scale	Number of items	Reference	Composite reliability from original study sample
Social identification	Social identification	6	Mael & Ashforth (1992:122)	0.870
Perceived similarity	Perceived similarity	4	Schouten *et al.* (2020:261)	0.930
Source credibility	Attractiveness	5	Wang and Scheinbaum (2018:24)	0.849
	Expertise	5	Wang and Scheinbaum (2018:24)	0.813
	Trustworthiness	5	Wang and Scheinbaum (2018:24)	0.820
Product involvement	Product involvement	5	Zaichkowsky (1985:346)	0.970
Cognitive involvement	Risk involvement	4	Broderick (2007:371)	0.829
	Normative involvement	2	Broderick (2007:371)	0.897
Affective involvement	Situational involvement	3	Broderick (2007:372)	0.891
	Enduring involvement	3	Broderick (2007:372)	0.889

| Attitude | Attitude | 4 | Chang (2017:493) | 0.930 |
| Purchase intentions | Purchase intentions | 4 | Diallo *et al.* (2013:437) | 0.890 |

The questionnaire included the demographic variable age, questions about Black African women's ties to a specific reference group, and their behaviour towards natural hair care products, such as their purchase frequency and use of natural hair products, how long they have had natural hair, and their behaviour in wearing their natural hair. These questions were used to provide a sample profile of the respondents and their consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products. One of the objectives of this study was to examine normative (female family member – FFM) and comparative (social media influencer – SMI) reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions; therefore, each respondent saw only one of the two questionnaires. One group of respondents received a questionnaire about the normative reference group, and the other group got the second questionnaire to answer questions about the comparative reference group. Table 3 below shows the two scenarios used in the questionnaires for the two groups. Those who responded about the normative group got scenario one (FM), and those who responded about the comparative reference group got scenario two (SMI). A fictional SMI, Kiwendo, was created for the SMI scenario in this study.

Table 3: Female family member and social media influencer questionnaire scenarios

Scenario 1 (Female family member)

Consider a female family member with natural hair (for example a sibling or cousin). The female family member has had natural hair for a period of more than one year. Recently the female family member started using a range of natural hair care products that she likes. Since you also have natural hair, she had decided to tell you about the products and share information about the natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, the female family member is your source of information for natural hair care products. In this instance, natural hair is defined as black hair in its natural state, not chemically straightened hair or relaxed hair.

Scenario 2 (Social media influencer)

Kiwendo is a natural hair social media influencer on different social media platforms. She has an Instagram account with 123,000 followers and a YouTube channel with over 52,000

subscribers. She uses these platforms to share content about natural hair. This includes her journey with natural hair, educating people on how to take care of their natural hair and giving information about the products that are available to take care of natural hair. Her recent post on Instagram was about a natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, you follow Kiwendo on her Instagram page @Kiwendo_hair. She is your source of information regarding natural hair. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

Final copies of the questionnaires that were used are available in Appendix A.

5.2.4 Pilot study

A pilot study is a preliminary study that is conducted to examine the research questionnaire and to ensure that the instruments in the questionnaire are understandable for the respondents and are effective in accomplishing what the study is trying to achieve (Drew *et al.*, 2008:125). The pilot study for the questionnaires were conducted through convenience sampling from the target population to ensure that the questionnaires worked effectively and provided valid and reliable measures of the constructs (Czaja & Blair, 2005:103). After the researcher received ethical clearance, the pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaires.

The pilot study was conducted using a third-party research panel. The data was collected from adults (18 years or older), specifically Black South African women who had natural hair. The pilot study had a sample of 30 respondents per reference group questionnaire. Minor adjustments, including rephrasing a few items, were made to some scale items to ensure that each questionnaire correctly captured the study context. For example, the SMI questions referred directly to Kiwendo, the fictional SMI in the scenario. The manipulation question indicated that some respondents did not quite fully understand which questionnaire they were referring to, so the scales of the SMI were changed from referring to Kiwendo to reflect social media influencer.

5.2.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the systematic arrangement of information such as facts and figures that can be analysed and extrapolated into meaningful patterns (Aneshensel, 2012:4). The study used

various data analysis techniques to achieve its objectives by understanding the relationships and influences in the theoretical framework. The first step in the data analysis used frequency tables to provide information on the distribution of variables such as the age profiles of the respondents, and the frequency of purchasing and using natural hair care products. In addition, for the respondents who answered the SMI-related questionnaire, there was information on their social media activity.

The statistical technique used to determine the relationships between constructs was structural equation modelling because of the complexity of the relationships between the variables or constructs (Frey, 2018:1625). According to Hair *et al.* (2006:711), structural equation modelling (SEM) is the statistical modelling process that tries to explain the relationships among multiple variables and constructs. SEM is a unique combination of factor analysis and multiple regression. Multiple regression determines the strength and predictive power of the relationships between constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006:176). This study chose this statistical technique because of its ability to determine the complex relationships embedded in the study's conceptual framework. SEM determined the various relationships in the effects of reference groups as credible sources on the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. The statistical packages and tools used for the data analysis were the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the PROCESS Macro Model 1 and PROCESS Macro Model 4 in SPSS, IBM SPSS Analysis of Moment Structure Amos version 28, and Microsoft Excel. The statistical methods described below were used.

In order to use maximum likelihood estimation (MLE), the assumptions of normality need to be met. MLE is fairly robust for violations of normality (Hair *et al.*, 2006:743). Normality is the shape of the distribution of the data (Hair *et al.*, 2006:79). MLE was chosen for the study because it is efficient and unbiased when the assumption of normality is met (Hair *et al.*, 2006:743). Descriptive statistics were done to determine the kurtosis and skewness, which are the measures of the normality of the data (Hair *et al.*, 2006:80). To meet the assumptions of normality, the kurtosis – which measures the peakness or flatness of a distribution compared with a normal distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2006:39) – must be lower than ±7 (Byrne, 2013); and the skewness – which measures the symmetry of the distribution (Hair *et al.*, 2006:40) – must be less than ±2 (Byrne, 2013). The data for this study met the assumptions of normality. Therefore, the SEM with MLE was an appropriate statistical technique to use.

Fornell and Larcker (1981:49) propose an SEM testing system that has a measurement model and the structural model before testing for significant relationships in a structural model. The first step is to assess the measurement model – that is, it satisfies validity and reliability

(Fornell & Larcker 1981:45). The reliability (convergent validity), average variance extracted, and discriminant validity were tested for each of the unobservable variables in the measurement model. The internal consistency and reliability of the constructs was obtained through composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients with factors needing to be greater than the $\alpha = 0.7$ threshold (Pallant, 2010:6). The average variance extracted in this study was above the 0.5 threshold. The measurement models for the study were found to be adequate, and thus the measurement for goodness-of-fit was conducted (Hair *et al.*, 2006:745).

The second step of the Fornell and Larcker (1981:49) testing process was to measure the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model. Various goodness-of-fit indices were used to assess the goodness-of-fit of the measurement models and structural models in the study. The goodness-of-fit tests used, and their thresholds, were the chi-squared value (CMIN), the degrees of freedom (DF) and their statistical significance (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:46), CMIN/DF<3.000, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA<0.070), the normed fit index (NFI>0.900), the comparative fit index (CFI >0.900), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI>0.900), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR<0.080), and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI >0.900) (Hair *et al.*, 2006:746). The measurement model's goodness-of-fit was adequate. The assessment of the structural models' goodness-of-fit was conducted using the same fit indices and cut-off points, and all of the structural models met the requirements.

Mediation analysis was conducted to determine the effect of a third intervening variable between two other variables (Hair *et al.*, 2006:844). A mediator is a third variable that explains how and why two variables relate (Fairchild & McDaniel, 2017:1259). Mediation occurs when a third variable, the mediator (M), is introduced into the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y). It can either reduce the significance of the two variables, but they remain significant (partial mediation), or it can change a previously significant relationship into one that is non-significant, or change a non-significant relationship into one that is significant (full mediation) (Hair *et al.*, 2006:867).

Moderation analysis was conducted to determine the effect of a third variable changing the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Hair *et al.*, 2006:844) by increasing the strength of the relationship, decreasing the strength of the relationship, or changing the direction of the relationship. The moderation effect considers the impact of a third variable (W = moderator) on the strength of the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) (Hair *et al.*, 2006:870; Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007:191). Moderation is the interaction of the third variable interacting

(X*W) with the independent variable (X) to predict the dependent variable (Y) (Preacher *et al.*, 2007:191).

The study used multigroup SEM to examine the normative (female family member – FFM) and comparative (social media influencer – SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their effect on purchase intentions. In addition, in an attempt to compare the models of the normative and comparative reference groups, multigroup SEM was used, for which multigroup invariance is necessary. Multigroup invariance indicates that the observed scores (the items in the questionnaire) and the latent constructs are the same across the groups (Campbell, Barry, Joe & Finney, 2008:995; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:581). Measurement invariance is tested using the difference between the unconstrained (freely estimated) model and the constrained model between the two models (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002:250). Measurement invariance is supported when the difference in the goodness-of-fit between the unconstrained model and the constrained model satisfies the following conditions: ΔCFI ≤ -0.01, ΔGamma hat ≤ -0.001, and ΔMacDonald NCI ≤ -0.02 (Campbell *et al.*, 2008:996; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002:250). The study first determined the measurement invariance between the normative and comparative reference groups to ensure that the differences were not at a measurement level. Generally, once measurement invariance is determined, the structural invariance is tested, which in this case assessed the differences in the structural paths (or parameters) between the reference groups.

The above description has outlined and defined the different steps used to achieve the study's goals and objectives, and explained the reasons for the choices made to collect and analyse the data for the study.

5.3   Ethics and data management

According to Love (2012:4), the rise of ethical regulation in the 1960s was to protect human subjects, and the principles of confidentiality and anonymity were established to protect the privacy of informants (Love, 2012:9). Lavrakas (2008:244) reiterates that, in survey research, the ethical principles are the regulations for privacy and confidentiality in order to protect the human subjects who are participating in a survey. Survey research ethics ensure that no harm is done to the survey participants, and that respondents are not pressured and do not feel obligated to participate in the survey (Lavrakas, 2008:866). Research proposals are subject to regulatory reviews, and need to go through ethics boards to ensure that the ethical guidelines are followed (Lavrakas, 2008:866). In order to comply with these regulations, this study went through ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Ethical Committee to

ensure that it adhered to the research code of ethics and protected the participants in the survey. This included informing the respondents of the purpose of the research, requesting their consent to participate voluntarily in this study, and informing them of the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of their responses. The data was collected after ethical clearance and approval had been received from the University of Pretoria (see Appendix B).

All of the collected data, the original dataset with possibly identifiable information, and other related information accumulated for this research study has been stored in a secure storage space as electronic data. This includes the data collected and stored via the electronic platform Qualtrics and the downloaded versions of these original datasets. Access to the original data is limited to the team members: Batandwa Simelane (batandwam@gmail.com), Prof. Liezl-Marié van der Westhuizen (liezl-marie.vanderwesthuizen@up.ac.za), and Dr Tinashe T.R. Ndoro (tinashe.ndoro@up.ac.za), with team member Batandwa Simelane taking ownership of and full responsibility for all of the data. This has enabled the researchers to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. De-identified datasets used for analysis have been stored in the University of Pretoria's research data repository and platform (https://researchdata.up.ac.za/), which the University of Pretoria manages, maintains, and controls. All of the data stored on this platform will be disposed of and destroyed after the prescribed period and by means of the prescribed method defined by the University of Pretoria information management policy.

6   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

In decision-making there are important issues of coordination and the organisation of information flows that involve multiple individuals (Payne *et al*., 1991:63), such as reference groups. Reference groups significantly impact consumers' attitudes, behaviours, and intentions towards a product (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30). Consumers use other consumers (such as reference groups) and heuristics (such as credibility) to assist them (Hogg, 2000:229). Moreover, reference groups are considered one of the most prominent drivers of the Black African natural hair movement, as they provide supportive knowledge that educates and empowers the consumer about their natural hair (Douglas, Onalaja & Taylor, 2020:183; Jackson, 2017:46; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51; Rowe, 2015:1). Thus this study argues that it is important to understand the role of credible reference groups in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products.

6.1   Theoretical contribution

Chapter 2 (Article 1) contributes by showing both the direct and indirect effects of reference groups' source credibility on purchase intentions through the consumer's sense of belonging to the reference group, namely social identification and perceived similarity with the reference group. Using a social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283) lens to explain the impact of the social environment – in this case, group membership – on the individual and their behaviour. Understanding the direct effect of all three source credibility subdimensions on purchase intentions adds to the existing reference group source credibility literature. The addition of social identification and perceived similarity as mediators provides deeper insight into the cause of the effect that reference group source credibility has on purchase intentions. Chapter 3 (Article 2) contributes by demonstrating the moderating effects of all three reference group source credibility subdimensions on the granular consumer involvement constructs (product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement) and on purchase intentions. The moderation effect of source credibility provides insights into how reference group source credibility strengthens or weakens the effect that the involvement constructs have on purchase intentions, using a social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989:1175) lens to explain the interaction between the social environment (reference group source credibility) on the individual's personal factors and their behaviour after acquiring knowledge from others. Chapter 4 (Article 3) contributes by exploring the direct effects of the normative and comparative reference group source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) on purchase intentions and the indirect effects through attitudes towards the product. The article also contributes to the source credibility literature by adding attitudes towards the product as a mediator that explains the effect that the source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) have on purchase intention, using a social influence theory (Kelman, 1958:52) lens to explain the changes in the consumer's attitudes and behaviour as a result of the impact of the different social environments.

6.2   Managerial contribution

In practical terms Chapter 2 (Article 1) assists marketing managers to understand how the Black African woman is influenced by a credible source of information to purchase natural hair care products because they want to mimic the reference group's archetype, adhere to the group norms, and be accepted. The managerial contribution from Chapter 3 (Article 2) assists marketing managers to understand how a credible source of information strengthens or weakens the effect that the individual's interest in the product, thoughts about the product, and feelings towards the products have on the future purchase of the product. Chapter 4 (Article 3) in practical terms assists marketing managers to know which reference group's source

credibility, between FFMs and SMIs, would assist in driving the Black African woman to have favourable attitudes towards the natural hair care product and the intention to purchase it.

7 PRELIMINARY CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION

The purpose of this section is to provide a preliminary chapter classification of the study. This study will be presented in five chapters, as described below:

7.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 presents the introduction section that provides the contextual overview of the study. The chapter provides the background of the research and the motivations for conducting the study through the introduction and problems statements, the literature review, and the research objectives section. The chapter includes the research methodology section, which provides the methods of conducting the literature review and the approach to the empirical investigation that was used to achieve the research objectives.

The results of this study are presented in three articles as set out in the preliminary chapter classification that follows.

7.2 Chapter 2 (Article 1)

Chapter 2 of this study represents the first article, entitled "*Source credibility and purchase intentions: The perspective of South African Black women with natural hair*". The primary objective of this chapter is to investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The secondary objectives of this chapter, which seek to support the primary objective, are:
- To determine whether social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To determine whether perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Figure 6 presents the proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 2 (Article 1).

Figure 6: The proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 2 (Article 1)

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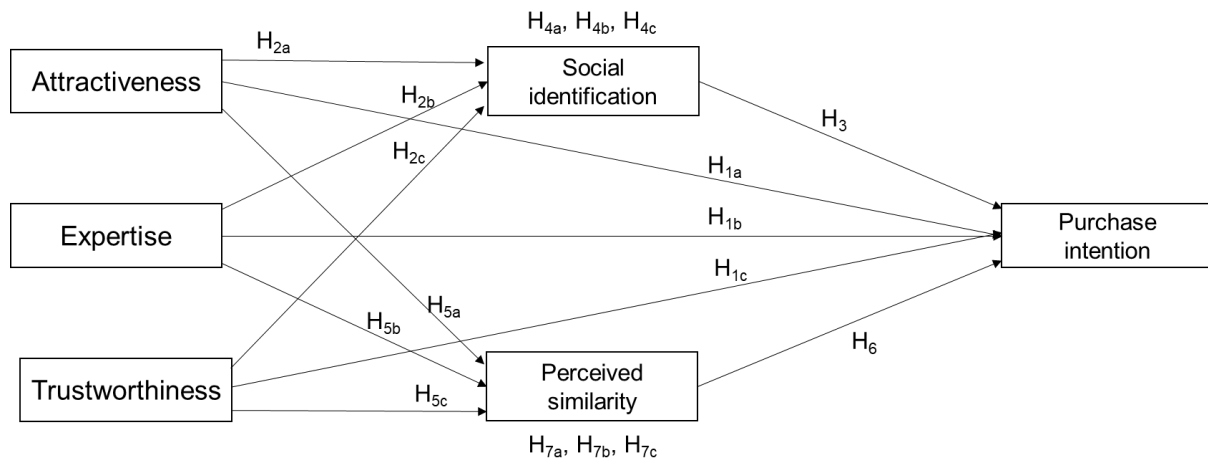
The following hypotheses are proposed in this article:

H_1: There is a relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's source credibility and social identification with the SMI with natural hair.

H_{2a}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's attractiveness and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{2b}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's expertise and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{2c}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between social identification with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_4: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{4a}: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

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H$_{4b}$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4c}$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_5$: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{5a}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{5b}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{5c}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H$_6$: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_7$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7a}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7b}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7c}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The method of analysis that was deemed acceptable was structural equation modelling and mediation analysis using Amos version 28. First the skewness which must be less than ±2 (Appendix F for Chapter 2 results)and kurtosis which must be lower than ±7 (Appendix F for Chapter 2 results) using description statistics through SPSS version 28, were determined to ensure that the data followed a normal distribution to allow maximum likelihood testing (Byrne, 2013). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were assessed to determine the reliability of the constructs. Discriminant validity was assessed by using Fornell and Larcker's (1981:45)

criterion, to ensure that the constructs were conceptually different. SEM mediation analysis was conducted to determine the direct and indirect relationships between the dependent and independent variables.

7.3   Chapter 3 (Article 2)

Chapter 3 of this study represents the second article. The title for the second article is "*Source credibility as a moderator between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products*". The primary objective of this study is to investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The secondary objectives of this article, which seek to support the primary objective, are:
- To determine whether cognitive involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To determine whether affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Figure 7 presents the proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 3 (Article 2)

Figure 7: The proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 3 (Article 2)

The following hypotheses are proposed in this article:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and cognitive involvement.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and affective involvement.

H_4: There is a significant positive relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_6: Cognitive involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_7: Affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_8: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{8a}: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{8b}: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{8c}: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_9: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{9a}: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{9b}: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{9c}$: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{10}$: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{10a}$: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{10b}$: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{10c}$: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

The **method of analysis** that was deemed suitable for the article was structural equation modelling, including moderation using PROCESS Macro Model 4 in SPSS and mediation analyses, followed by mediated moderation analysis using PROCESS Macro Model 4 in SPSS. The skewness which must be less than ±2 (Appendix F for Chapter 3 results) and kurtosis which must be lower than ±7 (Appendix F for Chapter 3 results) using description statistics through SPSS version 28, were determined to ensure that the data followed a normal distribution to allow maximum likelihood testing (Byrne, 2013). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were assessed to determine the reliability of the constructs. Discriminant validity was assessed by using Fornell and Larcker's (1981:45) criterion, to ensure that the constructs were conceptually different. The mediated moderation analysis was conducted to determine the complex relationships between the dependent and independent variables, including the moderation effect of source credibility on the mediated relationships.

7.4   Chapter 4 (Article 3)

Chapter 4 of this study represents the third article, entitled "*An investigation of family member and social media influencer reference group source credibility, attitude, and purchase intentions towards Black African women's natural hair care products*". The primary objective of this article is to examine the effects of normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The secondary objective of this article, which seeks to support the primary objective, is:

- To determine whether attitude mediates the relationship between normative (a FFM) and comparative (an SMI) reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Figure 8 presents the proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 4 (Article 3).

Figure 8: The proposed conceptual framework for Chapter 4 (Article 3)

The following hypotheses are proposed in this article:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of the reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1d}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of the reference group with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H_{2a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H_{2b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H_{2c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H_{2d}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between the attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{3a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{3b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_4: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the source credibility of the reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{4a}: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{4b}: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{4c}: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{4d}: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The **method of analysis** that was deemed suitable for the article was structural equation modelling in Amos version 28.0. The skewness which must be less than ±2 (Appendix F for Chapter 4 results)and kurtosis which must be lower than ±7 (Appendix F for Chapter 4 results) using description statistics through SPSS version 28, were determined to ensure that the data followed a normal distribution to allow maximum likelihood testing (Byrne, 2013). Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were assessed to determine the reliability of the constructs. Discriminant validity was assessed by using Fornell and Larcker's (1981:45) criterion, to ensure that the constructs were conceptually different. Measurement invariance analysis was conducted to test the difference between the two reference groups' observed scores (the items in the questionnaire) and whether the latent constructs were the same across the groups. After considering measurement invariance, two separate structural models were run, and then a mediation analysis was conducted to determine the direct and indirect relationships of the two models.

7.5   Chapter 5

Chapter 5 of this study is the final chapter, which presents the overall summary of the findings from the three articles, the theoretical and practical contributions, and the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter ends with the theoretical and practical implications, the study's limitations, and suggestions for future research.

8   CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 presented a contextualisation of the study, arguing for the important role of reference groups' source credibility in Black African Women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. The chapter provided detailed information that laid the groundwork for the rest of the study.

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CHAPTER 2

ARTICLE 1: SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS: THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK WOMEN WITH NATURAL HAIR

ABSTRACT

The Black African women's natural hair movement has gained popularity in South Africa. Many South African Black women are keeping their hair in its natural state, and the need for credible information about natural hair and its products is rising. There has been a move away from products that chemically straighten Black African hair. This paper aims to investigate the relationship between the source credibility of social media influencers (SMI) as reference groups and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products, mediated by social identification and perceived similarity. The study used social identity theory as a foundation for the conceptual framework. The study used a self-administered questionnaire, using convenience sampling through an online consumer panel, achieving a sample of 305 respondents. The study's main findings were that two constructs, namely the source credibility subdimension 'attractiveness' and 'social identification', have a positive impact on purchase intentions. Furthermore, the source credibility subdimension, 'trustworthiness', has a positive impact on social identification and perceived similarity. The study also found that social identification with an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair do not mediate the relationship between an SMI's source credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise) and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The managerial implications are that marketers need to use SMIs at different stages of the consumer journey. For marketers to ensure that the SMIs they adopt are able to stimulate purchase intentions, they should be perceived as attractive, and also be able to build a sense of belonging with the natural hair community in order to foster social identity with that community.

Keywords: social media influencer, attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, social identification, perceived similarity, natural hair movement, Black African women

1   INTRODUCTION

The natural hair movement has grown in South Africa, with a large number of Black South African women embracing their natural hair (Halo Heritage, 2021), rather than chemically straightened hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45). The motivation for Black women to keep their hair natural stems from their confidence about natural hair, identity, beauty and power, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-expression, and heritage and ancestry (Thomas, 2020:149). For Black African women, natural hair is a means to reclaim their black identity (Thomas, 2020:151) and psychological well-being (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:346). The population group 'Black' or 'Black African' relates to native South Africans, which means individuals born in South Africa and classified as Black (Union of South Africa, 1950:277). Practices during apartheid led Black individuals' hair to be perceived as unfavourable (Thomas, 2020:120), inappropriate, and unacceptable, leading to Black women straightening their hair and being unable to take care of their natural hair (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:343). However, in recent years, the natural hair care industry in South Africa has experienced a change (Thomas, 2020:61).

The rise in the natural hair movement was as a result of the influx of and easy access to information about natural hair from content creators in various formats (Ellington, 2014:562). Reference groups such as bloggers, vloggers, and SMI played a significant role in disseminating natural hair information, and are considered the critical sources of such information (Ellington, 2014:562). Ellington (2014:563) suggests that further research is required to gain knowledge and understanding of reference groups, such as online and in-person support groups. The proposed further research would add knowledge to the Black African natural hair movement. Previous research has shown the importance of reference groups in driving consumer behaviour towards hair products (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:262; Ellington, 2014:562; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:163; Thomas, 2020:143). However, little research has been conducted on consumption behaviour in relation to natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:172) and the role of credible sources in the acceptance of such products.

The source credibility of celebrities and social media influencers (SMIs) has long been considered (Ohanian, 1991:47; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sir, 2018:30). Both reference groups impact consumer behaviour (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). This study focuses on SMIs, since they are perceived to be more credible than celebrities; consumers identify with and find more similarities to SMIs than to celebrities (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:274). SMIs were chosen for this study because of their role in the rise of the natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:562). Thus, the primary objective of this

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article is to investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Belonging to a group is a way for individuals to form their understanding of the environment (Oakes, 2002:813). It could be noted that African American women feel a sense of belonging when engaging with natural hair communities, and can be persuaded in their decision-making about natural hair (Ellington, 2014:554). In this study, a sense of belonging is denoted by social identification (Kim, Han & Park, 2001:196) and perceived similarity (Lyu, 2012:38). Social identification has been shown to be a strong influencer of positive attitude, willingness to portray a good group image, and spending behaviours (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011:699). Perceived similarity has been found to influence purchase behaviours and decisions (Liu, Luo & Cao, 2018:6; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:269). However, research has yet to be conducted on the mediating role of social identification and perceived similarity in the relationship between credible reference groups and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Black women exchange information among themselves about the latest trends, while also seeking the approval of other Black women, which is very important to them (Thomas, 2020:61). This shows the power of word of mouth and the dependence on personal dialogue as reliable sources of information for middle class Black women (Thomas, 2020:61). This trend is no different for Black African women when it comes to information about natural hair. Thus Black women have found bonds of sisterhood and a place where their identity is affirmed within online natural hair communities (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:29-31). Therefore, the secondary objectives of this study are to examine the mediating role of social identification and perceived similarity in the relationship between reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions.

As stated by Addie, Ball and Adams (2020:352), not much marketing research has been done on Black women as a consumer group, and only limited research is available about the consumption behaviour of Black women. This paper makes an academic contribution by adding to the limited literature on understanding the role of reference groups as credible sources in purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. It aims to contribute to the South African natural hair care marketing industry by providing insights into how credible sources of information such as reference groups shape the consumer's sense of belonging (as specifically related to social identification and perceived similarity) and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The rest of the paper consists of six sections. The first section presents the theoretical review of the constructs and provides the hypotheses for the study. The second part of the paper

discusses the methodology used in the study, followed by the results. The section that follows it elaborates on the findings of the study, followed by a section on the managerial implications; and, finally, the study's limitations, and recommendations for future research are presented.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1   Social identity theory

Social identity theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (2004:283), posits that consumers derive their social identity from their group memberships through the influence of the reference groups with which they identify, and that they behave according to that group membership (Brown, 2020:10; Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade & Williams, 1986:274). Social identity consists of the preferences that come from unity with the groups to which an individual belongs; it is influenced by the social context in which the individual is immersed; and its primary objective is to express a sense of belonging to such groups (Ehala, 2018:17). Group affiliation affects an individual's behaviour (Ehala, 2018:20), and group identities are organised along various dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, and gender.

'Social identity' in this study relates to individuals who categorise themselves as Black South African women with natural hair and who belong to the natural hair movement. The SIT provides a unique lens to explain the impact of reference groups on identity and, in turn, on the consumer's behaviour. The theory suggests that individuals will be more receptive to the information they receive from significant others in their social groups. As applied to this study, Black African women would be more receptive to information or recommendations they receive from SMI about natural hair care products because they want to comply with the group's norms and behaviours in order to show their belonging to the group and be accepted by the group.

2.2   Reference group source credibility

Reference groups are a collective of individuals who are a point of reference for individuals to form attitudes and values that impact their purchase decisions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:2; Joubert, 2013:26). Reference groups have norms or standards to which individuals are expected to conform and adhere (Joubert, 2013:26). There are two types of reference group: normative and comparative. Normative reference groups largely influence and define the consumer's values and behaviours, which entail family and those who live in the same household as the individual (Bearden & Etzel, 1982:184; Childers & Rao, 1992:198). Comparative reference groups are those against which consumers compare or benchmark their values, attitudes, and behaviours, such as colleagues or social media influencers

(Bearden & Etzel, 1982:184; Childers & Rao, 1992:198; Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971:381; Human, 2014:225). This study focuses on comparative reference groups, and specifically social media influencers (SMIs), because SMIs are actively involved in supporting the choice of natural hair by African American women (Ellington, 2014:562).

Natural hair movement comparative reference groups provide supportive content that educates and empowers consumers about their natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51). They are the key drivers of content creation and information dissemination about natural hair and natural hair care products (Jackson, 2017:47; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165). It could be noted that Instagram SMIs are likely to exert reference group influence (Djafarova & Matson, 2021:25).

In South Africa, the natural hair movement is in its infancy (Williams, 2018); therefore, consumers need credible sources of information to provide them with reliable, empowering, and educational information. 'Source credibility' is a term used to denote the communicator's positive attributes that influence the receiver's acceptance of information (Hu, Chen & Davison, 2019:308; Ohanian, 1990:41). Source credibility can influence consumers' beliefs and behaviours (Wang, Kao & Ngamsiriudom, 2017:11) and a consumer is more likely to consider a product that is endorsed by a credible source (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017:6) state that influencer credibility is vital in influencing purchase behaviour. This study uses Ohanian's (1990:49) source credibility constructs to examine the credibility of the comparative reference group (SMIs) as a source of information in the consumption of natural hair care products. The source credibility construct comprises three subdimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise (Ohanian, 1990:48).

The 'attractiveness' of a source refers to the physical interest in or desire for the source (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Ohanian, 1991:46). An endorser's attractiveness – their physical characteristics – influences the effectiveness of the endorser's communication messages (Moraes, Gountas, Gountas & Sharma, 2019:1165; Wang *et al.*, 2017:12) because attractive influencers are more persuasive (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1160) and their messages are accepted (Moraes *et al.*, 2019:1165; Wang *et al.*, 2017:12). Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019:1439) posit that to be a micro-celebrity – an SMI – one needs to be physically attractive. This assumption might hold because consumers tend to gravitate towards celebrities who portray the consumer's ideal self-image (Moraes *et al.,* 2019:1182).

The 'expertise' of a source is defined as the authoritative skills and knowledge that the source possesses (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Ohanian, 1991:46). According to Moraes *et al.*

(2019:1166), expertise is the second most important factor of source credibility. This relates to the degree of authority that an endorser has in a product category. In this study, the skills and knowledge that the SMI has about Black African women's natural hair care products relate to expertise.

The 'trustworthiness' of a source refers to the integrity and objectivity of the source (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Ohanian, 1991:46); it is suggested that this is the most important factor in source credibility (Moraes *et al*., 2019:1166; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:28). Trustworthiness is important because it signifies the endorser's believability, honesty, and reliability (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1059; Wang *et al*., 2017:12). In this study, source credibility is operationalised through attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990:48; Wang *et al*., 2017:14). Thus this study uses these subdimensions to measure source credibility.

2.2.1 Reference group source credibility and purchase intentions

'Purchase intention' is the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product or service in the future (Bataineh, 2015:128; Chang & Wildt, 1994:20; Chen & Lin, 2019:25). In the context of this study, 'purchase intentions' refers to an individual's likelihood to purchase natural hair care products recommended by a credible reference group with natural hair. Various factors influence a consumer's purchase intentions (Paul & Rana, 2012:414); a credible source of information is one (Schouten *et al*., 2020:262). Previous research has shown that source credibility can boost purchase intentions, specifically in influencer-and-follower relationships (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). However, other studies have shown that one or more source credibility factors do not boost purchase intentions (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017:29; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124).

Schouten *et al*. (2020:268) found that influencer expertise influences a consumer's purchase intentions. A source considered an expert is more persuasive and can drive intentions to purchase (Wang *et al*., 2017:11). The combination of trustworthiness and expertise leads to a higher level of endorser message acceptance that influences the consumer's behaviour (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1160). Consumers purchase products recommended online by a trusted celebrity (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:4). Physical appearance is important, and attractive influencers are more persuasive (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1059). Wang *et al*. (2017:12) posit that consumers accept information from an attractive endorser. However, some studies have found that source attractiveness had no significant impact on product

purchase intentions (Lim *et al.*, 2017:29; Ohanian, 1991:51). Owing to this study's focus on natural hair, which plays a significant role in physical appearance (Trüeb, 2005:697), and the importance of the physical appearance of an SMI (Djavorafa & Trofimenko 2019:1439), it was appropriate to include the 'attractiveness' subdimension of source credibility. Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283), according to which a consumer might identify with the SMI as a reference group and therefore consider recommendations from the SMI with natural hair to behave according to the group membership, it could be deduced that the credibility of the SMI would influence Black African women to have intentions to purchase natural hair care products that are recommended by the SMI. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

2.2.2   Reference group source credibility, purchase intentions, and social identification

Social identification is an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group (Kim *et al.*, 2001:196). It helps individuals to achieve group identification (Lyu, 2012:26). Individuals tend to categorise themselves into various social groups, helping them to order their social environment and to locate themselves (Mael & Ashforth, 1992:104). Social identification is the perceived connectedness to various social groups; the more that individuals identify with a social group, the more the social group will affect their behaviour (Grappi & Montanari, 2011:1130). Consumers are more receptive to a message if they identify with the endorser of the message (Ladhari, Massa & Skandrani, 2020:7) and are more likely to purchase products that are recommended or endorsed by celebrities to whom they are connected (Kowalczyk & Pounder, 2016:6).

African American women feel a sense of belonging when engaging with natural hair communities, and can be persuaded in their decision-making about natural hair (Ellington, 2014:554). Black South African women have benefited from natural hair online blogs and communities (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:29-31), and have found a sense of belonging when

surrounded by others with natural hair (Thomas, 2020:114). Black women primarily seek natural hair care education and product recommendations from vloggers and other SMIs online (Thomas, 2020:174). Social identification is an important component of this study because of the support provided by natural hair communities (Ellington, 2014:560) and the sense of belonging to natural hair communities that African American women have (Ellington, 2014:554). Therefore, in this study 'a sense of belonging' refers to social identification with the natural hair movement, and is similar to Kim *et al.*'s (2001:196) definition, which is "as belonging to a group with natural hair".

Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283) and on the possibility that an SMI might act as a reference group, it could be proposed that consumers accept the recommendations about natural hair care products that are made by the SMI to whom they relate (perceived social identification), and that they are more likely to purchase those natural hair care products. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's source credibility and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{2a}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's attractiveness and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{2b}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's expertise and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{2c}: There is a significant positive relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and social identification with an SMI with natural hair.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between social identification with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Social identification is an important predictor of behaviour, and is a key factor in influencing consumers' purchase behaviours (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011:704; Jin & Phua, 2014:192). It is a strong influencer of positive attitudes, of a willingness to portray a good group image, and of spending behaviours (Bartels & Hoogendam, 2011:699). Identification has been found to be an important and significant mediator in various contexts: between celebrity types (with either a positive or a negative image) and purchase intentions (Jin & Phua, 2014:193); between social marketing activities and purchase intentions (Chen & Lin, 2019:29); and, in the context of website identification, partially mediating between website attractiveness and repeat purchase intentions (King, Schilhavy, Chowa & Chin, 2016:340) and between product attractiveness and repeat purchase intentions (King *et al.*, 2016:340). Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283) and on the aforementioned literature (Jin & Phua, 2014:193; Chen

& Lin, 2019:29), it could be proposed that social identification is an intervening variable between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H$_4$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4a}$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4b}$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4c}$: Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

2.2.3 Reference group source credibility, purchase intentions, and perceived similarity

'Perceived similarity' is the extent to which an individual identifies with another person by believing that they have things in common (Montoya, Horton & Kirchner, 2008:891; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261). The concept is well-established in the context of personal relationships (Hanks, Line & Yang, 2017:124), especially in similarity-attraction theory, which shows that individuals are attracted to those who are similar to them (Liu *et al.*, 2018:4). Individuals have an affinity to those like them with respect to their psychological and physical characteristics (Grigoryan, 2019:1123). They expect them to provide rewarding interactions, and believe that they will likely communicate meaningful information that resonates with them (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005:328).

'Similarity' can be defined in respect of demographic characteristics or psychographic traits (Shen, Huang, Chu & Liao, 2010:52); personality, behavioural tendencies, and life experiences (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005:328). For example, similar demographic characteristics in the natural hair movement are race and gender (for Black women). Similar psychographic traits could be the use of natural hair to express Black identity, and similar life experiences could be finding appropriate natural hair care products. In the context of this study, the perceived similarity is the degree to which Black African women perceive themselves to have things in common with the SMI with natural hair.

Group members tend to interact with those they perceive as similar to them (Shen *et al.*, 2010:54); they exchange information and are influenced by those with the same norms, values, and beliefs (Liu *et al.*, 2018:4; Shen *et al.*, 2010:58). Perceived similarity drives the need to be like others by mimicking their attitudes, appearances, and behaviours (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005:328). When consumers feel that they have the same values, interests, and characteristics as endorsers, they are more likely to assume the endorsers' attitudes and behaviours (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261). Perceived similarity has been found to positively affect a consumer's purchase intentions (Liu *et al.*, 2018:6). It has also been found to have mediating effects between the type of endorser and purchase intentions (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:269).

Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283), it could be proposed that, when consumers perceive an SMI to be similar to them, they will accept that SMI's recommendation about natural hair care products and will more likely purchase them. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{5a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{5b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H_{5c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.

H_6: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283) and on the aforementioned literature on perceived similarity (Liu *et al.*, 2018:6; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:269), it could be proposed that perceived similarity can be a mechanism through which an SMI's source credibility is associated with purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H_7: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7a}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7b}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{7c}$: Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the hypothesised relationships between the constructs.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3 METHODOLOGY

This section of the report outlines the research process undertaken to conduct the research.

3.1 Data collection

The study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique to collect the data, with a self-administered online survey deployed through a third-party panel from a reputable research company. The research company ensures ethical research practices are followed. The reason for using panel data for this study was that it minimised the risks associated with survey participation, such as incomplete questionnaires, missing data, screening the respondents, getting the correct respondents, and reaching the required sample size

(Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016:337). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions comprising multiple-choice and scale questions, with a scenario for the participants to respond to.

The respondents for the study were South African Black women with natural hair who were aged 18 years or older. All of the respondents who were selected to participate in the study were required to have an Instagram account to ensure that they would be familiar with the SMI scenario (see Table 1 below). This study chose Instagram because micro-celebrities (such as SMIs) upload appealing content and provide useful recommendations (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019:1433). A third-party market research company was appointed to conduct the online survey using an online panel. The final data collection generated 305 usable questionnaires. The ideal sample size for structural equation modelling (SEM) with seven or fewer constructs and with a minimum of three items for each construct is at least 150 respondents (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010:637).

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a sample of 30 participants from the study population to ensure that the questionnaire worked effectively and provided valid and reliable measures of the constructs (Czaja & Blair, 2005:103). Minor adjustments were made to some scale items to ensure that the questionnaire correctly captured the study context. For example, changing the item from generically stating SMI to being specific to the scenario and mention Kiwendo.

Table 1: Social media influencer questionnaire scenario

Scenario (Social media influencer)
Kiwendo is a natural hair social media influencer on different social media platforms. She has an Instagram account with 123,000 followers and a YouTube channel with over 52,000 subscribers. She uses these platforms to share content about natural hair. This includes her journey with natural hair, educating people on how to take care of their natural hair and giving information about the products that are available to take care of natural hair. Her recent post on Instagram was about a natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday. For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, you follow Kiwendo on her Instagram page @Kiwendo_hair. She is your source of information regarding natural hair. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

3.2 Measures

This study adapted various scales from the literature or from previous studies to measure the constructs. Wang and Scheinbaum's (2018:24) source credibility scales, adapted originally from McCracken (1989), and Ohanion's (1990) attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness scales were used to measure the reference group's source credibility. The four-item purchase intentions scale of Diallo, Chandon, Cliquet and Philippe (2013:437) was adapted for this study. Social identification was measured by Mael and Ashforth's (1992:122) six-item scale. For perceived similarity, this study adapted Schouten *et al.*'s (2020:261) four-item scale.

The constructs were measured using a seven-point unlabelled Likert scale ranging from 1 denoting "strongly disagree" to 7 denoting "strongly agree". A seven-point Likert scale was used in previous studies that investigated natural hair (Addie *et al.*, 2020:360; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93). The scales were adapted to suit the natural hair context. The questionnaire included other behavioural questions to obtain the respondent's profile, such as "*How long have you had natural hair?"* and "*How often do you buy natural hair care products for African women's hair?*", to ascertain the respondent's profile.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Sample profile

The average age of the respondents was 30.24 years old. Almost half (49%) of the respondents have had natural hair for less than a year, and 20.0% had natural hair for one to two years. Almost four in ten (38.4%) of the respondents have had natural hair for three to five years, 15.1% have had natural hair for six to ten years, and 21.6% have had natural hair for more than 10 years.

About a quarter (24.3%) of the respondents used natural hair care products once a week, while 16.4% used natural hair care products twice a week and 23.0% used them three times a week. Shampoos (86.6%) were the most used natural hair care product, and moisturisers were the second most used natural hair care products (76.4%), followed by conditioners (74.4%) and oils (71.8%). The respondents used one brand of natural hair care product on average. More than half (51.5%) of the respondents bought natural hair care products monthly, and 22.3% purchased the products every second month. The majority (91.9%) of the respondents bought organic or chemical-free products.

The respondents in this survey were asked about their social media activities. The majority of the respondents responded that they were very likely to use an SMI as a source of information

about natural hair care products. Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform (80.0%), followed by Instagram (74.1%) and YouTube (63.6%).

4.2 Evaluation of models

The study used structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques through SPSS Amos version 28 to explain the multiple relationships among the variables and constructs (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2006:711). Fornell and Larcker (1981:44) proposed a two-step approach for SEM: 1) the evaluation of the measurement model, to demonstrate the satisfactory levels of reliability and validity; and 2) the evaluation of the structural model, to test the significant relationships between constructs.

4.2.1 Evaluation of measurement model

A measurement model is evaluated for its goodness-of-fit through confirmatory factor analysis to determine the relationship between the observed variables (items) and the constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006:770). Six constructs with their respective observed variables (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, social identification, perceived similarity, and purchase intentions) were used to test the model's satisfactory validity and reliability levels (Fornell and Larcker, 1981:45).

To determine a model's goodness-of-fit, the chi-squared value and its statistical significance are generally used (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:46); however, the chi-squared test has limitations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:44). Therefore, in addition to chi-square, other goodness-of-fit indices need to be considered, such as CMIN/DF, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), standardised root mean residual (SRMR) and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) (Hair *et al.*, 2006:746).

The first measurement model generated a high chi-squared value, and so an improved measurement model was used that generated a lower chi-squared value and improved the values of the goodness-of-fit indices.

Table 2: Measurement model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Results	426.24	174	<0.001	2.450	0.960	0.967	0.884	0.946	0.069	0.034

Eight of the 29 items in the initial model were removed and 21 remained (see Table 3 for an overview of the remaining items), which improved the measurement model. One item was removed from attractiveness, two items were removed from expertise, one item was removed from trustworthiness, two items were removed from social identification and one item was removed from purchase intensions. Table 2 shows the results of the improved measurement model's goodness-of-fit indices that met the requirements.

4.2.2   Validity and reliability

In order to establish the reliability of the constructs in the measurement model, the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998:302) were calculated for all of the constructs. To show construct validity, each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) must be 0.5 or above (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:47). Convergent validity measures the extent to which the construct items are correlated (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137).

Table 3: Reliability and validity standardised weights (SW), Cronbach's alpha (*α*), CR, and AVE of all factors

Item	SW	*α*	CR	AVE
Attractiveness (AT)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems attractive	0.915	0.960	0.961	0.860
With regards to natural hair Kiwendo seems classy	0.899			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems beautiful	0.951			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems elegant	0.943			
Expertise (EX)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems experienced	0.929	0.943	0.975	0.849
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems knowledgeable	0.939			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems skilled	0.895			
Trustworthiness (TR)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems honest	0.912	0.954	0.785	0.838
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems reliable	0.925			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems sincere	0.916			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems trustworthy	0.908			
Social identification (SI)				
When I talk about Kiwendo. I would say "we" rather than "she"	0.801	0.880	0.882	0.713

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Kiwendo's successes are my successes	0.88			
When someone praises Kiwendo. it feels like a personal compliment	0.851			
Perceived similarity (PS)				
Kiwendo thinks like me	0.871	0.933	0.933	0.778
Kiwendo behaves like me	0.891			
Kiwendo is like me	0.906			
Kiwendo is similar to me	0.863			
Purchase intentions (PI)				
The probability that I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo is high	0.881	0.930	0.930	0.815
I would purchase African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo in the future	0.897			
I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	0.93			

Table 3 shows that the Cronbach's alpha values for all of the constructs were greater than the α = 0.7 threshold (Pallant, 2010:6); this indicated that the measurement scales used to measure each of the constructs were reliable. The AVE for all constructs was above 0.5, suggesting that the measurement scales used to measure each construct were valid.

In addition to examining the convergent validity, the discriminant validity – the extent to which two conceptually similar constructs are different – needs to be assessed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:45; Hair *et al.*, 2006:137). Furthermore, to show discriminant validity, the correlation of the constructs should be lower than the square root of the AVE (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137).

Table 4: Discriminant validity

	AT	EX	TR	SI	PS	PI
Attractiveness (AT)	**0.927**					
Expertise (EX)	0.855	**0.921**				
Trustworthiness (TR)	0.853	0.891	**0.915**			
Social identification (SI)	0.491	0.508	0.534	**0.845**		
Perceived similarity (PS)	0.493	0.517	0.545	0.683	**0.882**	
Purchase intentions (PI)	0.821	0.779	0.782	0.526	0.498	**0.903**

*Bold text is square root of the AVE.

From Table 4, it could be concluded that all of the measurement scales used in this study were reliable and showed discriminant validity.

4.2.3 Structural model

The second step was to specify the structural model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:44), which tests complex relationships between the constructs.

Table 5: Structural model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Results	426,24	174	<0.001	2.450	0.960	0.967	0.884	0.946	0.069	0.0337

Table 5 shows the results of the structural model's goodness-of-fit indices that met the requirements. Figure 2 displays the results from the assessment of the structural model.

Figure 2: Structural model of source credibility outcomes
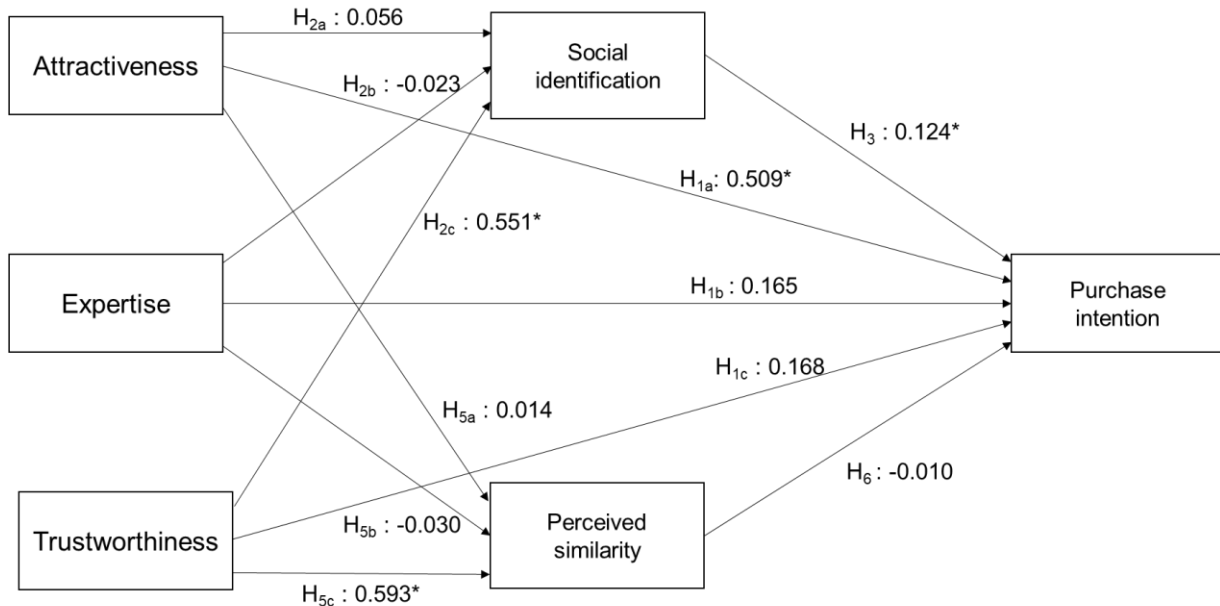
*Significant at the 0.05 level.

4.2.4 Linear relationships

The hypotheses were tested using the maximum likelihood estimation method through SPSS Amos version 28. Table 6 indicates which of the independent variables included in the model would best predict the dependent variable, and whether they were significant (Pallant, 2010:161). The standardised beta coefficients and their associated significant p-values indicate the best predictor variables (Pallant, 2010:161). Table 6 shows that four out of nine hypothesised relationships were significant at $p < 0.05$, in line with the recommendation of Hair *et al.* (2006:12).

Table 6: Standardised regression weights and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Beta values	p-values	Finding
H_{1a}	Attractiveness	Purchase intentions	0.513	0.000	Supported
H_{1b}	Expertise	Purchase intentions	0.164	0.223	Not supported
H_{1c}	Trustworthiness	Purchase intentions	0.231	0.209	Not supported
H_{2a}	Attractiveness	Social identification	0.056	0.684	Not supported
H_{2b}	Expertise	Social identification	-0.023	0.916	Not supported
H_{2c}	Trustworthiness	Social identification	0.551	0.009	Supported
H_3	Social identification	Purchase intentions	0.124	0.036	Supported
H_{5a}	Attractiveness	Perceived similarity	0.014	0.915	Not supported
H_{5b}	Expertise	Perceived similarity	-0.034	0.874	Not supported
H_{5c}	Trustworthiness	Perceived similarity	0.593	0.004	Supported
H_6	Perceived similarity	Purchase intentions	-0.010	0.859	Not supported

Note: significance level is p-value < 0.05

The results in Table 6 and Figure 2 above show that only one of the source credibility dimensions, the attractiveness of the SMI with natural hair ($\beta = 0.513$, $p < 0.001$), had a significant and positive relationship with purchase intentions; therefore, H_{1a} was supported. However, the expertise ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.223$) and trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.231$, $p = 0.209$) of the SMI with natural hair did not have significant relationships with purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. In addition, the results showed a relationship between social identification with the SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions ($\beta=0.124$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H_3. It was also established that there was a relationship between the trustworthiness of the SMI with natural hair and social identification ($\beta = 0.551$, $p = 0.009$) and between trustworthiness and perceived similarity ($\beta = 0.593$, $p = 0.004$), thus supporting H_{2c} and H_{5c}.

4.3 Mediation

Mediation analysis using SPSS Amos version 28 was conducted to determine whether social identification with an SMI with natural hair and the perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediated the relationships between an SMI's attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products respectively. The number of bootstrap samples mined was 2 000, and the bias-corrected confidence interval was 95%. Table 7 provides an overview of the mediation results.

Table 7: Mediation output

Hypothesis	Relationship	Direct effect [LLCI; ULCI]		Indirect effect [LLCI; ULCI]		Finding
		Co-eff	SE	Co-eff	Boot SE	
H_{4a}	AT → SI →PI	0.509 [0.187; 0.769]	0.000	0.006 [-0.020; 0.069]	0.415	Not supported
H_{4b}	EX → SI →PI	0.165 [-0.217; 0.553]	0.222	0.000 [-0.089; 0.062]	0.889	Not supported
H_{4c}	TR → SI →PI	0.162 [-0.231; 0.508]	0.227	0.026 [-0.011; 0.196]	0.185	Not supported
H_{7a}	AT → PS →PI	0.510 [0.192; 0.767]	0.209	0.000 [-0.012; 0.023]	0.712	Not supported
H_{7b}	EX → PS →PI	0.164 [0.187; 0.769]	0.224	0.000 [-0.024; 0.030]	0.984	Not supported
H_{7c}	TR → PS →PI	0.175 [0.214; 0.521]	0.193	-0.003 [-0.069; 0.039]	0.782	Not supported

SI= Social identification; PS = Perceived similarity; AT = Attractiveness; EX = Expertise; TR = Trustworthiness; PI = Purchase intentions

The results from Table 7 indicate that no mediation relationship was supported. The findings indicated that social identification with the SMI with natural hair and the perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair did not mediate the relationship between the SMI's source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

5   DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The secondary objectives included exploring the mediation effects of social identification with an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair on the relationship between the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products among Black African women. These relationships were examined through the lens of SIT to provide insight into and understanding of the influence of reference groups on consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products.

5.1   Theoretical implications

The first contribution of the study relates to understanding the role of the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair in relation to purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The empirical results suggested that only the relationship between the SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products was significant. It could be

suggested that the attractiveness of the SMI with natural hair encouraged Black African women to consider buying natural hair care products recommended by the SMI. In the study, trustworthiness and expertise did not significantly impact purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. This finding is consistent with that of Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021:1124), that one or several influencers' source credibility factors do not predict purchase intentions.

In some of the previous studies, attractiveness is not a driver of purchase intentions (Lim *et al.*, 2017:28; Ohanian, 1991:51). However, Hoffner and Buchanan (2005:321) argue that physical appearance strongly influences the evaluation of and attraction to others. It could be noted that, for the Black African women in the current sample, the physical appearance of the SMI with natural hair who is making recommendations about natural hair care products is essential. It drives the likelihood that consumers will purchase the products recommended. This study has thus added to the literature that an SMI's attractiveness influences purchase intentions for natural hair care products for Black African women. The questionnaire was based on a scenario with a fictional SMI, and therefore the respondent could not visualise the SMI. Attractiveness was operationalised as being classy, beautiful, and elegant. Respondents had to use their imagination and create the SMI in their heads to answer the scenario-based questions. Based on this imaginary SMI with natural hair, the respondents found the SMI to be attractive, and that attractiveness had an impact on respondents' purchase intentions. This indicates the desire to mimic the SMI, as the respondents could have been visualising their ideal self-image (Moraes *et al.*, 2019:1182) – that is, of having an idealised beauty and claiming their black identity (Thomas, 2020:149).

Hair is a physical feature; and when one sees how the product is used by the SMI, the individual can also visualise the outcome after using the recommended product. Drawing on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283), it could be suggested that Black African women are receptive to the information they receive from perceived attractive SMIs with natural hair about natural hair care products, and adopt the SMI's norms and behaviours. Thus it could be postulated that Black African women are likely to purchase the products to look equally attractive. It could also be argued that the positive impact that attractiveness has on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products could be explained by the respondent's perceptions of natural hair and attractiveness. Since the respondents had natural hair, they regarded individuals with natural hair as being attractive.

The second contribution of the study relates to understanding how an SMI's source credibility is related to social identification with an SMI with natural hair and to the perceived similarity

with an SMI with natural hair. The empirical results suggest that social identification with an SMI with natural hair and the perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair do not mediate the relationship between an SMI's source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. It is thus evident that a sense of belonging is not a mechanism through which source credibility is associated with purchase intentions in this sample, even though it was important in other contexts, such as between endorser type and purchase intentions (Schouten *et al.*, 2019:269); between celebrity types (positive or negative image) and purchase intentions (Jin & Phua, 2014:193); between social marketing activities and purchase intentions (Chen & Lin, 2019:29); in the context of website identification, partially mediating between website attractiveness and repeat purchase intentions (King *et al.*, 2016:340); or between product attractiveness and repeat purchase intentions (King *et al.*, 2016:340).

The third contribution the study has made is that trustworthiness is seen as impacting social identification and perceived similarity. Trustworthiness is important because it signifies the endorser's believability, honesty, and reliability (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1059; Wang *et al.*, 2017:12). The SMI's trustworthiness makes consumers feel similar or connected to the SMI. Because of this similarity and connectedness, they will interact with each other and will continue to share information (Hanks *et al.*, 2017:124) within the natural hair community. Perceived similarity drives the need to be like others by mimicking their attitudes, appearances, and behaviours (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005:328). When consumers feel that they have the same values, interests, and characteristics as endorsers, they are more likely to adopt their attitudes and behaviours (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261). Individuals prefer to interact socially with those who are perceived as similar to them (Hanks *et al.*, 2017:124). In this study, trustworthiness – consisting of being honest, reliable, and sincere – drives Black African women's social identification with an SMI with natural hair and the perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair. Interestingly, in this study, the relationships of trustworthiness with social identification and with perceived similarity were the strongest significant relationships. These findings are in line with those of Moraes *et al.* (2019:1166) and Wang and Scheinbaum's (2018:28) suggestion that trustworthiness is the most important factor in source credibility. While previous studies that considered identification in various contexts – wishful identification and purchase intentions (Schouten *et al.*, 2019:263); website identification and repeat purchase intentions (King *et al.*, 2016:340); and social identification and festival re-patronising intention (Grappi & Montanari, 2011:1131) – this study was different because it examined the relationship between social identification with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

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The fourth contribution of this study is that social identification with an SMI with natural hair influences purchase intentions towards the natural hair care products recommended by SMIs. Social media facilitate a sense of intimacy between an influencer and a follower because they are more accessible and because there is a sense of social proximity to influencers (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124). The emotional connections are significant in persuading consumers (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:11240) because consumers are more likely to purchase products recommended or endorsed by celebrities to whom they are connected (Kowalczyk & Pounder, 2016:6). Therefore, consumers are more receptive to a message from an SMI because they identify with them.

5.2   Managerial implications

Historically, natural hair and its maintenance have been given a negative perception by the Apartheid government and society for Black African women in South Africa (Thomas, 2020:120). To change this, marketers need to reposition the perceptions of natural hair and hair care products in their marketing communication strategies. Thomas (2020:149) states that the reasons that Black African women keep their natural hair include physical and psychological attributes such as beauty, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Therefore, using natural hair care products makes one feel attractive and beautiful; this increases self-esteem, thus helping to enhance a sense of self-identity.

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019:1439) posit that, to be a micro-celebrity – an SMI – one needs to be physically attractive because consumers tend to gravitate towards celebrities who portray the consumers' ideal self-image (Moraes *et al.,* 2019:1182). The physical attractiveness and aesthetics of the SMI play a role in the consumer's intention to purchase natural hair care products. Therefore, marketers of natural care hair products need to understand their target market's psychographics to obtain the ideal representation and characteristics of the SMI to use in marketing activities. Thus, in natural hair care products marketing communications, marketers need to use visually or aesthetically appealing SMIs who portray consumers' ideal self-image of attractiveness. Understanding the target market's psychographics will enable marketers to gain insight into attractive SMIs and help them to identify SMIs who resonate, through connection and similarity, with Black African women with natural hair.

In addition to attractiveness, marketers must use social identification to drive purchase intentions. Social identification is the connection or association that Black African women have with an SMI. It consists of Black African women collectively seeing the SMI ('we' instead of

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'her/she') – that the success of the SMI is 'ours' and not for the SMI only, and that the praise given to the SMI belongs to the group and not just to the SMI. Marketers need to use the identification with the SMI to drive purchase intentions. Social identification is achieved by the SMI gathering information from Black African women on product usage and styling tips, so that the interaction is a collective activity. In this way, Black African women will feel connected to the SMI and thus drive purchase intentions.

Marketers should use SMIs' everyday stories and experiences about their hair journeys during the consideration and decision-making stages to show how to achieve attractiveness with natural hair. The stories and experiences used by marketers should focus on using natural hair care products to style the hair and to highlight the attractiveness or positive portrayal of Black African women when wearing their natural hair. This is to drive conversion and to increase the likelihood that consumers will purchase natural hair care products, since physical interest in or desire for the source – the SMI (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Ohanian, 1991:46) – has been found to be more persuasive (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1160).

The SMI's trust can also be used during the awareness stage to generate interest and to build virtual communities in which Black African women feel a sense of belonging and have a collective identity, and in which the consumer is driven to the community to interact with other similar consumers. In this way, Black African women would progressively engage in online platforms via the internet (Thomas, 2020:61). Thus building such virtual communities would be beneficial to the marketer. Facebook was the social media platform most frequently used by the respondents in this study; and Thomas (2020:143) also found that Facebook was the top source of awareness for natural hair care products. Black African women exchange information among themselves about the latest trends while also seeking the approval of other Black African women, which is very important to them (Thomas, 2020:61). This shows the power of word of mouth and the dependence on personal dialogue as reliable sources of information for middle-class Black African women (Thomas, 2020:61). This trend is no different for Black African women regarding information about natural hair, because participation in social communities is a positive factor in creating in-group identity (Chen & Lin, 2019:24). Marketers should use social media platforms such as Facebook to encourage consumers to interact, using the SMI's trustworthiness to build virtual natural hair communities in which Black African women could share content about their natural hair journeys. The SMI's trustworthiness could be used to drive the social identification and perceived similarity of Black African women. Marketers could use Facebook as one of the platforms to create virtual communities using the trusted SMI to drive the interaction. Social media platforms such as

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YouTube and Instagram could also serve as spaces in which the SMI educates and demonstrates natural hair care products.

Credible sources of information are essential in content marketing (Dodd, 2017), as the need for reliable endorsers to provide useful and valuable information that is relevant to the consumer's needs and interests becomes more important. The SMI's trustworthiness should be used to distribute content in the natural hair communities. Marketers should use the SMI's trustworthiness to build virtual natural hair communities that encourage consumers to share content with one another. Consumers could share real, honest, reliable, sincere, and trustworthy stories about natural hair care products. These authentic organic conversations could be used as content for reviews or recommendations for natural hair products. Marketers could leverage the Black African women's trust with the SMI to share content about products so that Black African women would purchase the product because they feel a sense of belonging (they connect with and feel similar to the SMI).

The SMI could give visual tutorials or detailed educational information on how truly to achieve the look; and this might require including the products and accessories that are needed for the look. Being honest and transparent about the things that could go wrong, and how to mitigate those risks, would also be critical. Since some women have been disappointed by their natural hair journey (Oloruntoba, 2018), building trust in the SMI and strengthening trust in the SMI's suggestions about future purchases is important.

6   LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The first limitation of the study is that it used non-probability convenience sampling to draw the sample from the population. The disadvantage of using the convenience sampling method is that the findings from the study cannot be generalised to the entire population. Future studies could use probability sampling techniques to generalise their findings.

The cross-sectional design used in the study is another limitation. Future research could use a longitudinal design over a period of time (six to twelve months), since seasonal changes might change the usage of natural hair products. Future studies could include a qualitative research design that would include in-depth interview questions and focus group discussions to gain a deeper understanding of consumption behaviour in the natural hair movement.

The study used only one reference group, an SMI. Other reference groups could have been considered, such as friends and family. From the study of Thomas (2020:143) it was noted

that friends are one of the top sources of information and awareness for natural hair care products. This study was limited to an Instagram SMI; influencers from other social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook could have been considered, as they play a significant role in supporting natural hair care products. Future research should include other reference groups in order to understand their role in the consumption of natural hair care products.

The focus of this study was to investigate the relationship between source credibility and Black African women's purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Future research would need to include brands and services that cater for natural hair in order to make a holistic contribution to the South African natural hair care industry. Future research could consider the SMI and branding-related factors, such as the match-up hypothesis (similar to that of Lim *et al.*, 2017:30).

7   CONCLUSION

Reference groups such as bloggers, social media influencers, vloggers, and opinion leaders have assisted in the global growth of information about natural hair care products through content marketing to build communities (Ellington, 2014:562; Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:23). The role of reference groups is no different for Black African women. This study has shown that an SMI's trustworthiness is important in driving social identification and perceived similarity with the reference group with natural hair. However, credible SMIs should be used to build these communities in which not just content is created and shared, but also participants feel that they are part of the group by feeling connected and being similar to the reference group, thus being empowered and given knowledge about natural hair. Building communities is achieved through a sense of belonging, showing the beauty of natural hair, having a collective identity, and enabling the consumer to resonate with the SMI.

According to Eroğlu and Bayraktar Köse (2019:1059) and Wang *et al.* (2017:12), the physical appearance of SMIs is important because their messages are more persuasive and their information could effect change because it is easily acceptable, thereby driving purchase intentions. The SMIs' attractiveness encourages the intentions for future purchases by Black African women. The motivating factors for Black African women to wear their natural hair are confidence, identity, beauty and power, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-expression, heritage, and ancestry (Thomas, 2020:149). The SMI with natural hair, using natural hair care products to style their hair, maintain their hair, and express their personality through their hair

could be a way to build confidence and self-esteem and to showcase the beauty of natural Black African hair.

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CHAPTER 3
ARTICLE 2: SOURCE CREDIBILITY AS A MODERATOR BETWEEN INVOLVEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS TOWARDS NATURAL HAIR CARE PRODUCTS

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to understand the moderating role of SMI source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) in the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products by Black African women.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative research design was adopted. The study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Data was collected through a self-administered online survey sent to a third-party panel from a reputable research company. A sample of 305 usable responses was obtained. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the linear relationships and the meditation analysis. PROCESS macro model 4 in SPSS was used to test the moderation.

Findings: The findings indicated that the source credibility subdimensions 'expertise' and 'trustworthiness' moderated the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions. The credibility subdimension 'attractiveness' was not found to be a moderator in the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions. The findings also indicated that affective involvement did mediate the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions. The relationships between product involvement and purchase intentions and between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions were not supported.

Research implications: This study contributes to the existing SMI source credibility literature by adding knowledge pertaining to the moderating role of source credibility subdimensions in the relationship between the 'involvement' constructs and purchase intentions. Furthermore, knowledge about the mediating role of affective involvement in the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions is gained.

Managerial implications: This study emphasises the need to have credible SMIs as sources of information about natural hair care products; to share relevant and empowering content with Black African women who are involved in the natural hair movement; and to contribute to positive purchase intentions.

Originality/value: To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to examine SMI source credibility subdimensions as moderators in the relationship between involvement (product, cognitive, and affective involvement) and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Paper type: Research paper

Keywords: natural hair, Black African women, product involvement, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness

1   INTRODUCTION

The consumption of natural hair products in South Africa has seen massive growth in recent years. In 2018, the sales in South Africa of hair relaxers and hair chemicals, which differ from natural hair products, declined by 20% (Jadezweni, 2018). The trend of increasing natural hair product sales is forecast to continue, as more Black African women are dropping chemical straighteners for the natural hair approach (Tefu, 2020). The natural ethnic (curly) hair care segment in South Africa is projected to be worth US$500 million by 2024 owing to a growth in demand for natural hair care products (Mordor Intelligence, 2020). The natural hair movement contributed significantly to the growth of hair care in South Africa (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). Despite the growth in the natural hair care industry, there is limited research on the Black African hair care industry (Mhlungu, 2017), especially regarding the stakeholders that drive the interest and consumption behaviour in natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:108), such as social media influencers (SMIs). Further research is needed in the Black African natural hair care market (Thomas, 2020:173) so that marketing practitioners are better equipped to service and cater to the needs of Black African women with natural hair.

Interest in the Black women's natural hair care industry has grown over the years (Mintel, 2018). The COVID-19 global pandemic lockdown restrictions, which included the closing of hair salons, intensified the need for do-it-yourself (DIY) natural hair knowledge and information (Green & Butler, 2020; Mordor Intelligence, 2022) and thus further heightened the interest in natural hair care products. The sales of shampoos and conditioners have soared as Black women gain knowledge about how to take better care of their natural hair, and how to style it, without depending on hair salons (Mintel, 2018). The styling and maintenance of natural hair is a great financial and social burden for Black women (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2017:11). They are more likely to spend more time on their hair than White women (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2017:11). Babin and Harris (2013:252) posit that the purchase of (African) natural hair care products might not be expensive. Still, these purchases need a high level of involvement. Natural hair care products require a great amount of investment in research, time, and money – and a lot of trial and error (Shoba, 2020). Decision-making for Black African women about their natural hair is not a habitual process but an involving one that requires the motivation to search for information (Thomas, 2020:44). Gbadamosi (2013:240) suggests that further research needs to be conducted to understand consumer involvement in African contexts, and emphasises the need for research on the level of involvement by African women in certain purchase or buying contexts. Involvement is thus an important construct to consider with regard to Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour.

Involvement is regarded as an important concept in information and communication research (Faisal, Fernandez-Lanvin, De Andrés & Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 2020:1636). Involvement has received a great amount of attention because of its significant influence on information processing and purchase behaviour (Bruwer, Chrysochou & Lesschaeve, 2017:832), and theories have been developed to explain the role of involvement in these situations (Kong & Zhang, 2013:432). The term 'involvement', when used alone, is not accurate unless the type of involvement is specified (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:52). Involvement is a multidimensional construct that can assist in explaining various behavioural outcomes (Broderick & Mueller, 1999:98), and each facet of involvement brings out specific information (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:52). Therefore, involvement should be examined as a multidimensional construct to capture the richness of the concept (Quester & Lim, 2003:25). According to Faisal *et al.* (2020:1636), only a few studies focus on the multidimensional construct of involvement, given the difficulty of conceptualising the construct; and they suggest that further research be done by separating involvement into cognitive involvement and affective involvement. In this study, three types of involvement are examined: product involvement (interest), cognitive involvement (thinking), and affective involvement (feeling). Ma, Zhang, Ding and Wang (2020:406) suggest that further research be conducted on the mediating role of involvement. Therefore, the first contribution of this paper is the mediating role of cognitive and affective involvement in the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The rise in the popularity of natural hair was a result of content creators, such as SMIs (Ellington 2014:554), sharing information about natural hair and its maintenance. An individual's acceptance of information is based on 'who said it' (Çelebi, 2010:293), meaning that individuals are more persuaded by sources they deem credible (Ma *et al.*, 2020:398). Various studies have found that the source credibility of SMIs had a positive effect on a consumer's purchase intentions (Fink, Koller, Gartner, Floh & Harms, 2020:154; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). SMIs have played a significant role in changing perceptions and providing knowledge about natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46); therefore it was worth considering them for this study to understand the effect of source credibility on the consumption behaviour relating to natural hair care products.

Source credibility has been found to play a significant role in moderating a mediation relationship, specifically between online reviews and purchase intention mediated by trust (Tahir & Khan, 2020:68). However, further research needs to be conducted on the moderating effect of reference groups as credible sources on purchase decisions (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Luo, Luo, Schatzberg & Sia, 2013:99), such as source credibility moderation in the

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relationship between involvement constructs and purchase intentions. Therefore, the second contribution of this paper is to investigate the moderating role of SMI source credibility in the relationships between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The paper makes an academic contribution by adding to the limited literature on understanding the moderating role of SMI source credibility in the consumption behaviour relating to natural hair care products. The paper also adds knowledge to the literature on the mediating roles of cognitive involvement and affective involvement in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products.

The primary objective of this article is to investigate the moderating role of SMI source credibility in the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The secondary objectives of this article are: 1) to determine whether cognitive involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products; and 2) to determine whether affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The remainder of the paper consists of five sections. The first is the theoretical background, which consists of the grounding theory, a review of the literature, and the development of the conceptual framework and hypothesis. The second section of the paper presents the methodology and discusses the data collection approach; it is followed by the third section, which presents the results. The fourth section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the study. The fifth section is the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

2   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1   Social cognitive theory

The theory underpinning this study is the social cognitive theory, developed by Bandura (1989:1175). The social cognitive theory was used to understand the effect of the social environment on motivation, learning, and self-regulation individuals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:1). Social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in respect of triadic reciprocal interaction (Bandura, 1989:1175; Bandura, 2001:266). The fundamental premise of social cognitive theory (SCT) is the dynamic triadic causation between an individual's internal personal factors and behavioural patterns and the social environment (Bandura, 2001:14).

'Internal factors' refers to the cognitive, affective, and biological events of the person (Bandura, 1989:1175; Bandura, 2001:14; Yakut, 2019:19). The three components cannot be evaluated separately, because they are inseparable and interlocking pieces of a puzzle that cannot be contemplated in isolation (Phipps, Ozanne, Luchs, Subrahmanyan, Kapitan, Catlin, Gau, Naylor, Rose, Simpson & Weaver, 2013:1229; Yakut, 2019:19). In SCT, socio-structural factors operate through the psychological systems of thoughts or emotions, to produce behavioural outcomes. As applied to this study, this theory holds that one would expect that SMI as the social environment would influence the Black African women's product involvement, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The SCT extends the concept of individual actions to collective (group) actions (Bandura, 2001:14). People do not live their lives in isolation; the majority of the things they want can only be achieved through socially interdependent effort (Bandura, 2001:13). Social information is acquired through interaction with or observation of others (Yi, Gong & Lee, 2013:343) in an individual's social environment (Ferguson & Barry, 2011:82). The interactive and dynamic triadic causation leads to group attainment through the shared intentions, knowledge coordination, and collaboration of skills by its members (Bandura, 2001:14). This means that social learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of these three components: the individual, the behaviour, and the social environment. In marketing, learning is the process by which a consumer acquires the consumption knowledge and experience that they want to use for future-related behaviour. Unfilled needs result in motivations that trigger learning (Crous, 2014:162).

Yakut (2019:30) encourages the use of SCT to understand better its application in the field of marketing, focusing on social marketing, intentional behaviour, and online shopping. In the current study, the SCT as an observational learning theory is used to understand how the social environment (the SMI in the natural hair movement) will influence (through recommendations) the product involvement (interest), cognitive involvement (thoughts), affective involvement (emotions), and purchase intentions of African women towards natural hair products.

2.2   Natural hair movement

Hair is an important part of the identity of women in African cultures; for Black people, hair is a symbol of resistance and of one's identity, tribe, spirituality, family background, and social status (Bellinger, 2007:65; Dash, 2006:35; Matshego, 2020; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:44). In various studies the texture of Black people's hair is described and defined as 'coily' (Green,

2020:3; Jackson, 2017:45; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Rowe, 2015:21). In this study, 'natural hair' refers to non-chemically treated or non-straightened hair, 'African women' refers to Black South African women with natural hair, and 'natural hair products' refers to natural hair care products (i.e., products for non-chemically treated or non-straightened hair). The acceptance of Black people's hair in its natural state – which means that it has not been chemically manipulated or straightened – has resulted in various natural hair movements over the decades (Byrd & Tharps, 2014:2; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Rowe, 2015:2-5; Thompson, 2009:835).

The first wave of the natural hair movement was in the 1950s, driven largely by the civil rights movement in the United states of America, and braids were the symbol of anti-Eurocentric standards of beauty and of advocacy for natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46, Johnson *et al.*, 2017:2; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:50; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Thompson, 2009:835). The second wave of the natural hair movement came in the 1980s, when the popularity of Jheri curls, a glossy and loosely curled look, grew (Rowe, 2015:29; Thompson, 2009:835). The internet was a crucial part of the third wave of the natural hair movement, starting in the early 2000s, when social media platforms were used to reach Black women not only to promote products but also to educate, provide knowledge to, and empower them about their natural hair (Jackson, 2017:46; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51; Rowe, 2015:1). This third wave of the natural hair movement has encouraged more women to join the movement, and has created many natural hair communities in which women can connect with one another about their natural hair and have a sense of community (Ellington, 2014:554). The current African natural hair movement has created many African natural hair communities in which women can also share their knowledge.

The influence of reference groups such as hair opinion leaders and content creators played an important role in the growth of the African American natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:562; Green, 2020:2; Jackson, 2017:48; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:174). Engagements, communication, and content shared through social media platforms had a great impact on the development of the African natural hair phenomenon (Ellington, 2014:562; Mbunyuza-Memani 2019:29-31). African women use the internet and social media as sources of information-gathering to search for ways to wear and care for natural hair using natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:114). Content creators provide knowledge about natural hair and its products (Mintel, 2018). For this study, these content creators are called 'social media influencers'. Social media platforms have enabled Black (African) women to create communities and share information about styling natural hair and making homemade natural hair care products

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(Johnson, 2016). It should be noted that Black African women primarily seek natural hair care education and product recommendations from vloggers and other social media influencers (Thomas 2020:174).

2.3   Social media influencers as reference groups

According to the SCT, consumers will use the information about norms, values, expectations, and behaviour outcomes that they gain from others in the social environment to guide their behaviour (Yakut, 2019:19; Yi *et al.*, 2013:343).

Social media influencers (SMIs) are third-party endorsers and opinion leaders who use social media platforms to shape consumers' attitudes (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg, 2011:90; Xu & Pratt, 2018:958). As opinion leaders, SMI such as vloggers bring in new information about products, and they disseminate novelty to other social media users (Ladhari, Massa & Skandrani, 2020:7). Once a product has been related in the consumer's mind to an issue, such as something important to them, the probability of this person retaining knowledge of the product will increase (Hupfer & Gardner, 1971). The process of individuals acquiring new information, forms of behaviour, and attitudes from one another through direct experience or observation is known as social learning (Baron, Bryne & Branscombe, 2012:144). Therefore, SMIs facilitate social learning by providing information about natural hair care products.

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019:1435) suggest that SMIs are much more powerful influencers than celebrities when influencing consumers online, and that consumers perceive SMIs as more credible than marketing advertisements. Micro-celebrities (such as SMIs) are important influencers because their recommendations of products are perceived to be genuine (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse 2019:1057). Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019:1433) found that Instagram micro-celebrities are seen as posting appealing content and providing useful recommendations. In 2021, Instagram was the most successful social media platform for marketers, and it was one of the most successful social media platform for marketers again in 2022 (Influencer Intelligence, 2022). It is the fourth-most-used social media platform in the world by consumers, and the second-favourite social media platform (Kemp, 2022a); so, for those reasons, this study focuses on Instagram SMIs.

2.4   SMI source credibility

Consumers have a plethora of new products and new channels from which to purchase (Cotte & Wood, 2004:79). There is also a multitude of SMIs, and it is becoming important for brands

and marketers to identify the right SMI to promote a product (Ladhari *et al.,* 2020:7) and to share valuable information about products. An individual might also use informational reference groups to search actively search for information from opinion leaders or groups with the appropriate expertise. An individual might also make inferences by observing others' behaviour (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132; Park & Lessig, 1977:103). When an individual finds a source of information that provides useful and credible information, they are able to consider the reference group's recommendation with a certain level of confidence (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). The source with the most readily accepted information is seen as most credible (Park & Lessig, 1977:103).

'Source credibility' is used to denote the communicator's positive attributes that influence the receiver's acceptance of the information (Hu, Chen & Davidson, 2019:308; Ohanian, 1990:41). In this study, the acceptance of information, such as recommendations for natural hair care products, is considered with regard to SMI source credibility. To measure the credibility of SMIs, this study uses the source credibility construct from Ohanian (1990:49). Source credibility has three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. The expertise of a source is defined as the authoritative skills and knowledge the source possesses; the trustworthiness of a source refers to the integrity and objectiveness of the source; and the attractiveness of a source refers to the physical interest in or desire for the source (Cho, Kwon & Park, 2009:3753; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Lowry, Wilson & Haig, 2014:66; Ohanian, 1991:46).

2.5   Product involvement

The influence of reference groups differs across different products and depends on the product category, the brand, and the type of product purchased (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). Consumers experience products in different ways, through themselves or others' comments (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1061), and some purchase experiences might be more involving than others (Zaichkowsky, 1985:348). Involvement with a product might be a function of purchase experience (Hupfer & Gardner, 1971).

Involved consumers engage in several activities (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:52), such as the active search for information, an extensive choice process, and active information processing. Involvement is the general level of interest or concern about an issue (Zaichkowsky, 1985:343), while product involvement is the importance, relevance, and interest of a product category to a consumer (Drossos, Kokkinaki, Giaglis & Fouskas, 2014:423; Isaacson 2017:65), which affects their purchase behaviour (Wu & Wang, 2011:449). Product

involvement is a motivational state that influences a consumer's information search behaviour and processing (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015:349). Learning about how products, including newly available ones, are to be consumed induces product involvement motivations (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh & Walsh, 2003:53). In this paper, 'product involvement' is the interest a Black African woman has in natural hair care products. This paper uses Zaichkowsky's (1985:343) definition of product involvement, as 'an interest in a product category', which in this study relates to a Black African women's interest in the category of natural hair care products.

Product involvement entails continuous commitment from the consumer regarding their thoughts, feelings, and behavioural responses to a product category (Quester & Lim, 2003:4). Communication research suggests that, when people become involved, they both think and feel, and they use both dimensions of involvement. Consequently, different levels of cognitive and affective involvement can lead to different ways of seeking and processing information (Hamzelu, Gohary, Ghafoori Nia & Heidarzadeh Hanzaee, 2017:287). With respect to natural hair products, Thomas (2020:44) suggests that the purchase of these products needs a high level of involvement. Similarly, Shoba (2020) argues that the purchase of natural hair care products requires a great amount of investment and research.

2.6   Cognitive involvement

Cognitive involvement is the degree to which a consumer's information-processing activities are incorporated in purchase decision-making (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1709; Kim & Sung, 2009:506-507). The cognitive process is associated with and explains rational thinking that is induced by utilitarian motives (Faisal *et al.*, 2020:1636; Park, Shin & Ju 2014:29). Cognitive involvement entails active participation in processing information (Perse, 1990:559), and refers to the perceived item's significance, based on the functional and utilitarian performance of the product (Mou, Zhu & Benyoucef, 2019:569).

Cognitive involvement is divided into two subdimensions: risk involvement and normative involvement (Broderick 2007:347). Risk involvement is the risk associated with selecting the product and the likelihood of a consumer making the incorrect choice (Broderick, 2007:347, Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43, Mittal & Lee, 1989:347). On the other hand, normative involvement is the importance and symbolic meaning of a product in a consumer's values or emotions (Broderick, 2007:347-348, Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43, Mittal & Lee, 1989:347).

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2.7 Affective involvement

Affective involvement is associated with emotional, hedonic assessment, and is derived from value-expressing motives (Park *et al.*, 2014:29). 'Affective involvement' refers to the perceived item's significance, based on the consumer's feelings, emotions, and moods (Mou *et al.*, 2019:569); it refers to the emotional investment that a consumer makes to be involved in an environment, and to the consumer's emotional response to the information's content (Faisal *et al.*, 2020:1636). Emotional involvement is the experiencing of erratically strong internal feelings (Perse, 1990:559).

There are two types of affective involvement: enduring involvement and situational involvement (Celsi & Olson, 1988:211). Enduring involvement is the connection the consumer has with the product and the hedonic benefits that the product provides across all purchases; it is intrinsically motivated (Broderick, 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Huang, 2006:384; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43). Situational involvement is the degree of interest for a short period, when the consumer engages in activities to achieve a specific goal (Broderick 2007:347, Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Huang, 2006:384; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43). This type of involvement is extrinsically motivated (Broderick, 2007:347; Broderick & Mueller, 1999:102; Huang, 2006:384; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985:43).

2.8 Purchase intentions

Intention is the depiction of a plan of action that will be performed in the future; it is a proactive commitment to execute that action (Bandura, 2001:6). Purchase intentions are the prospects that a consumer will purchase a product or service in the future (Bataineh, 2015:128; Chang & Wildt, 1994:20; Dennis, King, Jayawardhena & Wright, 2007:516). It can be defined as consumers' deliberate plan to try to purchase a product at a specific time or in a specific situation (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014:260; Spears & Singh, 2004:56). Purchase intentions are used to measure whether there will be a demand for a product (Morwitz, 2014:181). Most individuals' pursuit of future action plans includes other participating individuals because they have shared activities, such as shared intentions and coordinated and interdependent plans of action (Bandura, 2001:6). Numerous factors influence a consumer's purchase intention (Paul & Rana, 2012:414); one of those factors is a credible source of information (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:262). In this study, purchase intentions are regarded as the likelihood that Black African women will intend to purchase natural hair care products that a credible SMI has recommended.

2.9   Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

2.9.1   The effect of consumer involvement on purchase intention

Ellington (2014:561) found that, in the natural hair movement, involvement in natural hair social network sites helped with to ease women's transition from chemically treated hair to natural hair. Product involvement brings about a motivational state that might generate cognitive, affective, or behavioural responses (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015:352). While various studies have shown the effect of involvement on purchase intentions (Huang, 2012:266; Park *et al.*, 2014:35), studies have found that either one of the two involvement subdimensions had an impact on purchase intentions (Mou *et al.*, 2019:579; Patanasiri & Krairit, 2019:154). Drawing on the above assertions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and cognitive involvement.

H_3: There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and affective involvement.

H_4: There is a significant positive relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_5: There is a significant positive relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

As explained above, a consumer's product involvement motivates cognitive and affective responses (Ferreira & Coelho, 2015:352), such as cognitive and affective involvement. Previous studies have shown that cognitive involvement and affective involvement do play a mediating role in the purchase of products (Jiang, Chan, Tan & Chua, 2010:48; Min-Sook, Jong-Kuk & Yong, 2014:35). Similarly, it was noted that cognitive and affective involvement were partial mediators of online shopping experiences and online purchase intentions (Ma *et al.*, 2020:406). The present study seeks to build on the mediating role of involvement in consumer purchase intentions identified by Ma *et al.* (2020:406) and on Ohanian's (1990:50) suggestion that the impact of consumer involvement as mediating variables in source credibility research be examined. Drawing on the above assertions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_6: Cognitive involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_7$: Affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

2.9.2   Source credibility subdimensions as moderators

The level of uncertainty of consumer information exchange over the internet is high (Liu, Luo & Cao, 2018:5). Consumers do not only want recommendations from sources of information but also want credible sources who use the products they recommend, to see how they change the recommender's appearance (Cooley & Parks Yancy, 2019:55). Consumers who perceive sources of information to be credible tend to argue less with what is being said and are more easily influenced by the content of the message (Zhang & Buda, 1999:74). Previous studies have found inconsistencies in the impact of the source credibility subdimensions on consumer behaviour (Roy, Gammoh & Koh, 2012:35). Some studies have found that the influencer's credibility can stimulate followers' purchase intentions, while others have shown that one or a combination of the credibility subdimensions do predict purchase intentions (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124).

Source credibility variables might function essentially as moderator variables that influence the impact of persuasive messages (Zhang & Buda, 1999:4). According to Tahir and Khan (2020:68), the moderating effect of source credibility as a first-order construct is accepted. Roy *et al.* (2012:45) found that the source credibility subdimensions of attractiveness and expertise functioned as moderators between purchase intentions and attitude toward the brand, while trustworthiness did not act as a moderator. Fernandes and Panda (2019:136) suggested future research on the moderating variables of reference groups during buying decisions. In line with Luo *et al.* (2013:92), this study seeks to expand knowledge about the moderating effect of source credibility – specifically, the relationship between the involvement constructs (that is, product, cognitive, and affective involvement) and purchase intentions. Drawing on the above assertions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H$_8$: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{8a}$: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H$_{8b}$: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

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H_{8c}: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_9: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{9a}: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{9b}: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{9c}: The relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{10}: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the source credibility of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{10a}: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{10b}: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair.

H_{10c}: The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair.

In developing the conceptual framework for all of the hypothesised relationships between the constructs, it can be observed that there is a moderated mediation. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
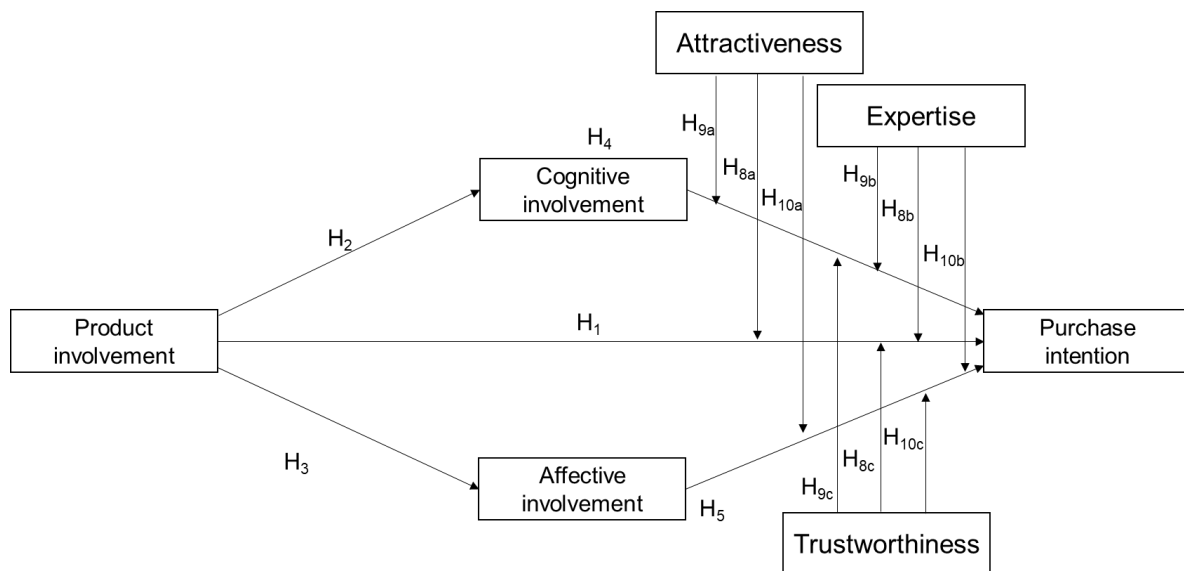
3 METHOD

This section of the paper outlines the process that was followed to conduct the research.

3.1 Methods and procedures

A causal research design was used to establish the relationships in the study. A quantitative approach was adopted in the study (Frey, 2018:1349). The study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique to collect the data through a self-administered online survey deployed through a third-party panel from a reputable research company. A convenience sampling technique draws the sample from the population without randomisation, and continues to collect data until the required sample size has been achieved (Daniel, 2012:82; Frey, 2018:403; Lavrakas, 2008:524). The reason for using panel data for this study was to minimise the risks associated with survey participation, such as incomplete questionnaires, missing data, screening the respondents, getting the correct respondents, and reaching the required sample size (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016:337). The questionnaire included a scenario of a fictitious female influencer called 'Kiwendo', who had an Instagram page '@Kiwendo_hair' with 123,000 followers, as the respondents' source of information about natural hair and natural hair care products. The respondents answered questions based on the information provided in the scenario.

The research respondents of the study were Black African women 18 years old or older with natural hair who were South African. The population group 'Black' or 'Black African' refers to

native South Africans, which means individuals of African ethnicity born in South Africa (Union of South Africa, 1950:277). The research respondents were screened to ensure that they had an Instagram account so that they would be familiar with the SMI scenario (see Table 1 below).

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 30 respondents from the study population in order to ensure that the questionnaire worked effectively and provided valid and reliable measures of the constructs (Czaja & Blair, 2005:103). Minor adjustments were made to some of the scale items in order to ensure that the questionnaire correctly captured the context of the study.

After data collection, 305 usable questionnaires were obtained, thus achieving the ideal recommended sample size of more than 190 respondents and satisfying the statistical requirement to have a robust significant level at 0.05, an effective size of 0.35, and a power level of 0.8 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006:12).

Table 1: Social media influencer questionnaire scenario

Scenario (social media influencer)
Kiwendo is a natural hair social media influencer on different social media platforms. She has an Instagram account with 123,000 followers and a YouTube channel with over 52,000 subscribers. She uses these platforms to share content about natural hair. This includes her journey with natural hair, educating people on how to take care of their natural hair and giving information about the products that are available to take care of natural hair. Her recent post on Instagram was about a natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday. For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, you follow Kiwendo on her Instagram page @Kiwendo_hair. She is your source of information regarding natural hair. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

3.2   Measurement and scales

This study adapted various scales from the literature or from previous studies to measure the constructs under investigation. The constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 denoting 'strongly disagree' to 7 denoting 'strongly agree'. A seven-point Likert scale was also used in previous studies that investigated natural hair (Addie, Ball &

Adams, 2020:360; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93). In this study, the scales were adapted to suit the natural hair movement.

Wang and Scheinbaum's (2018:24) source credibility scales, adapted originally from McCracken's (1989) and Ohanion's (1990) attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness scales, were used to measure the reference group's source credibility. The four-item purchase intention scale of Diallo, Chandon, Cliquet and Philippe (2013:437) was adapted for this study. Zaichkowsky's (1985:346) five-item theoretical propositions on involvement were adapted for this study to measure product involvement. The cognitive involvement and affective involvement scales were adapted from Broderick (2007:371-372). Other natural hair care behavioural questions, such as "*How long have you had natural hair?*" and "*Please indicate which natural hair care product categories for African women you use*", were included in the questionnaire to ascertain each respondent's profile.

4   RESULTS

4.1   Participant profile

The average age of the respondents was 30 years old, with the majority (51.6%) of the respondents falling into the 25–34 years category. Most of the respondents would thus be considered Generation Y or Millennials (Dimock, 2019).

More than half (58.4%) of the respondents have had natural hair for fewer than five years. Most of the respondents used natural hair care products such as shampoos (86.6%), followed by moisturisers (76.4%), conditioners (74.4%), and oils (71.8%). Almost a quarter (24.3%) of the respondents used natural hair care products once a week, and 23.0% used natural hair care products three times a week. On average, the respondents used one brand of natural hair care products, and 91.9% bought organic or chemical-free products. More than half (51.5%) of the respondents bought natural hair care products monthly ,and 22.3% bought the products every second month.

The respondents in this study were asked about their social media activities. They used social media platforms daily. Facebook was the most used social media platform (80.0%), followed by Instagram (74.1%) and YouTube (63.6%).

4.2   Descriptive statistics

According to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2006:743), to use maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) for analysis, the assumption of multivariate normality must be met.

Skewness and kurtosis can be used to test normality, with the acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis being less than ±2 and ±7 respectively (Byrne, 2013). However, Hair *et al.* (2006:81) stipulate that, when the sample size is greater than 200, non-normality can be negligible. Therefore, structural equation modelling (SEM) through MLE in Amos version 28 was used to test the proposed direct relationships and the mediation analysis, while SPSS PROCESS v4.0 was used to conduct the moderation analysis.

4.3 Measurement model fit

The measurement model is evaluated for its goodness-of-fit, to determine how well the specified model replicates the estimated covariance estimates close to the observed data (Hair *et al.*, 2006:745). Seven constructs with their respective observed variables (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, product involvement, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, and purchase intentions) were used to test the model's validity and reliability satisfactory levels (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:45).

The chi-squared value and its statistical significance are generally used to determine the goodness-of-fit of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:46). However, Fornell and Larcker (1981:44) state that the chi-squared test has limitations. Hair *et al.* (2006:746) suggest that, in addition to chi-square, other goodness-of-fit indices, such as CMIN/DF, RMSEA, CFI, TLI, SRMR, and GFI, need to be considered. Table 2 illustrates the goodness-of-fit thresholds and the results for the measurement model.

Table 2: Measurement model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Result	577.963	231	<0.001	2.502	0.952	0.960	0.864	0.935	0.070	0.0277

The initial measurement model with all the observed variables and constructs did not have a good fit, with high chi-square values, and not meeting other indices requirements. Because of these results, an improved measurement model was designed that generated a lower chi-squared value and improved values for the alternative indices. Out of the 36 items in the initial model, 12 items were removed across all constructs and 24 items remained (refer to Table 4 for an overview of the remaining items), which then improved the measurement model. One item was removed from attractiveness, two items were removed from expertise, one item was removed from trustworthiness, one item was removed from product involvement, three items

were removed from cognitive involvement, three items were removed from affective involvement and one item was removed from purchase intensions. Table 3 shows the results of the improved measurement model's goodness-of-fit indices that met the requirements.

Table 3: Final improved measurement model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Results	577.963	231	<0.001	2.502	0.952	0.960	0.864	0.935	0.070	0.028

4.3.1   Instrument validity and reliability

According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998:302), the reliability of the constructs in the measurement model is established using the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. For reliability, the Cronbach's alpha values for all of the constructs must be greater than the threshold $\alpha=0.7$ (Field, 2013:709; Pallant, 2010:6). To show construct validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct must be 0.5 or above (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:47). Convergent validity measures the extent to which the items in the construct are correlated (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137). Table 4 shows the measurement scales' reliability and validity.

Table 4: Reliability and validity standardised weights (SW) Cronbach's alpha (*α*), CR, and AVE of all factors

Item	SW	*α*	CR	AVE
Attractiveness (AT)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems attractive	0.915	0.960	0.961	0.860
With regards to natural hair Kiwendo seems classy	0.898			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems beautiful	0.952			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems elegant	0.943			
Expertise (EX)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems experienced	0.929	0.943	0.975	0.849
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems knowledgeable	0.939			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems skilled	0.895			
Trustworthiness (TR)				
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems honest	0.912	0.954	0.785	0.838

With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems reliable	0.925			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems sincere	0.915			
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems trustworthy	0.909			
Product involvement (PrI)				
I am interested in reading information about how African women's natural hair care products are made.	0.925	0.906	0.911	0.722
I am interested in reading about the African women's natural hair care product category.	0.954			
I have compared product characteristics among brands of African women's natural hair care products	0.737			
I think there are a great deal of differences among brands of African women's natural hair care products	0.762			
Cognitive involvement (CI)				
I believe that different types of African women's natural hair care products provide different amounts of satisfaction	0.761	0.826	0.828	0.615
In purchasing African women's natural hair care products, I am certain of my choice	0.799			
Buying African women's natural hair care products helps me express my personality	0.793			
Affective involvement (AI)				
I have a strong interest in African women's natural hair care products	0.878	0.926	0.972	0.793
I attach great importance to African women's natural hair care products	0.9			
I enjoy buying African women's natural hair care products	0.893			
Purchase intention (PI)				
The probability that I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo is high	0.879	0.930	0.929	0.815
I would purchase African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo in the future	0.895			
I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	0.933			

Table 4 shows that the measurement scales used to measure each of the constructs were reliable. The AVE for all of the constructs was above 0.5, indicating that the measurement scales used to measure each of the constructs were valid. Cognitive involvement and affective involvement had three items each. Thus, unlike in previous studies (Broderick, 2007: 372) that had multiple dimensions for cognitive involvement and affective involvement, in this study cognitive involvement and affective involvement were used as one-dimensional constructs.

In addition to examining convergent validity, discriminant validity – the extent to which two conceptually similar constructs are different – needs to be assessed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:45; Hair *et al.*, 2006:137). Furthermore, to show discriminant validity, the correlation of the constructs should be lower than the square root of the AVE (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137).

Table 5: Discriminant validity

	AT	EX	TR	PrI	CI	AI	PI
Attractiveness (AT)	**0.927**						
Expertise (EX)	0.836	**0.921**					
Trustworthiness (TR)	0.853	0.875	**0.915**				
Product involvement (PrI)	0.547	0.518	0.516	**0.850**			
Cognitive involvement (CI)	0.634	0.618	0.621	0.779	**0.785**		
Affective involvement (AI)	0.721	0.669	0.683	0.735	0.775	**0.890**	
Purchase intention (PI)	0.821	0.763	0.782	0.526	0.598	0.699	**0.903**

*Bold text is square root of the AVE.

According to Table 5, all of the measurement scales showed discriminant validity.

4.3.2 Structural model fit

The structural model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:44), which evaluates the complex relationships between the constructs, was evaluated for goodness-of-fit (Hair *et al.*, 2006:756). Because of the complexity of the moderation model, the structural model results only showed the structural model for the mediation of cognitive involvement and affective involvement in the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions, thus excluding moderation effects. Table 6 illustrates the goodness-of-fit thresholds and the results for the measurement model.

Table 6: Structural model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Results	161.326	59	<0.001	2.734	0.961	0.971	0.920	0.955	0.076	0.035

Table 6 shows that the results of the structural model's goodness-of-fit indices met the requirements. The structural model was assessed using the R^2, which indicates the amount of variance that the model explains, and it was found that the modelled data fitted the observed data. The model with product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement accounted for 57.8% of the variance of purchase intention.

4.4 Linear relationships

A path analysis was conducted in Amos version 28 using MLE to test hypotheses H_1 to H_5. The number of bootstrap samples mined was 2 000, and the bias-corrected confidence interval was set at 95%. Table 6 shows the results of the hypothesis testing for H_1 to H_5.

Table 7: Hypothesis testing: H_1 to H_5

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardised estimate	95% CI [LLCI; ULCI]	SE	p-value	Finding
H_1	PrI→ PI	-0.059	[-0.377; 0.145]	0.081	0.462	Not supported
H_2	PrI→ CI	0.845	[0.729; 0.940]	0.047	0.001	Supported
H_3	PrI→ AI	0.764	[0.623; 0.869]	0.042	0.002	Supported
H_4	CI→ PI	0.136	[-0.397; 0.866]	0.176	0.436	Not supported
H_5	AI→ PI	0.693	[0.083; 1.098]	0.125	0.042	Supported

PrI = Product involvement; PI = Purchase intentions; AI = Affective involvement; CI = Cognitive involvement.

Note: significance level is p-value < 0.05

The results indicated that product involvement had a relationship with cognitive involvement (β=0.845, p < 0.001) and with affective involvement (β=0.764, p=0.042). Affective involvement had a significant relationship with purchase intentions (β=0.693, p < 0.001). Thus H_2, H_3, and H_5 were supported.

Figure 2 illustrates the detailed standardised estimates.

Figure 2: Structural model
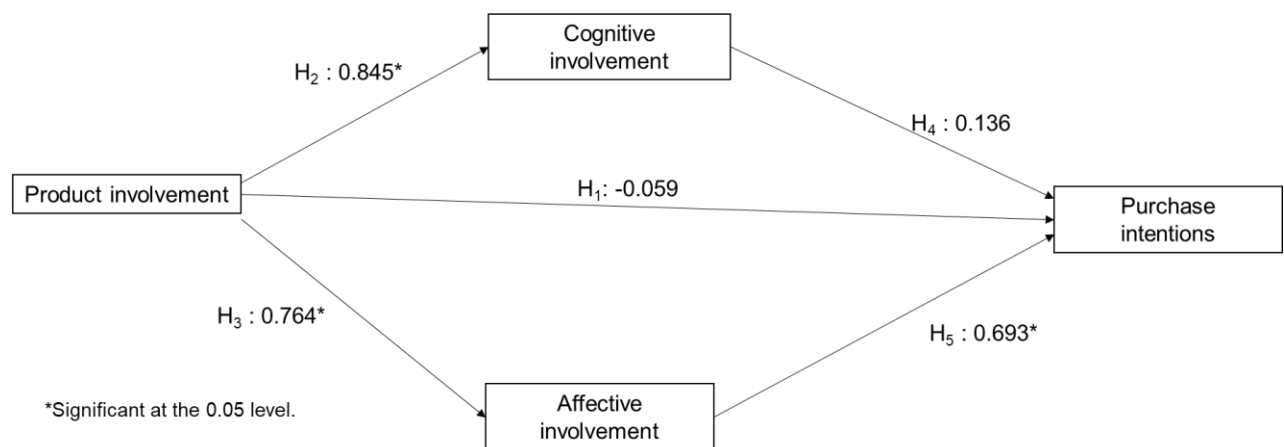
4.5 Mediation analysis: H_6 and H_7

Mediation occurs when a third variable, the mediator (M), is introduced and the influence of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) reduces but remains significant

(partial mediation) or changes a previously significant relationship to become non-significant (full mediation) (Hair *et al.*, 2006:867). A mediator is a third variable that explains how and why two variables relate (Fairchild & McDaniel, 2017:1259). Mediation analysis was therefore conducted using MLE in Amos version 28. Table 8 shows the mediation results.

Table 8: Mediation output

Hypothesis	Direct effect [LLCI; ULCI]			Indirect effect [LLCI; ULCI]			Finding
	Standardised estimate	SE	p-value	Standardised estimate	Boot SE	p-value	
H_6: PrI → CI →PI	0.015 [-0.293; 0.288]	0.165	0.917	0.066 [-0.128; 0.438]	0.154	0.365	Not supported
H_7: PrI → AI →PI	-0.033 [-0.200; 0.140]	0.115	0.723	0.272 [0.129; 0.503]	0.121	0.008	Supported

PrI = Product involvement; PI = Purchase intentions; AI = Affective involvement; CI = Cognitive involvement.

The mediation results in Table 8 indicate that the hypothesis for cognitive involvement as a mediator (H_6) was not supported, as both the direct ($β$=0.015, p=0.917) and the indirect ($β$=0.066, p=0.365) effects were insignificant, while affective involvement was supported as a mediator in the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention, thus supporting H_7. The direct effect from product involvement to purchase intention was found to be insignificant ($β$=-0.033, p=0.723), while the indirect ($β$=0.272, p=0.008) effect with affective involvement as mediator was found to be significant. This suggests that affective involvement fully mediated the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention towards natural hair care products.

4.6   Moderation analysis: H_8 to H_{10}

Hypotheses H_8, H_9, and H_{10} focused on the moderation effects of the source credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) on the respective relationships between product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement on the one hand and purchase intentions on the other. The moderation effect considers the impact that a third variable has on the strength of the relationship between two related variables (Hair *et al.*, 2006:870; Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007:191). Moderation is the interaction of the third variable (W=moderator) interacting (X*W) with the independent variable (X) to predict the dependent variable (Y) (Preacher *et al.*, 2007:191). Since product involvement was not significantly related to purchase intention (refer to Table 6), and cognitive involvement was not significantly related to purchase intention (refer to Table 6), H_8 and H_9, which examined the moderation effect of the source credibility subdimensions on these relationships respectively, were not examined. The moderation analysis was done using PROCESS Macro Model 1 in

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SPSS; 2 000 bootstrapping samples were mined, and the bias-corrected confidence interval was set at 95% (Hayes, 2015:20). Table 9 shows the moderation effect results.

Table 9: Moderation output

Hypothesis	Moderator	Moderation	Coeff	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI [LLCI; ULCI]	Finding
H_{10a}:AI →PI	Attractiveness	AI x AT	-0.023	0.015	-1.553	0.122	[-0.052; 0.006]	Not supported
H_{10b}: AI →PI	Expertise	AI x EX	-0.036	0.015	-2.360	0.019	[-0.067; -0.006]	Supported
H_{10c}: AI →PI	Trustworthiness	AI x TR	-0.045	0.015	-2.990	0.003	[-0.074; -0.015]	Supported

PI = Purchase intentions; AI = Affective involvement, AT = Attractiveness, EX = Expertise, TR = Trustworthiness.

The interaction terms for affective involvement and attractiveness had p-values > 0.05 and a biased-corrected 95% confidence interval that contained zero. Therefore, H_{10a} was not supported. All of the other moderation hypotheses were negative and significant. Therefore, H_{10b} and H_{10c} were supported. This meant that expertise and trustworthiness moderated all of the relationships between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. A statistically significant interaction effect means that the effect of the independent variable (affective involvement) on the dependent variable (purchase intentions) is dependent on the level of the moderating variables (expertise and trustworthiness) (Świątkowski, 2015; Zentou, 2020). A negative interaction term (moderation effect) means that an increase in the independent variable (moderating variable) will decrease the significant effect of the moderating variable (independent variable), and vice versa (Zentou, 2020). The interaction term for both AI x EX and AI x TR was negative, which meant that the more positive that expertise or trustworthiness was, the less effect that affective involvement had on purchase intentions. Similar to Luo *et al.*'s (2013:97) results of a negative moderation, post hoc simple slope tests were conducted. Table 10 below shows the moderation results in two-way interaction effect graphs.

Table 10: Two-way interaction graphs for moderation effect of source credibility on the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions

Relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions		
Moderated by attractiveness	**Moderated by expertise**	**Moderated by trustworthiness**
Not applicable.		

The interaction graphs show that the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions was dependent on the levels of source credibility. The moderating effect of expertise and trustworthiness was significant; however, it was a small effect and therefore, visually, it would not be visible. The regression equations of the interaction graphs confirm that the more positive (higher) that expertise or trustworthiness are, the less effect that affective involvement has on purchase intentions – i.e., the slope for higher credibility is lower than the slope for lower credibility.

4.7 Exploratory analysis: Source credibility moderated mediation

Based on the significant moderation and mediation found, further exploring was conducted with the data to determine whether there was any moderated mediation in the data. The moderated mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS Macro Model 4 method, an SPSS macro developed by Andrew Hayes. Moderated mediation, also known as a conditional indirect effect, is the strength of a mediator (indirect effect) at a particular value of the moderator (Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007:186). A formal test for moderated mediation is the index of moderated mediation, to test whether it is different from zero (Hayes, 2015:3). The moderated mediation analysis was done using model 14 of the Process macro; 2 000 bootstrapping samples were mined, and the bias-corrected confidence interval was set at 95% (Hayes, 2015:20) to assess the moderated mediation effect. Table 11 shows the moderated mediation effect results.

Table 11: Moderated mediation with the moderation of the b-path

Mediation	Moderator	Index	Boot SE	95% CI [LLCI; ULCI]
PrI → AI →PI	Attractiveness	-0.015	0.010	[-0.033; 0.005]
PrI → AI →PI	Expertise	-0.025	0.011	[-0.046; -0.002]
PrI → AI →PI	Trustworthiness	-0.030	0.011	[-0.052; -0.009]

The biased-corrected 95% confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation for attractiveness on the mediation effect of affective involvement was from -0.033 to 0.005, which contained zero. The index of moderated mediation for expertise on the mediation effect of affective involvement was from -0.046 to -0.002, and so did not contain zero. The index of moderated mediation for trustworthiness on the mediation effect of affective involvement was from -0.052 to -0.009, and did not contain zero. Thus the finding was that expertise and trustworthiness did moderate the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions, mediated by affective involvement.

In line with Tahir and Khan (2020:69), the moderated mediation effect of source credibility (even though it was between online reviews and purchase intention mediated by trust for their study) was found in this study. For the moderated mediation examination of the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention mediated by affective involvement, expertise and trustworthiness moderated the relationship.

5   DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement (product, cognitive, and affective involvement) and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The secondary objectives of the study were to explore the mediating effects of cognitive involvement and affective involvement on the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions.

SCT (Bandura, 2001:14) was used to provide insight into and understanding of the findings in the study, from which it should be noted that SMIs' expertise and trustworthiness moderate the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. In the natural hair movement there are content creators, such as SMIs, who share information about natural hair care products. For SMIs to enable purchase intentions effectively, they need to be perceived as credible sources of natural hair care product information. Thus, drawing from the SCT (Bandura, 2001:14), it could be suggested that Black African women learn from SMIs. The characteristics of the SMI, namely expertise and trustworthiness, moderate the impact of affective involvement on the purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Furthermore, affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions. Drawing from the SCT (Bandura, 2001:14), it could be argued that, when an interest in natural hair care products has occurred (product involvement), Black African women should have emotions (affective involvement) towards natural hair care products. This interest in the form of involvement motivates the need to search for information that might lead to a future purchase of the products. Personal factors relating to Black African women do not work in isolation: they work in unison with the context in which the African women look for information, which is the SMIs who support the natural hair care community or movement. The SCT (Bandura, 2001:14) argues that individuals do not live in isolation and that socially interdependent actions allow them to achieve the majority of the things they want (Bandura, 2001:14; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:1, Yakut, 2019:9).

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study has extended the literature on reference group source credibility by revealing the moderating role of SMI source credibility. The study has also built on the involvement literature by demonstrating the mediating role of affective involvement.

According to Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021:1124), some studies have found that the influencer's credibility can stimulate followers' purchase intentions, while others have shown that one or a combination of the subdimensions of source credibility predict purchase intentions. For affective involvement and purchase intentions, only the expertise and trustworthiness source credibility subdimensions were significant moderators. This study thus supports those assertions by Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021:1124). The moderation effect of expertise and trustworthiness on the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products was significant, small, and negative. This means that the more positive the expertise or trustworthiness effect is, the more negative the effect of affective involvement on purchase intentions becomes.

The interaction graphs indicated that the influence of affective involvement on purchase intentions is dependent on the levels of SMI source credibility. The higher the source credibility subdimension, the higher the likelihood that the consumer will purchase the natural hair care products. The higher the SMI's credibility and the less emotionally involved the Black African women are, the higher the likelihood that the consumer will purchase the product. Therefore, it could be inferred that SMI source credibility influences Black African women who have emotions towards the product to want to buy it in the future. The findings in this study are supported by the SCT (Bandura, 2001:14), which states that social learning occurs in a social context with the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the individual, the behaviour, and the social environment. The moderating role of the source credibility subdimensions in consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products is the first theoretical contribution of this study.

Ferreira and Coelho (2015:352) suggest that product involvement brings about a motivational state that might generate cognitive, affective, or behavioural responses. The findings of this study have revealed that product involvement influences cognitive and affective involvement. This means that interest (product involvement) in natural hair care products leads Black African women actively to process the information (cognitive involvement) they have received about natural hair care products, and also to have an emotional connection (affective involvement) with the products. Cognitive involvement with natural hair is about understanding

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the products, and choosing the right ones to express one's identity, while the consumer's affective involvement is to have an emotional connection with (a desire for) the product.

Similar to the findings of Mou *et al.* (2019:579), this study found that affective involvement had a significant effect on purchase intentions, while cognitive involvement did not have a significant effect. Previous studies in different contexts have shown varying results for the effect of affective involvement on purchase intentions. For example, Drossos *et al.* (2014:427) and Patanasiri and Krairit (2019:154) found no significant relationship, while Huang (2012:265) and Park *et al.* (2014:35) found a significant relationship. Contrary to the findings of previous studies (Drossos *et al.*, 2014:427; Huang, 2012:266; Park *et al.*, 2014:35; Patanasiri & Krairit, 2019:154), in this study cognitive involvement did not have a significant relationship with purchase intentions. Since in the present study it was found that affective involvement had a significant effect on purchase intentions, it could be deduced that the emotions that Black African women have about recommended natural hair care products lead to the intention to purchase such products.

The findings have shown the mediating role of affective involvement in the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The second contribution of this study is that affective involvement fully mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions. It could be proposed that the emotions towards natural hair care products explain why Black African women who are interested in the product would want to purchase the product in the future. The findings in this study are consistent with the mediation findings of Ma *et al.* (2020:402), who found that affective involvement was a mediator, albeit a partial mediator, between online shopping experience and purchase intentions.

5.2   Practical implications

Majority of the Black African women in this study have had natural hair for less than five years, which is in line with the statement of Williams (2018) that the natural hair movement is in its infancy in South Africa. Education is key to normalising the wearing of natural hair (Williams, 2018). This means that Black African women need credible sources of information to provide them with empowering and educational information. Thomas (2020:140) posits that the natural hair industry has changed in the past five years, assisted by the growth of available content from SMIs. On average, the respondents followed more than 300 SMIs over the various social media platforms. Therefore, marketers need to create content that is relevant and that caters to Black African women's needs. Content marketing is used to deliver information to make the

consumer more insightful; and so it is important for marketers to deliver consistent, ongoing, and valuable information to the consumer (Baltes, 2015:116). Marketing practitioners need to choose credible SMIs to share product information, benefits, and usage.

The findings of this study have shown that SMIs who are deemed to possess expertise and trustworthiness moderate the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions, mediated by affective involvement. Consequently, SMIs who are seen to have the expertise and who are trusted can influence a consumer who is interested in natural hair care products to want to purchase those products in the future. Trustworthiness and expertise together result in a high likelihood of the consumer accepting the content of an influencer and having their behaviour affected (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1059). Influencer intelligence (2022:19) agrees with this finding that the expertise of the influencer helps to bring credibility and trustworthiness to a campaign.

Thus the content provided by SMIs should provide Black African women with information about the benefits of the products and about how to use them to express their identity. This would in turn drive product involvement in natural hair care products and the emotions towards such products. At a minimum, the content provided by SMIs should contain information on shampoos, moisturisers, conditioners, and oils, as these are the products in which the Black African women in the study showed an interest, and thus those with which they are involved. Another important aspect is that the SMIs who are used to share content must use their genuine personal journey and experience with using the products to drive interest and involvement in them. Furthermore, showcasing how important the product is in their lives and their satisfaction with the product would help to create affective involvement in the product. The SMIs need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the product, and of how it is used with Black African natural hair. Consequently, this would display their expertise and build trust, which would influence the effect of affective involvement on purchase intentions among Black African women.

SMIs need to have a lived experience of the products, and must authentically share that experience with the audience to encourage affective involvement. Storytelling is important in content marketing, as it creates an emotion (McKee & Fryer, 2003:52). This is an important factor in natural hair care products, as affective involvement – the emotions and feelings towards natural hair care products – contributes to a consumer who is interested in the products having the desire to purchase them in the future. This is explained by SCT (Bandura, 2001:14) – that learning is a triadic reciprocal interaction. The SMI might share an experience about the product so that Black African women would learn by observing and imitating the

behaviour, in the process building emotions about the products that they are interested in, and so imitating the behaviour to purchase and acquire the product. As highlighted through the SCT (Bandura, 2001:14), observational learning can help to disseminate information from the SMI to the consumer. This process makes it easier for Black African women to learn about the product, and in turn reduces the trial-and-error process, thus helping to build the trustworthiness of the SMI, thereby assisting the consumer to choose the correct products that are suitable for their hair. Furthermore, it could be asserted that demonstrating the SMI's expertise and understanding of natural hair care products builds trust in the process.

In summary, the higher the SMI's source credibility, the stronger the impact of Black African women's affective involvement on purchase intentions towards natural hair products. Thus an important aspect for natural hair care marketing practitioners is to ensure that they include actionable insights that involve credible SMIs in their marketing strategies.

"*So many of us grew up thinking we're not attractive, we're not valued, we're less than. A movement that centres us, our experiences and celebrates us for who we are is such an important part of building self and community esteem*," said Jellars (Williams, 2018).

Overall, this study has contributed to the natural hair care industry, which is an under-studied area – specifically, the moderating role of SMI source credibility in influencing behavioural actions in the industry.

6   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION FOR RESEARCH

In this section the limitations of the study and future research are discussed. The first limitation of the study was the use of a non-probability convenience sampling technique to draw the sample from the population. The disadvantage of using the convenience sampling method is that the findings from the study cannot be extrapolated to the wider population. The second limitation is that the study used a cross-sectional design to collect the data. Future research could include a longitudinal design to understand the consumption patterns of natural hair care products over time.

Various studies have shown the relationship between cognitive involvement and affective involvement (Broderick 2007:360; Perse, 1990:573). Future research could examine the relationship of these two constructs in natural hair care consumption behaviour.

This study only included Black African women who currently had natural hair, and excluded consumers with straightened hair. Thus the inclusion of Black African women with straightened hair might provide a broader picture of the involvement of Black African women in the natural hair care industry by providing a comparative view of disengagement from natural hair care. Since this study was based on women who are interested in natural hair care products, future research could also include Black African men with natural hair and their involvement with natural hair care products. These two inclusions would provide a more holistic and thorough understanding of consumer behaviour in the realm of Black African natural hair care products. Future research could also examine the differences in the behaviour of these groups with respect to Black African natural hair consumption.

Thomas (2020:143) indicated that Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform and source of information about or awareness of natural hair care products. Facebook is also the most frequently used social media platform in the world (Kemp, 2022b:6). Thus future research could focus on SMIs on Facebook in order to understand their source credibility in the natural hair care context.

This study conducted an exploratory analysis of moderated mediation source credibility subdimensions. Future research could include further analysis of the role of source credibility in moderated mediation. This could be in the natural hair care context, or in any other context, to build the literature on the moderated meditation effects of source credibility subdimensions. Future research could adopt a qualitative research design in which data would be collected through semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing behaviour.

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CHAPTER 4

ARTICLE 3: AN INVESTIGATION OF FAMILY MEMBER AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER REFERENCE GROUP SOURCE CREDIBILITY, ATTITUDE, AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS TOWARDS BLACK AFRICAN WOMEN'S NATURAL HAIR CARE PRODUCTS

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the effects of normative (female family member - FFM) and comparative (social media influencer - SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Specifically, it aims to determine whether attitude mediates the relationship between normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and Black African women's purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The study used social influence theory as its foundation in order to develop the conceptual framework and to provide insight into the reference groups' social influence. The study used a self-administered questionnaire and convenience sampling through an online consumer panel, achieving a sample of 611 respondents. The main findings in this study indicate that the influence of source credibility (i.e., expertise and trustworthiness) of the two reference groups (FFM and SMI) does not directly impact purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. However, the expertise of the SMI and the trustworthiness of both reference groups had an impact on attitudes towards natural hair care products. Furthermore, the study revealed that the mediating role of attitudes towards natural hair care products was significant in the relationship between SMI expertise and purchase intentions, as well as for both FFM and SMI trustworthiness and purchase intentions. The theoretical contribution of this study is the novelty of exploring the source credibility of FFMs and SMIs in relation to a growing trend of Black African women using natural hair care products. The managerial implications are that marketers need to use the reference groups' source credibility to disseminate relevant and empowering information about natural hair care products to Black African women. Marketers should use reference groups whose attitudes towards natural hair care products are congruent with those of Black African women with natural hair. Marketers should specifically use SMIs with their in-depth knowledge of natural hair care products – that is, expertise – and use both FFMs and SMIs who are reliable and honest (trustworthy) when providing information about the products.

Keywords: comparative reference group, normative reference group, expertise, trustworthiness, attitude, purchase intentions, natural hair

1   INTRODUCTION

For generations, Black women have been told, in various environments and platforms, such as media, work, school, and Black communities, that natural hair is unacceptable; and this has had a lasting effect (Easter, 2017). 'Going natural' is not only a physical process for Black women, but also an internal emotional process (Norwood, 2018:70) of decolonising both the body and the mind, which, according to Norwood (2018:70), is a gradual process of transformation and a rebirth into the new and unknown self. On the 9th of December 2019, for the first time in history, Zozibini Tunzi, a Black South African woman with natural hair, won the Miss Universe pageant (Cohan, 2020). Tunzi's win ended centuries of under-representation for Black African women in the beauty industry. The win was an acknowledgement of Black beauty on the international stage (Cohan, 2020), where beauty standards are predominantly set by and for White women. Black African women have been shamed and criticised for their natural hair, causing them to lose their self-esteem in relation to their hair (Montle, 2020:118). The gradual decolonising process is similar to Kelman's (2006:8) forms of social influence. Most situations of social influence fall into one of two categories: either socialisation, which is about preparing individuals for roles in a society, group, or organisation; or resocialisation, which is designed to move individuals from old to new roles, along with their accompanying beliefs and values (Kelman, 2006:8). Thus, Black women are changing their beliefs and values about their natural hair. Socialisation has been recognised as a crucial motivation for shopping (Hu, Chen & Davison, 2019:300); and so, this study assumes that resocialisation would be important in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. In South Africa, the hair care market has been projected to be worth US $500 million by 2024, and it is forecast to achieve a compound annual growth rate of 5.7% between 2020 and 2025 (Mordor Intelligence, 2020). The growth in the hair market further highlights the need to understand people's consumption behaviour in respect of hair care products. However, little research has been conducted on the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:172) and on the role of credible sources in the growth of the use of natural hair care products. Thomas (2020:172) suggests that further research needs to be conducted to determine the hair care consumption behaviour of Black African women with natural hair.

Hair is important in psychosocial communication (Molamodi, Fajuyigbe, Sewraj, Gichuri, Sijako, Galliano & Laurent, 2021:323) and is an important aspect of individuals' lives: it assists individuals to develop social constructions that impact on various parts of people's lives (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:342). Hair is a complex tool of communication to express various aspects of an individual: it is used to express age, class, ethnic group membership, marital status, religion, mental health, and education (Mbilishaka, Clemons, Hudlin, Warner & Jones,

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2020:591). This social construction of the hair means that hair carries a lot of meaning with it that would influence related cultural practices (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:345). In traditional African social settings, hair influenced social behaviour (Mbilishaka *et al.*, 2020:591), such as the type of hair style used to indicate marital status. This study focuses on the consumption behaviour of hair products, and specifically on Black African women's natural hair care products.[1]

Social norms reflect group standards, and they are fundamental to social behaviour (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:149). This is no different for Black women and their social behaviour pertaining to natural hair. Lessons about hair are learned in childhood (Norwood, 2018:72), and families are one of the first agents of socialisation. Traditionally, some of the earliest critical negative messages about natural hair have come from relatives (Norwood, 2018:72). African American women most often received the most negative, critical, or discriminatory responses from their family because of their natural hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:96). In a qualitative study by Ellington (2015:25), participants stated that their family and significant others were not supportive, and that they used social media sites or social media communities to help them to counteract the negative comments of others. Comparative reference groups (such as social media influencers and YouTube vloggers) play a significant role in sharing natural hair information and are considered vital sources of information about natural hair (Ellington, 2014:562; Ellis-Hervey, Doss, Davis, Nicks & Araiza, 2016:876). YouTube vloggers are perceived to provide credible channels for those who aspire to obtain positive hair messages that validate their natural hair (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:342). YouTube vloggers describe their personal hair journeys and experiences by demystifying misinformation about Black women's natural hair for Black women who struggle with tightly coiled hair (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:344). The natural hair movement in South Africa is emerging because of these influencers and their hair chronicles (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:345). Previous research (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:262; Ellington, 2014:562; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:163; Thomas, 2020:143) has shown the importance of reference groups in driving consumer behaviour towards hair products. Nonetheless, Ellington (2015:28) suggests that future research examine online and offline support groups to understand better ways to support and empower Black women about natural hair. Further research would add knowledge and provide insights into the role of reference groups in consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products.

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[1] Hair care products for Black African women with coily hair that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

Previous research has found that the influence of reference groups does have an impact on the purchase behaviour of a consumer (Yang, He & Lee, 2007:335; Zhao, Stylianou & Zheng, 2018:27). The source credibility of comparative reference groups such as celebrities and SMIs has long been considered (Ohanian, 1991:47; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sir, 2018:30). Although the influence of family members as socialising agents has been well-researched (Hsu, Kang & Lam, 2006:475; Kim and Kang, 2001:41; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171), the source credibility of family members has not received the same amount of attention. Yet both types of reference group impact consumer behaviour (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). Wang and Liu (2022:13) suggest that future research that investigates the dimensions of influential factors (influencer characteristics) be conducted. Therefore, it is worth seeking to understand the source credibility effects of the normative and comparative reference groups on consumption behaviour.

Family is chosen as the normative group of this study, since family members are the consumer's most influential reference group for consumption behaviour (Hsu *et al.*, 2006:475; Joubert, 2013:26). They impact the consumer's values and attitudes and are perceived as having nothing to gain from a purchase recommendation (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:2; Human, 2014:225; Hsu *et al.*, 2006:475; Joubert, 2013:26). The values and practices instilled by mothers about hair are essential to consider because hair is not about the choice, but about the value attached to it (Nyamnjoh & Fuh, 2014:58). In a study conducted by Mbilishaka *et al.* (2020:592), participants reported being discriminated against by family members because they wore natural hair. Therefore, this study will focus on female family members (FFM) such as siblings and cousins, because they are also the earliest shapers of hair perceptions, hair identity, and hair product consumption (Halo Heritage, 2021; Lewis, 1999:507; Thomas, 2020;167) for Black women. Furthermore, this study focuses on SMIs as the comparative reference group, since they are perceived to be more credible than celebrities (Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:274) and because of the role they have played in the rise of the natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:562). Wang and Liu (2022:13) suggest that future research exploring source credibility effectiveness in different communication methods with consumers be conducted. Thus, the first contribution of this article to consider both female family members' and social media influencers' credibility with respect to purchase recommendations about natural hair care products and the resulting relationship with consumers' purchase intentions.

Black women who wear hair natural generally feel better about themselves (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:97). With the growing trend of natural hair, Black women have generally felt comfortable wearing hair natural and being accepted in their communities (Mbilishaka *et al.*,

2020:592). Naturalistas (Black women with natural hair) have had the most positive attitude to natural hairstyles and have rated them as beautiful, sexy/attractive, and professional – more so than white women or Black women without natural hair (Johnson, Godsil, MacFarlane, Tropp & Goff, 2017:7). Seeing other women embrace their natural hair on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook have inspired many Black women to go natural (Easter, 2017). The social influence of Black women with natural hair on social media platforms has not only encouraged Black women to embrace their natural hair, it has also assisted in the cultivation of positive attitudes to natural hair.

Attitudes can be attained or modified by various factors (Asiegbu, Powei & Iruka, 2012:39), such as a credible source of information (Lim, Radzol, Cheah & Wong, 2017:22). McDonald and Crandall (2015:147) posit that an individual's major social attitudes are formed in relation to group norms and social norms. Social attitudes are the expectations about appropriate behaviour in a group context; thus, they represent the consistencies in attitudes and behaviours that define a group. The link between attitude and behavioural intention has been found in a variety of product categories (Kim & Chung, 2011:47). An individual's attitudes play a significant role in their forming a behavioural intention (Cherian & Jacob, 2012:119).

The impact of attitude on purchase intentions has been extensively researched through the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) in different settings and product categories. Despite the vast research on the direct relationships of attitudes with different factors, scholars have recommended future research for the relationship with different product categories and other variables that might impact the relationship. Wang and Liu (2022:13) suggest future research to investigate the relationship between source credibility and various constructs. For this study, these constructs are attitude and purchase intentions. Taking into account these recommendations, as far as the researcher could determine, no studies have examined the mediating role of attitude in the purchase intentions of Black women towards natural hair care products in South Africa. This study thus sought to examine the direct and mediating role that attitude plays in the two reference groups' source credibility and its effect on purchase intentions. The mediating role of attitude would provide insight into the mechanism of the effect of source credibility on purchase intentions for both the normative and the comparative reference groups. This would assist in creating a content marketing strategy in order to understand which reference group subdimensions would be effective in driving favourable attitudes. The second contribution of this study is the mediating role that attitude plays in the consumption of Black African women's natural hair care products.

The paper makes an academic contribution to the limited literature by seeking to understand the role of normative reference groups and comparative reference groups as credible sources in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. It also contributes to the Black South African natural hair care marketing industry by providing insights into how the credibility of different reference groups as sources of information impacts consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The primary objective of this article is to examine the role of female family members and social media influencers as reference groups with regard to source credibility, attitude towards natural hair care products, and purchase intentions towards such products.

The rest of the paper comprises six sections. The first section consists of the theoretical review of the constructs and provides the hypothesis for the study. The remaining sections discuss the methodology used in the study; present the results, which illustrate the data collection outcomes; summarise the study's findings; identify the managerial implications and the paper's limitations; and make recommendations for future research.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Social influence theory

The social influence theory underpinning this study is the social influence theory of Kelman (1958:52). The theory is social influence theory was developed by Kelman (1958:58-60). The theory was used to study the role of peer influence on the social behaviour of individuals (Hu, Cheng & Davidson, 2019:299; Hwang, 2014:467; Zhao, Stylianou & Zheng, 2018:17). Social influence theory provides a foundation for understanding individuals' social behaviour (Hwang, 2016:467). According to the social influence perspective, during an interaction there is an influencing agent and a target of the influence (Kelman, 2006:7). Furthermore, social influence is seen to occur within a larger social context (Kelman, 2006:11). In this study, the influencing agent is the reference group in the natural hair movement (the FFM or the SMI with natural hair) and the target of the influence is the Black African woman with natural hair. Social influence is realised when there is an interaction between the source and the recipient (Hu *et al.*, 2019:299). Individuals are more likely to perform behaviours that they believe would result in a valued outcome and that their significant reference group would value (Kim & Han, 2010:999). Social influence can be used to understand the change in an individual's attitudes and behaviour (Kelman, 1958:59); the core premise of social influence is change (Hu *et al.*, 2019:301).

Social influence is the change in an individual's feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours from interacting with others (Chou, Wang & Tang, 2015:366; Hu *et al.*, 2019:299). Social influence is affected by three methods of persuasion: compliance, identification, and internalisation (Kelman, 1958:53). Compliance is when an individual conforms to the social influence of others to get a reward (Goodwin, 1987:379), such as approval or support (Shen, Cheung, Lee & Chen, 2009:159) from others who are important to them (Zhou, 2011:68). Identification occurs when an individual has a sense of belonging to the group (Shen *et al.*, 2009:159) and accepts the influence to establish and maintain a satisfying mutual relationship with the group (Goodwin, 1987:379; Zhou, 2011:68). Internalisation occurs when the individual's values are in sync with those of the group (Goodwin, 1987:379; Shen *et al.*, 2009:159; Zhou, 2011:68).

Each of these persuasion methods has a power source, which is the extent to which the recommender can influence the individual (Kelman, 1958:54). The nature of the change that is induced by these three power sources tends to be different (Kelman, 2006:5). The power to reward or punish leads to compliance; the power of attractiveness leads to identification; and the power of credibility leads to internalisation (Kelman, 1958:54). For Black women, the power to liberate themselves lies within the self; other Black women might assist, but ultimately the power is within the individual (Norwood, 2018:71). The process of embracing specific values is an internal process by the self that can lead to their internal values being in line with the values of a group with which they resonate. In the context of this study, the group with which the Black African woman resonates is the natural hair movement. Therefore, this study has focused specifically on internationalisation, since it considers the power of source credibility.

The social influence process will differ, depending on the individual's orientation to the system. Compliance has a rule orientation, identification has a roles orientation, and internalisation has a value orientation (Kelman, 2006:10). This study focuses on the internalisation method. Internalisation signals an orientation to system values that the individuals personally shares (Kelman, 2006:11). Internalisation is about value congruence, in which the individual's values match the group's values (such as the value to embrace natural hair). Values and beliefs lead to the formation of attitudes (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39; Cherian & Jacob, 2012:122), as attitudes are learned by and transferred to an individual through the social environment, including family and SMIs (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39). The reference group that has the same values about natural hair encourages the formation of attitudes and changes in behaviour. Internalisation that is evident in a congruence of the values of a reference group with those of a consumer plays a role in influencing the consumer's purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. This study used social influence theory to provide insights into how social influence,

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in the form of a credible reference group, leads to changes in attitude and behavioural intentions in Black African women towards natural hair care products.

Social influence has two dimensions: informational social influence and normative social influence (Hu *et al.*, 2019:299; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955:629). Informational influence is linked with individuals accepting information from others as evidence of truth, while normative influence is related to conforming to the positive expectations of others (Hu *et al.*, 2019:299). Informational social influence, which operates through internalisation, is about attaining knowledge from the social environment to solve a problem (Hu *et al.*, 2019:302). Consequently, this study used information influence through internalisation, because Black African women learn from their social environment – the reference group that recommends natural hair care products – to solve a problem related to such products.

Based on the literature reviewed above, this study has made several assumptions. One is that Black South African women would encounter the same behaviour of nonacceptance and lack of support from family because of the historical role that natural hair played in South Africans' social status and race during apartheid, while social media influencers provide support in the form of providing knowledge and encouraging Black women to embrace their natural hair. This means that the family is the socialising agent and provides injunctive norms for social behaviour. In contrast, the social media influencer is the resocialisation agent who provides descriptive norms of social behaviour. From this it might be expected that the influence of the two reference groups' source credibility would not have the same effects on the Black South African woman's consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products, since the two reference groups produce different internalisations because of their distinct value orientations. Thus this study has found it necessary to understand the role of the two reference groups' source credibility in relation to attitudes and purchase intentions. Understanding the role of source credibility for the two reference groups would assist marketers to know which of the reference groups to use and at what point to impact the consumer's decision-making process when developing their content marketing strategy.

2.2   Natural hair movement

The natural hair movement is a diasporic movement that is about resistance, personal and collective empowerment, self-affirmation, celebrating one's own natural aesthetics, and establishing one's own standard of beauty from one's own standpoint (Norwood, 2018:80). The natural hair movement is about Black women embracing their natural hair (Halo Heritage, 2021) rather than chemically straightened hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:90; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:45) – unlike the natural hair movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was

about Black power race politics and resistance (Ellington, 2015:22; Norwood, 2018:80). The natural hair movement of the 2010s is mostly about personal empowerment: self-acceptance, freedom, spiritual growth, and whole-body health (Jackson, 2012).

Personal empowerment for Black women is facilitated by their reliance on community support systems, such as family and other Black women (Norwood, 2018:71). Social support is when individuals in a social group interact to provide support by assisting one another informatively or emotionally (Hu *et al.*, 2019:299). From these interactions and receiving advice from their peers, consumers can gain new product knowledge and also discover new products (Hu *et al.*, 2019:300). The result of the individual's interaction with the social environment in the form of a social group is social influence (Hu *et al.*, 2019:299). African American women seek social support for their preference for their natural hair through communication in social networking sites (Ellington, 2015:21); social influence occurs in these natural hair social groups (which are the natural hair communities within the natural hair movement).

Social group norms are fundamental to social behaviour (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:149). There are two difference kinds of norm, and they each play a role in social influence. The first type of norm is injunctive norms: they are what people ought to do in the group. These norms lead to attitudes and behaviours that are seen as managed, ambivalent, and restricted. The second type of norm is descriptive norms, which are what people should do in the group. These norms lead to attitudes and behaviours that are seen to be genuine and unconstrained (McDonald & Crandall, 2015:149). As described below, Black women have experienced these different types of social norm about their natural hair; the family's group norms could be perceived as injunctive norms, while the social media influencers' group norms could be perceived as descriptive norms.

Black identities and hairstyles were produced in specific social and historical contexts, such as slavery and apartheid (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:346). Natural hair was considered the most unappealing and inappropriate form in the apartheid political setting (Jacobs & Kelemi, 2020:343). In the African American community, family members have been shown to be very unsupportive of natural hair (Ellington, 2015:23). This lack of support for natural hair is rooted in the African American community's history and in the social meaning of having a lower social status because one has kinky hair (Ellington, 2015:26). Attitudes to the unacceptability of natural African hair on Black women have been fostered in childhood through the intervention of female parents who have straightened or chemically relaxed their daughters' hair at a young age – sometimes as young as three years old (Oyedemi, 2016:13). Thus the family's historical

group norms could have been injunctive owing to the social context during these periods, thus requiring adherence to the family's social behaviour.

It has been noted that African American women use social media sites to gain knowledge about natural hair and to obtain support from the online natural hair community when they don't get it from their immediate community (Ellington, 2015:28). African American women find that natural hair social media networks are extremely important for gaining knowledge about maintaining their hair: they receive hair care tutorials, product information, and styling inspirations (Ellington, 2015:25). Vloggers/bloggers who appear to be highly credible are trusted (Ellington, 2015:26). Consequently, SMIs' group norms are descriptive, because Black women are receiving unrestricted information that guides their social behaviour with respect to natural hair.

2.3   Reference groups

Reference groups aid the formation of the formation of behaviour, values, and attitudes (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). The influence of reference groups differs across various products and services, and depends on the type of product that is purchased, the product category, and the brand (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). Different types of reference group have different effects on consumers; their impact on purchase intentions might be diverse if the consumer used various sources of information for decision-making (Hoonsopon & Puriwat, 2016:158). Women are more responsive to reference group influence than men are (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:133).

Black women in became aware of natural hair care products through various data sources (in-store, Facebook, friends, and family) (Thomas, 2020:143). According to Cooley and Parks-Yancy's (2019:255) study, their respondents' sources of information for hair/make-up were people they knew, YouTube, and Instagram. Black women used the internet and social media as sources of information to search for methods to care for their natural hair and for information on natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:114).

Social ties alter consumers' attitudes, emotions, and behaviours (Ma, Zhang, Ding & Wang, 2020:398). 'Social tie' refers to the consumer's experience of intimacy, affiliation, and psychological connection with another person; strong ties are family or friends, and weak ties are colleagues, celebrities, and SMIs (Ma *et al.*, 2020:398). Sources with strong ties are considered more credible and are easily trusted (Ma *et al.*, 2020:398). Relationship strength is an important factor that drives trust and encourages purchase (Ma *et al.*, 2020:395). Thus

this study sought to ascertain which relationship – that between the source credibility of a female family member and the individual, or that between the source credibility of a social media influencer and the individual – would have the greater impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Children learn consumer behaviour from their parents because the parents teach them directly or the children observe them (Cotte & Wood, 2004:79). Family messaging from Black mothers to daughters about hairstyle preferences begins early in life through the symbolic ritual of Black mothers styling their daughters' hair (Davis Tribble, Allen, Hart, Francois & Smith-Bynum, 2019:10). The standards of beauty and attractiveness are conveyed during these rituals (Davis Tribble *et al.,* 2019:10), and the mother's attitude towards of natural hair is the essential reference point in the process of wearing natural hair and buying natural hair care products (Thomas, 2020:167). The mother's voice plays a significant role in the consumer decision-making process of Black women about their natural hair (Thomas: 2020:166).

Social media content creators initiated the current third natural hair movement (Ellington, 2014:252; Thomas, 2020:112). Social media influenced Black African women millennials concerning their natural hair (Thomas, 2020:114). In turn, the natural hair community (as part of the natural hair movement) trusted the advice of social media content creators because they offered support, hair care tips, advice, and education about natural hair (Ellington, 2014:552). Black women might have been taught by their mothers that their natural hair was not good enough (Thomas, 2020:120), while social media influencers encouraged wearing natural hair (Ellington, 2014:552).

Historically, the FFM and the SMI have played two distinct roles for Black women concerning their acceptance of natural hair: the FFM, especially the mother, has made the consumer believe that natural hair is unacceptable, while the SMI has made the consumer embrace their natural hair. Thus this study chose these two reference groups to examine the role of source credibility in attitude formation and purchase intentions in Black African women's natural hair care consumption. From these two different perspectives, it is thought that the consumer would have different views of the attractiveness of the natural hair of an FFM and an SMI. Therefore, as a result of these different views or impacts, like Hu *et al.* (2019:305), Kim and Na (2007:28), and Schouten *et al.* (2020:266), this study did not consider the attractiveness subdimension of source credibility.

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2.4 Reference groups' source credibility

Information from a credible source influences beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour through internalisation (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1059; Wang, Kao & Ngamsiriudom, 2017:11). Credibility is enhanced when the recommender of the product not only talks about the product but also uses it (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:255). Consumers will confidently consider the reference group's recommendations when they find that it provides valuable and credible information (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). The information source that the consumer readily accepts is the one that is perceived to be credible, and sources with a high level of credibility play a significant role in determining conformity (Park & Lessig, 1977:103). Studies have shown that consumers are more likely to accept information from a credible source, thus resulting in favourable attitudes and behavioural intentions (Kareklas, Muehling & Weber, 2015:90).

Source credibility is generally used to analyse the effectiveness of an endorsement; a credible source has a positive influence on the consumer accepting the delivered message (Lim *et al.*, 2017:21). The effectiveness of a message depends on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator (Kareklas *et al.*, 2015:910). It has been noted that source credibility (defined as both expertise and trustworthiness) has a significant effect on the attitude towards the products endorsed by the source (Kim & Na, 2007:28). According to Wang *et al.* (2017:12) and Eroğlu and Bayraktar Köse (2019:1059), trustworthiness has the attributes of dignity, believability, and honesty that are possessed by the recommender and observed by the consumer. It reflects the information provider's ethical traits, which indicate that the information source will provide valid information (Hu *et al.*, 2019:305). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017:6) argue that bloggers and lower-scale (micro-)celebrities are more trustworthy and relevant. 'Expertise' refers to the perceived degree of the relevant knowledge, skills, or experience of the endorser (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:24). A source who is considered an expert is more persuasive, and generates more intention to purchase (Wang *et al.*, 2017:11).

2.4.1 Reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions

Purchase intentions are the consumer's willingness to purchase a product (Chen & Lin, 2019:24). The willingness to buy is the consumer's objective preference in selecting a particular product (Chen & Lin, 2019:24). It is the combination of the consumer's interest in and likelihood of purchasing a product (Wang *et al.*, 2017:12). Various factors influence a consumer's purchase intentions (Paul & Rana, 2012:414); a credible source of information is one of these factors (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:262).

Purchases of beauty, make-up, skincare, and hair products are affected by the consumer's trust in the seller's advertisement (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:255). Untrustworthy reviewers force consumers to spend more time and energy searching for the products they want (Ma *et al.*, 2020:395). The source credibility subdimensions – expertise and trustworthiness – result in a higher acceptance of information (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1060) because the consumer has internalised the information. The expertise and trustworthiness dimensions of source credibility have different weights (Pornpitakpan, 2004:246). A trustworthy communicator is more influential than an untrustworthy one, whether or not they are experts (Pornpitakpan, 2004:246). The expert and trustworthy source produces the most opinion change; trustworthiness is more impactful than expertise (Pornpitakpan, 2004:246). Schouten *et al.* (2020:268) found that there was a relationship between trust and purchase intentions and between expertise and purchase intentions. Chekima, Chekima and Adis (2020:1509) found that expertise and trust influenced purchase intentions towards cosmetic products. Various studies that have shown the relationships between the source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) and purchase intentions.

Previous research has also shown that source credibility can boost purchase intentions, specifically in influencer and follower relationships (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). Some studies have found that social media influencer credibility can drive followers' purchase intentions (Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1124; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9), while Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019:264) posit that individuals trust information from people they know in real life. Also, stronger familial ties add to source credibility and increase trust (Ma *et al.*, 2020:398). Therefore, it is expected that, although source credibility should be related to purchase intentions, the relationship could be impacted by the type of source – in this study, the FFM and the SMI. Based on the above discussion of reference groups, it is hypothesised that:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of the reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1a}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1b}: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H_{1c}: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H[1d]: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

2.4.2   Reference groups' source credibility and attitude

The concept of attitude has played a significant role in the history of social psychology (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974:59). 'Attitude' refers to the consumer's predispositions towards a product (Wassenaar, Kempen & Van Eeden, 2019:438) that can be adopted in various ways from the environment (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:38), such as from direct experience, recommendations from an information source, or personal exposure (Wassenaar *et al.*, 2019:438; Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:40). Attitudes have several properties; when scholars use the term, they generally refer to the evaluative properties of the attitude – the positive or negative feelings about the object (Fabrigar, Krosnick & MacDougall, 2005:20). Attitudes have a motivational quality: they influence a consumer towards or away from a particular behaviour (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:40; Wassenaar *et al.*, 2019:438). Attitudes and values are interconnected in an individual to form a consistent hierarchical mental organisation (Hupfer & Gardner, 1971). Consequently, when the attitudes of the FFM or the SMI about natural hair care products are synced with those of the Black African woman with natural hair, there is an internalisation of the information about natural hair care products from the reference group.

Social psychologists have increasingly focused on the strength of the attitude because some attitudes are more robust than others (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:20). Attitudes place objects into a frame of mind of liking or disliking, moving towards or away from the product. Attitudes lead individuals to behave consistently (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39). Strong attitudes are more likely to last over time; they are resilient and resist persuasion, and guide behaviour and influence how information is processed (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:20, Wassenaar *et al.*, 2019:438). Attitudes towards a product significantly predict purchase intentions and behaviour (Wang *et al.*, 2017:12; Wassenaar *et al.*, 2019:438). Attitudes differ in the purpose they serve; they have different functions. The utilitarian function maximises rewards and minimises the cost associated with the product. The value-expressive function is the individual's expression of their essential values. The adjustive social function is about the attitudes related to social relationships (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:40; Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:21). Cognitive attitudes are based on more objective information (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:20), while attitudes based on affect refer to positive or negative emotions or feeling towards the object (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:20). This study uses the concept of affective attitude to understand attitudes towards the reference group that has recommended natural hair care products.

Another essential property of attitude is the degree to which they are based on various types of information (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005, 20). Attitudes can be learnt or altered by influences resulting from four principal sources: information exposure, group membership, the environment, and wanting to satisfy a need (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39). Individuals can have attitudes towards a multitude of things (Fabrigar *et al.*, 2005:19). An individual's perception of the product determines whether or not they are willing to accept or adopt the product (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:38). Attitudes are a psychological process that can be inferred from other people's communications or actions (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39) and are complex to measure or assess, because individuals can have different attitudes to a product and its attributes (Wassenaar *et al.*, 2019,438). For example, Black African women might have a positive attitude towards natural hair shampoos, but a negative attitude towards the sulphate ingredient in the product.

Attitudes are formed by values and beliefs, which are learnt; values are transferred to the individual through their immediate and remote environments, such as family, friends, school, and SMIs (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39). Consumers are more likely to positively products evaluate that are endorsed by individuals they perceive to be credible (Schouten *et al.*, 2020:261).

Schouten *et al.* (2020:262) postulate that the effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), such as online recommendations, on product attitudes and purchase intentions is determined by the credibility of the recommender. Source credibility can directly change a consumer's attitude, and information from a highly credible source will have a significant effect on the information's credibility (Luo, Luo, Schatzberg & Sia, 2013:94). Sources that are high in credibility lead to positive attitudes towards the endorser and the advertisement (Pornpitakpan, 2004:245). Source credibility is linked to improved consumer attitudes, which lead to increased purchase intentions (Lim *et al.*, 2017:24). Thus it can be proposed that source credibility, which could be from a familial (FFM) or an aspirational role model (SMI) source, has an impact on attitudes towards the products recommended by the source. Furthermore, with the extensive research on SMI source credibility and the lack of research on FFM source credibility, it was imperative to examine the two reference groups' source credibility on attitudes and purchase intentions. Also, considering the roles that normative and comparative reference groups play in Black African women's experiences of their natural hair, it was important to include both of these reference groups. Based on the above discussion of the reference groups' source credibility and attitudes, it is hypothesised that:

> H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between the source credibility of the
> reference group with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H$_{2a}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H$_{2b}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H$_{2c}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

H$_{2d}$: There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.

2.4.3   Reference groups' source credibility, purchase intentions, and attitude

Information from a credible source can influence a consumer's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour (Lim *et al.*, 2017:21-22). Social psychology research has established attitude as a significant predictor of behaviour and behavioural intentions (Kotchen & Reiling, 2000:95; Paul, Modi & Patel, 2016:126). The role of purchase intentions has long been considered in consumer research, such as attitudes towards purchasing halal food (Alam & Sayuti, 2011:12); attitudes towards online purchases (George, 2004:200); attitudes towards green product purchases (Paul *et al.*, 2016:126); and attitudes towards buying organic skin/hair care products (Kim & Chung, 2011:41). Studies have emphasised the importance of attitude as a mediator and an antecedent of behavioural intentions (Muda & Hamzah, 2021:443). Positive attitudes positively influence an individual's behavioural intentions (Dada & Jazi, 2022:198; Muda & Hamzah, 2021:444). Attitudes are learnt from family, friends, school, and SMIs (Asiegbu *et al.*, 2012:39). Yet the method of learning and the values represented by different types of reference groups, such as normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups, might transfer different beliefs and values that impact attitude, making the investigation of different types of reference group relevant. Furthermore, it can be deduced that purchase intentions by an individual could be influenced by attitudes towards reference groups (FFMs and SMIs) that encourage the purchase. From the aforementioned, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H$_3$: There is a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{3a}$: There is a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{3b}$: There is a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

From a brand perspective, attitudes towards brands influence purchase intentions (Torres, Augusto & Matos, 2019:1273). For local apparel brands, attitudes towards brands had an impact on purchase intentions, and attitudes towards a brand mediated the relationship between endorser credibility and purchase intentions (Chin, Isa & Alodin, 2020:906). Paul *et al.* (2016:129) found a significant relationship between attitudes towards green products and purchase intentions in India. Lim *et al.* (2017:30) found a relationship between attitude and purchase intentions. Muda and Hamzah (2021:453) supported the hypothesis that attitudes towards user-generated content and purchase intentions, and also supported the hypothesis that attitudes mediated the relationship between source credibility and purchase intentions. A mechanism of internalisation in this study is thus considered as forming attitude towards the reference group's recommended hair care products. Such internalisation – that is, of attitude towards reference groups' recommended hair care products – could vary, based on the credibility of the source. Owing to the two reference groups having different effects on Black African women's attitude to natural hair, this study opted to understand the effects of attitudes on source credibility and purchase intentions for these two reference groups. Based on the above discussion on reference groups, it is hypothesised that:

H$_4$: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the source credibility of the reference group with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4a}$: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4b}$: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4c}$: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

H$_{4d}$: Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the hypothesised relationships between the constructs.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3 METHODOLOGY
This section of the article outlines the process undertaken to conduct the research.

3.1 Sampling and data collection
The study was conducted on adult (those aged 18 years or older) South African Black women with natural hair. The population group 'Black' or 'Black African' is 'native South African', which means African individuals born in South Africa (Union of South Africa, 1950:277). This study aimed to examine two reference groups; thus respondents received one of two questionnaires deployed through a third-party panel from a reputable research company. The reason for using panel data for this study was that it minimised the risks associated with survey participation, such as incomplete questionnaires, missing data, screening the respondents, getting the correct respondents, and reaching the required sample size (Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016:337). One group of respondents got a questionnaire to answer questions about the female family member (FFM) reference group, and the other group got the second questionnaire to answer questions about the social media influencer (SMI) reference group. Participants responded to either the FFM scenario or the SMI scenario in their questionnaire (see Table 1 below).

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The survey screened the respondents; to be eligible to participate, they had to be 18 years or older South African Black women who had natural hair. The SMI survey had an additional criterion: the respondent had to have an Instagram account. Instagram SMIs were chosen for this study because they were likely to exert reference group influence (Djafarova & Matson, 2021:25) and because they provide useful recommendations to consumers (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019:1433). The final data collection generated 611 usable responses: 306 from the FFM survey and 305 from the SMI survey, thus achieving the ideal sample size for a study with four constructs that contain more than three items each (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006:742).

3.2 Data collection

The study used a causal research design. The study used a non-probability convenience sampling technique to collect the data, with a self-administered online survey. The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions that comprised multiple-choice and scale questions.

The questionnaires were pre-tested with a sample of 30 participants from the study population to ensure that the questionnaire works effectively and provides valid and reliable measures of the constructs (Czaja & Blair, 2005:103). Minor adjustments were made to some of the scale items to ensure the questionnaire correctly captured the context of the study. For example, in the SMI questionnaire, items were changed from referring to a generic SMI to Kiwendo, the SMI in the scenario.

Table 1: Female family member and social media influencer questionnaire scenarios

Scenario (Female family member)
Consider a female family member with natural hair (for example a sibling or cousin). The female family member has had natural hair for a period of more than one year. Recently the female family member started using a range of natural hair care products that she likes. Since you also have natural hair, she had decided to tell you about the products and share information about the natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, the female family member is your source of information for natural hair care products. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

Scenario (Social media influencer)

Kiwendo is a natural hair social media influencer on different social media platforms. She has an Instagram account with 123,000 followers and a YouTube channel with over 52,000 subscribers. She uses these platforms to share content about natural hair. This includes her journey with natural hair, educating people on how to take care of their natural hair and giving information about the products that are available to take care of natural hair. Her recent post on Instagram was about a natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, you follow Kiwendo on her Instagram page @Kiwendo_hair. She is your source of information regarding natural hair. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

3.3 Measures

This study adapted various scales from the literature to measure the constructs. Wang and Scheinbaum's (2018:24) source credibility scales, adapted initially from McCracken's (1989) and Ohanion's (1990) expertise and trustworthiness scales, were used to measure the reference group's source credibility. Attractiveness was excluded from the analysis because of the distinctly different roles the two groups had in the influence of natural hair; this would have biased the answer, and there would have been differences between the groups. It was also excluded because, for the FFM group questionnaire scenario, the respondents had to think of a female family member with natural hair, which means that they already had a specific person in mind with perceived attractiveness. In contrast, the SMI group were given a fictitious SMI with a natural hair scenario to which they had to respond, thus not having an actual visual attractiveness point of reference.

The four-item purchase intentions scale of Diallo, Chandon, Cliquet and Philippe (2013:437) was adapted for this study. The attitude scale was adapted from Chang's (2017:493) four-item scale; however, the original scales were adapted from Crites, Fabrigar and Petty's (1994) attitude scale. The constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1

denoting 'strongly disagree' to 7 denoting 'strongly agree'. A seven-point Likert scale was used in previous natural hair studies (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020:360; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:93). The scales were adapted to suit the natural hair context.

The questionnaire included other behavioural questions to obtain the respondent's profile, such as age, and questions about their ties to a specific reference group. The questionnaire also included their behaviour towards natural hair products, such as purchase frequency and usage, how long they have had natural hair, and their behaviour in wearing their natural hair.

4   RESULTS

4.1   Sample profile

The sample profiles and natural hair care products consumption behaviour are for the respondents who participated in the FFM survey and the SMI survey.

The average age of the respondents in the FFM survey was 30.6 years old; for the SMI survey it was 30.2 years old. More than a third (34%) of the FFM respondents have had natural hair for three to five years, and almost a quarter (23.9%) have had natural hair for one to two years. Nearly four in ten (38.4%) of the SMI respondents have had natural hair for three to five years, while 21.6% have had natural hair for more than ten years and 20.0% have had natural hair for one to two years.

The SMI respondents used natural hair care products more often than FFM respondents; a quarter (24.3%) of the SMI respondents used natural hair care products once a week, while 45.4% of the FFM respondents used natural hair care products two to three times a week. The most frequently used natural hair care products for both groups were shampoos, followed by moisturisers, conditioners, and oils. On average, the respondents used one brand of these products, and most purchased organic/chemical-free natural hair care products. More than half of the respondents (FFM = 56.2% and SMI = 51.5%) bought natural hair care products monthly, and almost a quarter (FFM = 22.5% and SMI = 22.3%) bought the products every second month.

4.2   Evaluation of models

The study used structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques through Amos 27 to ascertain and explain the multiple complex relationships among the variables and constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006:711) for the two reference groups.

4.2.1 Evaluation of measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated for its goodness-of-fit through confirmatory factor analysis to determine the relationship between the observed variables (the items) and the constructs (Hair *et al.*, 2006:770). Four constructs with their respective observed variables (expertise, trustworthiness, attitudes, and purchase intentions) were used to test the model's validity and reliability satisfactory levels (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:45).

The chi-squared value, its statistical significance, and other additional goodness-of-fit indices, such as the chi-squared value divided by the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the standardised root mean residual (SRMR), and the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), were used to determine the goodness-of-fit (Hair *et al.*, 2006:747). Table 2 illustrates the thresholds for the various goodness-of-fit indices and the results for the various measurement models.

The initial measurement models with all the observed variables and constructs generated a high chi-squared value. Owing to these results, an improved measurement model was done by removing one item from expertise, one item from trustworthiness and one item from purchase intentions, which generated a lower chi-squared value and improved values for the alternative indices.

Table 2: Measurement model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Model 1: FFM results	180.874	81	0.000	2.227	0.970	0.977	0.927	0.959	0.063	0.030
Model 2: SMI results	250.489	81	0.000	3.092	0.961	0.970	0.904	0.956	0.083	0.022
Model 3: Combined results	430.874	162	0.000	2.660	0.965	0.973	0.915	0.957	0.052	0.030

In summary, three of the 18 items in the initial model were removed, leaving 15, which improved the measurement models. Table 2 shows the results of the improved measurement

model's goodness-of-fit indices that met the requirements. See Table 3 for the items that were retained.

4.2.2   Validity and reliability

The composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to establish the reliability of the constructs in the measurement model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998:302). To show construct validity, each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) must be 0.5 or above (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:47). The convergent validity measures the extent to which the constructs' items are correlated (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137).

Table 3: Reliability and validity standardised weights (SW), Cronbach's alpha (*α*), CR, and AVE of all factors for the FFM and SMI combined measurement model (model 3)

Item	SW		*α*		CR		AVE	
Reference group	FFM	SMI	FFM	SMI	FFM	SMI	FFM	SMI
Expertise (EX)								
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems like an expert	0.848	0.823	0.929	0.940	0.957	0.961	0.772	0.804
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems experienced	0.923	0.930						
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems knowledgeable	0.887	0.932						
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems skilled	0.855	0.898						
Trustworthiness (TR)								
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems honest	0.801	0.900	0.935	0.954	0.779	0.785	0.783	0.833
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems reliable	0.903	0.916						
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems sincere	0.901	0.918						
With regards to natural hair care FFM/Kiwendo seems trustworthy	0.929	0.917						
Attitudes (ATP)								
I like African women's natural hair care products recommended by my FFM/Kiwendo	0.849	0.868	0.892	0.932	0.913	0.942	0.663	0.759
I feel positive towards African women's natural hair care products recommended by my FFM/Kiwendo	0.815	0.885						
African women's natural hair care products recommended by my FFM/Kiwendo are desirable	0.814	0.887						
African women's natural hair care products recommended by my FFM/Kiwendo are good	0.849	0.868						
Purchase intention (PI)								
The probability that I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by FFM/Kiwendo is high	0.823	0.875	0.904	0.930	0.908	0.930	0.766	0.815

I would purchase African women's natural hair care products recommended by FFM/Kiwendo in the future	0.890	0.903	
I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by FFM/Kiwendo	0.911	0.930	

Table 3 shows that the Cronbach's alpha values for all of the constructs were greater than the threshold of α = 0.7 (Field, 2013:709; Pallant, 2010:6); this indicates that the measurement scales used to measure each of the constructs were reliable. The AVE for all of the constructs was above 0.5, suggesting that the measurement scales used to measure each construct were valid.

In addition to examining construct reliability and convergent validity, discriminant validity – the extent to which two conceptually similar constructs are different – also needed to be assessed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:45; Hair *et al.*, 2006:137). To show discriminant validity, the correlation of the constructs needed to be lower than the square root of the AVE (Hair *et al.*, 2006:137), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Discriminant validity

Reference group	Variable	EX	TR	ATP	PI
FFM	Expertise (EX)	**0.879**			
	Trustworthiness (TR)	0.825	**0.885**		
	Attitude (ATP)	0.594	0.621	**0.814**	
	Purchase intentions (PI)	0.550	0.602	0.787	**0.875**
SMI	Expertise (EX)	**0.897**			
	Trustworthiness (TR)	0.894	**0.913**		
	Attitude (ATP)	0.793	0.785	**0.871**	
	Purchase intentions (PI)	0.791	0.782	0.811	**0.903**

*Bold text is square root of the AVE.

Table 4 indicates that all the measurement scales used in this study were reliable and showed discriminant validity.

The measurement model that met all of the model fit, reliability, and validity requirements was used as the unconstrained baseline model for the measurement invariance.

4.2.3   Results for invariance test

To run a multigroup SEM, the study used multigroup invariance to statistically test the difference between the groups, as done by Byrne (2004:273), Campbell, Barry, Joe and Finney (2008:995), and Delgado-Ballester (2004:581). Multigroup invariance indicates that the

observed scores (the items in the questionnaire) and the latent constructs are the same across the groups (Campbell *et al.*, 2008:995; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:581). Invariance analyses compare the unstandardised coefficients (Sass & Schmitt, 2014:316). Byrne (2004:273) proposed a three-step approach to test multigroup invariance: 1) configural invariance – which tests whether the basic structure stands across the groups; 2) metric invariance – to test whether the relationships between the items and the factors are equal for each group; and 3) scaler invariance – which tests the equivalence of the intercept terms between the groups (Campbell *et al.*, 2008:995-996).

Measurement invariance is tested using the difference between the unconstrained (freely estimated model) and constrained models, $\Delta GFI = GFI_c - GFI_{uc}$, where GFI_{uc} is the goodness-of-fit for the unconstrained model, GFI_c is the goodness-of-fit for the constrained model, and Δ is the difference (Δ = delta) between the two models (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002:250). Cheung and Rensvold (2002:250) recommend the following: ΔCFI, $\Delta Gamma$ hat and $\Delta MacDonald$ NCI, and ΔGFI test to assess measurement invariance. The goodness-of-fit tests are recommended because they are not affected by sample size and are robust enough not to be affected when the model is not specified accurately (Meade, Johnson & Braddy, 2008:571). Measurement invariance is supported when $\Delta CFI \leq -0.01$, $\Delta Gamma$ hat ≤ -0.001, and $\Delta MacDonald$ NCI ≤ -0.02 (Campbell *et al.*, 2008:996; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002:250). This study used Pirritano (2018) to calculate the $\Delta Gamma$ hat and the $\Delta MacDonald$ NCI.

Table 5: Measurement invariance results across reference groups

	Chi-squared (χ^2)	DF	p-value	CFI	Gamma hat (GH)	Mac-Donald NCI (MNCI)	ΔCFI	ΔGH	ΔMNCI
Configural invariance	430.87	162	0.000	0.973	0.944	0.802	-	-	-
Metric invariance	456.22	173	0.000	0.971	0.942	0.793	-0.002	-0.003	-0.009

This study used the process similar to that of Hong, Malik and Lee (2003:643), process to test multigroup invariance. According to the fit indices results from Table 2's model 3, all of the fit indices indicated one common model for FFM and SMI, and thus configural invariance was achieved (Hong *et al.*, 2003:644). The basic structure across the two groups was the same. The next step of the process was to determine metric invariance. Table 5 shows the results for the measurement invariance; the findings indicated that the metric invariance was not supported. This meant that the relationships between the items and the factors for the two

reference groups were not equal. Therefore, the study assessed the structural models of the two reference groups separately because measurement invariance was not evident.

4.2.4   Evaluation of structural models

The next step of the analysis was to measure the structural model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:44), which tested the complex relationships between the constructs of the measurement model.

Table 6: Structural model

	Chi-squared	DF	p-value	CMIN/DF	TLI	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Threshold	NA	NA	<0.050	<3.000	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	>0.900	<0.070	<0.080
Model 1: FFM results	180.384	81	0.000	2.227	0.970	0.977	0.927	0.959	0.063	0.030
Model 2: SMI results	250.489	81	0.000	3.092	0.961	0.970	0.904	0.956	0.083	0.022

Table 6 shows the results of the structural model goodness-of-fit indices for the FFM reference group and the MSI reference group, which met the requirements. From the structural model fit indices, the results show that the FFM structural model fitted better than the SMI structural model.

4.3   Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using the maximum likelihood estimation method in SPSS Amos 27. Figure 2 shows the results from the assessment of the structural model for the FFM model, and Figure 3 shows the structural model results for the SMI model.

Figure 2: Results of the FFM structural model

*Significant at the 0.05 level.
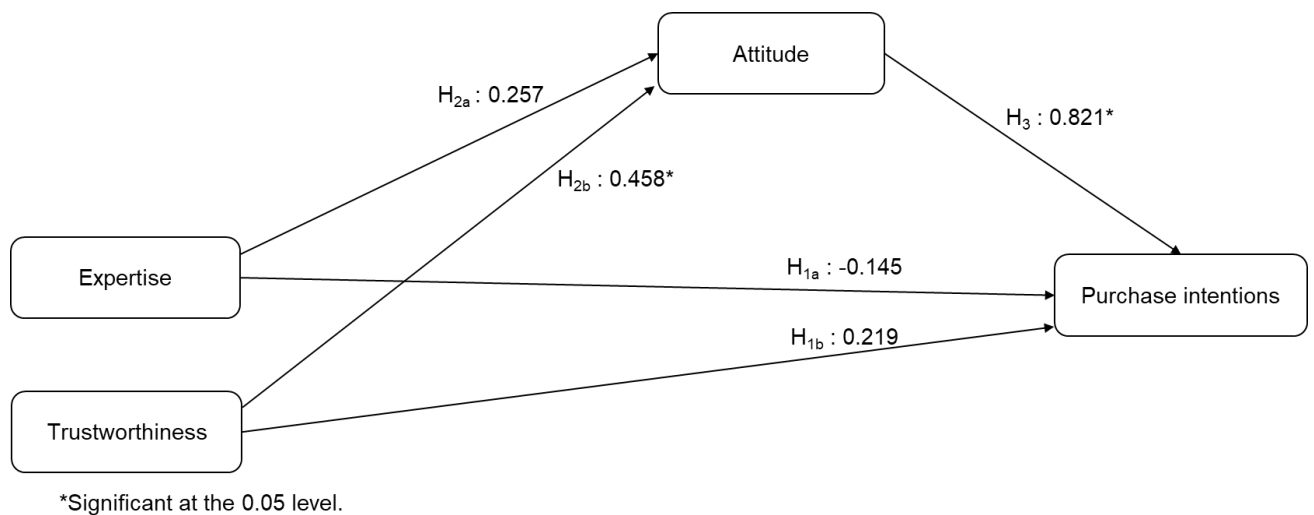
Figure 3: Results of the SMI structural model

*Significant at the 0.05 level.
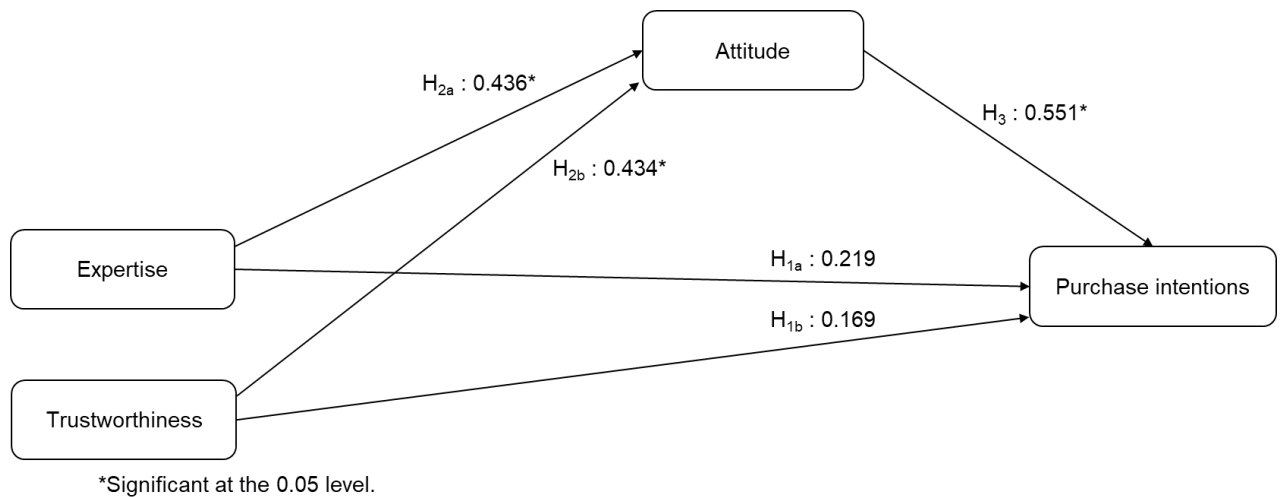
Table 7 illustrates the results of the structural path analysis of the two reference groups for the various relationships in the two models. Table 7 indicates which of the independent variables included in the model best predicted the dependent variable and whether they were significant (Pallant, 2010:161). The best predictor-dependent variables were shown by the standardised beta coefficients and their associated significant p-value (Pallant, 2010:161).

Table 7: Structural path results across the two reference groups for hypotheses testing H_{1a} – H_{3b}

Relationship	Reference group	Standardised estimate ($β1$)	p-value [95% CI LLCI; ULCI]	H_a finding
EX → PI	FFM	-0.145	0.183 [-0.402; 0.075]	H_{1a} not supported

	SMI	0.219	0.237 [-0.152; 0.543]	H$_{1b}$ not supported
TR → PI	FFM	0.219	0.103 [-0.048; 0.516]	H$_{1c}$ not supported
	SMI	0.169	0.244 [-0.134; 0.559]	H$_{1d}$ not supported
EX → ATP	FFM	0.257	0.101 [-0.051; 0.554]	H$_{2a}$ not supported
	SMI	0.436	0.024* [0.064; 0.790]	H$_{2b}$ supported
TR → ATP	FFM	0.458	0.009* [0.155, 0.766]	H$_{2c}$ supported
	SMI	0.434	0.014* [0.081; 0.805]	H$_{2d}$ supported
ATP→ PI	FFM	0.821	0.001* [0.652; 0.994]	H$_{3a}$ supported
	SMI	0.551	0.001* [0.287; 0.826]	H$_{3b}$ supported

EX = Expertise; TR = Trustworthiness; ATP= Attitude; PI = Purchase intentions

Note: significance level is p-value < 0.05

Key: * = significant

The results in Table 7, Figure 2, and Figure 3 show that five out of the ten relationships were supported because they were significant at $p < 0.05$, in line with the recommendation of Hair *et al.* (2006:12). The relationships between the source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) and purchase intentions were not significant for both groups (FFM and SMI). Therefore, H$_{1a}$ to H$_{1d}$ were not supported. Two relationships were supported for the FFM model: H$_{2c}$ path ($\beta = 0.458$, $p = 0.009$) and H$_{3a}$ path ($\beta = 0.821$, $p = 0.001$). Trustworthiness had a significant relationship with attitude, and attitude had a significant relationship with purchase intentions for FFM. All of the other relationships were not significant for FFM. Three of the linear structural paths were significant for the SMI model: H$_{2b}$ path ($\beta = 0.436$, $p = 0.024$), H$_{2d}$ path ($\beta = 0.434$, $p = 0.014$), and H$_{3d}$ path ($\beta = 0.551$, $p = 0.001$). Expertise and trustworthiness had a significant relationship with attitude, and attitude had a significant relationship with purchase intentions for SMI.

4.3.1 Mediation

Mediation analysis was conducted to investigate the mediation effect of attitude on the relationship between the source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) for the FFM and SMI reference groups and purchase intentions. A mediator is a third variable that explains how and why two variables relate (Fairchild & McDaniel, 2017:1259). The number of bootstrap samples mined was 2 000, and the bias-corrected confidence interval was 95%. Table 8 shows the results for the mediation analysis.

Table 8: Mediation output

Relationship	Reference group	Direct effect p-value [95% CI LLCI; ULCI]		Indirect effect p-value [95% CI LLCI; ULCI]		Hₐ finding
		Co-eff	SE	Co-eff	Boot SE	
EX→ ATP→PI	FFM	0.183 [-0,402; 0,075]	0.119	0.097 [-0,038; 0,465]	0.130	H₄ₐ not supported
EX→ ATP→PI	SMI	0.237 [-0,152; 0,543]	0.184	0.013* [0.059; 0.519]	0.117	H₄ᵦ supported
TR→ ATP→PI	FFM	0.103 [-0,048; 0,516]	0.140	0.008* [0,132; 0,488]	0.137	H₄ᵢ supported
TR→ ATP→PI	SMI	0.244 [-0,134; 0,559]	0.184	0.008* [0.052; 0.563]	0.129	H₄d supported

EX = expertise; TR = Trustworthiness; ATP= Attitude; PI = Purchase intentions

Key: * = significant

Table 8 shows the results of the mediation analysis. The findings showed that attitudes towards natural hair care products only fully mediated the relationship between expertise and purchase intentions for the SMI reference group, whereas, for the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intentions for both the FFM and SMI reference groups, attitudes towards natural hair care products fully mediated those relationships. Therefore, H₄ᵦ, H₄ᵢ and H₄d were supported.

5   DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this article was to examine the effects of normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. To support the primary objective, the secondary objective was to determine whether attitude mediates the relationship between normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

Leveraging social influence theory (Kelman, 1958), the power of the reference groups' credibility in the form of internalisation, influences attitudes, and change in behavioural intention was investigated. Generally, Black consumers are more likely to go for trustworthy brands because they appeal to their cultural values and have credibility in the Black community (Stewart, 2022:2). Thus a congruence in values between Black consumers and credible sources strengthens the power of these credible sources in driving behaviour. Therefore, Black consumers readily choose recommended brands when there is some form of internalisation that represents the influence of credible sources. Social influence theory has provided the insight that Black African women accept recommendations from reference

groups because they find them credible and have values that are congruent with them and that influence their attitudes and behaviour. The recommendation from the reference groups assists them to understand acceptable norms and standards.

5.1 Theoretical implications

The study's first contribution is exploring the female family member and social media influencer reference groups as credible sources, and their effect on purchase intentions. The study has found that the source credibility subdimensions (expertise and trustworthiness) do not directly impact purchase intentions towards natural hair care products for Black African women. The outcome of this study was contrary to the finding of Schouten *et al.* (2020:269) that, for SMI, there was a significant relationship between the source credibility dimensions and purchase intentions. In the study of Schouten *et al.* (2020:269), significant relationships were dependent on the type of product, as different products yielded different outcomes for the source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions. This was clearly the case for natural hair care products, as the results for this product category were different from those of Schouten *et al.* (2020:269). Therefore, the social influence power of the credibility of the normative and comparative reference groups for the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products did not result in a change of behaviour in the form of purchase intentions.

The study's second contribution was the investigation of the female family member and social media influencer reference groups as credible sources, and their effect on attitudes towards natural hair care products that were recommended by a reference group. This study found that only the relationship between expertise and attitudes was significant for SMIs, supporting the findings of Schouten *et al.* (2020:268) for fitness products and Chekima *et al.* (2020:1513) for product attitude. The SMIs' skills and knowledge of natural hair care products drove the Black African women in this study to have favourable attitudes. Trustworthiness led to a change in attitudes towards natural hair care products for both the FFM and the SMI reference groups. The outcomes of this study, specifically for SMIs, support those of Schouten *et al.* (2020:268) for beauty products. The findings relating to source credibility (only to expertise for FFMs and to both expertise and trustworthiness for SMIs) were aligned with those of Kelman (1958:54), that the power of credibility leads to a shift in attitude. This reflects what is happening in the Black women's natural hair care movement. Black African women seek knowledge about and social support for natural hair from SMIs (Ellington, 2015:28; Jacob & Kelemi, 2929:344); thus the SMIs' skills and knowledge lead to favourable attitudes. Internationalisation in the form of a congruency between the values of Black African women

with natural hair and the reference groups with natural hair enables the recommendations by these reference groups to influence attitudes.

The third contribution of the study is exploring the influence of attitudes towards the recommended natural hair care product on purchase intentions towards the products for the two reference groups. There was a significant relationship between attitude towards products and purchase intentions for both FFMs and SMIs, supporting the findings of Lim *et al*. (2017:30) and Muda and Hamzah (2021:453). There was more trust in FFMs than in SMIs; the strength of the connection between the FFMs and the Black African women in this study could drive this because sources with strong ties are trusted more (Ma *et al*., 2020:395). Kelman (1958:54) states that internalisation occurs when the value system of the information source is congruent with that of the individual; therefore the strong ties and congruency in values with family members could be a driver of this strong relationship of trustworthiness and attitude for FFMs. Black African women's attitudes were congruent with those of the two reference groups (FFM and SMI); thus the information was accepted, which in turn drove the Black women to intend to purchase natural hair care products. According to Human (2014:225), family members represent the normative group that has the most influence on an individual's values. Thus family members are likely to instil injunctive social norms in an individual, and so the values of the individual would be more congruent with those of FFMs than those of SMI. Thus the FFMs' recommendations were accepted more readily than those of the SMIs.

The fourth contribution of the study was the mediation effect of attitudes towards natural hair care products on the relationship between the source credibility of the two reference groups' influence and purchase intentions. The findings in this study revealed that for, SMIs, attitudes fully mediated the relationship between expertise and purchase intentions. This meant that attitudes towards the products recommended by SMIs fully accounted for the relationship between expertise and purchase intentions. Favourable attitudes generated from the SMIs' skills and knowledge were the reason that the Black African women in this study intended to purchase natural hair care products. For both FFMs and SMIs, attitudes fully mediated the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intentions. This finding supports the findings of Muda and Hamzah (2021:453) about attitude mediating source credibility and purchase intentions.

This study has built on the reference group literature, and has successfully examined the source credibility of the female family member and social media influencer reference groups on attitudes and purchase intentions. It has shed light on how marketers can use the two

reference groups' expertise and trustworthiness to drive purchase intentions through attitudes towards the products.

5.2   Managerial implications

Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019:251) posited that it is essential for companies to determine who is buying their products, why they are doing so, and to ensure that consumers continue using their products. This applies to Black women's natural hair care products when consumers lack knowledge, want a reliable brand to cater to them, and want to make the purchase decision seamless. The relationship with the beauty industry is a personal and emotional experience for the Black consumer because there is sensitivity about exclusion in the beauty industry (Baboolall, Burns, Weaver & Zegeye, 2022:5). Therefore, to address this issue, marketers need to provide targeted Black consumers with tailored marketing content that resonates with them. This includes providing relevant and empowering information from a credible source about natural hair care products.

Marketers could use the trustworthiness of both FFMs and SMIs to drive favourable attitudes towards natural hair care products. Black consumers are more likely to discover products and services and proactively share them with their peers (Stewart, 2022:2). The family is generally seen as having nothing to gain from recommending a product; marketers could use this trust to drive attitudes towards a product. Marketers could also encourage Black women to recommend natural hair care products in their immediate social circles and to people close to them. These sources of information are more likely to have social influence because their value systems might be congruent with those of the recipients of the information. According to Cooley and Parks-Yancy (2019:263), individuals trust information from people they know. For example, marketers could run a campaign in which FFMs give hair advice to other female family members or recommend products to other family members, such as running a campaign that asks Black African women to share one positive natural hair care tip they have received from their FFMs, especially mothers and grandmothers. To build trust in SMIs, marketing practitioners could use SMIs with verified social media accounts to show that they are trustworthy and reliable, and so give valid information. Marketers could identify and use SMIs who consistently provide honest and valuable information about the product's benefits. SMIs who also use the products themselves could provide feedback on how the product works.

Consumers read product-related information on opinion platforms to evaluate products (Hennig-Thurau, Walsh & Walsh, 2003:54). SMIs' knowledge of natural hair and natural hair

care products influenced the attitudes of Black African women towards natural hair care products in this study. Micro-celebrities, such as SMIs, state the benefits of a product and encourage their followers to purchase the products (Eroğlu & Bayraktar Köse, 2019:1061). Content is more than just selling a product; it's about communicating a sentiment or emotion through content that is useful and relevant to the consumer (Raath, 2022). Thus SMI influencers needs to showcase their expertise and skills relating to such content by illustrating the benefits of natural hair care products to their followers in order to drive a favourable attitude towards the products. This means that SMIs need to give educating and empowering information to Black African women in order to fill the current natural hair knowledge gap in the natural hair care community.

The study also found that Black African women intend to purchase the natural hair care products recommended by credible FFMs or SMIs mainly because of their attitudes towards the product recommended by the reference group. There must be an interaction between the reference group and the recipient for social influence to occur (Kelman, 2006:7). The impact of attitudes towards products recommended by FFMs is higher because of their stronger ties with and closeness to Black women, who value the FFM's recommendations because the FFM's values are consistent with their own – especially the values of the source and of the recipient, which is why marketers need to know their target consumers' values, needs, and preferences. For example, in advertising, FFMs could recommend natural hair care products to their children or other family members. The advert should also have hair activities that show bonding moments between mother and daughter or between two female family members in order to change the perception that the family does not support or accept natural hair. The advertisement needs to use Black consumers to show inclusion in the beauty industry. SMIs should be used to reach a broader audience and showcase the products' benefits. A campaign could include an SMI asking their followers to recommend a product or natural hair care tip from a family member that is a 'family secret or trick' for hair that works, and the consumer continues to use it.

"*I feel beautiful in my short, afro hair, this is how it grows out of my head ... and I wanted the world to see it like that.*" – Zozibini Tunzi

6   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTION FOR THE RESEARCH

This study had several limitations. The first was that it used a non-probability convenience sampling technique to draw the sample from the population. The disadvantage of using a convenience sampling method is that the findings from the study cannot be extrapolated to

the wider population. The second limitation of the study was its use of a cross-sectional design. Future studies could conduct a longitudinal study for an extended period. Such a longitudinal study would also include the analysis of actual behaviour, such as the purchase of natural hair care products.

The study excluded the attractiveness subdimension of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility construct. Future research could use attractiveness to understand the role of source credibility further, especially if the analysis compared the source credibility of SMIs on different platforms (such as YouTube vs Instagram). Further research could include testing the measurement invariance of the source credibility scale across reference groups, especially in the African context.

Another limitation of the study was that it used only Black South African women with natural hair. The study excluded Black women from other counties or regions; so future research could include Black women from other parts of Africa and the African diaspora. The inclusion of these Black women in future research would provide a broader picture of attitudes towards natural hair care products for Black women. Because this study used Black women only, future research could include Black African men and their attitudes towards natural hair care products. These two inclusions would provide a more holistic understanding of attitudes towards natural hair care products. Future research could also understand the differences in the attitudes of these various groups – for example, between Black African women and Black African men.

The study used only FMMs and Instagram SMIs. The respondents in this study, like Thomas (2020:143), indicated that Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform and source of information or awareness on natural hair care products. Facebook is also the most frequently used social media platform in the world (Kemp, 2022:6); thus it is worth considering future research that uses Facebook SMIs, friends, and SMIs from other platforms. The use of other social media platforms would be to understand their source credibility in the natural hair care movement and their differences in source credibility.

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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. Theoretically, the external influence of the social environment on reference groups was explored using social theories, addressing the research gap with regard to the role that reference groups play in Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. Understanding the role of credible reference groups as sources of information would assist marketing practitioners when creating their content marketing strategy for natural hair care products. This thesis could enable the marketer to select and use ideal natural hair care advocates to engage effectively with Black African women about natural hair care products. That engagement would include the reference group sharing credible, relevant, and valuable information that satisfies the Black African woman's needs, which would assist in moving them along the consumer journey.

Marketers have long found that reference groups influence consumers' consumption behaviour (Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986) and that consumers are susceptible to the influence of reference groups in purchasing products (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:137). Reference group members who provide valuable and credible information often have their recommendations considered with a high level of confidence (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:132). Credibility plays a significant role in determining conformity (Park & Lessig, 1977:103); credible reference groups are important because they affect consumers' social identification, perceived similarity, cognitive involvement, affective involvement, attitude, intention to purchase, and behaviour (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30).

In consuming natural hair care products, reference groups have played a significant role by sharing content and providing support and empowering Black women to take care of their natural hair (Ellington, 2014:562; Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:29). The natural hair movement, which entails Black women embracing their natural hair (Byrd & Tharps, 2014:2; Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:87; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:157; Rowe, 2015:2; Thompson, 2009:835), is in its infancy in South Africa, but is rapidly growing (Williams, 2018). So, the need for credible sources of information becomes critical for Black African women with natural hair to decipher credible natural hair care information. This thesis was intended to aid in creating marketing activities that are underpinned by the influence of reference groups as credible sources for Black African women's natural hair care products. The ultimate purpose is to create advocates

who engage effectively with Black African women about natural hair care products, and to drive specific behaviours by building empowering consumer communities through product knowledge sharing and demonstrations that drive purchase and usage behaviour.

The theoretical groundings for this study were the social theories of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989:1175), and social influence theory (Kelman, 1958:52). Social identity theory was used for Chapter 2 (Article 1) because it provides insights into the impact that group membership has on a consumer's identity (Dutot, 2020:6; Liu & Chan, 2011:4) and on the interaction between the individual and their social environment (Oakes, 2002:820). Social cognitive theory was used for Chapter 3 (Article 2) because of the dynamic triadic causation between the individual's internal personal factors, their behavioural patterns, and the social environment (Bandura, 2001:14). Social influence theory was used in Chapter 4 (Article 3) because it provides a foundation for understanding individuals' social behaviour (Hwang, 2016:467). All the theories selected for this study provide a unique lens to explain how the consumer is influenced by their social environment (the external influence – the reference group). In turn, their sense of belonging and their cognitive, affective, and evaluative behaviours are impacted, thereby providing insight into how credible reference groups recommending natural hair care products to Black African women affect consumption behaviour towards the products.

The remainder of this chapter addresses the research problem and the objectives, summarises the main findings, notes the theoretical and managerial contributions of the study and its limitations, and offers directions for future research.

2   PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

Reference groups play a pivotal role in influencing a consumer's attitudes, behaviours, and intentions towards to a product (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30). They are part of the input stage in the consumer decision-making model, as the sociocultural environment influences, which is one of the external influences on the process (Shrosbree, 2014:16). Previous research has addressed several aspects of reference groups, including that of source credibility – specifically, the relationships between reference groups' source credibility and consumers' attitudes, purchase intentions, and behaviour (Fink, Koller, Gartner, Floh & Harms, 2020:154; Ohanian, 1991:47; Rafique & Zafar, 2012:62; Sir, 2018:30; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9). Consumer researchers have devoted considerable attention to reference groups' source credibility (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008:211; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017:3; Hovland & Weiss, 1951:647; Ohanian, 1990:41;

Ohanian, 1991:47; Pornpitakpan, 2004:243; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020:259). Although numerous studies have measured the influence of source credibility on purchase intentions, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, only a few peer-reviewed studies examine the influence of all three subdimensions of Ohanian's (1991:52) source credibility scale on purchase intentions (Adam, 2022:54; AlFarraj, Alalwan, Obeidat, Baabdullah, Aldmourand & Al-Haddad, 2021:6; Daimi & Tolunay, 2021:69; He & Jin, 2022:8; Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang & Soutar, 2020:167), especially for natural hair care products. Thus, it was important for this study to understand the role of credible reference groups. This study investigated all three of the source credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) in the consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products. The two main reasons for the selection of all three source credibility subdimensions were that hair is a physical feature, and that it has had negative historical and socio-political associations for Black individuals that led to a lack of knowledge about their natural hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:843). Consequently, it was important for the study to choose a source credibility measure that assesses physical appearance using attractiveness, trustworthiness for believability, and expertise for knowledgeability. The focus on all the source credibility subdimensions enables marketing practitioners to identify the exact components of the reference groups that would drive the consumption behaviour of Black African women in using natural hair care products.

Reference groups are considered one of the most prominent drivers of the Black African women's natural hair movement (Black women who wear their natural hair in its coily form and do not chemically straighten their hair). They provide social support by offering supportive knowledge that educates and empowers Black individuals about their natural hair (Douglas, Onalaja & Taylor, 2020:183; Jackson, 2017:46; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:165; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51; Rowe, 2015:1). While reference groups play a significant role in the Black women's natural hair movement, little research exists on the role they play in the consumption behaviour of Black women in using natural hair care products. Ellington (2014:563) suggests that further research is required to gain knowledge and understanding of reference groups such as online and in-person support groups, because this would add knowledge to the natural hair movement; and that knowledge would assist marketing practitioners for Black African women natural hair care products in creating content strategies that drive the consumption behaviour relating to their products.

Previous research has shown that reference groups are influential in the purchase of products, and are perceived to be credible sources of information (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30). While research has been conducted

that generally focuses on source credibility as an antecedent (Adam, 2022:54; AlFarraj *et al.*, 2021:6; Daimi & Tolunay, 2021:69; He & Jin, 2022:8; Weismueller *et al.*, 2020:167), very little research has been done on the other roles that source credibility plays in consumption behaviour. Fernandes and Panda (2019:134) suggest that future research needs to be conducted to understand either the mediating role or the moderating role of reference groups during buying decisions. Thus, this study has focused on the role of source credibility reference groups as antecedents and moderators in the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products.

The relationship between source credibility and purchase intentions is well-known and well-researched by consumer researchers (Adam, 2022:54; AlFarraj *et al.*, 2021:6; Daimi & Tolunay, 2021:69; He & Jin, 2022:8; Jin & Phua, 2014:182; Ohanian, 1990; Ohanian, 1991:47; Schouten *et al.*, 2020; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:18; Weismueller *et al.*, 2020:167). As an extension of the existing research, this study has followed Wang and Liu's (2022:13) suggestion that future research investigates the relationship between source credibility and various constructs. This study added the following mediators to the well-established relationship between source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products: social identification, perceived similarity, and attitude. Those additional mediators provide a deeper understanding of how and why source credibility is associated with purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. In turn, such an understanding aids in better predicting purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Understanding the mediating impact of these additional factors would assist marketing practitioners in knowing the interceding factors of reference groups as credible sources and of purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

In addition, this study used consumer involvement at a granular level – specifically, product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement. According to Mou, Zhu and Benyoucef (2019:569), product involvement is linked to the cognitive and affective properties of consumer decision-making. Kim and Sung (2009:517) suggest that further research needs to be conducted on the structural relationships of the constructs of cognitive and affective involvement in various situations to enhance understanding of the purchase-decision involvement constructs. Considering this, this study used cognitive and affective involvement as mediators to understand their effects as catalysts between product involvement and purchase intentions. The study also used the future research suggestion of Fernandes and Panda (2019:134) on the moderating role of source credibility to understand the influence of the source credibility subdimensions of the relationship between the involvement constructs

(product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement) and purchase intentions.

There are two types of reference group: normative and comparative (Human, 2014:225). In alignment with Ellington's (2014:563) suggestion for further research to understand the role of reference groups in the natural hair movement, the family – specifically, female family members – were chosen as the normative (FFM) reference group, and social media influencers were chosen as the comparative (SMI) reference group. Previous research has found that normative reference groups such as family members and comparative reference groups such as SMIs affect the consumer's purchase intention behaviour (Fink *et al.*, 2020:154; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020:9; Wong & Aini, 2017:774). The importance of family in consumer consumption (Human, 2014:225) and the surge of SMIs as information disseminators (Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi & Thrassou, 2021:2), led to the study seeking to understand not only their role as credible reference groups but also their role as recommenders of Black African natural hair care products. Therefore, the study found it was worthwhile to explore these two reference groups' impact on consumption behaviour.

In the light of the above, this study sought to fill the gap in the literature, specifically on the novel and growing phenomenon of the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour.

The secondary objectives of this study to support the primary objective were:

- To investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.
- To examine the effects of normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

3   CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study, focusing on understanding the role of reference group source credibility on consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products, has made several theoretical and

managerial contributions to the reference group source credibility literature, specifically on the novel phenomenon of natural hair care products.

3.1   Theoretical contribution

Reference groups are important because they impact consumers' attitudes and intentions relating to product usage and purchase behaviours (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Fernandes & Panda, 2019:136; Human, 2014:225; Sir, 2018:30). Reference groups are part of the sociocultural environment in the consumer's decision-making process (Shrosbree, 2014:16). Thus, the study used social theories – methodical studies of human society (Barry, 2007:9) – which reinforce the point that the social environment does have an impact on the individual's decision-making process and decision behaviour. The present study considered three social theories to understand the influence of social interaction on an individual, namely social identity theory, social cognitive theory, and social influence theory. The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283) focuses on belonging to a group; this allowed an investigation of how the source credibility of reference groups might relate to belonging and, in turn, the consumption of information to conform to the group's norms. The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989:1175) focuses on triadic reciprocal interaction between individuals' personal factors and behaviour and the social environment. This allowed the study to investigate the interaction of reference group source credibility and involvement (product, cognitive, and affective) on behavioural intentions while acquiring knowledge from the reference group. The social influence theory (Kelman, 1958:52) focuses on changes in an individual from interpersonal processes; this allowed the study to examine the source credibility of normative and comparative reference groups concerning attitudes, through the internalisation of information that leads to a change in the individual's attitude. The social theories used in this study provided an explanatory framework for how reference group source credibility in the social context of Black African women impacts consumption behaviour related to natural hair care products.

Consumer behaviour studies of Black African women's hair care are still limited, and those research studies that do exist generally tend to be of a qualitative nature or in other fields. The reasons for this could be because of the role that natural hair has historically played for Black women, or because natural hair is socio-political (Williams, Collier, Anderson Wadley, Stokes & Coghill, 2022:135). Black people's natural hair is a symbol of resistance, identity, tribe, spirituality, and one's family background and social status (Bellinger, 2007:65; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:44). Thus, studies of Black individuals' natural hair are exploratory in order to gain an in-depth psychological understanding. An opportunity was identified to conduct

quantitative research related to the consumption behaviour of Black African women towards natural hair care products, as this would assist in the creation of content for marketing strategies. This study's quantitative research has been the first to examine the causal relationships associated with reference group source credibility in Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. Understanding the causal relationships in that consumption behaviour would assist marketing practitioners to understand the key factors to leverage when they choose credible sources of information in order to drive purchase intentions when developing their content marketing strategy.

The study's main objective was to understand the role of reference groups' source credibility in the social context of Black African women's natural hair care products. Reference groups are a frame of reference that are perceived by consumers to be credible sources of information (Human, 2014:225). The main contribution of this study is in the consumer behaviour field – specifically, in understanding the role of source credibility as an external influence on the individual's decision-making process and how it impacts the outcome of their decisions. The contribution to consumer research, based on the recommendations of MacInnis, Morwitz, Botti, Hoffman, Kozinets, Lehmann, Lynch and Pechmann (2020:5) is threefold, and can be summarised as follows: first, a descriptive perspective on an understudied consumer group – that is, Black African women with natural hair (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020:366; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:63; Thomas, 2020:173) – is provided; second, the non-target role as a reference group with the source credibility of two types of Black African women – namely, a SMI and an FFM – is considered; and last, the emerging Black African natural hair movement (i.e., wearing hair in its unstraightened and coily state) provides a rich backdrop for the investigation of this arcane context. Focusing on these consumer research opportunities would assist in having a broader impact on the creation of content marketing strategies by using credible understudied consumers to disseminate information as recommenders of products in an emerging phenomenon. The contributions of this study are discussed further below.

Reference group source credibility has become important in the natural hair care movement as a result of the influx of information to which consumers have access. So it has become crucial that consumers be exposed to believable content or information. Therefore, the first contribution of this study is the examination of all three subdimensions of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility scale on purchase intention, as a core construct of the Black African women's consumption behaviour towards natural hair care for decision-making. Similar to Daimi and Tolunay (2021:69) and Weismueller *et al.* (2020:167), who used all three of Ohanian's (1990) source credibility subdimensions, but modified them for generic product

endorsement, source credibility was explored in respect of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. Most previous studies either focused on the effect of one or two of the source credibility subdimensions on purchase intentions (Masuda, Han & Lee, 2022:6; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:274) or used all three with a different outcome variable (Koay, Teoh & Soh, 2021:5; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:18; Wiedman & Von Mettenheim, 2021:712). Ohanian's (1990) source credibility subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) were chosen for two main reasons. The first was that hair is a physical feature, and thus the impact of the physical appearance of the reference group had to be taken into consideration in the form of attractiveness. Second, given Black individuals' historical and socio-political association with their natural hair (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:843), which led to tensions in Black individuals who did not fully embrace natural hair, this resulted in a lack of knowledge about the consumption behaviour of Black individual's natural hair products; and so the knowledge and reliability of the reference group had to be taken into consideration. Thus it was important for the study to choose a source credibility construct that consisted of a measure of attractiveness to measure the physical appearance of the source, its expertise in respect of knowledge, and its trustworthiness and believability in relation to the consumption of natural hair care products. Chapter 2 (Article 1) of this study added to knowledge of the direct effects of the reference group source credibility subdimensions on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Unearthing the finer nuances embedded in each of the subdimensions of source credibility as related to purchase intentions would assist marketing managers in knowing the value of having a credible source to disseminate information for the purposes of encouraging engagement and behaviour. The use of the source credibility subdimensions as first-order constructs provided a unique and in-depth understanding of the roles that attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness respectively played in purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Similarly, Chapter 3 (Article 2) contributed to knowledge by providing insights into the role of reference group source credibility's three first-order constructs as moderators, specifically between the involvement constructs (product, cognitive, and affective involvement) and purchase intentions. Source credibility subdimensions are generally examined as antecedents (He & Jin, 2022:11; Ohanian, 1991:51; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018:18; Wiedman & Mettenheim, 2021:712) or as mediators (Koay *et al.*, 2021:5; Schouten *et al.*, 2020:274). However, never before have all three source credibility subdimensions been empirically examined as moderators, especially between the three involvement constructs mentioned above and purchase intentions. The addition of the moderation effect of the source credibility subdimensions (based on the social cognitive theory of Bandura [1989:1175]) provides insights into the effect of reference group source credibility in strengthening or weakening the

influence of product involvement, cognitive involvement, and affective involvement on the inclination to purchase natural hair care products.

The second contribution of this study was the addition of mediators to the existing source credibility and purchase intentions relationship. This would assist marketing scholars to have a better understanding of possible additional causes of the effect between the source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions (Fairchild & McDaniel, 2017:1259). Adding mediators to understand a relationship between two factors has always been done in consumer research, especially in respect of the relationship between source credibility (Jin & Phua, 2014:193; Muda & Hamzah, 2021:453; Paul, Modi & Patel, 2016:126; Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2021:1128; Tahir & Khan, 2020:68) and purchase intentions. The study has contributed by providing further possible causes of the relationship between the source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions by including a sense of belonging in the form of social identification and perceived similarity (based on social identity theory [Tajfel & Turner, 2004:283]), cognitive involvement, affective involvement (based on social cognitive theory [Bandura, 1989:1175]), and attitude (based on social influence theory [Kelman, 1958:52]). The addition of these mediators provided rich insights into building Black African women's natural hair communities where they can feel that they belong (social identification and perceived similarity), engage through thought (cognitive involvement) and emotion (affective involvement), and establish attitudes to facilitate future purchases. The addition of mediators to the well-established relationship between source credibility and purchase intentions would assist content marketers to understand better the context-specific catalysts (the causal paths) that drive the relationship between the constructs. Specifically, the addition of the mediators provided insights into the catalysts that drive the relationship between reference group source credibility and purchase intentions. This would assist content markers to identify the levers that cause an individual receiving a recommendation to intend to buy a product.

In addition, the study used consumer involvement at a granular level in Chapter 3 (Article 2), defining 'involvement' as interest in the product (product involvement), thoughts about the product (cognitive involvement), and emotions towards the products (affective involvement). The separation of involvement into three constructs was necessary for this study because natural hair care products require a great amount of effort (Shoba, 2020), and so are high-involvement products. Furthermore, this was the first study to use cognitive involvement and affective involvement as mediators between product involvement and purchase intentions in the context of Black African women's natural hair care products. Separating cognitive and affective involvement explains how a consumer's way of thinking about a product and their

emotions towards the product are the means by which product involvement has an effect on purchase intentions. In the emerging trend of natural hair care (Jadezweni, 2018), it was important to understand the role of the Black woman's information processing of natural hair care products through cognitive involvement (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2004:1709; Kim & Sung, 2009:506-507) and their emotions towards natural hair care products (Mou *et al.*, 2019:569) through affective involvement. This would provide marketing practitioners with insights into how thoughts and emotions cause an interested individual to intend to purchase a product.

This was the first study to explore the expertise, trustworthiness, attitudes, and purchase intentions constructs of a normative reference group and a comparative reference group. Historically, the two reference groups (FFMs and SMIs) performed two distinct roles in relation to Black women about their acceptance of natural hair. Historically, FFMs, especially the mother, criticised natural hair (Thomas, 2020:167) because of the role that natural hair played in determining the socio-economic status of Black individuals (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014:88; Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:160; Thompson, 2008:1; Thompson, 2009:843) and in turn made it unacceptable. More recently, however, SMIs have encouraged Black women to embrace their natural hair (Ellington, 2014:552). Chapter 4 (article 3) of the study was the first to consider both FFMs as the normative reference group and SMIs as the comparative reference groups and their effect on attitudes and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. In addition, considering the indirect impact of a reference group's source credibility on purchase intentions through attitudes towards the product would explain which of the two reference groups would drive the internalisation and acceptance of the shared information, based on social influence theory (Kelman, 1958:52).

Mediated moderation was explored further in the study, with the reference group source credibility subdimensions as the moderator between the mediation of cognitive and affective involvement in product involvement and purchase intentions. This model contributed further to the role of reference groups as moderators; and this could be further tested in other contexts or product categories in order to understand the complex factors and relationships that source credibility impacts. This model would show marketers the complexities of consumption behaviour and the interplay of factors during the consumer decision-making process.

3.2 Managerial contribution

The findings from Chapter 2 (Article 1), Chapter 3 (Article 2), and Chapter 4 (Article 3) offer the natural hair care industry insight into developing a content marketing strategy using credible reference groups to disseminate information about natural hair care products. The

managerial contribution of this study is that marketers could use credibility reference groups (FFMs and SMIs) to provide valuable and helpful information about natural hair care products to Black African women.

In line with Cooley and Parks-Yancy's (2019:264) recommendation that marketers should distinguish between strategies to drive product promotion and product purchases, marketers also need to differentiate between sources of information that create product awareness and sources that prompt product purchases (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019:264). Thus this study has focused on understanding the role of credible reference groups as sources of information to enable the marketer to know when to use the reference group in the consumer journey. This study has revealed that reference group credibility plays different roles in the consumption behaviour towards natural hair care products. Marketers could use the reference group source credibility in various ways; it could be used to build brand or company communities that are centred on natural hair care products, or to impact emotional involvement with natural hair care products, or to influence attitudes towards natural hair care products and to drive the purchase of natural hair care products. Marketers could also use the credible reference group that recommends natural hair care products to create a shared social identity that Black African women want to aspire to or mimic.

A managerial implication of this study is the possibility of providing Black African women with tailored marketing content that resonates with them. This could include providing relevant and empowering information about natural hair care products, using credible sources of information to assist Black African women in their decision-making and to move them further on the consumer journey.

4 SUMMARY AND MAIN FINDINGS OF EACH ARTICLE

4.1 Overview of the study, and sample usage behaviour

The empirical research for this chapter adopted a quantitative approach, using online self-administered surveys. One of the objectives of this study was to examine the normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility. Each respondent was randomly assigned one of the two questionnaires. One group of respondents received a questionnaire about FFMs being their source of information; the other received a questionnaire about SMIs being their source of information. A pilot was conducted on a sample of 30 respondents to ensure that the instruments in the study worked correctly. Minor adjustments were subsequently made to the instruments. A total of 611 usable respondents was achieved for

the study: 306 respondents for the FFM reference group and 305 respondents for the social media reference group.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to determine the relationships between the constructs. The statistical packages and tools used for data analysis in the study were the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), PROCESS macro model 4 in SPSS, IBM SPSS Analysis of Moment Structure Amos version 28 and Microsoft Excel.

The questionnaire elicited information on natural hair care product usage behaviour and social media activities for the SMI group. Table 1 below shows the natural hair care products usage behaviour.

Table 1: Sample usage behaviour with natural hair care products

Variable	Response category	Reference group	
		Female family member	**Social media influencer**
		Percentage (n = 306)	**Percentage (n = 305)**
How long have you had natural hair?	Less than one year	3,9%	4,9%
	1 – 2 years	23,9%	20,0%
	3 – 5 years	34,0%	38,4%
	6 – 10 years	15,7%	15,1%
	More than 10 years	22,5%	21,6%
How often natural hair care products are bought?	Weekly	7,2%	5,6%
	Twice a month	10,5%	14,1%
	Monthly	56,2%	51,5%
	Every second month	22,5%	22,3%
	Less often than every second month	3,6%	6,6%
How many times a week do you use African women's natural hair care products?	Once a week	18,0%	24,3%
	Twice a week	22,5%	16,4%
	Three times a week	22,9%	23,0%
	Four times a week	9,8%	10,8%
	Five times a week	8,8%	8,2%
	More than five times a week	17,6%	17,4%
	Blank	0,3%	0,0%
Types of products used	Shampoo	84,3%	86,6%
	Conditioner	72,5%	74,4%
	Moisturiser	73,9%	76,4%
	Oils	72,5%	71,8%
	Styling gel	34,0%	38,7%
	Hydrating spray	41,2%	40,7%
	Other	4,2%	7,5%
	Yes	94,4%	91,1%

Use organic/chemical-free products?	No	5,6%	8,9%
Bought natural hair care products that were recommended?	Yes	97,7%	96,1%
	No	2,3%	3,9%
Who recommended the bought products?	Advert	22,9%	22,3%
	Colleagues	17,3%	12,5%
	Family	69,6%	35,4%
	Friends	55,2%	51,5%
	Online shop	10,1%	8,2%
	Social media influencer	24,2%	56,7%
	Other	2,3%	1,3%

Source: Author's own compilation (2022)

The above sample behaviour characteristics illustrate the consumers' usage patterns and their recommendation patterns for natural hair care products. As reflected in the recent and projected increasing South African market trend to drop chemical straighteners in favour of the natural hair approach (Mordor Intelligence, 2023), the majority of the Black African women in the sample, for both FFM (34.0%) and SMI reference groups (38.4%), had natural hair for three to five years at the time of the study. The samples for both the FFM and SMI reference group in this study thus aligns with the social hair movement seen across South Africa.

The respondents were asked how often they purchased natural hair care products; more than half of the respondents bought products on a monthly basis – 56.2% for FFM respondents and 51.5% for SMI respondents. Shampoos, conditioners, and moisturisers were the most frequently used products. Slightly more respondents from the SMI group (86.6%) than those from the FFM reference group respondents (84.3%) used shampoos. This was the same for conditioners, with slightly more SMI group respondents (74.4%) than the FFM reference group respondents (72.5%). Moisturiser usage followed the same pattern: compare the SMI group (76.4%) and the FFM reference group respondents (73.9%). Most respondents used organic or chemical-free natural hair care products – 94.4% for the FFM respondents and 91.1% for the SMI respondents. These results provide a glimpse into possible product category expenditures contributing to the increase in the natural hair care market share (Mordor Intelligence, 2023).

Of the respondents, 97.7% of the FFM respondents and 96.1% of the SMI respondents bought the natural hair care products that were recommended to them. The aforementioned high

figures relating to purchase recommendations, reaffirm the value of considering reference groups as credible sources in African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour examined in this study. Therefore, findings confirm established literature pertaining to reference group influence (Fernandes & Panda, 2019:137), specifically with regard to the natural hair movement (Neil & Mbilishaka, 2019:174; Ndichu & Upadhyaya, 2019:51; Thomas, 2020:61). For the FFM respondents, natural hair care products were recommended by family (69.6%), friends (55.2%), SMIs (24.2%), and adverts (22.9%). For the SMI respondents, natural hair care products were recommended by friends (51.5%), SMIs (56.7%), family (35.4%), and adverts (22.3%).

The SMI reference group responded to additional questions about their social media activities. The results are reported in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Most frequently used social media platforms

Most frequently used social media platforms	Percentage (n = 305)
Instagram	99,3%
YouTube	98,0%
Facebook	93,8%
Twitter	80,0%
Snapchat	76,4%
Other_WhatsApp	18,0%
Other_TikTok	12,5%

Source: Author's own compilation (2022)

Findings pertaining to the social media usage of the SMI reference group sample reflect social media consumers, supporting the possible impact of the Internet and reference groups via social media established in the literature pertaining to the natural hair movement (Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019:29). The findings in Table 2 show that the majority of the SMI reference group respondents used Instagram (99.3%), followed by YouTube (98.0%) and Facebook (93.8%). WhatsApp and TikTok were the most frequently mentioned social media platforms in the 'Other' category.

Table 3: Frequency of usage of social media platforms

Social media Platform	Response category	Percentage (n = 305)
Instagram	Daily	74,1%
	Monthly	7,2%
	Never	0,7%
	Weekly	18,0%
YouTube	Daily	63,6%
	Monthly	9,2%

	Never	2,0%
	Weekly	25,2%
Facebook	Daily	80,0%
	Monthly	4,3%
	Never	6,2%
	Weekly	9,5%
Twitter	Daily	50,5%
	Monthly	9,8%
	Never	20,0%
	Weekly	19,7%
Snapchat	Daily	30,8%
	Monthly	17,0%
	Never	23,6%
	Weekly	28,5%
Other	Daily	43,0%
	Monthly	3,0%
	Never	46,6%
	Weekly	7,5%

Source: Author's own compilation (2022)

Table 3 above shows that Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform by the SMI reference group respondents, with 80% of them indicating that they used it daily. Despite having more respondents using it, Instagram was the second most frequently used social media platform, with 74.1% of the respondents stating that they used the platform daily. Only 63.6% of the respondents stated that they used YouTube daily, while only half of the respondents used Twitter daily and almost a third used Snapchat daily.

The sections that follow are the main findings from Chapter 2 to Chapter 4 in addressing the study's secondary objectives.

4.2   Chapter 2: Source credibility and purchase intentions: The perspective of South African Black women with natural hair

The primary objective of Chapter 2 (Article 1) was to investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The *secondary objectives* of this chapter were 1) to determine whether social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products, and 2) to determine whether perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The *research design* was quantitative, and the data was collected using the convenience sampling method. The research was conducted using an online survey through a third-party panel. A total of 305 usable responses was achieved. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was done through Amos version 28.0 to test the hypothesis of Chapter 2 (Article 1). The *theory* underpinning this study was social identity theory.

The *main findings* of Chapter 2, presented in Table 4, were that, of the 17 hypotheses of the study, only four were supported. First, this study has supported the statements of Lim, Radzol, Cheah and Wong (2017:29) and of Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo (2021:1124) that several influencer source credibility subdimensions did not encourage purchase intentions. Attractiveness was the only credibility subdimension that influenced purchase intentions. The hypotheses testing the influence of expertise and trustworthiness on purchase intentions were not supported. Only trustworthiness had a significant relationship with social identification, while the impacts of attractiveness and expertise on social identification were not supported. Likewise, only trustworthiness had a significant relationship with perceived similarity. In contrast, the influence of attractiveness and expertise on perceived similarity was not supported. Social identification had a direct influence on purchase intentions. However, despite this significant relationship, the mediating role of social identification in the relationship between the source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions was not supported. The direct relationship between perceived similarity and purchase intentions was also not supported. The indirect relationships between the source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions, mediated by perceived similarity, were not supported. Of the supported relationships, trustworthiness and perceived similarity had the strongest relationship, followed by the relationship between trustworthiness and social identification. Further details of the findings can be reviewed in Chapter 2.

Table 4: Chapter 2 (Article 1) hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses		Finding
H$_{1a}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H$_{1b}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{1c}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and	Not supported

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	purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	
H$_{2a}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and social identification with SMI with natural hair	Not supported
H$_{2b}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and social identification with an SMI with natural hair	Not supported
H$_{2c}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and social identification with an SMI with natural hair	Supported
H$_3$	There is a significant positive relationship between social identification with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Supported
H$_{4a}$	Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between the SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{4b}$	Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{4c}$	Social identification with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{5a}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair.	Not supported
H$_{5b}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.	Not supported
H$_{5c}$	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair.	Supported
H$_6$	There is a significant positive relationship between perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Not supported
H$_{7a}$	Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's attractiveness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{7b}$	Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's expertise and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H$_{7c}$	Perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair mediates the relationship between an SMI's trustworthiness and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported

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Chapter 2 (Article 1) *contributes* by showing that the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intentions was significant. The influence of expertise and trustworthiness on purchase intentions was not significant in this study, reaffirming Sánchez-Fernández and Jiménez-Castillo's (2021:1124) assertion that not all of the influencers' source credibility factors influenced purchase intentions. Chapter 2 (Article 1) has added to the reference group literature that an SMI's attractiveness influences purchase intentions for natural hair care products for Black African women. Some studies have found that attractiveness was not a driver of purchase intentions (Lim *et al*., 2017:29; Ohanian, 1991:51), while other studies found that expertise and trustworthiness impacted purchase intentions (Schouten *et al*., 2020:268; Wang, Kao & Ngamsiriudom, 2017:11). Therefore, within the underexplored context of natural hair care products, source credibility affects purchase intentions differently when compared with previous studies in different contexts. Furthermore, trustworthiness impacted social identification and perceived similarity. Therefore, trust in an SMI could be used to foster a sense of belonging in order to build natural hair communities that disseminate natural hair care product information, and to create the kind of image for the group that Black African women would want to aspire to be part of and to conform to. Additional contributions of Chapter 2 (Article 1) are related to social identification with an SMI with natural hair and perceived similarity with an SMI with natural hair. The results suggest that social identification and perceived similarity do not mediate the relationship between an SMI's source credibility subdimensions and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Thus, the sense of belonging was not a mechanism through which source credibility was associated with purchase intentions for the Black African women in this study. However, social identification with an SMI with natural hair did impact purchase intentions. So, the connection that the Black African women in this study had with an SMI inspired them to intend to purchase the natural hair care products that the SMI had recommended.

4.3 Chapter 3: Source credibility as a moderator between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products

The *primary objective* of Chapter 3 (Article 2) was to investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The study's *secondary objectives* were 1) to determine whether cognitive involvement mediated the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products; and 2) to determine whether affective involvement mediated the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The *empirical research* for the chapter adopted a quantitative approach, using online self-administered surveys through a third-party panel. A final 305 usable responses were achieved for the study. Structural equation modelling (SEM) through IBM SPSS Analysis of Moment Structure Amos version 28 and PROCESS macro model 4 in SPSS were used to test the hypotheses of Chapter 3 (Article 2). The third chapter (Article 2) only focused on SMIs as a reference group for recommending natural hair care products. The foundational *theory* for this article was social cognitive theory.

The *main findings* of Chapter 3 (Article 2), presented in Table 5, indicated that six of the 16 hypotheses were supported. The direct effects of the product and cognitive involvement on purchase intentions were not supported, whereas the direct effect of affective involvement on purchase intentions was supported. The study's findings revealed that product involvement did influence cognitive and affective involvement. There was no statistical significance in the indirect relationship between product involvement and purchase intention, mediated by cognitive involvement. On the other hand, affective involvement was a mediator between product involvement and purchase intentions. Since the effect of the relationship between product involvement and cognitive involvement on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products was not supported, the moderating role of source credibility in these direct relationships was not tested (i.e., H_{8a} – H_{9c}). Two of the hypotheses were supported for the moderating role of source credibility in the direct relationships between product involvement and purchase intentions. The relationships where the moderating effect was found to be significant were that 1) expertise did moderate the direct relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions, and 2) trustworthiness did moderate the direct relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions. The hypothesis that was not supported was attractiveness moderating the influence of affective involvement on purchase intentions. Further details of the findings can be reviewed in Chapter 3.

Table 5: Chapter 3 (Article 2) hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses		Finding
H_1	There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Not supported
H_2	There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and cognitive involvement	Supported
H_3	There is a significant positive relationship between product involvement and affective involvement	Supported

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H$_4$	There is a significant positive relationship between cognitive involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Not supported
H$_5$	There is a significant positive relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Supported
H$_6$	Cognitive involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Not supported
H$_7$	Affective involvement mediates the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products	Supported
H$_{10a}$	The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the attractiveness of an SMI with natural hair	Not supported
H$_{10b}$	The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the expertise of an SMI with natural hair	Supported
H$_{10c}$	The relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products is moderated by the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair	Supported

Chapter 3 (Article 2) *contributes* by identifying source credibility subdimensions that were significant moderators in affecting the relationship between the involvement constructs and purchase intentions. Affective involvement was the only involvement construct in this study that impacted purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Therefore, it was the only relationship that was used to examine the source credibility subdimension's moderation. The findings revealed that the expertise and trustworthiness source credibility subdimensions were significant moderators of the relationship between affective involvement and purchase intentions. However, this effect was small and negative. This meant that the more positive the expertise or trustworthiness effect, the weaker the impact of affective involvement on purchase intentions (albeit a very small effect). Furthermore, the study found that affective involvement did facilitate the relationship between product involvement and purchase intentions. This meant that the emotions a consumer had towards the product could be used as a mechanism to use the interest that Black African women had in natural hair care products to drive them to intend to buy the products in the future.

4.4 Chapter 4: An investigation of family member and social media influencer reference group source credibility, attitude, and purchase intentions towards Black African women's natural hair care products

The *primary objective* of Chapter 4 (Article 3) was to examine the effects of normative (female family member – FFM) and comparative (social media influencer - SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. The study's *secondary objective* was to determine whether attitude mediates the relationship between normative (a FFM) and comparative (an SMI) reference groups' source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.

The *empirical research* for Chapter 4 (Article 3) adopted a quantitative approach, using online self-administered surveys through a third-party panel. A final 611 usable responses were achieved for the study: 306 usable responses from the FFM reference group and 305 usable responses from the SMI group. Structural equation modelling (SEM) through IBM SPSS Analysis of Moment Structure Amos version 28 was used to test the hypotheses of Chapter 4 (Article 3), which focused on both FFMs and SMIs as reference groups for recommending natural hair care products. The *theory* for this article was social influence theory.

The *main findings* of Chapter 4 (Article 3), presented in Table 6, indicated that eight of the fourteen hypotheses were supported. The hypotheses testing the source credibility (expertise and trustworthiness) of both FFMs and SMIs on purchase intentions were not supported. Based on the distinct roles that FFMs and SMIs played in Black women's perceptions about natural hair, the FFMs – especially mothers – made Black African women believe that natural hair was unacceptable, while the SMIs encouraged Black African women to embrace their natural hair. Given these two different perspectives, the study assumed that Black African women would have different views of the attractiveness of natural hair; and so it opted to omit attractiveness from this article. The hypothesis testing the influence of the FFMs' expertise on attitudes towards recommended natural hair care products was not supported, while the hypothesis testing the SMIs' expertise on attitudes towards recommended natural hair care products was supported. The hypotheses testing the direct relationship between attitudes towards recommended natural hair care product of both FFMs and SMIs on purchase intentions were supported. Further novel findings of the study revealed that the relationship between SMIs' expertise and purchase intentions was mediated by attitudes towards recommended natural hair care products. However, the indirect effect of attitude towards recommended natural hair care products on the relationship between expertise and purchase intentions of FFMs was not significant. Furthermore, the indirect effect of attitudes towards recommended natural hair care products on the relationship between trustworthiness and

purchase intentions for both FFMs and SMIs was found to be significant. Further details of the findings can be reviewed in Chapter 4.

Table 6: Chapter 4 (Article 3) hypotheses testing results

	Hypotheses	Finding
H_{1a}	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H_{1b}	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H_{1c}	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H_{1d}	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H_{2a}	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.	Not supported
H_{2b}	There is a significant positive relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H_{2c}	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H_{2d}	There is a significant positive relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and attitudes towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H_{3a}	There is a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H_{3b}	There is a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H_{4a}	Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Not supported

H$_{4b}$	Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the expertise of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H$_{4c}$	Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an FFM with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported
H$_{4d}$	Attitudes towards natural hair care products recommended by a reference group mediate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an SMI with natural hair and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.	Supported

Chapter 4 (Article 3) *contributes* by exploring the effect of the normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and its effects on attitude and purchase intentions. Both the normative and comparative reference groups impacted consumer behaviour (Childers & Rao, 1992:199; Lutfie & Hidayat, 2017:171). Therefore, it was worthwhile to understand the effect, especially in the novel context of this study, which was the consumption of natural hair care products – a new and growing phenomenon in South Africa (Williams, 2018).

5 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. Three secondary objectives to support the primary objective were addressed in Chapter 2 (Article 1), Chapter 3 (Article 2), and Chapter 4 (Article 3). This study has proposed several recommendations for marketers to select and use ideal natural hair care advocates to engage effectively with Black African women about natural hair care products. These recommendations are linked to the consumer decision-making process and the consumer journey to adopt natural hair care products, which would assist with marketing activities as part of the content marketing strategies.

Objective 1: *To investigate the relationship between a social media influencer's (SMI's) source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products*

For consumers in the 'need recognition' phase, marketers need to generate content to create awareness of their products. Trust influences social identification and perceived similarity with the SMI with natural hair. Trust is one of the critical drivers of content marketing (Vinerean,

2017:97). Marketers need to use the SMI's trustworthiness to build natural hair communities in which Black African women can engage, interact, and ultimately have a sense of belonging. Participation in social communities is a positive factor in community identity (Chen & Lin, 2019:24), which is where the ideal self-image to which the consumer wants to conform is generated. At this stage, content should not include promotional content, but be informational, educational, entertaining, and related to Black African women's interests or needs. Content would need to be created that would bring consumers to the company's social media platforms and websites (i.e., content that would drive the consumer to the company's various touchpoints). Creating a natural hair community by using an SMI who resonates with Black African women would also create awareness of the natural hair care products that the brand or company has.

For consumers in the 'pre-purchase information' search phase, marketers would need to create interest in their product. At this stage, consumers actively search for information, and source credibility becomes crucial. The Black African woman would be gathering and analysing product information. In this case, trust in the SMI becomes essential to show what the product offers to fulfil the Black African woman's needs. The marketer should focus on providing information by using a credible SMI, and thus reduce the analysis of the information. Marketers should have information on all their available products that would need to be easily acceptable. This would include empowering the SMI with knowledge about and skills to promote the company's products in order to answer consumers' questions and so satisfy their need for natural hair care products.

Consumers in the 'evaluation of alternatives' phase evaluate the brand's products, considering whether to purchase the product from Brand A or from Brand B. Marketers should use an SMI to provide Black African women with the rationale for buying their products, and provide other tips to reduce cognitive processing (cognitive involvement). At this stage, the marketer could use the SMI's attractiveness to showcase how the product would make the Black African woman look and make her feel elegant, sexy, and beautiful (attractiveness). At this stage, the content might shift to information about the brand or the product's differentiator (organic products that are chemical free), the product's benefits (what the product does or does not do to the hair, assistance with hair growth, etc.), how the product would make the consumer feel (easy, soft, and manageable hair). Marketers could leverage the attractiveness of the SMI with natural hair at this stage. The Black African women in the study used, on average, three products: shampoos, conditioners, and oils. So, it is recommended that an SMI be used to share information about these three products and their benefits.

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For consumers in the 'trial purchase' stage, marketers need to convert the consumer to purchasing their natural hair care products. The social identification (connection) with the SMI with natural hair and the SMI's attractiveness could be used to drive the consumer to want to purchase the product in the future and try it. Attractiveness does not cause social identification with the SMI, so it is not sound to use attractiveness for connection with the SMI (trust is still essential to drive connection). Emotional connection the Black African women have with the SMI and visual appeal (attractiveness) could be used to drive future purchases. The SMI's visual appeal that is shown after using the products would need to be in line with what the Black African woman resonates with. Information should be provided on how the product would make the Black African woman's hair soft or long – or whatever features of the product satisfy her needs for her visual appearance. After using the product, this stage could include many visuals of SMIs with different hairstyles; and the SMI could recommend additional products such as gels and oils.

Objective 2: *To investigate the moderating role of an SMI's source credibility on the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products*

For this objective and at this stage, the Black African woman is aware of natural hair care products. Marketers must provide content that converts interest and involvement into intentions to purchase their natural hair care products.

The information provided to Black African women must give them food for thought. Information that would allow them to think positively about the products is critical at this point. The content marketer could provide information such as how the product minimises the risks of damaging their hair, and what the product offers to fulfil their needs (cognitive involvement). The marketer should use an SMI who would provide Black African women with consistent information that shows that the brand or the company is always there for the consumer in order to satisfy their needs. To tap into the benefits of affective involvement, an emotion towards the product should be created; this could be information about the product's origins and emotive features, including how it was sourced.

The Black African woman is considering whether to purchase the product and is actively searching for information. Credibility becomes crucial to move the consumer from information processing and being emotionally involved (affective involvement) to wanting to buy the products in the future. The marketing company should use an SMI to provide the Black African woman with a compelling motivation for buying their products. The SMI's expertise and trustworthiness would be used to drive purchases by encouraging the consumers to think

about and have feeling towards the product. Since social media are a platform on which SMIs share their lives, it would also be ideal to show how the SMI uses the products in their everyday life and for any special occasion they might have or be going to, and, using the SMI's skills and knowledge, to showcase the different hairstyles that could be achieved from using the product. The showcasing of products and illustrating their use in their everyday lives would indicate that the natural hair care products are consistent, and thus show that the SMI is trustworthy in their recommendations.

It is also recommended to showcase the SMI's skills and expertise by getting them to share product information. The information would illustrate that the SMI's expertise includes, but is not limited to, the ingredients used in the products and how they affect Black African women's natural hair; authentic feedback about the product; how to use it and how not to use it; and the positive and negative attributes of the product and how to overcome them, thereby minimising the potential risks of using the products. For example, the SMI could be honest and share that in summer, when the air is dry, product Z makes the hair dry, but that, if the consumer sprayed their hair with water before using the product, the product would be fine. This would be an example of how the product would reduce the potential risk to the consumer and thus affect their cognitive involvement positively. In this way, the SMI would show not only that they know the products but also could be trusted with the information they were giving about the products.

Trustworthiness is another source credibility factor that affects the involvement with the products to the point of purchasing them. The marketing company thus needs to ensure that the SMI provides information that shows that the product is consistent and reliable over time. The information should include how the SMI has consistently used the products, and whether the products are always there for the consumer without fail (or with minimal fail) on all occasions.

As noted earlier, the Black African women in the study used, on average, three products: shampoos, conditioners, and oils. Marketers should include a story about how the product was made; and if the marketing company donates any proceeds from the sale, the SMI should inform (or have a campaign that informs) the consumer about the feel-good stories about the product; how the brand uses natural ingredients in the product, and how it would not damage their hair; and that the product is environmentally friendly and uses natural ingredients from a community that the company is uplifting. These would assist in the feelings (linked to affective involvement) that Black African women would have towards the product, thus moving them from being interested in the product to intending to buy it in the future.

Objective 3: *To examine the effects of normative (FFM) and comparative (SMI) reference groups' source credibility and their impact on purchase intentions towards natural hair care products.*

One way to solve the consumer's problem in the 'need recognition' phase and to create awareness of the products is to show them which credible source of information to use at this point. Information that is generated from an FFM with natural hair is trusted more, and it has the greatest impact on attitudes towards natural hair care products. This is because family members are perceived as having nothing to gain from sharing the information (Human, 2014:225); therefore, their information is trusted more. Also, their values are similar to those of the consumer. Thus, it could be argued that they would have a greater impact on attitudes towards natural hair care products. The marketer or the natural hair care brand could run a campaign using the trust of an FFM, such that the Black African woman could share how an FFM with natural hair gave them honest, reliable, and useful natural hair care product advice, and then share how the advice, recommendation, or information helped them with their hair. This could include what they liked about the product, the positive feelings they had towards the product, and its good and desirable attributes. This would give the consumer the information they need to form favourable attitudes towards natural hair care products.

Once the consumer is aware of the product, the information provided needs to drive a favourable disposition or position towards natural hair care products. The marketer must empower the consumer with knowledge that would continue to shape their favourable – or change their unfavourable – belief about the product. The marketer could use a credible SMI at this point to share information that would drive positive attitudes towards natural hair care products. The SMI could use their knowledge and previous experience with natural hair care products to show that they are qualified to talk about the product and that they are knowledgeable about the product. They could also provide tips on the dos and don'ts about the products, making sure that they highlight their great benefits (such as their ease of use, they could be used for any hairstyle and occasion, and how they make hair softer). Marketers should use the trustworthiness of the SMI by showing that the SMI gives reliable and honest information. This could include running a campaign in which the SMI asks the consumer what about the product worked and what didn't work. For those who say that things did not work, the SMI must be able to offer them a solution to the problem. This is to ensure that the SMI drives the consumer to have favourable attitudes towards natural hair care products.

In the stage when the Black African woman is evaluating natural hair care products, the attitudes generated by both the FFM and the SMI influence the intentions to purchase natural

hair care products. However, the influence of the FFM is more crucial in respect of purchase intentions towards natural hair care products. Consequently, when marketers develop their content marketing strategy, they should put more emphasis on the FFM (or on the campaign that involves them) to drive purchase intention. Another example campaign for this part of the journey might be to have two FFMs talk about the different products they had used. Part of the story would be about how the FFMs changed Black African women's attitude towards natural hair care products. This would be a way to compare brands. This could include what they liked about the product compared with the previous brand they used, the good and desirable attributes of the brand, and how it differed from the other brands. This would give consumers the information they need to form attitudes towards natural hair care products. The marketer could also use this tactic by asking the SMIs to share their stories about how their FFMs gave them hair advice, or when the FFMs gave them (the SMIs) information about using the products and how that worked for them. A campaign like this would use both aspects of the study – the trustworthiness and expertise of FFMs, and the trustworthiness and expertise of SMIs – to drive the purchase of natural hair care products.

In order to drive trial purchases or to convert the Black African woman, marketers should use FFM and SMI recommendations that produce positive attitudes towards the product to drive the consumer to want to purchase the product and trial it. Additional natural hair care products could also be recommended at this stage.

6   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the theoretical and managerial contributions of this study, it has several limitations that could guide future research.

The first limitation of the study is that the study used non-probability convenience sampling to draw the sample from the population. The disadvantage of using the convenience sampling method is that the findings from the study cannot be generalised to the entire population. Future studies could use probability sampling techniques to generalise their findings. The second limitation is that the study used a cross-sectional design to collect the data; future research could include a longitudinal design in order to understand the consumption patterns of natural hair care products over time – for example, six to 12 months – since seasonal changes might change the use of natural hair products.

This study only focused on FFMs and Instagram SMIs. Future research could include other reference groups as sources of information in order to understand their role in the consumption

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of natural hair care products. The respondents in this study and in that of Thomas (2020:143) indicated that Facebook was the most often used social media platform and source of information or awareness for natural hair care products. Thus for future research it would be worth considering using Facebook SMIs, friends, and SMIs from other platforms (such as Facebook and Tiktok, which is growing rapidly globally). The use of other social media platforms would be to understand their source credibility in the consumption behaviour of natural hair care products and the differences in the source credibility of the various SMIs. Differences in source credibility might be expected because the various types of social media platform have different purposes; for example, YouTube is a video-sharing platform, while Facebook is a social network (Aichner & Jacob, 2015:260).

This study conducted an exploratory analysis of the moderated mediation effects of the source credibility subdimensions. Future research could include further analysis of the role of source credibility in moderated mediation. This could be in the natural hair care context or in any other context to build the literature on the moderated meditation effects of the source credibility subdimensions. Further research could also include testing the measurement invariance of the source credibility scale across reference groups, especially in the African context.

The focus of this study was to explore the relationship between source credibility and purchase intentions towards natural hair care products by Black African women. Future research would need to include brands and services that cater for natural hair to make a holistic contribution to the South African natural hair care industry. The research design for this study was quantitative in nature, which was appropriate for its objectives. Future studies could adopt a qualitative research design in which data is collected through semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing behaviour towards natural hair care products.

This study used only Black South African women with natural hair and excluded Black women and men from other countries or regions. Thus, future research could include Black women and men from the African diaspora and from the rest of Africa. These two inclusions would provide a more holistic and thorough understanding of consumer behaviour in the realm of Black African natural hair care products. Future research could also seek to understand the differences in the attitudes of these various groups, such as Black African women vs Black African men.

The theoretical contribution of this study has added to the knowledge of reference groups' source credibility, which has opened further avenues for future research on this topic.

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Following the suggestion of Fernandes and Panda (2019:134), future research would need to be conducted to understand the mediating role of the source credibility of reference groups. This would enable researchers to understand source credibility as a mechanism to explain a phenomenon and why certain relationships exist.

In this study, reference groups were used, according to Shrosbree's (2014:16) categorisation, as an external influence in the consumer's decision-making process. In the process, other external influences could be considered in future research, such as culture and subcultures, which are the learnt beliefs, values, and customs that directly impact consumer behaviour (Brewer, 2014:304). Future research should consider the effects of these external influences on the consumption behaviour of Black individuals towards natural hair care products. Considering the historical and socio-political association of Black individuals' natural hair care consumption behaviour, culture and subcultures would be expected to play a role in that consumption behaviour. In addition, future research could explore the similarities or differences between these external influences in order to understand their effects on Black individuals' natural hair care consumption behaviour.

7   CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to determine the effect of reference groups as credible sources on Black African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour. This study has made significant theoretical and managerial contributions to the reference group source credibility literature and the role it plays in impacting consumption behaviour. The findings of this study, underpinned by the social theories it used to focus on the impact of the social environment on the individual, have highlighted and elucidated the importance of having credible sources of information to impact consumption behaviour.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES USED IN THE STUDY

FEMALE FAMILY MEMBER (FFM) QUESTIONNAIRE

**Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences**

Dept. of Marketing Management

Title of the study

The role of reference groups as credible sources in African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour

Research conducted by:

Mrs B. L. Simelane (18325123)
Cell: 076 179 5061

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Batandwa Simelane, PhD student from the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of this study is to investigate African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour.

This is an <u>anonymous</u> study survey as your name will not appear on the questionnaire. The answers you give will be treated with strict <u>confidentiality</u> to ensure that you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.

- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

- Please answer the questions as completely and honestly as possible. This survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time.

- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

- Should you have any questions or comments regarding the study, please contact Batandwa Simelane (batandwam@gmail.com), Dr Liezl-Marié van der Westhuizen (liezl-marie.vanderwesthuizen@up.ac.za) and Dr Tinashe Ndoro (tinashe.ndoro@up.ac.za).

In research of this nature the study supervisors may wish to contact respondents to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

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Please click on either agree to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the survey voluntarily.

Or choose the disagree option below if you would not like to participate.

_____   _____

Participant's signature via click   **Date**

Select your answer by clicking the appropriate option.

Part I: Screening questions

1.   Are you older than 18 years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

2.   Are you a South African woman?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

3. Are you a Black African woman?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

4.   Do you have natural hair? Please note that **natural hair is defined as black hair in its natural state; not chemically straightened hair or relaxed hair.**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

If yes, then please proceed to Part II of the questionnaire.

Part II: Consumption behaviour

1.   Are there any female family members in your household (Choose the most appropriate option below.)

☐ Yes

☐ No, I live alone

☐ No, I only live with male family members

☐ Other (please specify)

2.   What is the role of female family members in the decision-making process concerning African women's natural hair care products? (Indicate all appropriate options.)

- ☐   The person that suggests the purchase of a product or service (Initiator)
- ☐   The person that has influence on the final purchase decision of others (Influencer)
- ☐   The person who finally determines the purchase decision (Decider)
- ☐   The person that purchases and pays for the product or service (Buyer)
- ☐   The person that consumes the product or service (User)

3.   How long have you had natural hair? (Select only one option)

- ☐   Less than one year
- ☐   1 – 2 years
- ☐   3 – 5 years
- ☐   6 – 10 years
- ☐   More than 10 years

4.   How many times a week do you use African women's natural hair care products?

- ☐   Once a week
- ☐   Twice a week
- ☐   Three times a week
- ☐   Four times a week
- ☐   Five times a week
- ☐   More than five times a week

5.   Please indicate which natural hair care product categories for African women you use. (Indicate all applicable categories)

- ☐   Shampoo
- ☐   Conditioner
- ☐   Moisturiser
- ☐   Oils
- ☐   Styling gel
- ☐   Hydrating spray
- ☐   Other (please specify)

6. How many different types of African women's natural hair care brands per product type do you use on a weekly basis?

(A) Product types used	(B) Number of brands used
Shampoo	
Conditioner	
Moisturiser	
Oils	
Styling_gel	
Hydrating_spray	
Other (please specify)	

7. How often do you buy natural hair care products for African women's hair? (Select only one option)

        ☐   Weekly

        ☐   Twice a month

        ☐   Monthly

        ☐   Every second month

        ☐   Less often than every second month

8. Do you choose African women's natural hair care products that are organic/chemical free (products that are free from sulphates, parabens, silicones, and harmful materials)?

        ☐ Yes

        ☐ No

Part III: Data collection

In this study, natural hair care products are defined as products that cater for African women's natural hair.

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I am interested in reading information about how African women's natural hair care products are made.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am interested in reading about the African	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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women's natural hair care product category.							
I have compared product characteristics among brands of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think there are a great deal of differences among brands of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a most preferred brand of African women's natural hair care products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I believe that different types of African women's natural hair care products provide different amounts of satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All types of African women's natural hair care products are equally enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In purchasing African women's natural hair care products, I am certain of my choice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is really annoying to make unsuitable purchases of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Buying African women's natural hair care products helps me express my personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can tell a lot about a person by the African women's natural hair care products she buys	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Choosing between African women's natural hair care products is a very important decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Buying an African women's natural hair care product requires a lot of thought	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is extremely important that I make the right choice of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a strong interest in African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I attach great importance to African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy buying African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Scenario (Family member)

Consider a female family member with natural hair (for example a sibling or cousin). The female family member has had natural hair for a period of more than one year. Recently the female family member started using a range of natural hair care products that she likes. Since you also have natural hair, she had decided to tell you about the products and share information about the natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, the female family member is your source of information for natural hair care products. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

Click to continue.

Below are statements about your association with the female family member with natural hair in the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
When someone criticises my female family member with natural hair, it feels like a personal insult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very interested in what others think about my female family member with natural hair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I talk about my female family member with natural hair, I usually say "we" rather than "she"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My female family member with natural hair's successes are my successes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When someone praises my female family member with natural hair, it feels like a personal compliment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When someone criticises my female family member with natural hair, I feel embarrassed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about perceived similarity with the female family member with natural hair in the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
My female family member with natural hair thinks like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My female family member with natural hair behaves like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My female family member with natural hair is like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My female family member with natural hair is similar to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements related to your attitude towards natural hair care products recommended by the female family member in the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I like African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel positive towards African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member are desirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member are good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements relating to purchasing African women's natural hair care products recommended by the female family member in the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
The probability that I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member is high	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would purchase African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would continuously buy African women's natural hair care products recommended by my female family member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about your perception of the female family member with natural hair in the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems classy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems beautiful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems elegant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems dependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems like an expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems experienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female family member seems qualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care the female	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

family member seems skilled							

Which of the following options was your source of information about natural hair care products in the scenario for answering multiple questions in this questionnaire?

□ Female family member

□ Social media influencer: Kiwendo

How likely are you to use a female family member as a source of information about natural hair care products?

Not likely at all						Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1.   In which year were you born?

____

2.   Who is your female role model when it comes to natural hair? (Indicate all appropriate options.)

□   A family member (mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, etc)

□   Celebrity

□   Social media influencer

□   A colleague

□   A friend

□   I don't have a female role model

□   Other (please specify)

3.   Have you ever bought an African women's natural hair care product recommended to you?

□ Yes

□ No

If no, end of survey.
If yes, move to next question.

4.   If yes to question 3, who recommended the product? (Select all applicable options.)

□ Family

- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Colleagues
- ☐ Social media influencer
- ☐ Advert
- ☐ Online shop
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER (SMI) QUESTIONNAIRE

**Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences**

Dept. of Marketing Management

Title of the study
The role of reference groups as credible sources in African women's natural hair care
consumption behaviour

Research conducted by:

Mrs B. L. Simelane (18325123)
Cell: 076 179 5061

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Batandwa Simelane, PhD student from the Department of Marketing Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of this study is to investigate African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour.

This is an <u>anonymous</u> study survey as your name will not appear on the questionnaire. The answers you give will be treated with strict <u>confidentiality</u> to ensure that you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.

- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

- Please answer the questions as completely and honestly as possible. This survey should not take more than 15 minutes of your time.

- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

- Should you have any questions or comments regarding the study, please contact Batandwa Simelane (batandwam@gmail.com), Dr Liezl-Marié van der Westhuizen (liezl-marie.vanderwesthuizen@up.ac.za) and Dr Tinashe Ndoro (tinashe.ndoro@up.ac.za).

In research of this nature the study supervisors may wish to contact respondents to verify the authenticity of data gathered by the researcher. It is understood that any personal contact details that you may provide will be used only for this purpose and will not compromise your anonymity or the confidentiality of your participation.

Please click on either agree to indicate that:
- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the survey voluntarily.
Or choose the disagree option below if you would not like to participate.

_____   _____

Participant's signature via click   **Date**

Select your answer by clicking the appropriate option.

Part I: Screening questions

1.   Are you older than 18 years?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

2.   Are you a South African woman?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

3. Are you a Black African woman?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

4.   Do you have natural hair? Please note that **natural hair is defined as black hair in its natural state; not chemically straightened hair or relaxed hair.**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

5.   Do you have an Instagram account?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no to this question, thank you for participating.

If yes, then please proceed to Part II of the questionnaire.

Part II: Consumption behaviour

1.   How often do you use the most common social media platforms?

Social media platform	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
Instagram				
Facebook				
YouTube				
Twitter				
Snapchat				
Other (please specify or select "Never" if not applicable)				

2. Approximately how many influencers do you follow on each social media platform?

Social media platform	Number of influencers
Instagram	
Facebook	
YouTube	
Twitter	
Snapchat	
Other (please specify)	

3. How long have you had natural hair? (Select only one option)
- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1 – 2 years
- ☐ 3 – 5 years
- ☐ 6 – 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

4. How many times a week do you use African women's natural hair care products?
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Twice a week
- ☐ Three times a week
- ☐ Four times a week
- ☐ Five times a week
- ☐ More than five times a week

5. Please indicate which natural hair care product categories for African women you use. (Indicate all applicable categories)

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☐ Shampoo

☐ Conditioner

☐ Moisturiser

☐ Oils

☐ Styling gel

☐ Hydrating spray

☐ Other (please specify)

6. How many different types of African women's natural hair care brands per product type do you use on a weekly basis?

(A) Product types used	(B) Number of brands used
Shampoo	
Conditioner	
Moisturiser	
Oils	
Styling gel	
Hydrating spray	
Other (please specify)	

7.   How often do you buy African women's natural hair care products? (Select only one option)

☐ Weekly

☐ Twice a month

☐ Monthly

☐ Every second month

☐ Less often than every second month

8.   Do you choose African women's natural hair care products that are organic/chemical free (products that are free from sulphates, parabens, silicones, and harmful materials)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Part III: Data collection

In this study, natural hair care products are defined as products that cater for African women's natural hair.

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I am interested in reading information about how African women's natural hair care products are made.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am interested in reading about the African women's natural hair care product category.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have compared product characteristics among brands of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think there are a great deal of differences among brands of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a most preferred brand of African women's natural hair care products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I believe that different types of African women's natural hair care products provide different amounts of satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All types of African women's natural hair care products would be equally enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In purchasing African women's natural hair care products, I am certain of my choice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It is really annoying to make unsuitable purchases of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Buying African women's natural hair care products helps me express my personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can tell a lot about a person by the African women's natural hair care products he or she buys	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about your involvement with African women's natural hair care products.

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Choosing between African women's natural hair care products is a very important decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Buying an African women's natural hair care product requires a lot of thought	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is extremely important that I make the right choice of African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a strong interest in African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I attach great importance to African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy buying African women's natural hair care products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Scenario (Social media influencer)

Kiwendo is a natural hair social media influencer on different social media platforms. She has an Instagram account with 123,000 followers and a YouTube channel with over 52,000

subscribers. She uses these platforms to share content about natural hair. This includes her journey with natural hair, educating people on how to take care of their natural hair and giving information about the products that are available to take care of natural hair. Her recent post on Instagram was about a natural hair care range of products and steps on how to use the products on washday.

For the purpose of answering the questions that follow, you follow Kiwendo on her Instagram page @Kiwendo_hair. She is your source of information regarding natural hair. In this instance, natural hair is defined as hair that is kinky and coily that is not relaxed or chemically straightened.

Click to continue.

Below are statements about your association with Kiwendo (the natural hair social media influencer) from the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
When someone criticises Kiwendo, it feels like a personal insult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very interested in what others think about Kiwendo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I talk about Kiwendo, I would say "we" rather than "she"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kiwendo's successes are my successes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When someone praises Kiwendo, it feels like a personal compliment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When someone criticises Kiwendo, I would feel embarrassed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements about perceived similarity with Kiwendo (the natural hair social media influencer) from the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement:

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Kiwendo thinks like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kiwendo behaves like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kiwendo is like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Kiwendo is similar to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements related to your attitude towards African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo (the natural hair social media influencer) from the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
I like African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel positive towards African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo are desirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo are good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are statements relating to purchasing African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo (the natural hair social media influencer) from the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

The probability that I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo is high	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would purchase African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would consider buying African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would continuously buy African women's natural hair care products recommended by Kiwendo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Below are several statements about your perception of Kiwendo (the natural hair social media influencer) from the scenario. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Statement	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair Kiwendo seems classy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems beautiful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems elegant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems dependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems like an expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems experienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems qualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
With regards to natural hair care Kiwendo seems skilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Which of the following options was your source of information about natural hair care products in the scenario for answering multiple questions in this questionnaire?

☐ Female family member

☐ Social media influencer: Kiwendo

How likely are you to use a social media influencer as a source of information about natural hair care products?

Not likely at all						Very likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. In which year were you born?

_____

2.   Who is your female role model when it comes to natural hair? (Indicate all appropriate options.)

☐   A family member (mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, etc)

☐   Celebrity

☐   Social media influencer

☐   A colleague

☐   A friend

☐   I don't have a female role model

☐   Other (please specify)

3.   Have you ever bought an African women's natural hair care product recommended to you?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ If no, end of survey.
☐ If yes, move to next question.

4.   If yes to question 3, who recommended the product? (Select as many options)

☐ Family

☐ Friends

☐ Colleagues

☐ Social media influencer

☐ Advert

☐ Online shop

☐ Other (please specify)

Thank you for taking time to participate in this research.

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Approval Certificate

21 May 2021

Mrs BL Simelane
Department: Marketing Management

Dear Mrs BL Simelane

The application for ethical clearance for the research project described below served before this committee on:

Protocol No:	EMS092/21
Principal researcher:	Mrs BL Simelane
Research title:	The role of reference groups as credible sources in African women's natural hair care consumption behaviour
Student/Staff No:	18325123
Degree:	Doctoral
Supervisor/Promoter:	Dr L van der Westhuizen
Department:	Marketing Management
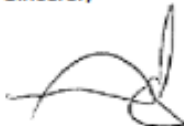
The decision by the committee is reflected below:

Decision:	Approved
Conditions (if applicable):	
Period of approval:	2021-06-14 - 2022-12-31

The approval is subject to the researcher abiding by the principles and parameters set out in the application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research. The approval does not imply that the researcher is relieved of any accountability in terms of the Codes of Research Ethics of the University of Pretoria if action is taken beyond the approved proposal. If during the course of the research it becomes apparent that the nature and/or extent of the research deviates significantly from the original proposal, a new application for ethics clearance must be submitted for review.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

pp PROF JA NEL
CHAIR: COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

Fakulteit Ekonomiese en Bestuurswetenskappe
Lefapha la Disaense tša Ekonomi le Taolo

APPENDIX C: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

Michael J. McCoy, editor

Make no mistake

Cell: +27 83 664 3982
e-mail: <editor@writeright.co.za>
SA Government CSD supplier number: MAAA0756443
Associate member, Professional Editors' Guild, South Africa

2 May 2023

To whom it may concern

I certify that I was contracted by **Ms Batandwa Simelane** to assist with the language editing of her PhD thesis by article.
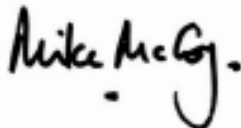
I edited the various documents making up the thesis using the 'Track changes' feature of Microsoft Word®. I focused on correcting typing errors, and ensuring that the syntax, spelling, and punctuation were correct, that the language was idiomatically acceptable, that the register was appropriate to an academic document, and that the documents were as free from ambiguity as possible.

Where necessary, terms or passages that were unclear to me, such that I was not confident about editing them, were brought to the attention of the client.

In the process I neither made nor suggested any changes to the substance of the document.

I proofread the various reference lists for any obvious typing errors or missing information, and to check whether the formatting was consistent. I also cross-checked the reference lists against the in-text citations, and pointed out any cases where references were missing from one or the other or where details did not match. I did not verify that every reference in the list was correctly recorded and/or cited, as that is primarily the responsibility of the client as a post-graduate student. However, I did look up some of them on-line when I needed greater clarity about specific details.

The final decision about accepting or rejecting all of the changes and suggestions remained with the client.

Michael J. McCoy   BA (Hons), BTh (Hons), MTh, DPS
Copyeditor and language editor

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
Declaration Regarding Plagiarism

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences emphasises integrity and ethical behaviour with regard to the preparation of all written assignments.

Although the lecturer will provide you with information regarding reference techniques, as well as ways to avoid plagiarism, you also have a responsibility to fulfil in this regard. Should you at any time feel unsure about the requirements, you must consult the lecturer concerned before submitting an assignment.

You are guilty of plagiarism whenever you extract information from a book, article, web page or any other information source without acknowledging the source and pretend that it is your own work. This does not only apply to cases where you quote the source directly, but also when you present someone else's work in a somewhat amended (paraphrased) format or when you use someone else's arguments or ideas without the necessary acknowledgement. You are also guilty of plagiarism if you copy and paste information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web site, e-mail message, electronic journal article, or CD-ROM) without paraphrasing it or placing it in quotation marks, even if you acknowledge the source.

You are not allowed to submit another student's previous work as your own. You are furthermore not allowed to let anyone copy or use your work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own.

Students who are guilty of plagiarism will forfeit all credits for the work concerned. In addition, the matter will be referred to the Committee for Discipline (Students) for a ruling. Plagiarism is considered a serious violation of the University's regulations and may lead to your suspension from the University. The University's policy regarding plagiarism is available on the Internet at **http://www.library.up.ac.za/plagiarism/index.htm**.

For the period that you are a student in the Faculty, the following declaration must accompany **all** written work that is submitted for evaluation. No written work will be accepted unless the declaration has been completed and is included in the particular assignment.

I/we declare the following:

1. I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.

2. I declare that this assignment is my own, original work. Where someone else's work was used (whether from a printed source, the Internet or any other source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to departmental requirements.

3. I did not copy and paste any information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web page, electronic journal article or CD-ROM) into this document.

4. I did not make use of another student's previous work and submitted it as my own.

5. I did not allow and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own work.

Surname and initials	Student number	Signature
Batandwa Simelane	18325321	*B. h. Simelane*

APPENDIX E: MATRIX FOR SOURCE CREDIBILITY STUDIES

Keywords searched: Source credibility, expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and purchase intensions

Authors	Date of publication	Reference group	Types of reference group	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediator	Moderator	Reference
Adam, A.	2022	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise and celebrity fit	Purchase intentions			Adam, A. 2022. Consumer Purchase Intention for Celebrity Endorsed Products: A Study on Pakistan Clothing Industry. *KASBIT Business Journal*, 15(2):46-65.
AlFarraj, O., Alalwan, A.A., Obeidat, Z.M., Baabdullah, A., Aldmour, R. and Al-Haddad, S.	2021	Comparative	Social media influencer	Influencer credibility (attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise)	Purchase intentions	Cognitive online engagement and affective online engagement		AlFarraj, O., Alalwan, A.A., Obeidat, Z.M., Baabdullah, A., Aldmour, R. and Al-Haddad, S. 2021. Examining the impact of influencers' credibility dimensions: attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise on the purchase intention in the aesthetic dermatology industry. Review of International Business and Strategy.
Amos, C., Holmes, G. and Strutton, D.	2008	Comparative	Celebrity	Celebrity endorser effects	Advertising effectiveness			Amos, C., Holmes, G. and Strutton, D. 2008. Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness: A quantitative synthesis of effect size. International Journal of Advertising, 27(2):209-234.
Bashir, R., Lodhi, R.N. and Mahmood, Z.	2017	Normative	Family and peers	Family, peers and social networking media	Purchase decision	Future Purchase Intensio		Bashir, R., Lodhi, R.N. and Mahmood, Z. 2017. Factors Influencing the Purchase Intensions of Young Females of Pakistan. Paradigms, 11(2):173-178.
Bearden, W.O. and Etzel, M.J.	1982	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Product and brand decisions			Bearden, W.O. and Etzel, M.J. 1982. Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. Journal of consumer research, 9(2):183-194.
Belanche, D., Flavián, M. and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S.	2020	Comparative	Social media influencer	Consumr product congruence	Intention to purchase and intention to recommend	Attitude		Belanche, D., Casaló, L.V., Flavián, M. and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. 2021. Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. Journal of Business Research, 132:186-195.
Bravo Gil, R.B., Andres, E.F. and Salinas, E.M.	2007	Normative	Family	Advertising, family, price, promotion	Brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand equity			Bravo Gil, R.B., Andres, E.F. and Salinas, E.M. 2007. Family as a source of consumer-based brand equity. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 16(3):188–199.
Childers, T.L. and Rao, A.R.	1992	Normative	Family	Family	Peer-based reference groups, product and brand decisions			Childers, T.L. and Rao, A.R. 1992. The influence of familial and peer-based reference groups on consumer decisions. Journal of Consumer Research, 19(2):198-211.
Cooley, D. and Parks-Yancy, R.	2019	Normative vs comparative	Celebrities, social media influencers, and people whom they know in real life	Source of information	Purchase decisions			Cooley, D. and Parks-Yancy, R. 2019. The effect of social media on perceived information credibility and decision making. Journal of Internet Commerce, 18(3):249-269.
Cuomo, M.T., Foroudi, P., Tortora, D., Hussain, S. and Melewar, T.C.	2019	Comparative	Celebrity	Celebrity credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness), vanity, familiarity	Brand awareness, luxury brand value, purchase itentions, brand attitude			Cuomo, M.T., Foroudi, P., Tortora, D., Hussain, S. and Melewar, T.C., 2019. Celebrity endorsement and the attitude towards luxury brands for sustainable consumption. Sustainability, 11(23):6791.
Daimi, S. and Tolunay, A.	2021	Comparative	Social media influencer	Attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, interactivity, consistency, high quality, ego need, social need and self-actualisation	Purchase intentions			Daimi, S. and Tolunay, A. 2021. An Empirical Investigation on Influencer Marketing: the Impact of Content-related, Follower-related and Influencer-related Factors on Consumers' Purchase Intentions. Istanbul Management Journal, (91):59-86.
Djafarova, E. and Rushworth, C.	2017	Comparative	Instagram celebrity	Credibility	Purchase decisions			Djafarova, E. and Rushworth, C. 2017. Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. Computers in Human Behavior, 68:1-7.
Dom, S.M.S.M., Ramli, H.S.B., Chin, A.L.L. and Fern, T.T.	2016	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, celebrity endorser's nationality and celebrity endorser/product fit	Celebrity endorsement advertisement effectiveness			Dom, S.M.S.M., Ramli, H.S.B., Chin, A.L.L. and Fern, T.T. 2016. Determinants of the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement in advertisement. The Journal of Developing Areas, 50(5):525-535.
Fernandes, S. and Panda, R.	2019	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Influence of reference groups	Product category, consumer segment and culture			Fernandes, S. and Panda, R. 2019. Influence of social reference groups on consumer buying behavior: A review. Journal of Management Research, 19(2):131-142.
Fink, Koller, Gartner, Floh & Harms	2020	Comparative	Celebrity	Celebrity credibility	Purchase intentions	Brand image	Brand differentiation	Fink, M., Koller, M., Gartner, J., Floh, A. and Harms, R. 2020. Effective entrepreneurial marketing on Facebook–A longitudinal study. Journal of Business Research, 113:149-157.

Authors	Date of publication	Reference group	Types of reference group	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediator	Moderator	Reference
Guido, G., Peluso, A. M. and Moffa, V.	2011	Comparative	Endorser	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Purchase intentioms		Gender, endorsers' physiognomy (with or without beard)	Guido, G., Peluso, A. M. and Moffa, V. 2011. Beardedness in Advertising: Effects on Endorsers' Credibility and Purchase Intention. Journal of Marketing Communications, 17(1):37–49.
Hani, S., Marwan, A. and Andre, A.	2018	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness and credibility	Ad recall and purchase intentions			Hani, S., Marwan, A. and Andre, A. 2018. The effect of celebrity endorsement on consumer behavior: Case of the Lebanese jewelry industry. Arab Economic and Business Journal, 13(2):190-196.
He, W. and Jin, C.	2022	Comparative	Opinion leaders, live streamers, celebrity endorsers	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Purchase intentions	System 1 and system 2		He, W. and Jin, C. 2022. A study on the influence of the characteristics of key opinion leaders on consumers' purchase intention in live streaming commerce: based on dual-systems theory. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 1-31.
Hermanda, A., Sumarwan, U. and Tinaprillia, N.	2019	Comparative	Social media influencers	SMI (visibility, credibility, attractiveness and power)	Purchase intention	Brand image and self-concept		Hermanda, A., Sumarwan, U. and Tinaprillia, N. 2019. The effect of social media influencer on brand image, self-concept, and purchase intention. Journal of Consumer Sciences, 4(2):76-89.
Hsu, C.H., Kang, S.K. and Lam, T.	2006	Normative vs comparative	Family, friends/relatives, and travel agents	Perception on reference groups' opinions and willingness to comply with each reference group's opinion	Perceived behavioral control, overall attitude, and intent to visit a destination			Hsu, C.H., Kang, S.K. and Lam, T. 2006. Reference group influences among Chinese travelers. Journal of Travel Research, 44(4):474-484.
Kembau, A. and Mekel, P.A	2014	Normative and comparative	Family and reference groups	Reference groups, family and role and status	Purchase intentions			Kembau, A. and Mekel, P.A. 2014. Reference groups, family, roles and status on young consumer behaviour towards purchase intentions of luxury fashion brands. Jurnal EMBA: Jurnal Riset Ekonomi, Manajemen, Bisnis dan Akuntansi, 2(2):1169-1179.
Koay, K.Y., Teoh, C.W. and Soh, P.C.	2021	Comparative	Instagram influencer	Perceived social media marketing activities (interactivity, informative, personalisation, trendiness, word-of-mouth)	Online impulse buying	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise		Koay, K.Y., Teoh, C.W. and Soh, P.C. 2021. Instagram influencer marketing: Perceived social media marketing activities and online impulse buying. First Monday, 26(9).
Lafferty, B.A., Goldsmith, R.E. and Newell, S.J.	2002	Comparative	Celebrity	Endorser credibility and corporate credibility	Attitude to ad, attitude to brand and purchase intentions			Lafferty, B.A., Goldsmith, R.E. and Newell, S.J. 2002. The dual credibility model: The influence of corporate and endorser credibility on attitudes and purchase intentions. Journal of marketing theory and practice, 10(3):1-11.
Lim, X.J., Radzol, A.M., Cheah, J.H. and Wong, M.W.	2017	Comparative	Social media influencers	Source credibility, source attractiveness, product match up and meaning transfer	Purcahse intention	Consumer attitude		Lim, X.J., Radzol, A.M., Cheah, J.H. and Wong, M.W. 2017. The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. Asian Journal of Business Research, 7(2):19-36.
Lutfie, H. and Hidayat, R.	2017	Normative	Family	Perception (opinions, attitudes, experiences) of family	Purchase decisions			Lutfie, H. and Hidayat, R., 2017, March. Descriptive Analysis of Reference Group and Family to Decision Purchase Phone Touchscreen. In Proceeding 12th ADRI 2017 Internasional Multidisicplinary Conference and Call for Paper, Bogor (p. 171).
Masuda, H., Han, S.H. and Lee, J.	2022	Comparative	Social media influencer	Attitude homophily, physical attractiveness and social attractiveness	Purchase intentioms	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Control variable (gender, age, product/service, and influencer type)	Masuda, H., Han, S.H. and Lee, J. 2022. Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 174:121246.
Ohanian, R.	1991	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Purchase intention, purchase, equire, consider			Ohanian, R. 1991. The impact of celebrity spokespersons' perceived image on consumers' intention to purchase. Journal of Advertising Research, 31(1):46–54.
Ohanian, R.	1990	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Source credibility scale			Ohanian, R. 1990. Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Journal of Advertising, 19(3):39-52.
Park, C.W. and Lessig, V.P.	1997	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Informational reference group, value-expressive reference group and utilitarian reference group	Reference group influence	Brand selection			Park, C.W. and Lessig, V.P. 1977. Students and housewives: Differences in susceptibility to reference group influence. Journal of Consumer Research, 4(2):102-110.
Rafique, M. and Zafar, Q.U.A.	2012	Comparative	Celebrity	Physical attractiveness, source credibility and celebrity-brand Congruency	Consumer attitude and purcahse intention			Rafique, M. and Zafar, Q.U.A. 2012. Impact of celebrity advertisement on customers' brand perception and purchase intention. Asian Journal of Business and Management Sciences, 1(11):53-67.

Authors	Date of publication	Reference group	Types of reference group	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Mediator	Moderator	Reference
Rahmi, Sekarasih & Sjabadhyn	2016	Comparative	Celebrity and beauty vlogger	Influence of beauty vlogger vs traditional celebrity	Purchase intentions	Trustworthiness, expertise	Previsou experience in using the product	Rahmi, Y., Sekarasih, L. and Sjabadhyni, B. 2016. The Influence of Beauty Vlog on perceived Source Credibility and Purchase Intention, Makara Hubs-Asia, 20 (2):13-23.
Rahmi, Y., Sekarasih, L. and Sjabadhyni, B.	2016	Comparative	Beauty vlogger	Beauty vlogger and traditional advertising(as soure of information)	Percieved trustworthiness, consumers' previous experience, perceived expertise and purchase intentions			Rahmi, Y., Sekarasih, L. and Sjabadhyni, B. 2016. The Influence of Beauty Vlog on perceived Source Credibility and Purchase Intention, Makara Hubs-Asia, 20 (2):13-23.
Rohde, P. and Mau, G.	2021	Comparative	Social media influencer	Qualitative study				Rohde, P. and Mau, G. 2021. "It's selling like hotcakes": deconstructing social media influencer marketing in long-form video content on youtube via social influence heuristics. European Journal of Marketing, 55(10):2700-2734.
Sánchez-Fernández, R. and Jiménez-Castillo, D.	2021	Comparative	Social media influencer	Emotional attachment and percieved information value	Positive WOM communication and intention to purchase recommended brands	Perceived influence		Sánchez-Fernández, R. and Jiménez-Castillo, D. 2021. How social media influencers affect behavioural intentions towards recommended brands: the role of emotional attachment and information value. Journal of Marketing Management, 37(11-12):1123-1147.
Schouten, A.P., Janssen, L. and Verspaget, M.	2020	Comparative	SMI vs traditional celebrity	Endoerser type: SMI vs traditional celebrity	Wishful identification, percieved similarity, product-endorser fit, ad attitude, product attitude and purchase intentions	Trustworthiness and expertise,		Schouten, A.P., Janssen, L. and Verspaget, M. 2020. Celebrity vs. Influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and Product-Endorser fit. International Journal of Advertising, 39(2):258-281.
Sir	2018	Comparative	Celebrity	Source expertness, source trustworthiness, source similarity, source likeability, source familiarity	Consumer gender and purchase intention		Consumer gender	Sir, H.S. 2018. Moderating Role of Consumer's Gender on Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsement towards Consumer's Purchasing Intention. Global Journal of Management and Business Research, 18(1): 24-34.
Sokolova, K. and Kefi, H.	2020	Comparative	Social media influencer	Physical attractiveness, attitude homophily and social attractiveness	Credibility, para-social interaction and purchase intention			Sokolova, K. and Kefi, H., 2020. Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. Journal of retailing and consumer services, 53, p.101742.
Thomas, M.J., Wirtz, B.W. and Weyerer, J.C.	2019	Comparative	Celebrity	Accuracy, complateness, timeliness, review quantity, review consistency, reviewer expertise, product or service rating and website reputaion	Review credibility and purhase intentions			Thomas, M.J., Wirtz, B.W. and Weyerer, J.C., 2019. Determinants of online review credibility and its impact on consumers'purchase intention. Journal of Electronic Commerce Research, 20(1):1-20.
Wang, S.W. and Scheinbaum, A.C.	2018	Comparative	Celebrity	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Brand credibility, brand attitude, purchase intentions		Involvement	Wang, S.W. and Scheinbaum, A.C. 2018. Enhancing brand credibility via celebrity endorsement: Trustworthiness trumps attractiveness and expertise. Journal of Advertising Research, 58(1):16-32.
Weismueller, J., Harrigan, P., Wang, S. and Soutar, G.N.	2020	Comparative	Social media influencer	Advertising disclosure	Purchase intentions	Aattractivness, trustworthiness and expertise	Number of followers	Weismueller, J., Harrigan, P., Wang, S. and Soutar, G.N. 2020. Influencer endorsements: How advertising disclosure and source credibility affect consumer purchase intention on social media. Australasian Marketing Journal, 28(4):160-170.
Wiedmann, K.P. and Von Mettenheim, W.	2020	Comparative	Influencer	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise	Brand satisfaction, brand image, brand trust, purchase intention and price premium			Wiedmann, K.P. and Von Mettenheim, W. 2020. Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise–social influencers' winning formula?. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 30(5):707-725.
Wong, S.S. and Aini, M.S.	2017	Normative	Family and friends	Food safety, meat characteristics, health conscious, price, attitude towards organic meat, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control	Purchase intentions			Wong, S.S. and Aini, M.S., 2017. Factors influencing purchase intention of organic meat among consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia. International Food Research Journal, 24(2):103-107.
Xu, X. and Pratt, S.	2018	Comparative	Social media influencers	Endorser - destination congurence and endorser-consumer congruence	Attitude towards advertisement, attitude towards destination and visit intentions			Xu, X. and Pratt, S. 2018. Social media influencers as endorsers to promote travel destinations: an application of self-congruence theory to the Chinese Generation Y. Journal of Travel & Tourism marketing, 35(7):958-972.
Yoon, D. and Kim, Y.K.	2016		Spokesperson	Self-congruency (celebirty vs non celebrity)	Purchase intentions and ad attitudes	Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise		Yoon, D. and Kim, Y.K. 2016. Effects of self-congruity and source credibility on consumer responses to coffeehouse advertising. Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, 25(2):167-196.
Zhang, H., Liang, X. and Moon, H.	2020	Comparative	Web celebrities (cewebrities)	Attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise , interactivity and intimacy	New product design, development, commercialisation and purchase intentions			Zhang, H., Liang, X. and Moon, H. 2020. Fashion cewebrity involvement in new product development: scale development and an empirical study. Journal of Business Research, 120:321-329.

APPENDIX F: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1: Chapter 2 (Article 1) Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
SocialIdentification_A1	305	4.93	1.88792	-0.563	0.140	-0.864	0.278
PerceivedSimilarity_A1	305	4.68	1.74971	-0.417	0.140	-0.687	0.278
Attractiveness_A1	305	6.04	1.29669	-1.906	0.140	4.055	0.278
Expertise_A1	305	5.96	1.33816	-1.597	0.140	2.588	0.278
Trustworthiness_A1	305	5.92	1.33704	-1.536	0.140	2.310	0.278
PurchaseIntentions_A1	305	5.98	1.30505	-1.730	0.140	3.263	0.278

Table 2: Chapter 3 (Article 2) Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
Attractiveness_A2	305	5.997	1.289	-1.811	0.140	3.663	0.278
Expertise_A2	305	5.956	1.338	-1.597	0.140	2.588	0.278
Trustworthiness_A2	305	5.918	1.337	-1.536	0.140	2.310	0.278
ProductInvolvement_A2	305	5.833	1.489	-1.952	0.140	3.328	0.278
CognitiveInvolvement_A2	305	5.890	1.416	-1.809	0.140	3.094	0.278
AffectiveInvolvement_A2	305	6.117	1.357	-2.276	0.140	5.172	0.278
PurchaseIntentions_A2	305	5.894	1.291	-1.629	0.140	2.962	0.278

Table 3: Chapter 4 (Article 3) Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
Attitude_A3	611	5.864	1.311	-1.414	0.099	2.000	0.197
Attractiveness_A3	611	6.157	1.228	-2.144	0.099	5.333	0.197
Expertise_A3	611	5.831	1.410	-1.551	0.099	2.305	0.197
Trustworthiness_A3	611	5.887	1.403	-1.568	0.099	2.305	0.197
PurchaseIntentions_A3	611	6.009	1.280	-1.713	0.099	3.200	0.197