

# **The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behaviour in the Kingdom of Bahrain**

## **BAM Conference: Development Paper (Final Submission)**

### **Track: Marketing and Retail**

This development paper is submitted to the BAM conference which will be held in September 2024.

Authors:  
Noor Jamsheer  
Dr. Lauren Thomas  
Dr. Jackie Harris  
Prof. Jonathan Deacon

Date: 26 June 2024  
Word Count: 2166

#### **Abstract:**

This paper explores the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer behaviour in the Kingdom of Bahrain, focusing on the food tourism industry. It addresses various facets, including consumer behaviour, social commerce, marketing communications, a brief overview of social media influencers, culture and tourism, and SMIs impact on consumers' attitudes toward Bahrain's food/restaurant industry. Bilro and Loureiro (2020) highlight a research gap in media engagement and advocate for studying the influence of SMIs on customer behaviour. This study seeks to fill this gap, acknowledging the scarcity of research on SMI influence in Bahrain and its unique cultural and religious contexts. The planned methodology for the research is briefly outlined at the end.

## Table of Contents

|          |                                                                                                                                         |          |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b><i>Introduction.....</i></b>                                                                                                         | <b>3</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b><i>Literature Review .....</i></b>                                                                                                   | <b>3</b> |
| 2.1      | Consumer behaviour.....                                                                                                                 | 4        |
| 2.2      | Social Commerce .....                                                                                                                   | 4        |
| 2.3      | Marketing Communications.....                                                                                                           | 5        |
| 2.4      | Overview of social media influencers .....                                                                                              | 5        |
| 2.5      | Culture and Tourism.....                                                                                                                | 5        |
| 2.6      | Food tourism and SMIs - Social media influencers (SMIs) impact on consumers' attitudes toward food/restaurants industry in Bahrain..... | 6        |
| <b>3</b> | <b><i>Methodology.....</i></b>                                                                                                          | <b>7</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b><i>Conclusion.....</i></b>                                                                                                           | <b>7</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b><i>References .....</i></b>                                                                                                          | <b>9</b> |

**Title: The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Consumer Behaviour in the Kingdom of Bahrain**

## 1 Introduction

Technological improvements have considerably impacted verbal exchange and buying and selling activities, compelling individuals and agencies to successfully or unsuccessfully adopt new improvements (Ilhan and Celtek, 2016). The giant use of social media platforms, which includes Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, has given upward thrust to Viral Marketing (VM) and e-word-of-mouth (e-WOM), shaping the landscape of social media advertising (Stephen, 2016; Bilro, Loureiro, and Ali, 2018; Kupfer et al., 2018). Social trade, exemplified by activities like sharing YouTube motion pictures, forwarding reviews, and providing instantaneous remarks, has become a norm, reflecting the profound effect of these systems on brand interaction (Berger and Milkman, 2012; Mulvey et al., 2019).

The study aims to investigate the influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on consumer behaviour in the Kingdom of Bahrain, concentrating on food tourism. The use of Facebook has been extensive, but Instagram and Snapchat have become popular in the Middle East, making it the fastest-growing market, with Bahrain marking 56.8% Instagram and 48.4% Snapchat usage early in 2022 (Data Reportal, 2022; Swiss Arab Entrepreneurs, 2020). Instagram and Snapchat are undoubtedly the most outstanding social media platforms that consumers, particularly in this region, use these days. These applications have a user growth that exceeds that of any other country (IstiZada, 2020).

Social media provides the link between businesses and consumers; that is, it influences consumer behaviour and is a business tool (Kumar and Pansari, 2016). The current prevalence of SMIs in the advertising sector is indicative of the fact that consumers are influenced by opinions from influencers and friends, cultural or religious influences, and brand/restaurant advertisements.

## 2 Literature Review

This literature review explores theories including post-modernism and its impact on consumer research, meta-modernism, the theory of planned behaviour, the theory of unplanned behaviour, and the persuasion knowledge model. There needs to be more research on how social media impacts consumer behaviour, especially in Bahrain (Khan et al., 2022; Purohit et al., 2022; Chu and Kim, 2011; Xie and Lee, 2015; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Although earlier studies address the effect of customer reviews and e-WOM on consumer buying intentions, the decision-making process and the Bahraini view have yet to receive enough attention.

Currently, the role of religious and cultural influences on social commerce is insufficiently studied (Chu and Choi, 2011; Men and Tsai, 2012; Gharbi and Al-Tamimi, 2020; Bilro and Loureiro, 2020b; Kim and Kim, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). This research study addresses the need to understand the effect of social media influencers (SMIs) on purchasing behaviour inside organisations that consider culture and religion as important areas.

Despite advancements in Islamic communication studies that discuss the evolving nature of Islam through digital media (Bunt, 2018; Zaid et al., 2021; Zaid et al., 2022), specific research on the intersection of culture, religion, social media influencers, and the food industry in Bahrain is lacking. This PhD research seeks to contribute by examining SMIs' influence on customer purchase intentions in Bahrain's food industry, focusing on timeline videos and marketing tactics on Instagram and Snapchat. These areas remain unexplored in academic literature.

## 2.1 Consumer behaviour

The evolution of marketing emphasises a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour, ranging from individual actions in acquiring goods to the broader decision-making process (Stoica, Cristescu, and Stancu, 2017; Solomon, 2006). This spans individual, organisational, and governmental consumers (Stoica, Cristescu, and Stancu, 2017; Fahy and Jobber, 2015; Solomon, 2006).

Consumer behaviour, defined as the study of selecting, purchasing, using, or disposing of products, services, ideas, or experiences, forms the cornerstone of marketing strategy (Solomon, 2006). Factors influencing consumer behaviour include attitudes, social influences, situational factors, authority, scarcity, affinity, and reciprocity (Dennis et al., 2009; Tuten, 2020).

Finding answers about those who make the decisions, the selection criteria, the purchase locations, the timing of the purchases, and the purchasing process that also allows for consumer-based personalised marketing efforts are the main benefits (Stoica et al., 2017; Fahy and Jobber, 2015). Consumer behaviour is a problem with many faces. Thus, marketers' psychological and contextual abilities need to be flexible (Purohit, Arora, and Paul, 2022; Tuten, 2020; Dennis et al., 2009).

## 2.2 Social Commerce

According to research on customer behaviour in social commerce, social media should be used for communication purposes, and online relationships are essential (Gruzd et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2013; Hajli, 2014). One of the subcategories of e-commerce is social commerce, which is concerned with people sharing information and personal user experiences on social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. Therefore, it creates a virtual marketplace where customers and businesses can interact (Zhang and Benyoucef, 2016; Hajli, 2014; Yadav, et al., 2013).

In this light, social commerce and relationship marketing principles, such as trust, commitment, and satisfaction, are the most critical factors that influence customer interactions, CRM effectiveness, and user trust (Hajli, 2014; Hossain et al., 2021). Online brand communities open up chances for the co-creation of brands, thereby leading to customer engagement and loyalty (Hajli, et al., 2017). The benefits of social commerce include increased sales, improved customer service, and enhanced data collection on customer behaviour (Tuten, 2020; Mustafi, 2010).

Social commerce facilitates customer reviews, influencing purchasing intentions through networking, co-creation, and knowledge-sharing (Hajli, 2015; Pavlou, 2003). Managers can

leverage social commerce to create a supportive environment, attract customers, and benefit from their contributions to brand building (Lin, Li, and Wang, 2017; Hajli et al., 2017).

### 2.3 Marketing Communications

Marketing Communications involves various elements such as online and offline selling, customer engagement, and digital technologies. Websites serve diverse purposes, including information provision, data collection, transactions, advertising, and competition, with the primary objective being to surpass competitors by satisfying customers and cultivating long-term relationships (Smith and Zook, 2019). Integration of marketing, logistics, and CRM systems enhances experience and empathy, extending customer focus beyond the marketing team to the operations team. Influencer marketing, aligned with e-WOM, professionally targets social media users, enhancing credibility compared to paid marketing. The recognition of influencer marketing has grown significantly, prompting marketers to increase budgets and acknowledge its effectiveness. The research aims to investigate social media influencers' influence on followers'/consumers' behaviour, addressing the effectiveness of SMIs in influencing customer attitudes towards brands/restaurants in Bahrain. Customer engagement in social media platforms is vital in influencer marketing, contributing directly and indirectly to fostering relationships. Influenced by word-of-mouth and blogging/vlogging activity, consumer engagement behaviour requires empirical studies. Media engagement, especially in the context of culture or religion, is an area that requires further exploration in future research (Bilro and Loureiro, 2020b).

### 2.4 Overview of social media influencers

Previous research primarily examined the relationship between Social Media Influencers (SMIs) and their followers from the influencer's perspective, with less attention on followers (Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020; Cooley and Parks-Yancy, 2019; Ki et al., 2020). Studies emphasised SMIs as opinion leaders shaping followers' decisions, considering factors like credibility and content quality (Ki and Kim, 2019; De Veirman et al., 2017).

SMIs, defined as individuals with substantial social followings, are vital in influencing attitudes and opinions through content creation (Farivar et al., 2021). They are categorised by follower count, including mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers (Ouvrein et al., 2021; Ruiz-Gomez, 2019; Ismail, 2018). The research focuses on micro and nano influencers in Bahrain's context, examining how SMIs influence follower behaviour in the food tourism industry on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat.

### 2.5 Culture and Tourism

In the 1980s, Michael Harris Bond's research prompted the addition of the 'Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation' dimension to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, later re-evaluated by Michael Minkov in the 2000s, resulting in six dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. These dimensions statistically vary, combining in

diverse ways across countries (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) provides a conceptual framework exploring the complex links between consumer behaviours, the marketplace, and cultural significance. Contrary to a homogeneous view of culture, CCT recognises varied interpretations and overlapping cultural formations within the globalised market economy. It views consumer culture as a societal structure where market mechanisms facilitate relationships between everyday culture, societal assets, lifestyles, and symbolic resources. (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Bahrain's collectivist culture, based on Islamic values, shapes consumer behaviour. Businesses—especially those employing Social Media Influencers (SMIs)—that want to match cultural differences must first understand Bahrain's culture (Hudson et al., 2016). Culture influences reactions to products, advertisements, prices, and promotional offers, among other elements of the consumer journey (Shavitt and Barnes, 2019).

Consumer behaviour is much influenced by religious affiliation and commitment; in Bahrain, with a strong Islamic culture, aspects like halal food preferences and traditional clothing practices affect consumer decisions (Al-Hyari et al., 2012; Swimberghe et al., 2009; Worthington et al., 2003). Bahrain's cultural and religious background must be considered while creating SMI content to keep followers' trustworthiness and likeability (Al-Hyari et al., 2012).

This study explores the impact of Bahrain's culture and religion on SMIs' content creation, recognising the significance of understanding diverse consumer needs shaped by cultural values. The research aims to clarify the effect of SMI content on trustworthiness and credibility among Bahraini consumers, acknowledging the role of religion in influencing attitudes, values, and purchasing behaviour.

## 2.6 Food tourism and SMIs - Social media influencers (SMIs) impact on consumers' attitudes toward food/restaurants industry in Bahrain

The increase in food tourism demand emphasises the need for culinary events to pull visitors (Barnes et al., 2020; Tsai and Wang, 2017). Driven by sensory appeal, local food shapes visitors' travel destinations (Soltani et al., 2021; Kivela and Crotts, 2006). The hospitality sector depends on an awareness of the attitudes and behaviours of visitors around food consumption. Understanding food tourists' decision-making processes requires an investigation of personal and value-based consumption (Soltani et al., 2021; Choe and Kim, 2018; Tsai and Wang, 2017). The study investigates consumer behaviour in Bahrain's food tourism industry regarding culture, religion, and social media influencers (SMIs). Pre-visit impressions generated by SMIs influence guests' attitudes and actions, facilitating sustainable food tourism's growth (Maghnati and Ling, 2013). Crucially vital for supplying data to restaurant researchers, SMIs help to shape ideas, impressions, and decisions. Though SMIs have acknowledged influence, little study on how they affect food tourism in Bahrain generates academic curiosity. The study intends to look specifically at how SMIs affect consumers' opinions of Bahrain's food sector.

### 3 Methodology

The research will employ a qualitative method. It proposes using in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from Social Media Influencer (SMI) followers. The aim is to understand opinions and behaviours related to social media use, specifically focusing on factors influencing their following of SMIs. The methodology aligns with Berger's recommendation for effective questioning in semi-structured interviews (Berger, 2011).

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face and virtually, targeting a demographic of social media users aged 22 to 60 in Bahrain. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods will be employed to select participants, considering demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education.

Participants must meet specific criteria, including having an Instagram or Snapchat account, following at least one influencer, and following a Bahrain-based influencer. The data collection process involves semi-structured and open-ended questions, and participants will be informed about the recording's purpose and confidentiality, with explicit consent obtained before recording.

The interview process will progress from informal rapport-building to semi-structured questions and observation of SMI-advertised videos to assess participant reactions and influences. The selection of participants will ensure alignment with predetermined criteria and research objectives, emphasising the impact of culture and religion in the context of Bahrain.

In this research, interviews and netnographic data collection combined with thematic analysis are chosen methodologies, aligning well with the study's objectives. Netnography gathers information from online platforms, mainly social media, to observe interactions between influencers and followers (Kozinets, 2020; Kozinets, 2011). Thematic analysis is employed to extract codes and themes from participants' responses, exploring aspects not covered in existing literature (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The combination of netnography and thematic analysis proves effective for understanding the daily lives of social media influencers (SMIs) and their followers, particularly in the context of narrative videos and product advertising.

### 4 Conclusion

This paper examines 'The influence of SMIs on consumer behaviour in Bahrain,' particularly in the food tourism industry. The researcher covers various aspects, including the role of SMIs, influencer marketing, social commerce, content marketing, customer engagement, SMI-follower relationships, brand attitudes, purchase processes, persuasion knowledge, and the impact of Bahrain's culture and religion on SMI content. It concludes with a brief overview of the planned methodology for the research.

Bilro and Loureiro (2020) identified a gap in research on media engagement, emphasising the need to investigate the influence of SMIs on customer behaviour. The scarcity of studies on SMI influence in Bahrain, where cultural and religious elements may differ from Western contexts, is noted (Gharbi and Al-Tamimi, 2020; Lin, Li, and Wang, 2017). This research aims to contribute

to understanding cultural variations in the perception of social media, social commerce, and changes in buyer behaviour under the influence of SMIs.

## 5 References

- Al-Hyari, K., Alnsour, M., Al-Weshah, G., and Haffar, M. (2012) 'Religious beliefs and consumer behaviour: from loyalty to boycotts', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 3(2), pp.155-174.
- Arnould, E. and Thompson, C.J. (2005) 'Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), pp. 868–82.
- Berger, A. A. (2011) *Media and Communication Research Methods: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 2<sup>nd</sup>edn. p. 138.
- Bilro, R., Loureiro, S., Guerreiro, J. and Raposo, D. (2020a) 'How influencers and digital interaction can impact customer-brand relationship and engagement', *2020 Global Marketing Conference at Seoul*, Seoul, pp. 465-467.
- Bilro, R.G. and Loureiro S. M.C. (2020b) 'A consumer engagement systematic review: synthesis and research agenda', *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 24(3), pp.283-307.
- Bilro, R. G., Loureiro, S. M. C. and Ali, F. (2018) 'The role of website stimuli of experience on engagement and brand advocacy', *Journal of hospitality and tourism technology*, 9(2), pp. 204-222.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp.77–101.
- Bunt, G. R. (2018) *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority. Islamic Civilization and Muslim Networks* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Casaló, L., Flavián, C. and Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020) 'Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership', *Journal of Business Research*, 117, pp.510-519.
- Choe, J.Y.J. and Kim, S.S. (2018) 'Effects of tourists' local food consumption value on attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intention', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 71, pp. 1-10.
- Chu, S.-C., and Choi, S. M. (2011) 'Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Social Networking Sites: A Cross Cultural Study of the United States and China'. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 24, (3), pp.263-281. DOI: 10.1080/08911762.2011.592461.
- Chu, S.C. and Kim, Y. (2011) 'Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites', *International Journal of Advertising*, *The Review of Marketing Communications*, 30(1), pp.47–75.
- Data Reportal (2022) Digital 2022 Bahrain. Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-bahrain> (Accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022).

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V. and Hudders, L. (2017) 'Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude', *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), pp.798-828.

Dennis, C., Merrilees, B., Jayawardhena, C. and Tiu Wright, L. (2009) 'E-consumer behaviour', *European journal of marketing*, 43(9/10), pp. 1121-1139.

Fahy, J. and Jobber, D. (2015) *Foundations of marketing*. Fifth edition. edn. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

Farivar, S., Wang, F. and Yuan, Y. (2021) 'Opinion leadership vs. para-social relationship: Key factors in influencer marketing', *Journal of retailing and consumer services*, 59.

Gharbi, K. and al-Tamimi, A. (2020) 'Using Social Media in Building and Managing Corporate Identity: Study on Real Estate Companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain', *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 14(2).

Gruzd, A., Wellman, B. and Takhteyev, Y. (2011) 'Imagining Twitter as an Imagined Community', *The American behavioral scientist (Beverly Hills)*, 55(10), pp. 1294-1318.

Hajli, M. N. (2014) 'The role of social support on relationship quality and social commerce', *Technological forecasting & social change*, 87, pp. 17-27.

Hajli, N. (2015) 'Social commerce constructs and consumer's intention to buy', *International journal of information management*, 35(2), pp. 183-191.

Hajli, N., Shanmugam, M., Papagiannidis, S., Zahay, D. and Richard, M.-O. (2017) 'Branding co-creation with members of online brand communities', *Journal of business research*, 70, pp. 136-144.

Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London, UK: McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*. London: UK: Sage.

Hofstede, G. (2011) 'Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context', *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>

Hofstede, G. & Bond, M. H. (1988) 'The Confucius connection: from cultural roots to economic growth', *Organizational Dynamics*, 16, pp. 4-21.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M. (2010) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Rev. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. For translations see [www.geerthofstede.nl](http://www.geerthofstede.nl) and "our books".

Hossain, M. S., Rahman, M. F. and Zhou, X. (2021) 'Impact of customers' interpersonal interactions in social commerce on customer relationship management performance', *Journal of contemporary marketing science*, 4(1), pp. 161-181.

Huang, J., Baptista, J. and Galliers, R. D. (2013) 'Reconceptualizing rhetorical practices in organizations: The impact of social media on internal communications', *Information & management*, 50(2-3), pp. 112-124.

Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M. S., Madden, T.J (2016) 'The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(1), pp.27-41.

Ilhan, I. and Celtek, E. (2016) 'Mobile Marketing: Usage of Augmented Reality in Tourism', *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(2), pp.581-599.

Ismail, K. (2018) *Social media influencers: Mega, macro, micro or nano*, 10 December, 2018, (Accessed [online]: 11 December, 2022), Available at: <https://www.cmswire.com/digital-marketing/social-media-influencers-mega-macro-micro-or-nano/>.

IstiZada (2020) Arab Snapchat Marketing In The Middle East – A Guide - Istizada. Available at: <http://istizada.com/blog/arab-snapchat-marketing-in-the-middle-east-a-guide/>. (Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2021).

Khan, S., Zaman, I., Khan, M. I. and Musleha, Z. (2022a) 'Role of Influencers in Digital Marketing: The moderating impact of follower's interaction', *Global management journal for academic & corporate studies*, 12(1), pp. 37-64.

Khan, S., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A., Abbas, Q., and Mahboob, F. (2022b) 'The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Job Performance: An Empirical Study from Pakistan', *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 9 (2), pp. 283-294. <https://doi.org/10.13106/JAFEB.2022.VOL9.NO2.0283>

Ki, C.W.C. and Kim, Y.K. (2019) 'The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: the role of consumers' desire to mimic', *Psychol. Market*, 36 (10), pp.905–922. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21244>.

Ki, C.W.C., Cuevas, L.M., Chong, S.M., and Lim, H. (2020) 'Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 55 pp.102133.

Kim, D. Y. and Kim, H.-Y. (2021) 'Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media', *Journal of business research*, 134, pp. 223-232.

Kivela, J. and Crotts, J.C. (2006) 'Tourism and gastronomy: gastronomy's influence on how tourists experience a destination', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 30 (3), pp. 354-377.

Kozinets, R. V. (2011) What is netnography?, Sage Video. [Streaming Video] London: Sage Publications Ltd. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995511> & gt; [Accessed 26 Nov 2023].

Kozinets, R. V. (2020) *Netnography : the essential guide to qualitative social media research*. 3rd edition. edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Kumar, V. and Pansari, A. (2016) 'Competitive Advantage through Engagement', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(4), pp. 497-514.

Kupfer, A.-K., Pähler vor der Holte, N., Kübler, R. V. and Hennig-Thurau, T. (2018) 'The Role of the Partner Brand's Social Media Power in Brand Alliances', *Journal of Marketing*, 82(3), pp.25-44.

Lin, X., Li, Y. and Wang, X. (2017) 'Social commerce research: Definition, research themes and the trends', *International journal of information management*, 37(3), pp. 190-201.

Maghnati, F. and Ling, K.C. (2013) 'Exploring the relationship between experiential value and usage attitude towards mobile apps among the smartphone users', *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8 (4), p. 1.

Maguire, M., and Delahunt, B. (2017) *Doing a thematic analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars*, *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3), pp.3351-33514.

Mangold, W.G. and Faulds, D.J. (2009) 'Social media: the new hybrid element of the promotion mix', *Business Horizons*, 52(4), pp.357–365.

Men, L. R., and Tsai. W. H-S. (2012). 'How Companies Cultivate Relationships With Publics on Social Network Sites: Evidence from China and the United States'. *Public Relations Review*, 38(5), pp. 723-730. DOI: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.10.006.

Mustafi, S. (2010) *The benefits of social commerce for suppliers and customers*- University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, (Accessed [online]: 25 November, 2022), Available at: <https://fjalaim.ch/wp-content/uploads/The-Benefits-of-Social-Commerce-Skender-Mustafi-a.pdf>

Mulvey, M. S., Lever, M. W. and Elliot, S. (2019) 'A Cross-National Comparison of Intra-Generational Variability in Social Media Sharing', *Journal of Travel Research*, In press, pp.1-17.

Ouvrein, G., Vandebosch, H., & De Backer, C. J. (2020). Followers, fans, friends or haters? A Typology of the online interactions and relationships between social media influencers and their audiences. Work in progress.

Pavlou, P. A. (2003) 'Consumer acceptance of electronic commerce: Integrating trust and risk with the technology acceptance model', *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 7(3), pp. 101-134.

Purohit, S., Arora, R. and Paul, J. (2022) 'The bright side of online consumer behavior: Continuance intention for mobile payments', *Journal of consumer behaviour*, 21(3), pp. 523-542.

Ruiz-Gomez, A. (2019) 'Digital fame and fortune in the age of social media: A classification of social media influencers', *AdResearchESIC*, 19(19), pp. 8-29.

Shavitt, S. and Barnes, A.J. (2019) 'Culture and the Consumer Journey', *Journal of Retailing*, 96(1), pp.40-54.

Solomon, M. R. (2006) 'Consumer Behavior, Buying, Having, and Being, Seventh edition. edn. Pearson Education', Inc.: *Upper Saddle River, New Jersey*.

Soltani, M., Soltani Nejad, N., Taheri Azad, F., Taheri, B. and Gannon, M. J. (2021) 'Food consumption experiences: a framework for understanding food tourists' behavioral intentions', *International journal of contemporary hospitality management*, 33(1), pp. 75-100.

Smith, P. and Zook, Z. (2019) *Marketing Communications : Integrating Online and Offline, Customer Engagement and Digital Technologies*. Seventh edition edn. London, UK: Kogan Page. [eBook]

<https://web.s.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzIzMTg5NTVfX0FO0?sid=c13f596-0b6d-4407-b39b-147304eb42cc@redis&vid=7&format=EB&rid=1>

Stephen, A.T. (2016) 'The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior', *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, pp.17-21.

Stoica, L. C., Cristescu, M. P. and Stancu, A.-M. R. (2017) 'RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND MARKETING STRATEGIES', *Knowledge horizons : economics*, 9(4), pp. 79-83.

Swimberghe, K., Sharma, D. and Flurry, L. (2009) 'An exploratory investigation of the consumer religious commitment and its influence on store loyalty and consumer complaint intentions', *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(5), pp.340-347.

Swiss Arab Entrepreneurs (2020) What is Social Media's Most Sharp Secret Weapon for entrepreneurs in the Arab Gulf markets? Available at: <https://www.saentrepreneurs.ch/index.php/magazine-27/item/845-what-is-social-media-s-most-sharp-secret-weapon-for-entrepreneurs-in-the-arab-world-markets> (Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2021)

Tsai, C.T.S. and Wang, Y.C. (2017) 'Experiential value in branding food tourism', *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 6 (1), pp. 56-65.

Tuten, T. L. (2020) *Social media marketing. Core textbook* 4th edition. edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Worthington, E.L. Jr, Wade, N.G., Hight, T.L., McCullough, M.E., Berry, J.T., Ripley, J.S., Berry, J.W., Schmitt, M.M., Bursley, K.H. and O'Connor, L. (2003) "The religious commitment inventory: development, refinement, and validation of a brief scale for research and counseling", *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50(1), pp. 84.

Xie, K. and Lee, Y.J. (2015) 'Social media and brand purchase: quantifying the effects of exposures to earned and owned social media activities in a two-stage decision making model', *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 32(2), pp.204–238.

Yadav, M. S., de Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T. Hoffman, D. L., and Spann, M. (2013). Social commerce: A contingency framework for assessing marketing potential, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), pp. 311-323. DOI: 10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.001.

Zaid, B., Fedtke, J., Shin, D. D., El Kadoussi, A. and Ibahrine, M. (2022) 'Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices', *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)*, 13(4), pp. 335.

Zaid, B., Shin, D. D., Kteish, S. W., Fedtke, J. and Ibahrine, M. (2021) 'Gendered self-representation and empowerment on social media in the United Arab Emirates', *The communication review (Yverdon, Switzerland)*, 24(3), pp. 199-217.

Zhang, K. Z. K. and Benyoucef, M. (2016) 'Consumer behavior in social commerce: A literature review', *Decision Support Systems*, 86, pp. 95-108. DOI: 10.1016/j.dss.2016.04.001.