



The Influence of Social Media Factors on Consumers' Buying Behavior Toward Online Food Purchasing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social media components in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour for online food shopping in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Anchored in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the research investigates five key social media variables: ease of use, interactivity, entertainment, ease of information sharing, and credibility, and their influence on consumer decision-making processes. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, the study surveyed 342 active Saudi social media users who had purchased food online within the past six months. Hypothesized relationships were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings reveal that social media factors substantially affect information-seeking behaviour, accounting for 87% of its variance, with Instagram and Snapchat emerging as the primary platforms for discovery and evaluation. However, these factors negatively influenced subsequent evaluation and purchase decision phases, suggesting that information overload and excessive choices may hinder final purchasing decisions. Among the stimuli, ease of use and ease of information sharing received the highest ratings, while credibility was moderate, reflecting ongoing trust issues in online commerce. Theoretically, this study contributes by situating S-O-R-TAM integration within a rapidly digitizing and culturally distinct society. Practically, it offers valuable insights for marketers and policymakers to enhance engagement, streamline decision-making processes, and foster trust in the expanding Saudi online food market.

KEYWORDS: Social media, Consumer behavior, Online food purchasing, Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, Saudi Arabia has experienced a profound transformation in communication, consumption, and marketing, driven by rapid digitalization, urbanization, and technological advancements. Central to this change is the widespread adoption of social media, with over 29.5 million active users representing 80 percent of the population engaging on platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X, and Facebook ([Global Media Insight, 2024](#)). Social media has become a primary medium for communication, entertainment, and commerce, fueling the growth of social commerce. Consumers now research, compare, and purchase products directly through these platforms. Notably, approximately 73% of Saudis made purchases via social media in the past year, underscoring a significant shift toward technology-driven consumption ([Deloitte, 2025](#)).

The online food delivery sector, in particular, has seen accelerated growth, propelled by evolving lifestyles, the prevalence of dual-income households, and widespread smartphone usage. Statista ([2025](#)) projects that over six million Saudis will access food delivery apps in 2025, attracted by their efficiency, personalization, and immediacy. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this

trend, with social media playing a critical role in building trust and shaping perceptions of food quality and service reliability ([Alotaibi and Alharbi, 2024](#); [Al-Zahrani et al., 2023](#)). Peer-to-peer recommendations, influencer marketing, and engaging digital content now exert a substantial influence on consumers' food purchasing decisions.

Regardless of the increasing influence, there is a lack of literature on the role of social media in Saudi consumer decision-making. The current research concentrates on e-commerce in the developed markets, and the emerging markets, such as Saudi Arabia, have not been extensively explored. The existing Saudi studies focus on the overall marketing of social media but pay little attention to the psychological and behavioural mechanisms of online communication and online shopping ([Alghamdi and Bogari, 2020](#); [Alfeel and Ansari, 2019](#)). Scholarly sources differentiate between utilitarian (functionality, reliability, ease) and hedonic (enjoyment, emotional satisfaction, authenticity) issues in social commerce. As much as interaction and entertainment increase engagement, credibility and ease of use would help to build trust and satisfaction ([Coutinho et al., 2023](#); [Kim and Park, 2024](#)). Nevertheless, the results might not be entirely applicable to Saudi



Arabia, where the values of trust, social connectedness, and reputation are valued. An opportunity to combine technology and sociocultural factors must be developed to determine how Saudi consumers react to social media marketing stimuli.

To fill this gap, this paper will combine both the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) to understand the influence of social media variables on online food-purchasing behaviour. S-O-R model represents an environmental psychology-derived model that suggests that external stimuli result in internal cognitive-emotional responses that cause behavioural consequences. The perceived ease of use, interactivity, entertainment, and credibility are stimuli in social media marketing that stimulate consumer evaluation, causing consumer attitudes and intentions. In tandem with this, TAM states that user acceptance of technology is provided in terms of perceived usefulness and ease of use. A combination of both models (S-O-R-TAM) will offer a holistic theoretical framework in the study of the interplay of technological and psychological drivers in the predictors of digital consumption.

In this context, the social media affordances serve as external cues that result in internal assessments, e.g., trust (cognitive) and enjoyment (affective), that subsequently lead to behavioural reactions, i.e., purchase intentions. This is an integration that goes beyond descriptive analysis to what the psychological mechanisms are behind the social media experience in relation to consumer behaviour. It takes practical variables (e.g. convenience, informativeness), emotional variables (e.g. entertainment, authenticity) and places them in a single explanatory framework.

The Saudi Arabian context is mainly the right environment to be analyzed. The development agenda of Vision 2030 of the country places digital transformation as one of the factors of economic diversification and social modernization. With the development of digital infrastructure, promotion of innovation and the empowerment of the e-commerce ecosystem, Saudi Arabia has become one of the most digital markets in the Middle East (Saudi Ministry of Economy, 2024). At the same time, the popularization of social media has changed the relationship between consumers and brands and has allowed for instant communication and building new trust. The sites act as cultural spaces where the convenience of technology meets social values and norms, and affect the consumer's regulation of authenticity, reliability, and quality.

This is a twofold change, a change in technology as well as culture, which is why the Saudi market is the right place to study the effect of digital affordances on behaviour. Social media is a commercial platform as well as a social platform in Saudi Arabia that represents the aspirations, family values, and cultural identity of the users. Consumers are exposed to influencer content and content created by users, as well as interactive brand messaging, which jointly form buying impetuses. The explanation of this convergence of social and business forces aids in the international debate of localization of digital consumerism in non-Western societies.

In addition, the proposed study fulfils appeals to contextual and theoretical diversification of consumer behaviour studies. A lot of the literature available today is Western-based and fails to address the role of cultural environments in mediating the reaction

to online marketing stimuli. There is a unique possibility for Saudi Arabia to put known theories, including S-O-R and TAM, to test in a fast-modernising, culturally diverse situation. This type of analysis can push these structures further by demonstrating the interaction of universal theoretical constructions with local cultures.

Therefore, the research problem will be to investigate the effects of five significant social media factors on consumer purchasing behaviour in the online food-buying segment in Saudi Arabia, namely: ease of use, interactivity and participation, entertainment, information-sharing ease, and credibility. These variables are some of the social media affordances that are crucial in determining digital engagement as observed by previous literature. The paper will evaluate the extent to which they affect and the direction in which they affect one another in a combined theoretical framework.

The following research question will guide this inquiry:

RQ: How do the social media variables influence consumer buying behaviour in online food purchasing in Saudi Arabia, and how do they do so in psychological and technological mechanisms?

The study contributes to the body of knowledge because it incorporates S-O-R and TAM paradigms into the framework of social media in Saudi Arabia and distinguishes how technological and emotional aspects influence the process of online food purchases. It provides practical information that can enable marketers, policymakers, and digital strategists to enhance engagement and confidence in the emerging online food industry in Saudi Arabia. It identifies the effects of digital platforms on consumer behaviour by examining the usability of technology and its sway on society. Since Saudi Arabia is working towards Vision 2030, it is crucial to know how consumers react in digital ecosystems. As a confluence of technology, culture, and business, social media influences the choices of buyers and consumer experiences as a practical strategic guide to success in a digital economy that has gone and is going global.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Social Media and Customer Purchasing Habits

Social media has become a central instrument in transforming consumer behaviour in the digital era. It has also turned traditional ways of information distribution and decision making into interactive and community-based processes where consumers are not only receiving Information but also participating in the production, affirmation, and distribution of this Information. The platforms of Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and X (previously Twitter) support the sharing of experiential stories, the request of peer reviews, and the development of attitudes that further translate into consumption decisions (Coutinho et al., 2023; Kim & Park, 2024).

Social media is a major booster of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), brand interactions, and building of trust globally. The interactive nature that it provides in real-time enables consumers to connect with brands and influencers in a more personalised way. The impressions of credibility and satisfaction are formed in the process of these interactions, and the purchasing intentions are informed (Luo et al., 2023). The fact that the social cues are combined with the characteristics of transactions is what



makes social media unlike other digital media and makes it an outstanding environment to explore how people make decisions.

The role of social media is outstanding in emerging markets such as Saudi Arabia. The penetration of smartphones, the prevalence of digital literacy, and a cohort of young population have all helped to achieve never-before-seen rates of engagement online. Global Media Insight (2024) indicates that social media penetration in the Kingdom is more than 80 per cent, where, on average, users spend over three hours a day on the digital platforms. This massive usage has made social media one of the main commercial places. It is reported that in the last year, 73 per cent of Saudi consumers made direct purchases or procurements through social media (Deloitte, 2025).

This trend is an indication of the emergence of social commerce, where the lines between social and online shopping are becoming even more indistinct. Social media is no longer just a channel of Information; it has become a major marketplace. Online food purchasing decisions are based on peer review, credibility of the influencer, and interactive content on the brand. However, even with the growing commercial importance of social media, the majority of studies based in Saudi Arabia are still descriptive and address the general effectiveness of e-commerce or social media marketing (Alghamdi & Bogari, 2020; Alfeel & Ansari, 2019). There is limited empirical evidence that focuses on the precise manner in which social media variables affect consumer decision-making, especially in the online food delivery industry.

In order to address this gap, this paper will be based on the Stimulus Organism Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) to conceptualize the role of the social media affordances as the external stimuli that influence the internal consideration of cognitive and emotional processes of the consumers, which subsequently lead to behavioural responses including online food purchasing.

2.2 *hype Theory: S-O-R + TAM Integration.*

According to the S-O-R model, environmental stimuli (S) arouse internal psychological and emotional responses (O), which subsequently give rise to behavioural responses (R). Developed by environmental psychology, it has been extensively applied to marketing and information systems research to understand how consumers decide based on the environmental or digital cues (Luo et al., 2023). Social media affordances, such as interactivity, entertainment, or credibility, in digital contexts, act as external stimuli that activate internal processes, like trust, satisfaction, or perceived fun, and so change behavioural consequences such as purchase intention or loyalty.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) adds to this viewpoint by explaining how technology is adopted based on two major perceptions, namely perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). Over the years, the TAM has been expanded to include other variables, including trust, enjoyment, and perceived credibility, to explain the emotional and social aspects of the adoption of digital technology (Chen & Zhao, 2024; Kim & Park, 2024). The more the digital platforms appear easy to navigate, reliable, and pleasant to the users, the higher the likelihood of sustained use and purchasing activities.

A combination of S-O-R and TAM can be used to gain a deeper insight into the interaction of technological and affective mechanisms on consumer behaviour. The composite framework hypothesizes the characteristics of social media as stimuli, namely, convenience, interactivity and involvement, fun, the ease of sharing Information, and credibility, which influence the organismic states, including trust, satisfaction, and pleasure, and result in behavioural responses, such as online food shopping. This assimilation is particularly relevant in the Saudi Arabian context, where technology adoption processes and social impact are closely associated with cultural values that promote authenticity, trust, and social bonding (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024).

2.3 *Social Media Factors as Major Stimuli*

2.3.1 *Ease of Use*

Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a user is of the view that using a social media platform involves minimum effort. According to TAM, ease of use increases their perceived usefulness and satisfaction, thus raising the intention to use the technology (Davis, 1989). By making the users feel that a platform is easy, convenient, and intuitive, they tend to browse and find content, discuss, and make purchases (Coutinho et al., 2023).

Empirical findings have always shown that usability is an essential factor in promoting confidence and uncertainty avoidance in the virtual world. Kim and Park (2024) discovered that user-friendly interfaces and effective designs raise the interest and desire to buy goods on social media. In the same way, Chen and Zhao (2024) have shown that the perception of ease of use plays a significant role in enhancing the cognitive trust of consumers in mobile commerce platforms.

The convenience of use is especially relevant in the context of Saudi Arabia, in terms of which consumers have to combine work, family, and social duties. These time-conscious lifestyles are in line with digital services that offer convenient navigation and options for online payments (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024). In this regard, ease of use should be considered a technological stimulus in the S-O-R-TAM model, which improves perceived control and satisfaction and eventually encourages consumers to buy foods online.

H1: *The perceived ease of use of social media platforms has a positive effect on the buying behaviour of consumers with regard to online food purchasing in Saudi Arabia.*

2.3.2 *Interactivity and Partaking*

Interactivity is one of the main peculiarities of social media, and it serves as the most essential indicator of the involvement of a user. It is a construct that denotes the degree to which users can interact, share feedback, and share experiences together. Interactivity leading to high levels leads to social presence that ensures that consumers feel united with the brands and engaged with them personally and with other consumers. Under the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) paradigm, the interaction of a social stimulus, interactivity, triggers the emergence of positive affective states, which include enjoyment and trust, which, in turn, lead to behavioural intentions (Luo et al., 2023).

The relevance of interactivity in the development of online trust and purchase intention is supported by empirical studies. Coutinho et al. (2023) revealed the positive impact of participatory



communication on brand credibility, and Al-Zahrani et al. (2023) have shown that engagement via influencer pages could improve the level of emotional attachment in Saudi consumers. Perceived authenticity and transparency, which are greatly appreciated in the Saudi culture, are also enhanced by interactive experiences.

When social media participants have the opportunity to engage with the brands in live sessions, polls, and question-and-answer sessions, they are likely to develop positive attitudes and trust. Engagement also transforms passive audiences into active content co-creators, which makes them feel a sense of belonging to a digital community. This affective and mind activation makes the consumer move towards the action aspect after becoming aware, especially in industries with experiential consumption as a core activity; food being one such industry.

H2: *The levels of activity and engagement in social media sites have a positive impact on consumer purchasing behaviour of online food in Saudi Arabia.*

2.3.3 Entertainment and Emotional Involvement

Entertainment captures the extent of enjoyment and pleasure that consumers get out of engagement with social media content. Hedonic stimulus in digital marketing is a form of entertainment that creates emotional motivation, hence increasing the chances of purchase. As per the S-O-R model, the positive affective states, pleasure and excitement, caused by entertaining stimuli generate positive behavioural response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Recent studies back up the suggestion that entertainment facilitates engagement and purchase intention in online settings. Kim and Park (2024) established that hedonic pleasure when consuming short-form video material enhances the impulse purchasing behaviour of consumers. Similarly, according to Deloitte (2025), the Saudi consumers are especially sensitive to engaging and culturally engaging content, where humor and storytelling have become the most prevalent strategies among the food brands on social media.

Entertainment also works towards differentiation of the brand and emotional attachment. Consumers will tend to become loyal and engage in favorable word-of-mouth behaviour when it comes to a platform or brand, as they have pleasant experiences. In the Saudi context, entertainment has a social aspect; social pleasure and common media experiences make group identities and group satisfaction stronger.

Accordingly, entertainment not only increases the level of engagement but also affects the emotional conditions, which translate to purchasing behaviour.

H3: *The entertainment value of social media content has a positive effect on consumers' purchasing behaviour towards online food purchasing in Saudi Arabia.*

2.3.4 Information-Sharing Ease

Information-sharing ease has been used to capture the ease through which the user can access, evaluate, and share product-related Information using social media platforms. Transparent information exchange is essential in reducing the perceived risk in online food purchasing, where the tangibility of products does not exist (Chen & Zhao, 2024). Sharing of reviews, photographs, or

testimonials boosts trust in consumers and aids in making informed decisions.

Social media offers a participatory platform where consumers are able to legitimize their decision by interacting with others. Alotaibi and Alharbi (2024) have discovered that Saudi consumers place an enormous burden on social validation to base their online purchase decisions, especially in high-involvement products (food and hospitality). Social sites where people can create content and openly communicate build consumer confidence and satisfaction.

Using the S-O-R-TAM conceptualization, it can be stated that information-sharing ease is a cognitive stimulus that increases perceived usefulness and trust through reliable and readily available Information. This lessens uncertainty and favorable organismic states, which result in an increase in purchase intention.

H4: *The accessibility and sharing of information on social media have a positive effect on the consumer's buying behaviour for online food in Saudi Arabia.*

2.3.5 Credibility and Establishment of Trust

Credibility refers to what is felt to be trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity of social media content. It has always been one of the best forecasts of consumer buying behaviour, especially in situations where the evaluation of the product is associated with uncertainty (Coutinho et al., 2023). Consumers will tend to believe the source and take its suggestions when the latter is perceived as credible.

Credibility acts as a persuasive stimulus in social commerce that lowers the perceived risk and creates trust. Al-Zahrani et al. (2023) showed that the credibility of the influencer has a direct effect on the purchase intention of Saudi consumers. Likewise, Kim and Park (2024) have found that authoritative recommendations enhance the perceived authenticity of online communication, hence increasing the level of trust and purchase rates.

In Saudi culture, credibility is of paramount value. Credible digital communication is enhanced by cultural demands of honesty, integrity, and transparency. In Saudi Arabia, the primary influencers, family, and verified business accounts are the ones that allow social media users to make purchases (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024).

In the integrated model, credibility arouses cognitive trust and emotional confidence as two important organismic states resulting in the behavioural response of purchasing online food.

H5: *Perceived credibility of social media content has a positive impact on the buying behaviour of consumers of online food purchasing in Saudi Arabia.*

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the integrated S-O-R-TAM framework, the study will conceptualize the social media affordances as the external stimulations (S) that influence the cognitive and affective assessment of the consumer (O), which results in behavioural reactions (R) in the shape of the online food purchasing behaviour.

The five social media dimensions, which include ease of use, interactivity and participation, entertainment, information-sharing ease, and credibility, are different but related dimensions of the social media experience. A combination of these factors affects

organismic states of consumers, such as perceived trust, satisfaction, and enjoyment. These internal states, in turn, motivate behavioural intentions, which include online purchases of food using social sites.

This theoretical framework offers an all-inclusive framework through which the use of social media can be understood in terms of behavioural consequences. It also creates a basis for future research on mediating and moderating variables, like

consumer trust, consumer satisfaction, or cultural orientation, that may narrow down the quality of the explanatory model.

Using this combined framework in the Saudi context, the current study expands the existing theories into a fast-changing and culturally diverse setting and hence makes contributions in both theoretical and practical value to the scholars, marketing practitioners, and policymakers who aim at using social media as a strategic tool to engage consumers.

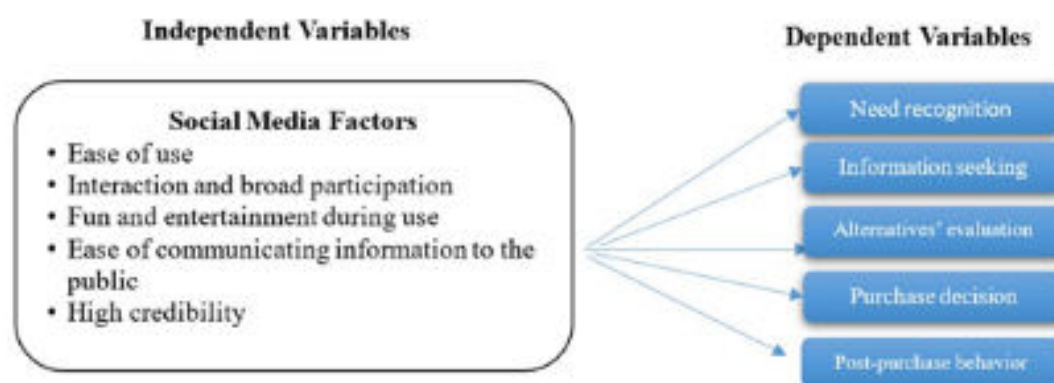


Figure 1: Research Model Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study is a quantitative and cross-sectional research design because the study empirically examined the effects of social media variables on the buyer's decision to purchase food online in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The quantitative method was chosen due to the latent psychological constructs that may be quantified and to test the theoretical relationships between a number of variables using statistical modelling. A cross-sectional design was suitable considering the purpose of the study to record the prevailing perceptions and behaviour of social media users at a given time, hence the ability to capture modern consumption trends in the ever-changing digital environment in Saudi Arabia.

An online questionnaire was structured, self-administered, and created based on measurement items that were previously tested by other researchers. The survey tool was constructed to operationalise the constructs of the combined Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) models. The strategy helped to analyses cognitive (technological) and affective (emotional) variables that affected behaviour intentions and real purchasing decisions of consumers.

The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was adopted, which made it possible to test the hypothesised relationships (H1–H5) simultaneously and test the overall model fit. This research design can be aligned with the previous literature that has used the S–O–R and TAM models to examine consumer activity, technology acceptance, and behaviour in digital settings (Chen & Zhao, 2024; Kim & Park, 2024). The design will guarantee internal consistency, statistical rigour, and theoretical consistency with the already known patterns of social media consumer behaviour research.

3.2 Population and Sampling Procedure

The sampled population of this study consisted of Saudi consumers who use social media extensively and have ordered food online in the last six months. This inclusion criterion was important in order to make sure that the respondents had the appropriate experience in both social media interaction and online purchasing of food, thus ensuring high validity of the responses.

The non-probability convenience sampling method with a snowball extension was used in the study due to the absence of an official database to identify this population. The first sample was identified by using posts and private messages in high-engagement social media platforms (Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp) so that the most diverse range of respondents was obtained. The respondents were motivated to forward the survey link to their social circles, and this meant that they were able to reach a broader range of population groups in the Kingdom as well as regions.

In the first place, 368 responses were gathered. The preceding analysis was done on 342 valid responses following the screening of completeness, attention-check compliance, and eligibility. This sample size is larger than the minimum size that SEM analyses are recommended to have, which typically implies a ratio of 10 participants per parameter of interest or 200 observations (Hair et al., 2021). This provides sufficient statistical power and reliability of parameter estimates.

Although convenience sampling reduces the ability to make inferences about the general Saudi population, it is suitable in exploratory research on consumer behaviour in an online setting, whereby the sample groups should fulfil a set of behavioural parameters (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024). The active social media users are of great relevance to the study by adding contextual relevance



that captures insights of the segment that is most reflective of the Saudi Arabian digital consumer culture.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in the collection of data was an online questionnaire; the questionnaire was developed in both Arabic and English to make it linguistically accessible to Saudi respondents as well as culturally relevant. In order to preserve the conceptual similarity of the two versions of the language, the back-translation approach was adopted for the translation process through the involvement of independent translation and reverse checking by experts of both languages. The last survey had 3 main sections that, in totality, represented the constructs of interest. The preliminary part comprised demographic data items such as gender, age, educational stage, social media usage frequency, and the social media platform of choice. These variables offered a background to descriptive analysis and enabled subgroup comparisons between demographic groups. The second question concerned social media factors that were conceptualised as external stimuli in the integrated S O R TAM model. Multi-item scales, based on earlier tested instruments, were utilized to operationalise five constructs, including ease of use, interactivity and participation, entertainment, the ease of sharing Information, and credibility (Coutinho et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2023; Kim & Park, 2024). All the constructs were theorised as social media affordances that were expected to affect the cognitive and affective assessment of consumers in the purchasing decision-making process. The third part discussed consumer buying behaviour, and it assessed the five steps involved in the consumer decision-making model, namely need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. Objects were based on the previous research in e-commerce and online food service and were modified to mirror the cultural and technological background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. All Information in the questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree), which gave the form a balanced and symmetric delivery that contributed to higher response variation and the opportunity to make meaningful comparisons between constructs. Before the massive distribution, the instrument was evaluated by three scholarly professionals of digital marketing and consumer psychology to determine the clarity of the content, the accuracy of the language, and the decency of the context. In response to their reactions, minor changes in wording were made to enhance the interpretability and ensure that the resulting tool was culturally appropriate and scientifically sound.

3.4 Procedures of validity and Reliability.

A rigorous multi-stage validation and reliability testing of the research tool was done to test its psychometric soundness. To determine the clarity of the questions, the wording accuracy, and the consistency of the responses in general, a pilot study with thirty participants was conducted. The pilot participants expressed that the items were largely well comprehended and fitting into the overall context, though small adjustments were required to enhance the clarity and linguistic correctness according to the Saudi cultural and digital environment. After the pilot stage, expert review was conducted by three academic experts in the field of digital marketing and consumer behaviour in order to determine the content

validity of every item in terms of representativeness, wording, and the relevance to the targeted construct and suitability of such items to Saudi digital media users. The construct validity was then tested by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS 28.0 to test the suitability of the measurement model. The validity of indicators and the convergent and discriminant validity of all constructs were assessed in the analysis. Convergent validity was also assured since all Standardized factor loadings were greater than 0.70 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) per construct was greater than the suggested cut-off of 0.50, which shows that the items were a good measure of their corresponding latent variables. Discriminant validity was also tested under Fornell-Larcker, which revealed that the square root of the AVE of each construct was larger than the inter-construct correlations, and this implied that each construct was distinct empirically. Cronbach alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR) were used to test reliability to determine the internal consistency of the measure's scales used. Each construct had α values of more than 0.80 and CR values of more than 0.85, which is higher than the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al. (2021). These findings confirmed that the tool is highly internally consistent and stable when measuring all the variables. Lastly, the general fit of the measurement model was assessed using various goodness-of-fit statistics, such as $2/df = 2.14$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.957, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)=0.942, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)=0.056, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRM)=0.048. In sum, all these indices were within the recommended ranges, which served as proof that the model of measurement depicted a wonderful fit and reflected the underlying data structure appropriately.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Initial statistical operations were performed on SPSS 28.0, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was undertaken on AMOS 28.0. The analytical plan was based on a two-step systematic approach to the best practice of using the SEM application in both behavioural and social sciences. At the first stage, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted with the aim of determining the dimensionality, reliability, and validity of all latent constructs, and the measurement indicators were used to measure their underlying theoretical concept before hypothesis testing. This was done to confirm that the measurement model had sufficient psychometric characteristics and structural validity. A second stage was done to test the validated measurement model as a complete structural model to test the hypothesised relationships between constructs (H1 through H5). The path coefficients, standard errors, and level of significance were analyzed to identify the strength, direction, and statistical significance of each of the proposed relationships. The adequacy of the model was further tested using the same goodness-of-fit indices used in the previous validation steps, thus creating consistency and resiliency in the model estimation. Besides the SEM analysis, other statistical tests were performed to add to the interpretation dimension of the results. To describe socio-demographic traits of the respondents and their patterns of using social media, descriptive statistics were computed to give a contextual insight into the sample. The correlation coefficients of Pearson were used to discuss the relations between



the constructs, and the Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) were evaluated to determine that multicollinearity did not occur, with all values of them less than the standard acceptable level of 3.0. Moreover, multi-group analysis was conducted to investigate possible differences in demographics by gender, age groups, and favorite social media platforms with regard to the structural paths among the respective subgroups. This extra layer of analysis resulted in a more nuanced contextual analysis and was in line with the modern tendencies of the methodological approach to digital consumer behaviour studies in the Gulf region (Al-Zahrani et al., 2023).

3.6 Questionnaire Reliability and validity.

Pilot research assists researchers in pretesting the questionnaire in order to ascertain whether it is achieving the research goals. It is also useful in paraphrasing any questions that can be misleading or ambiguous (Bluman, 2004). A pilot study was used to test the validity of the research tool by taking a sample of 20 Saudi people who used online food purchasing platforms through social networks. This group of people was not represented in the primary research population, which comprised 308 other characters.

Validity after the pilot study was checked through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and the items with coefficients loading lower than 0.3 were removed. Consequently, this led to the deletion of four items, such as D1S1, D4S3, D4S5, and D5S2, in the questionnaire with respect to five of the variables, i.e., ease of use, interaction and broad participation, fun and entertainment during use, ease of communicating Information to the public, and high credibility.

The alpha coefficient of Cronbach is a method of testing reliability, and it measures internal consistency of a questionnaire by assessing the relationship that exists between the items. A research score of 0.70 or more is considered acceptable. Based on Table 1, it is evident that the value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient between 0.7 and 0.881 indicates that all the variables have good and satisfactory reliability. More so, the internal consistency of all variables (ease of use, interaction and broad participation, fun and entertainment during use, ease of communicating Information to the public, and high credibility) was discovered to be 0.871, which is good to undertake the current study.

Table 1: Summary of reliability test

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Ease of use	3	0.703	Acceptable
Interaction and broad participation	4	0.881	Good
Fun and entertainment during use	2	0.852	Good
Ease of communicating Information to the public	3	0.70	Acceptable
High credibility	3	0.848	Good

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the Research Ethics Committee at the (University Name).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis will give a general idea of the demographic features of the respondents and the initial insights into their participation in online food buying on social media platforms. Analysis was done on 342 valid responses after the data screening. As the conclusions made in Table 2 indicate, the gender participation was relatively balanced, as 60.7% of respondents were men and 39.3% were women. In terms of age, 31.5 per cent of the respondents fell within the age brackets of 30-39 years, 57 per cent within the age group of 18-29 years, and 11.5 per cent in the age bracket of 40 years and above. Most of the respondents were therefore young adults, and this indicates the population that is most engaged in digital consumption in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Table 2 shows that the education levels of the participants were also somewhat good. The sample was found to have about

55.2% with bachelor's education, with 23% having postgraduate education, and 21.8% had either a diploma or lower education credentials. Concerning income, 34.1% of the respondents earned over 15,000 Saudi Riyals (SR) /month, 28% earned between 10,000 and 15,000 SR, and 37.9% earned less than 10,000 SR. This spread indicates a wide cross-section of the consumers of the middle- and upper-income brackets- the categories comprising the most active constituent of online food delivery consumers in Saudi Arabia.

Regarding social media practices, almost all the respondents (92%) said that they use different platforms on a daily basis. Instagram and Snapchat were recognized as the most common in terms of browsing or ordering food content, and TikTok and the X (formerly Twitter) were next in line. The results show that most Saudi consumers use visually based and interactive sources to explore, review, and purchase foods, which are more generally integrated with social commerce as part of overall lifestyle applications.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic and Variables			
Gender			
	Frequency		Percent %
	Male	187	60.7
Age	Female	121	39.3



Education level	20 and less than 30	75	24.4
	30 and less than 40	97	31.5
	40 and less than 50	71	23.1
	50 and less than 60	57	18.5
	More than 60	8	2.6
	High school	36	11.7
	Diploma	45	14.6
	Bachelor's degree	170	55.2
	Postgraduate	53	17.2
	Other	4	1.3
Monthly income level	less than 5,000 SR	67	21.8
	5,000 and less than 8,000 SR	42	13.6
	8,000 and less than 10,000 SR	28	9.1
	10,000 and less than 15,000 SR	66	21.4
	More than 15,000 SR	105	34.1

The average of 1.00 to 1.80 is equal to Strongly disagree, which means the level of agreement is very low. The score between 1.81 and 2.60 is the range of "Disagree in which a generally negative answer took place. A mean ranging between 2.61 and 3.40 is classified as neutral and is neither agreeable nor disagreeable. In the meantime, the scale between 3.41 and 4.20 is an indicator of the Agree level, which is positive. Lastly, a mean range of between 4.21 and 5.00 is equal to strongly agree, which means the maximum level of agreement among the respondents. Table 3 indicates that the mean scores of the study variables had a range of between 2.43 and 4.14, as indicated by the descriptive statistics. The construct Ease of Use had the greatest mean, resulting in the highest score ($M = 4.14$),

which means the respondents agreed strongly that social media sites are convenient and easy to use to purchase food. On the contrary, the lowest mean score was observed in Post-Purchase Behaviour ($M = 2.43$), which indicated moderate involvement in the review-sharing or repeat-purchase intentions following the initial dealings. The values of standard deviation were acceptable, 0.556 -1.496, which proves the presence of an acceptable variability among the responses and indicates a wide range of perspectives among participants. This variation means that the dataset is sufficient to reflect various consumer perceptions in the heterogeneous online food market in Saudi Arabia.

Table 3: Summary of Descriptive Findings

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ease of use	308	1.00	5.00	4.14	0.643
Interaction and broad participation	308	1.00	5.00	3.69	0.807
Fun and entertainment during use	308	2.00	5.00	3.87	0.788
Ease of communicating Information to the public	308	2.00	5.00	4.11	0.556
High credibility	308	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.751
Need recognition	308	1.00	5.00	3.14	1.336
Information seeking	308	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.384
Alternative evaluation	308	1.00	5.00	3.09	1.294
Purchase decision	308	1.00	5.00	2.74	1.277
Post-purchase behavior	308	1.00	5.00	2.43	1.496

4.2 Measurement of Constructs

The research model was broken down to examine each of its dimensions and determine the degree of variation and significance among the respondents. The standard deviations of all the measurement items and the mean scores were computed and ranked in a descending manner in order to refer to the most salient respondents on each construct.

4.2.1 Ease of Use

The overall mean of the dimension of Ease of Use, as depicted in Table 4, is 4.14, which implies that there is a strong

consensus among the participants that social media is easy to use, efficient, and simple to navigate when ordering food online. The highest mean ($M=4.25$) was achieved in Statement 1, then Statement 2 ($M=4.16$) and Statement 3 ($M=4.00$). A small market range of means and standard deviations is an indicator of great agreement. These findings highlight the importance of technological simplicity and interface clarity as the key factors that contribute to the motivation towards adoption and utilization of online food delivery services in Saudi Arabia.



Table 4: Ease of Use Statement Ranking

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Scale
1	Learning how to use the different online channels is easy for me.	4.25	.757	1	Strongly Agree
2	It feels easy to join the groups and communities that I am interested in.	4.16	.680	2	Agree
3	My interaction with the different online channels is clear and understandable.	4.00	.911	3	Agree
Ease of use		4.14	.643		Agree

4.2.2 Interaction and Broad Participation

The interaction and Broad participation Construct, which was summarized in Table 5, had a total mean of 3.69, which is the total agreement among the participants. The highest mean was recorded in Statement 1 (M = 3.90) and then Statement 2 (M = 3.78), Statement 3 (M = 3.55), and Statement 4 (M = 3.54). These results

show that consumers view moderate to high interactivity on social platforms, although further two-way communication between the brands and the consumer is possible. The findings indicate the significance of participatory interaction in the development of social presence and trust in online food trade.

Table 5: Interaction and Broad Participation Statement Ranking

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Scale
1	I often search for online food purchasing and seek information through social media platforms.	3.90	0.948	1	Agree
2	I often make comments or share experiences with my friends about online food purchases I have made through social media platforms.	3.78	1.015	2	Agree
3	I often start discussions with my friends about online food purchasing on social media platforms.	3.55	0.989	3	Agree
4	I often participate in discussions about online food proposals with my friends on social media platforms.	3.54	1.056	4	Agree
Interaction & Broad Participation		3.69	0.807		Agree

4.2.3 Fun and Entertainment During Use

Entertainment has become a significant psychological motivation for the use of social media. The mean on this construct, as displayed in Table 6, was 3.87 with a positive perception of the enjoyment and entertaining contents. Statement 1 had a mean of 3.88, followed by Statement 2 of 3.85. The regularly high average

indicates that consumers appreciate emotionally charged and aesthetically pleasing content, a feature that is consistent with hedonic motives of the S-O-R theory. Entertainment value will consequently increase the satisfaction of users, which will indirectly affect purchasing intent.

Table 6: Fun and Entertainment During Use Statement Ranking

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Scale
1	I find that online food purchasing through social media platforms is fun.	3.88	0.831	1	Agree
2	I think that purchasing online food through social media is enjoyable.	3.85	0.864	2	Agree
Fun & Entertainment During Use		3.87	0.788		Agree

4.2.4 Ease of Communicating Information to the Public

The construct of the Ease of Communicating Information was among the best with respect to aggregate mean across all these dimensions (M=4.11). As indicated in Table 7, Statement 1 was the top one (M=4.21), followed by Statement 2 (M = 4.18), Statement 3 (M = 4.04), and Statement 4 (M = 4.03). These findings are valid in

confirming that respondents find it easy to post Information, reviews, and visual materials regarding food purchases on social media. This ability to exchange information without any obstacles promotes transparency and peer approval, which are very important in consumer confidence and decision-making in online food situations.

Table 7: Ease of Communicating Information to the Public Statement Ranking

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Scale
1	I think that with social media sites, I am able to actively seek out information on online food.	4.21	0.693	1	Strongly Agree
2	I agree that social media provides effective and powerful platforms for consumers to communicate with each other and with companies.	4.18	0.741	2	Agree
3	I agree that feedback (reviews/comments/posts and so on) on social media affects my purchase decisions for online food purchasing.	4.04	0.889	3	Agree
4	The Information ingredients, cooking process, etc. provided through online food purchasing platforms is very useful.	4.03	0.895	4	Agree
Ease of Communicating Information to The Public		4.11	0.556		Agree

4.2.5 High Credibility

Table 8 shows that the High Credibility dimension had the highest total mean of 3.31, which is between the range of neutral and agree. The highest mean score ($M=4.00$) was obtained in Statement 1, whereas Statements 2 and 3 had the mean scores of 3.02 and 2.92, respectively. This difference implies that consumers

Table 8: High Credibility Statement Ranking

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Scale
1	I think social media is convincing.	4.00	0.768	1	Agree
2	I think social media is credible.	3.02	1.000	2	Neutral
3	I think social media is accurate.	2.92	0.989	3	Neutral
High Credibility		3.31	0.751		Neutral

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Following descriptive and construct-level analyses, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted to evaluate the hypothesized relationships between social media factors and stages of consumer buying behaviour. The initial model comprised 19 items measuring all constructs; however, after assessing factor loadings and modification indices, the model was refined to 15 items to achieve optimal goodness-of-fit. These modifications substantially improved the overall model fit, as detailed in Table 9.

The revised model met all key statistical adequacy criteria. The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) improved markedly from 0.471 to

tend to think that the content of social media is credible; however, distrust in the authenticity of some influencers or marketing pieces should still exist. The fairly neutral average indicates the ongoing issue of creating digital trust in social commerce ecosystems, where the difficulty of distinguishing between user-generated content and advertising is common.

0.970, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.90 (King et al., 2005). Similarly, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) increased to 0.965, indicating a strong model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) decreased from 0.261 to 0.068, falling well within the acceptable limit of less than 0.08 (Otto et al., 2011). The Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) dropped to 1.089 from 2.291, reflecting a more parsimonious model. Additionally, the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) rose significantly from 0.305 to 0.950, further demonstrating model adequacy (Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1994).

Table 9: Improvement of the model

Model	Items No.	IFI	RMSEA	CFI	CMIN/DF	TLI
1. Original Model	19	0.471	0.261	0.423	2.291	0.305
2. Revised Model	15	0.97	0.068	0.965	1.089	0.95

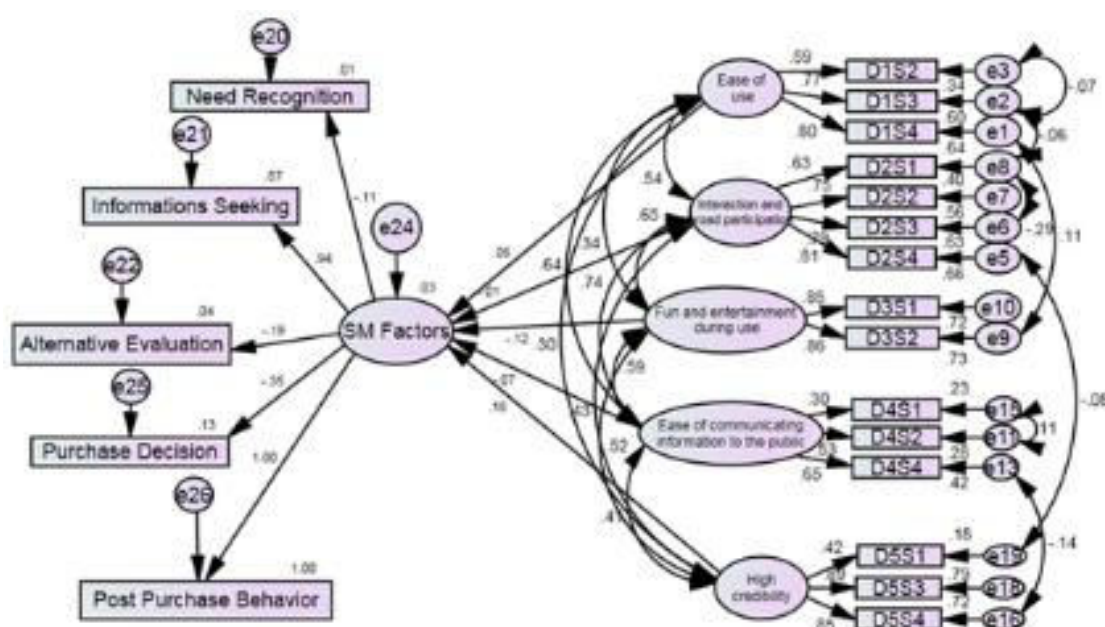


Figure 2: Path Diagram (Revised Hypothesized Model)

The updated model described a large variance in the endogenous variables. The factors of social media explained about 87 per cent of Information Seeking, 13 per cent of Purchase Decision, and 4 per cent of Alternative Evaluation. These findings

show that social media has the greatest effect at the initial phases of the decision-making process, especially at the information-seeking stage, where consumers are highly dependent on online indicators, reviews, and shared experiences to assess alternatives.



Hypotheses have been tested with the help of standardized path coefficients (0), critical ratios (CR), and p-values, as presented in Table 10. Findings showed statistically significant support for H2, H3, and H4, with a p-value less than 0.001 and a CR value greater than the 1.96 significance level. In particular, social media factors contributed significantly to the seeking of information (0.94, $p=0.001$). It implies that consumers perceive social media as the main means of online food discovery and comparison, which, again, is in line with the literature that highlights the importance of online food search behaviour being rooted in digital interactivity.

On the other hand, the findings showed that such factors as social media had negative effects on Alternative Evaluation ($= -0.19$, $p<0.001$) and Purchase Decision ($= -0.35$, $p<0.001$). The implication of these findings is that although social media is a good

catalyst for exploratory behaviour and awareness, overexposure to alternatives or conflicting Information can negatively affect the final purchase decision as it increases perceived complexity or choice overload. This contradiction is consistent with the existing studies indicating that information overload may even lead to decision paralysis in digital environments (Pahlevan & Sharif, 2018).

In sum, the postulated model shows how social media platforms are more channels of influence, whereby information is manipulated to influence initial decision-making processes instead of being a purchase driver. These platforms are used by consumers to discover, evaluate, and debate food choices, although the richness of factors like reliable delivery, prices, and offline brand recognition might be used to finalize the purchase decision.

Table 10: Relationship between Exogenous and Endogenous Variables

Hypotheses	Exogenous and Endogenous	Std. Estimate (β)	Critical Ratio CR.	Hypothesis
H ₁	SM Factors → Need Recognition	-0.11	-1.935	Not Supported
H ₂	SM Factors → Information Seeking	0.94	46.274***	Supported
H ₃	SM Factors → Alternative Evaluation	-0.19	-3.45***	Supported
H ₄	SM Factors → Purchase Decision	-0.35	-6.648***	Supported
H ₅	SM Factors → Post Purchase Behaviour	1	0.000	Not Supported

*** p-value < 0.001

5. Discussion

The main aim of this paper was to test the effect of the main factors of social media, including the ease of use, the interactivity and participation, the entertainment, the simplicity of sharing Information and credibility on the purchasing behaviour of consumers in Saudi Arabia regarding online food purchasing. Based on an integrated Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) research, the study empirically examined the linkages between these aggregated social media variables and the five stages of consumer decision-making, including need recognition, Information seeking, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. The findings offer subtle knowledge of the place of social media in the development of digital consumption patterns in the Saudi environment, showing both positive and counterintuitive influences that concur and resonate with the available literature.

5.1 Critical Discussion of Major Results

The analysis based on structural equation modelling (SEM) showed that the social media factors have a very strong but differing effect on consumer decision-making stages. Markedly, these variables described a significant 87% variance in information searching, which highlights the central theme presented by social media as a broad avenue of discovery and exploration in online food shopping. This positive correlation (0.94, $p<0.001$) supports H2 and

fits the S-O-R theory, where the social media affordances are viewed as stimuli that trigger cognitive organismic states, including perceived usefulness and trust, which cause behavioural reactions, including active information search (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Luo et al., 2023). The Saudi Arabian market, where apps like Instagram and Snapchat are mainly used with abundant visual and interactive materials, seems to use them as platforms to engage in peer reviews, endorsement by influencers, and real-time recommendations, which helps them to collect the necessary Information as a busy consumer, and the cultural focus on interacting with social approval (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024).

Nevertheless, the results showed negative effects on alternative evaluation ($= -0.19$, $=0.001$) and purchase decision ($= -0.35$, $=0.001$) to confirm H3 and H4 statistically significant, though in the opposite direction. That would indicate that, though social media is the best in creating the first wave of engagement, it also tends to cause unexpected complexity in subsequent steps by bombarding the customers with too many choices, opposing views, or too much Information. These results are consistent with the previous studies on the phenomenon of decision paralysis in online settings, in which the sheer amount of user-created content may increase the perceived risk and conversions (Pahlevan & Sharif, 2018; Chen & Zhao, 2024). When applied to online food purchasing, this may be in the form of indecision in the alternative consideration



because of the various reviews on food quality, delivery times, or prices, and may cause consumers to abandon carts or switch back to previous offline purchases. The insignificant significance of need recognition ($\beta = -0.11$, not significant) and post-purchase behavior ($\beta = 1.00$, not significant) further suggests that the effect of social media is not observable at the beginning stages of the decision process, but instead aimed at the intermediate stages of the buying process, which involves encouraging the continuance of those buying behaviors as long-term loyalty, such as repurchase and promotional behaviors.

These results are supplemented by descriptive analyses, indicating high mean scores of ease of use ($M=4.14$) and information-sharing ease ($M=4.11$), which are expressions of the focus of TAM perceived ease of use as a technology adoption driver (Davis, 1989). Other purported hedonic functions in the promotion of engagement were also positively rated: entertainment ($M=3.87$) and interactivity ($M=3.69$) (Kim & Park, 2024; Coutinho et al., 2023). Credibility, in its turn, was rated neutrally ($M=3.31$), which points to the current difficulties with establishing trust within the field of Saudi society, where authenticity and reputation are central values (Al-Zahrani et al., 2023). Such trends indicate that, though utilitarian considerations such as ease of use support the novice tendencies, hedonic ones may promote overload during later phases unless they are offset by plausible and unsophisticated contents.

5.2 Comparison to Existing Literature

The enhancement of information search is consistent with the world research on social commerce, in which interactivity and entertainment are the drivers of exploratory patterns (Luo et al., 2023; Kim & Park, 2024). This resembles results in Saudi-specific studies on the use of social sites as a source of eWOM and validation in the food industries after the COVID-19 pandemic (Alotaibi & Alharbi, 2024; Al-Zahrani et al., 2023). The adverse effects on alternative evaluation and purchase decision, however, are not consistent with the findings of other international literature, which tend to report evenly positive effects (Coutinho et al., 2023). This difference could be explained by the peculiarities of Saudi Arabia in terms of cultural and online environment, where the rate of social media use is high (more than 80% of the population, Global Media Insight, 2024) and the population tends to be conservative, which increases the distrust towards unproven Information. The situation in Saudi consumers is different because, unlike in the West, where individualism may help distinguish faster choices, the focus on individual trust and family impacts might support overload caused by the multitude of social signals (Alghamdi & Bogari, 2020).

The combination of S-O-R and TAM is effective to explain these mechanisms, which expands the previous applications by emphasizing how the stimuli interactivity influences the occurrence of organismic states, enjoyment, or confusion, which in turn variably result in responses (Chen & Zhao, 2024). This work contributes to the literature as it uses the framework of an emerging market that shows some context-specific peculiarities that are lacking in research on the developed economy (Alfeel & Ansari, 2019).

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Conceptually, the study has implications for the consumer behaviour literature by confirming and generalizing the S-O-R-

TAM integration in the context of social media-influenced food shopping. Through breaking down buying behaviour into stages, the research study reveals that the impact of social media is not unilateral but stage-specific, as its impact is more significant on cognition information seeking than action. This makes the models more applicable, which leads to the introduction of moderators such as information overload or cultural trust in the future. In addition, the results remind us of the duality of the social media affordances: they are facilitative, but they can also be inhibitory, providing a more balanced perspective than earlier positive accounts did. This is a key point to notice in the Saudi context, where the digital drive of Vision 2030 overlaps with sociocultural considerations, reinforcing the global discussions on localized digital consumerism (Saudi Ministry of Economy, 2024).

5.4 Practical Implications

To marketers and policymakers in the Saudi Arabian online food market, the findings support the use of a full-fledged approach towards social media strategies. To maximize the already explained 87 per cent of information-seeking in this stage, platforms should focus on improving information-seeking capabilities, including edited reviews and computer-based suggestions. In order to minimize adverse impacts on assessment and purchase, brands may adopt lean interfaces that lessen the choice overload, which may include individualized filters or trustworthy influencer cooperation in line with cultural principles (Deloitte, 2025). Post-purchase engagement tools loyalty programs, which do not significantly impact Instagram or TikTok, could be targeted by delivery services to develop repeat behaviour. To exhibit credibility perceptions, policymakers would encourage digital literacy programs that would help achieve Vision 2030 of a trustworthy e-commerce environment.

5.5 Limitations

Irrespective of its contributions, this research is limited. The convenience sampling and cross-sectional design restrict the possibility of generalizing the results to more than the active users of social media and may miss the fact that behaviour trends may change over time. The youth bias of the sample (more than half below 40) could be biased, and using self-reported data might lead to a bias, but the correlation of social media factors into one exogenous variable might mask the effects of each. Also, the Saudi emphasis limits the generalizability, and the external influence of such factors as economic cycles was not controlled.

5.6 Future Research Recommendations

Future researchers might use longitudinal designs to monitor the changes in behaviour over time or mixed methods to investigate the qualitative aspects of overload perceptions. The model could be refined by investigating moderators' demographic factors, gender, income, or platform-specific (e.g., TikTok vs. X). The cultural generalizability might be challenged through comparative research on the Gulf countries, whereas the integration of new technologies, such as AI chatbots, might be used to research the changing stimuli in social commerce. Lastly, the framework can be extended to other industries in fashion in order to increase its scope.

7. Conclusion

This paper examined how the following social media variables affect online food buying in Saudi Arabia, which are ease



of use, interactivity, entertainment, ease of sharing Information, and credibility, with an integrated S-O-R and TAM framework. The results indicate that social media has a substantial influence on consumer behaviour, specifically at the information-seeking phase, which accounts for 87% of its variation, caused by the nature of interfaces and the ability to interact. Nevertheless, the impairment of other evaluation and purchase decision phases also reveals issues such as information overload that is caused by the combination of high digital penetration and cultural focus on trust and genuineness peculiar to Saudi Arabia. These findings complement theoretical models and show the effect of social media with respect to the stage, and highlight the dual nature of social media as a facilitator and a potential inhibitor of buying behaviour.

In a practical sense, the research provides practical Information to the emerging online food industry in Saudi Arabia. Curated and credible content should be used to maximize platform information discovery, and decision paralysis should be solved by a

simplified interface and trusted influencer relationships. The digital transformation of Vision 2030 can be supported by policymakers by promoting digital literacy to build confidence in social commerce. Although the study has made its contributions, its use of convenience sampling and cross-sectional design makes it hard to generalize, and future studies must consider longitudinal or mixed-method studies to be able to capture changes in behaviour. The model could further be refined by investigating effects that are platform-specific or extending to other sectors.

Finally, this study sheds light on the social media redefining consumption in fast-digitizing Saudi Arabia, where technological innovation meets the cultural values. In revealing the current global theory and local reality, it can help develop a subtler perspective of digital consumerism, which will provide a baseline upon which academics and practitioners can operate in the volatile conditions of technology, culture, and commerce in the new markets.

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