

An Examination of the Influence of Social Media on Consumer Buying Behavior within the Saudi Arabian Tourism Sector

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الملخص

دراسة تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على السلوك الشرائي للمستهلك في قطاع السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية

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لقد تم الاعتراف بالتقدم العميق الذي حققته وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، مما قاد إلى مناقشات مستفيضة حول وظيفة وتأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في البحوث السياحية.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على أنماط الشراء لدى مستهلكي السياحة في المملكة العربية السعودية، وتقييم مدى فاعلية وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في قطاع السياحة. حيث استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهج المسح لدراسة التأثير المحتمل لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي على عملية اتخاذ القرار لدى المستهلكين فيما يتعلق بالخدمات السياحية. وذلك باستخدام نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية (SEM) وهي الطريقة الإحصائية في دراسة العلاقة بين المتغيرات المرصودة والهيكل الأساسية الخاصة بها. وأكدت نتائج الدراسة صحة الروابط المفترضة من خلال شرح كيفية ارتباط المعلومات والتأثير والاستخدام لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي وسلوك الشراء بعملية صنع القرار لدى المستهلك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، السياحة، قرارات شراء العملاء، المملكة العربية السعودية

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Abstract

The profound progress of social media has been recognized, leading to extensive discussions on the function and influence of social media in tourist research. Consequently, acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the knowledge generated regarding the subject, particularly in Saudi Arabia, has grown progressively challenging. This study aims to analyze social media's impact on the purchasing patterns of tourism consumers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of social media in the tourism sector. This study employed a survey approach to investigate the potential impact of social media platforms on consumers' decision-making process regarding tourism services. Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical method to investigate the relationship between observed variables and their underlying structures. The study's results validate the assumed connections and fully comprehend how information, influence, utilization, and buying behavior link to consumer decision-making.

Keywords: Social Media, Tourism, Customer Buying Decisions, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

Social media has a pivotal role in influencing the whole tourism experience (Alkhodair et al., 2020). Idbenssi et al. (2020) found that travelers commonly use digital devices to document their interactions and experiences with locals and tourist attractions. They submit photographs, feedback, and travelogues to popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WeChat. Online

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assessments are usually brief, focusing on the main qualities that reviewers want to underline. The adoption and widespread use of digital technologies have profoundly affected the tourism industry, making it one of the sectors that has been most influenced (Safaa et al., 2021).

The emergence of digital media and the fast expansion of the internet have fundamentally transformed social interaction and economic activities. Social media has profoundly impacted different sectors, primarily functioning as a medium for communication and acquiring information, replacing face-to-face encounters. Social media fulfills leisure and business-related purposes (Kumar & Kumari, 2022). Social media platforms have gained significant popularity for interacting, communicating, and expressing personal viewpoints. They have emerged as viable alternatives to conventional media for marketing tourism, planning trips, and making decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2023). In addition, data is regularly updated. The utilization of social networks began displacing traditional sources of information as early as 2006 (Jepsen, 2006). Later, it was established that social media can influence consumers' purchasing behaviors, as demonstrated by input-processing response models (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are influential digital platforms that have substantially impacted several businesses (Smith et al., 2012). Furthermore, technology has influenced the tourism sector by enabling the exchange of experiences and evaluations among persons. The information on social networking

sites enables us to make well-informed decisions regarding our future choices. It is essential to recognize that communication in the virtual sphere is high-speed, and information spreads faster than any other online channel. People no longer need to interact to fully comprehend a destination's current situation physically. Contemporary social networking sites facilitate the procurement of verbal endorsements. Additionally, the visual impact of the location can be assessed by examining its presence on social media and internet platforms. This streamlines the decision-making process and improves the selection of the most suitable travel package for a particular trip (Yen & Halim, 2021).

Naseem (2021) asserts that a thriving tourism industry has the potential to yield equivalent economic growth as the exportation of natural resources. Tourism has the potential to adopt sustainable practices, in contrast to the oil, gas, and mining industries, which harm natural resources (Tuncay and Ozcan, 2020). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's report in 2019, the travel and tourism sector accounted for 9.5% of Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It supported 11.2% of the total employment. Hence, it is possible to advance toward sustainable tourism by reducing the dependence on traditional approaches to achieving economic expansion.

Saudi Arabia holds great historical, cultural, and religious significance, as well as being of enormous commercial importance. The state-sponsored modern tourist concept emphasizes various economic, cultural, historical, social, and environmental advantages. The museums house artifacts unearthed during contemporary

archaeological digs of the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, the Middle Ages and Late Islam, and the Reunification era of Saudi Arabia. The nation proudly possesses more than 10,000 sites of heritage and cultural significance. There are precisely five hundred individuals mentioned in ancient Arabic poetry, while the history of the Prophet includes around four hundred additional. Nevertheless, Mecca remains the most alluring destination for guests, with Medina closely trailing behind. The Red Sea shoreline, which extends about 1800 km to the west and 700 km to the east on the Arabian Gulf coast, is home to several renowned tourist spots. Saudi Arabia aims to attract 100 million visitors annually by 2030, increasing the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP from 5 to 18 percent (Jamel, 2020).

Saudi Arabia is a leading worldwide economy in the tourism sector. Tourism is a crucial factor in the economic progress of many countries worldwide and has been the subject of intensive research for a significant amount of time. Nevertheless, the study is absent on the tourism industry of this particular country. This study aims to examine the influence of social media on the buying behaviors of tourism consumers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of social media in the tourism industry. If this scenario holds, management and marketing experts in the tourism sector should give precedence to promoting their services on social media platforms rather than traditional mediums like radio and television.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Social Media In Tourism

Social media plays a vital role in tourism marketing by efficiently gathering and validating precise information. These responsibilities can be easily completed, and the social media platforms can be tailored to suit every phase of marketing tourism. The stages mentioned are attention, interest, desire, and action (Alghizzawi et al., 2018).

Social media, in a broader sense, encompasses online platforms that disseminate content generated by users (Tussyadiah et al., 2011). There are different types of social media platforms, such as forums (e.g., Lonely Planet Thorn Tree), video-sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube), photo galleries (e.g., Flickr), and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). According to Fotis, Buhalis, and Rossides (2011), there are differences between these social media platforms' one-to-many and many-to-many communication styles and usage patterns. Moreover, the extent of involvement in social media varies according to the users' country, age, and gender (Albarq, 2014; Dionysopoulou & Mylonakis, 2013). The broad spread of content on social media, also known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), across various platforms, provides opportunities for improved customized information.

The ability to personalize content and the extensive use of social media platforms have made it easier for tourists to engage with social media. Social media facilitates and empowers individuals in their travel planning and location selection (Bakr & Ali, 2013).

Social media platforms are utilized at many stages of the tourist journey, including before, during, and after travel, showcasing their temporal roles (Book et al., 2018). Social media significantly influences tourist tastes and decision-making throughout all three stages. Travelers employ social media platforms to acquire and expedite information inquiry for tourism-related matters in the pre-travel phase (Liu et al., 2013). Social media platforms can help travelers make informed decisions and reduce potential unhappiness when choosing a place (Tussyadiah et al., 2018). Destination choices are particularly susceptible to dissonance due to two main considerations. Per Jalilvand et al. (2012), consumption occasionally occurs immediately following a purchase. Often, people choose destinations without being able to evaluate the experience beforehand (Rathonyi, 2013) personally.

In the second phase, travelers engage in the act of sharing their trip experiences on various social media sites. Wu and Pearce (2017) contend that this indirectly enables other users to encounter the tourist's destination. Osei et al. (2018) contend that social media has transformed into a platform for individuals to present an idealized version of themselves and that how they portray their travel experiences might influence others' perceptions of them. In addition, Hernandez-Mendez et al. (2015) suggest that social media platforms are used to notify others about the whereabouts of tourists while they are traveling, as safety and security have become more important.

Moreover, vacationers employ social media platforms to store and retrieve their tourism encounters after their travels. Online

forums and photo repositories sometimes comprise a compilation of contributions from various travelers, wherein they elaborate on their preferences and critiques of various experiences (Fakharyan et al., 2012). Some visitors exhibit this behavior as an act of charity, intending to aid others in their vacation plans by providing valuable guidance (Lee et al., 2014). Nevertheless, certain travelers may use social media to reflect upon and evaluate their experiences after their journey.

Tourists unquestionably exploit social media throughout their tourism experience, utilizing diverse approaches at various intervals. Zhang et al. (2018) suggest that social media can effectively enhance awareness and generate interest in a place. It is crucial for enticing tourists and fostering their return visits. While there have been many studies on the influence of social media in the tourism sector, not all of them directly address decision-making. Moreover, even among individuals who engage in these debates, the deliberations concerning the particular circumstances under which these decisions are taken are concise. Yuan et al. (2022) highlight how social media platforms serve as a source of information for tourists, potentially leading them to use these platforms for planning and booking trips.

Hudson & Thal (2013) demonstrating how information gathering on social media (reviews, recommendations) influences how people perceive and respond to those opinions.

1.2 Benefits of Social Media in the Tourism Industry

Parra-López et al. (2011) and Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) acknowledge that social media gives four distinct advantages to the tourism industry, which can be classified as social, functional, psychological, and hedonic benefits.

Functional benefits, as described by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004), are the advantages that online members of a community seek to fulfill their needs and participate in activities. The functional advantages include seeking vacation information, formulating arrangements, and engaging in excursions (Parra-López et al., 2011). Wang et al. (2002) argue that online communities create a social structure that allows for the expression of social significance, which is advantageous for both individuals and groups. As stated by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004), these social benefits involve tourists participating in conversation, sharing viewpoints, and establishing connections with one another.

In addition, Wang and Fesenmaier (2004) contend that psychological advantages encompass sentiments of inclusion, association, and interpersonal bonds within a community. Continuous communication in a collaborative setting can lead to psychological advantages for its members (Parra-López et al., 2011).

Saudi Arabia stands to gain advantages from the tourism industry (Ibrahim et al., 2021). For example, it can improve the economy by creating job opportunities for Saudi citizens throughout the country, improving the quality of services and infrastructure,

and enabling the development of a more efficient public transportation system (Zamani-Farahani and Henderson, 2010). Moreover, this endeavor would expedite the restoration of Saudi Arabia's cultural legacy and cultivate a feeling of national pride, thereby bolstering the Kingdom's international standing as a more inclusive and hospitable society. As per Hall and Lew (2008), ecotourism encourages heightened environmental awareness and the conservation of natural resources. Moreover, it promoted cultural awareness among Saudi inhabitants and supported the development of a more efficient public transportation system.

1.3 Social Media and Decision-making

The impact of social media on consumer behavior in the tourism and travel industry has been extensively discussed. The intangible character of travel services and the inherent hazards associated with making travel-related decisions are the reasons behind this (Minazzi, 2015). The impact of social media on a traveler's decision to travel is substantial. During the initial phase, the information and comments seen on the internet significantly influence the traveler's journey, modifying their decision-making process (Živković et al., 2014). A Google survey found that 84% of those who participate in recreational travel use the Internet to plan and prepare for their vacations (Torres, 2015). Academic researchers have highlighted the important importance of social media in the phase of traveler planning known as research. This is because websites that offer content created by travelers have become increasingly popular (Lo et al., 2011). Website visitors can obtain comments from travelers who have uploaded their images or videos of visited destinations on

personal pages or tourism websites by utilizing internet resources. Furthermore, the power of personal recommendations plays a crucial part in influencing tourists' decisions. People consider social media to be a trustworthy source of information because the content published there comes from people they know, such as friends or family, which creates a sense of reliability. Travelers often depend on the past experiences of other travelers to make their choices, as this helps them reduce risks and increase their enjoyment (Fotis et al., 2012). Travelers usually evaluate various online platforms to reduce the chance of making a wrong choice (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002).

Several research studies have investigated the tendency of tourists to use social media platforms (Lin & Rasoolimanesh, 2023; Wang et al., 2023) and its influence on obtaining travel-related information (Tran et al., 2016), as well as the intention and attitude towards making a purchase (Kaperonis, 2018), and decision-making related to travel. The widespread use and significance of social media in influencing visitors' decision-making underscores the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of how social media impacts tourists' information searches and decision-making processes (Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019).

Kumar and Kumari (2022) found that visitors exhibit higher trust in evaluations and firsthand reports provided by fellow travelers compared to relying on websites or media promotion. Ravindran et al. (2018) found that several social networking sites have changed how tourists purchase.

In their e-book, Munar et al. (2013) did a study that analyzed the

significant influence of tourism social media. Zivkovic et al. (2014) revealed that social media has a substantial influence on tourists, as they use information obtained from social media into their decision-making process when it comes to travel. In a study undertaken by Arat (2016), the impact of social media on tourism demand was evaluated through the use of content analysis. The study carefully examined the utilization of Facebook profiles by hotel services and the unique features they apply. Mkono and Tribe (2017) employed an ethnographic methodology to classify the functions of social media users. The roles encompass trolls, activists, social critics, information seekers, and socialites. The results of this study hold significant value for tourist enterprises and destination administrations.

2. Methodology

This study utilized a survey methodology to examine the potential influence of social media platforms on buyers' decision-making process about tourism services. To achieve this objective, a digital self-administered survey was designed, and certain aspects were established inside the questions. The authors constructed a questionnaire based on available literature to address various relevant issues regarding the decision-making process. The questionnaire includes respondent demographics and statements related to five dimensions of the buying process: information, utilization, influence, purchasing, and intention to share. The questionnaire comprises items that utilize a 5-point Likert scale, with the alternatives varying according to the extent to which participants agree with the assertions. The validity and reliability of

the data collection instrument (questionnaire) were assessed and confirmed during the pilot study phase.

The primary aim of this study is to uncover the social media-related aspects that influence the consumer's decision-making process while purchasing tourist and hospitality services. The study investigates the elements that influence the likelihood of using online platforms to purchase hospitality and tourist services. The target demographic for this research comprises social media users in Saudi Arabia, aged between 20 and 45, who can be reached through email or the internet and are active members of social networking websites. They are potential customers for tourism services, and their purchasing behavior is of interest. A hyperlink for an internet-based survey was distributed to prospective participants during the period spanning from June to December 2023.

The Random Sampling Technique, which ensures that every person in the population has an equal probability of being selected for the sample, was employed to reach the target group. A total of 700 individuals received the questionnaire, and following the exclusion of unsuitable and unfinished questionnaires, 350 were utilized for data analysis.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a data analysis technique employed to examine the structural association between observed variables and underlying structures. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique that considers measurement errors while analyzing the connection between the dependent and independent variables in a certain model. SEM has emerged as a method for analyzing the relationships between observable and

latent variables. It encompasses multiple regression analysis, explanatory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and simultaneous equations model. SEM also examines the structural relationship model between latent variables (Kartal & BARDAKÇI, 2018).

Using the literature mentioned earlier and the conceptual model shown in Figure 1, we formulated the following hypotheses to elucidate the connections between the variables that have already been identified. The factors mentioned in the study include "knowledge and utilization" (Parra-López et al., 2011), "knowledge and influence" (Kotler et al., 2003; Hu and Wei, 2013), "utilization and purchase" (Ekinci 2004), "influence and purchase" (Zivkovic et al., 2014), and "purchase and sharing experiences". The references cited include the works of Bayram and Sahbaz (2012) and Hu and Wei (2013) on the topic of "information and intention as a post-purchase behavior". Additionally, the works of Kotler et al. (2003), Kim and Ko (2012), Zivkovic et al. (2014), and Litvin et al. (2006) are referenced about "information and purchase action" and "influence and utilization".

The type of questionnaire is an online self-administered survey (participants complete the survey themselves on a digital platform). The type of study sample was a Convenience sample (participants were social media users in Saudi Arabia who were reached through email or the Internet). The study population was social media users in Saudi Arabia aged between 20 and 45

The type of methodology was survey methodology (data collection through questionnaires), This research employed a survey

to collect data on the decision-making process of social media users regarding tourism services. Surveys are a common method for gathering information on people's opinions, experiences, or behaviors. The type of study was Descriptive correlational study (the study aims to describe the relationships between variables, not to establish cause and effect. The study aimed to describe the decision-making process of social media users and also examine the relationships between the variables related to information, influence, utilization, buying and intention to share.

The Study Hypotheses

H1: Information → Utilization: Social media usage to find information about tourism services will positively influence the utilization of social media platforms for tourism purposes.

H2: Information → Influence: Social media usage for finding information about tourism services will positively influence people's perceptions of and responses to social media recommendations and reviews.

H3: Information → Intention to share: Using social media to find information about tourism services will positively influence the intention to share experiences and reviews on those platforms.

H4: Information → Buying: Social media usage to find information about tourism services will positively influence the likelihood of purchasing tourism services through these platforms.

H5: Influence → Utilization: Being influenced by social media recommendations and reviews will positively influence the utilization of social media platforms for tourism purposes.

H6: Utilization → Buying: Active use of social media platforms for tourism purposes will positively influence the likelihood of purchasing tourism services through these platforms.

H7: Influence → Buying: Being influenced by social media recommendations and reviews will positively influence the likelihood of purchasing tourism services through these platforms.

H8: Buying → Intention to Share: Purchasing tourism services through social media platforms will positively influence the intention to share experiences and reviews on those platforms.

3. Results

4.1 Demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The results show that In terms of gender distribution, 47.6% are male, while 52.4% are female. Age-wise, the majority fall within the 20-30 age range, with 28.5% aged 20-25 years and 25.9% aged 26-30 years. Marital status indicates a relatively balanced representation, with 47.1% single and 52.9% married. Education levels vary, with 52.9% having an undergraduate degree and 5.3% holding postgraduate degrees. Regarding income, a significant portion (44.1%) earns between 500-1000 USD per month. Holiday frequency indicates a trend towards multiple vacations, with 44.1% going on holidays two times a year. Social media usage varies, with 28.5% spending 45-60 minutes and 21.8% spending 60-120 minutes daily.

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Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	characteristics	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	162	47.6%
	Female	178	52.4%
Age	20-25 years	97	28.5%
	26-30 years	88	25.9%
	31-35 years	68	20.0%
	36-40 years	55	16.2%
	41 years and above	32	9.4%
Marital status	Single	160	47.1%
	Married	180	52.9%
Education	Primary	20	5.9%
	Secondary	32	9.4%
	High School	72	21.2%
	Foundation Degree (Vocational School)	38	11.2%
	Undergraduate	180	52.9%
	Postgraduate	18	5.3%
Income Level (Per Month - USD)	under 250 USD	41	12.1%
	250 – 500 USD	78	22.9%
	500-1000 USD	150	44.1%
	1000-2000 USD	48	14.1%
	more than 2000 US	23	6.8%
How many times do you go on holidays per year?	1 time	81	23.8%
	2 times	150	44.1%
	3 times	66	19.4%
	More than 3 times	43	12.6%
Frequency of social media use	10-30 min	26	7.6%
	30-45 min	74	21.8%
	45-60 min	97	28.5%
	60-120 min	74	21.8%
	120-180 min	41	12.1%
	more than 180 min	28	8.2%

4.2 Data analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, demonstrating that the mean values for all variables fall within the range of 3.459 to 3.694, accompanied by standard deviations ranging from 0.502 to 0.563. This suggests a positive agreement among respondents with the questionnaire statements. Additionally, the findings highlight significant associations among all constructs.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Constructs	Mean	SD	Information	Utilisation	Influence	Buying	Intention to share
Information	3.573	0.560	1				
Utilisation	3.517	0.534	.658**	1			
Influence	3.692	0.507	0.559**	.549**	1		
Buying	3.694	0.502	0.544**	.596**	.683**	1	
Intention to share	3.459	0.563	0.619**	.647**	.516**	.642**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2.2 CFA results: reliability and validity

- The measurement items underwent testing for reliability and validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 24. To gauge the validity of measurement items, discriminant validity and convergent validity were applied. The scales' reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as illustrated in Table 3. The outcomes indicate that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all constructs falls within the range of 0.840 to 0.750, surpassing the 0.50 cutoff value. This underscores the

internal consistency of all measurement items (Hair et al., 2019).

- Convergent validity was assessed through three key indicators: factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR), with 25 items established (refer to Table 3). Following Hair et al.'s (2019) recommendation that items with factor loadings exceeding 0.50 should be retained, this study found that all item loadings surpassed the cutoff value and were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) (see Table 3).
- Regarding Composite Reliability (CR), the results indicate that CR for all constructs ranges from 0.841 to 0.778, surpassing the 0.50 threshold, indicating an adequate level of composite reliability for all constructs, as Hair et al. (2019) suggested. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs, ranging from 0.590 to 0.521, surpass the suggested threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Based on the aforementioned findings, this study demonstrates robust reliability and validity of the measurement items.

Table 3. Reliability and validity

Constructs	Measurement Items	Factor Loading	A	CR	AVE	P.Value
Information	In_1	0.714	0.840	0.841	0.580	0.000
	In_2	0.702				0.000
	In_3	0.746				0.000
	In_4	0.841				0.000
	In_5	0.716				0.000
Utilisation	Ut_1	0.708	0.777	0.790	0.590	0.000
	Ut_2	0.766				0.000
	Ut_3	0.771				0.000
	Ut_4	0.752				0.000

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	Ut_5	0.717				0.000
Influence	Inf_1	0.742	0.768	0.780	0.521	0.000
	Inf_2	0.670				0.000
	Inf_3	0.730				0.000
	Inf_4	0.730				0.000
	Inf_5	0.696				0.000
Buying	Bu_1	0.730	0.836	0.834	0.584	0.000
	Bu_2	0.870				0.000
	Bu_3	0.742				0.000
	Bu_4	0.700				0.000
	Bu_5	0.697				0.000
						0.000
Intention to share	Int_1	0.692	0.750	0.778	0.559	0.000
	Int_2	0.814				0.000
	Int_3	0.715				0.000
	Int_4	0.698				0.000
	Int_5	0.751				0.000

A= Cronbach's alpha, CR =Composite Reliability and Average, AVE=Variance Extracted

Discriminant validity was employed to assess whether variables that theoretically should not exhibit high correlations were indeed not highly correlated (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Following the approach proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), this study confirmed discriminant validity by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlation values among all constructs. Table 4 reveals that the square root of the AVE scores for all variables exceeds the inter-construct correlations, providing confirmation of discriminant validity for the constructs.

To evaluate the quality of fit for the measurement model, goodness-of-fit measures were employed. The results indicate a favorable model fit (CMIN/df = 1.541, GFI = 0.900, TLI = 0.910, CFI =

0.910, RMSEA = 0.058). Consequently, the measurement model exhibits strong construct validity and reliability.

Table 4. Discriminant validity

	Information	Utilization	Influence	Buying	Intention to share
Information	0.762				
Utilisation	0.710**	0.768			
Influence	0.704**	0.644**	0.722		
Buying	0.663**	0.667**	0.572**	0.764	
Intention to share	0.618**	0.612**	0.577**	0.647**	0.748

Notes: Bold values in the diagonal represent the squared root estimate of AVE. AVE= Average Variance Extracted

4.2.3 Common Method Bias Checks

In this study, cross-sectional data was employed, utilizing a single-report questionnaire. Consequently, there is a potential for common method variance (CMV) to influence the precision of the measurements, as noted by Podsakoff and Organ (1986). To address this concern, Harman's single-factor test was executed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The findings demonstrate that the total variance accounted for by a single factor is below 50%, suggesting that common method bias does not significantly impact the interpretation of the results.

4. Discussion

- Structured equation modelling (SEM) was performed to examine the hypothesized model. The results presented in Table 5 provide comprehensive insights into the relationships between key variables. Firstly, the positive and significant beta coefficients associated with information and its influence on utilization (Beta = 0.276, $p = 0.000$), influence (Beta = 0.456, $p = 0.000$), intention to share (Beta = 0.315, $p = 0.000$), and buying behavior (Beta = 0.351, $p = 0.000$) underscore the pivotal role of information in shaping various aspects of consumer behavior. This implies that as individuals receive and process information, it strongly affects their utilization patterns, influence from others, intentions to share information, and, ultimately, their buying decisions. Therefore, the H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported.
- Moreover, the study highlights the importance of influence, indicating that it significantly influences utilization (Beta = 0.268, $p = 0.000$) and buying behavior (Beta = 0.260, $p = 0.000$) and underscores its substantial impact on consumer decision-making processes. This suggests that the opinions and recommendations of others play a crucial role in shaping both how individuals utilize information and the choices they make when it comes to purchasing products or services. Thus, H5, and H7 are supported.
- Additionally, the results emphasize the link between utilization and buying behavior (Beta = 0.325, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the effective use of information positively contributes to subsequent consumer purchases. This finding implies that individuals adeptly utilizing available information are more likely to translate their

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informed decisions into buying behavior. Therefore, H6 is supported.

- Lastly, the significant beta coefficient associated with buying behavior and intention to share (Beta = 0.379, p = 0.000) underscores that individuals who engage in certain buying behaviors are more inclined to share their experiences or information about products and services with others. This highlights the interconnected nature of consumer behavior, where purchasing decisions can influence individuals' intentions to share their experiences and opinions with their social networks. Thus, H8 is supported.
- In summary, the study's findings confirm the hypothesized relationships and provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between information, influence, utilization, and buying behavior in the context of consumer decision-making.

Table 5. SEM results

No	Paths	Beta Coefficient	P value	Results
H1	Information → Utilization	0.276	0.000	Supported
H2	Information → Influence	0.456	0.000	Supported
H3	Information → Intention to share	0.315	0.000	Supported
H4	Information → Buying	0.351	0.00	Supported
H5	Influence → Utilization	0.268	0.000	Supported
H6	Utilization → Buying	0.325	0.000	Supported
H7	Influence → Buying	0.260	0.000	Supported
H8	Buying → Intention to share	0.379	0.000	Supported

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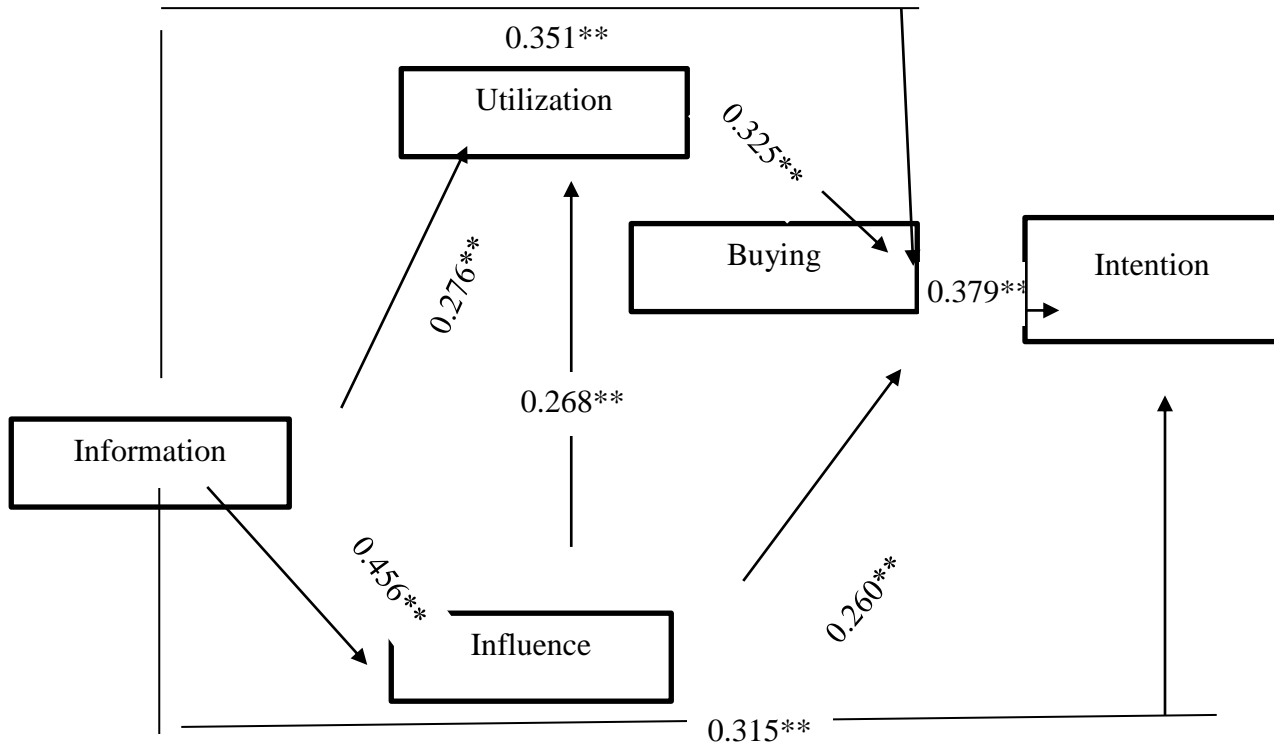


Figure 1. SEM results

Conclusion

- This study investigated the influence of social media on tourism-related decision-making by examining the relationships between information, influence, utilization, buying behavior, and intention to share. The hypothesized model, informed by the theoretical framework referencing prior research, was strongly supported by the data analysis.
- This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between information, influence, utilization, and buying behavior in consumer decision-making. The hypothesized model was strongly supported, highlighting the following key findings: Information plays a central role: As individuals receive and process information, it significantly impacts their utilization patterns, influence from others, intentions to share information, and ultimately, their buying decisions. Information obtained through social media significantly impacts how consumers utilize platforms, perceive recommendations, form sharing intentions, and ultimately decide to purchase.
- Influence matters: The opinions and recommendations of others significantly influence how individuals utilize information and the choices they make when purchasing products or services. Utilization drives buying behavior: Individuals who effectively utilize information are more likely to translate their informed decisions into actual purchases. Buying behavior fuels information sharing: Purchasing decisions can influence individuals' intentions to share their experiences and opinions with their social networks.
- The findings align with previous research on the role of social media in information seeking (H1, H4) and the influence of

recommendations and reviews (H2, H7). However, the study adds to the existing knowledge by exploring a potential link between information seeking and intention to share (H3), which requires further investigation in future research. Additionally, while some studies acknowledge the two-way communication aspect of social media (H5), this study requires stronger justification based on the chosen literature to support the idea that being influenced leads to more active use of the platforms.

- These findings offer valuable implications for businesses and marketers. By understanding the key drivers of consumer decision-making, businesses can Develop effective information dissemination strategies, Providing clear, relevant, and accessible information can empower consumers and facilitate informed purchase decisions; Leverage social influence, Partnering with influencers or fostering online communities can leverage the power of recommendations and peer pressure to positively impact consumer behavior; Encourage information utilization, Making information readily available and user-friendly can help consumers effectively translate knowledge into action; Connect purchases with sharing, Creating opportunities for consumers to share their experiences after purchase can further engage them with the brand and potentially influence others.
- In conclusion, this study contributes significantly to our understanding of the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making. By recognizing the relationship between information, influence, utilization, and buying behavior, businesses can develop more effective strategies to engage with consumers and drive their

purchasing decisions.

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