QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CONSUMERS PURCHASE DECISION:

THE CASE OF QATAR

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The consumer journey is highly influenced by social media as more people spent a significant portion of their time online. The increased understanding of how consumers make decisions has been widely studied and codified into models. Using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) this study examines the extent of influence of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions in Qatar and the challenges that could prevent the full utilization of social media marketing in Qatar. The study collected survey data from online users in Qatar based on a link shared on social media platforms.

The results reveal the significant impact exerted by social media in molding consumer buying behaviors in Qatar. Although the nation has a high rate of social media participation, it lags behind worldwide trends in terms of online sales, indicating a notable discrepancy. Trust has a crucial role in influencing behavioral intentions, but perceived value also has a big influence on consumer choices. This research emphasizes the need for firms to customize marketing tactics to the distinctive social media environment in Qatar, recognizing the difficulties and possibilities inherent therein.

The research provides detailed and valuable data that might be advantageous for companies, marketing professionals, and legislators that want to understand and improve Qatar's digital consumer ecosystem. It highlights the need of tailored marketing strategies that connect the online portrayal of a product or service with the

actual number of sales. This involves resolving any differences that have been detected and making the most of the opportunities provided by social media to influence customer behavior.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my parents and my husband, whom I credit you encourage me to continue this MBA program. Thank you for your constant support and love.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purchase intention and eventual decision by a consumer is often determined by many aspects according to research (Adnan, 2014; Rajković, Đurić, Zarić& Glauben, 2021). Some of the factors include the type of purchase to be made and other situational factors, social cultural influences, the marketing mix and psychological influences (Ferrao & Alturas, 2018). Traditionally, people would rely on others for connections and information about the market. However, since the proliferation of social media, such social circles have been expanded in terms of geographic coverage making people who barely know each other to exert influence in social circles. Social media has become a tool for validating information about price and quality of products among other aspects of the market mix because the technology offers some form of block chain validation that builds trust in the overall system (Hasan & Sohail, 2020). The technology is largely self-regulated. However, some actors have found a way for using it to their advantage such as marketing agencies and using social influencers (Jin, 2019). In the last decade, there has been a growing negative push to check the use of people's data for commercial purposes raising concern for abuse of social media for personal gain.

The decisions people make in life tend to largely be influenced by the social context they operate in (Lee, Levy & Yap, 2015). Despite the availability of the world wide web opening consumers to a large array of information, it is still a small circle of friends or associates in physical proximity or social media that influence decisions such as what to buy, where and when (Gladwell, 2006). Purchase decisions are influenced by a few people who are go to people or people considered to be experts in the area. Some people have a large scope of influence due to qualities they have, such as having travelled more extensively. Trust plays a key role in explaining why people tend to

regard their close associates as they key source of valuable purchase information (Hasan & Sohail, 2020). Because people on social media tend to be exposed to a lot of information, it is more difficult to use rational decision making faculties to determine the best market offers leaving most people to rely on their gut feelings to make decisions (Ho & Rezaei, 2018). Things that are embraced by friends tend to be assumed to be "right", "correct" or the bargain in a market where information may actually be less forthcoming.

Human beings are profoundly social beings influenced by and influencing other human beings, despite the technology available (Gladwell, 2006). Technology has therefore just enhanced the way human relations can be made better to pass information faster and to more people. The understanding of how social media works has had a lot of implications and influence on the growth of online businesses. A lot of the social media tools have since transformed into tools that support revenue earning through advertisement and even direct sales (Powell et al., 2011). Given that most of the social media platforms often operate across national boundaries, these platforms have grown faster than the legal and policy regulations in some of the countries have been able contain. Studies on topics such as the influence of social media on purchase intentions can help attain a level of clarity for evidence-based policy response to such global megatrends.

Most developed countries have far superior systems that support online trade compared to developing countries. Besides infrastructural limitations, there are other issues such as institutional capacity that have improved the reputation of online businesses (Ahmed et al., 2019). The fact that the platforms are ubiquitous and the key beneficiaries for its commercialization may hold power over other stakeholders justifies the need for an in-depth review on how the interaction between the consumer and

marketers on social media can be developed into a level ground that can allow users of social media to enjoy their space and their customer journey without being manipulated by external forces that seek to use the advantage they gain from the personal information to bait consumers on social media platforms (Kosanke, 2019).

<div align="center">Background Information</div>

According to Mintel's Digital Media Report for Qatar, digital media usage in Qatar has grown significantly in recent years. The report found that 81% of Qataris use the internet, of which 77% access the internet via a mobile device (Mintel, 2022). Social media penetration is also high, with 97% of Qataris using at least one social media platform, and 93% of them using at least three (Statista, 2020). The most popular social media platforms in Qatar are Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Additionally, data from Global Digital Insights show that Qataris spend an average of three hours and 40 minutes a day on digital media (Kemp, 2022). However, these statistics are in contrast to the actual online purchase intention among Qataris.

A report from Statista, in 2020, shows online purchases made up 5.9% of the overall retail market in Qatar compared to estimated 19% as the global average(Statista, 2020). This means that Qatar still has potential to grow its online market segment through improvements in online purchase intention. Future prospects are in favor of a rapid expansion of the online market with a projection of nearly 40% of total retail sales by 2025 being online (Kemp, 2022). Global mega trends are likely to drive growth in online purchases. However, local conditions may also promote or hinder consumers trust in buying products online and so far data shows that Qatar is only exploiting 30% of that online potential if global estimates are to be relied upon.

Further statistics indicate the countries with the highest online purchase rates being the United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, and the United States(Pasquali,

2022). In 2020, the UK had the highest online purchase rate, with 63.2% of the population making an online purchase in the last 12 months. Germany, France, and China all had around 50% of their population making an online purchase in the last 12 months, while the US had 49.2%(Pasquali, 2022). In terms of growth, the countries with the highest rate of growth in online purchases from 2019 to 2020 were India, Brazil, and Mexico, with all three showing growth rates of over 15%.

As it will be established later in empirical studies section, majority of consumers in Qatar view online marketing positively(Alkailani& Abu-shanab, 2021). Most consumers find online marketing to be informative, relevant, and helpful. Based on data from a recent study, about half of all consumers surveyed said that they had made a purchase as a result of online marketing, and 82% said they were likely to consider future purchases as a result of online marketing messages(Heider, 2021). However, there was some concern among consumers about the privacy and security of their data when interacting with online marketing messages.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Research</div>

This study aims at examining the influence of social media on consumers purchase decision in Qatar. To operationalize the study, the following two research questions will be pursued:

1. What is the extent of influence of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions in Qatar?

2. What are the challenges that could prevent the full utilization of social media marketing in Qatar?

The study examines show social media usage and users' attitude relates with social media marketing. The focus is on the customers' journey, touch points and

challenges to make appropriate recommendations to enhance the use of social media to promote consumer purchase decisions in Qatar.

Scope of the study

The study entailed conducting an online survey of potential users of social media marketing information with a view of examining how their interaction with content affects their purchase decision. The researcher conducted the data collection exercise by distributing an online form to users of social media in Qatar through convenient sampling method targeting Qatari residents (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2022). The study sought to examine the correlation between social media usage and users purchase using social media in Qatar. The study advances new knowledge on the role of trust and perceived value in the attainment of behavioral intention which is purchases on social media platforms.

Motivation Behind the study

Social media marketing in Qatar has received a lot of research attention due to the country's unique role in global business and commerce and leadership role in social media adoption in the region. Firstly, over 95% of the country population is active on social media, signaling the high potential for social media marketing to reach a wide audience (Kemp, 2022). In addition, Qatar has the highest social media penetration rate in the Middle East and North Africa region, with an average daily social media usage of 2 hours and 27 minutes per person interaction being predominantly on Facebook according to social media insights. Social media has become a crucial marketing channel for businesses in Qatar, with 85% of Qatari marketers using social media as a part of their marketing strategy(Shoheib& Abu-Shanab, 2020). Finally, the online advertising market in Qatar is expected to reach $308 million by 2023 (Kemp, 2022), demonstrating the importance of understanding the dynamics of social media marketing

for Qatar. The study was motivated out of the personal need to understand how different segments of the Qatar population perceives purchasing on social media. Recent studies also recommend a decomposition of trust as a driver of behavioral intention (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2022).

Benefits of the study

Qatar is a country that depicts a unique social demographic profile globally and in the region (Blanchard et al., 2008). The difference in social user perceptions is likely to be influenced by prevailing interventions by key stakeholders such as government, online vendors, users of social media (Askool, 2012). Furthermore, the extent of growth and tactics deployed by social media sites as well as businesses operating in the environment is likely to offer new insights that will be unique to Qatar. Lastly, the question of how the commercialization of social media sites affects the consumer experience is key in chatting the right balance between the rights of consumers and the potential sites provide to advance human society at large by enhancing market information and sales.

Therefore, despite several studies conducted on how social media relates with purchase intentions new insights can be derived from unique geographic regions and subsets of the population. Background studies have shown that consumer perceptions tend to vary with aspects such as age, gender, education culture and religion (Alkailani & Abu-shanab, 2021). Qatar will offer a special focus given that its population contains a mix of locals and foreigners from many countries. The usage pattern of social media in Qatar and how it relates with consumers purchase intentions therefore will have a wide range of insights worth focusing on.

Structure of the study

The thesis is organized into five chapters that include:

Chapter one – covering the introduction which contains the background information, statement of the problem, study objectives, scope and significance.

Chapter two presents the detailed literature on the topic. Examining literature

helps to appreciate what is known about the topic globally and in Qatar with a view of establishing specific gaps that the researcher intends to address. Literature review also helps to underpin the study in a particular theory that guides the study.

Chapter three presents the methods used to respond to the research question and particular gaps in literature. It contains sub sections such as research philosophy, research design, data collection tools, data collection processes, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings.

The fifth and last chapter reflections on the research question, the study methods and provides a summary of the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The current study has been preceded by other related studies on the topic. The literature review allows the research to contextualize what has already been achieved to avoid reinventing the wheel(Snyder, 2019). By examining studies that have been based on different methods, different target groups and locations it is possible to determine the best way the study can be designed to advance research on the topic. The chapter includes a section on definition of key terms on the topic, the theoretical basis and models underpinning the study, the major debates on social media influence on consumer purchase decisions, and the gaps this research will fill using empirical data collection.

Definition of terms and concepts

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Fong & Yazdanifard, 2014). Social media has become an important tool in influencing consumer purchase decisions(Khatib, 2016). Through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, companies can create brand awareness, increase brand loyalty and engage with their target audience. Companies can use social media to create visual content, run campaigns and promotions, connect with customers directly and provide support. Social media platforms also provide companies with the opportunity to collect customer feedback and use it to improve the customer experience (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Consumers are also influenced by the reviews and recommendations of other users on social media platforms, which enables them to make better informed purchase decisions.

Social media is characterized by large number of users, a high degree of community, a strong bond, diversified content and information

fragmentation(Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2014). The characteristics of social media allow users to socialize with others and in the process create and share content online. Social media has over time developed subgroups of people with similar interests helping to create business opportunities by commercializing the interests of groups as a business opportunity (Scholz et al., 2018). The influence of social media on the consumer purchase decision is often poorly understood not just by an average person but by business executives as well (Rohm & Weiss, 2014). There is often a high temptation by managers to use their assumptions or readily available information from any studies conducted to their local situation. Apart from changes of social demographics from one place to another, the social media platforms have been changing very fast that any insights gained from such sites need to continually be revised.

Researchers have over the years established that it is possible to study the series of steps in the consumer's psychological experience, from initial exposure to products or advertisements to the purchase decision (Boon-Long & Wongsurawat, 2015). Consumer behavior is defined as the way entities select, purchase, and use products, services, ideas and experiences, to satisfy their needs and desires and how they influence others along the journey (Bryson & Miller, 2009). The advent of social media has made these steps to be digitized and automated reducing the demand for separate data collection and allowing for more instant feedback. Social media supports need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the eventual purchase decision and post purchase behavior. Research shows that these steps often vary depending on the audience personality, culture and psychological factors (Hasan & Sohail, 2020).

There are five stages of the online consumer purchase decision process. They

include awareness, information search, evaluation if alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase assessment (Puspitasari et al., 2018). Social media marketers tend to create campaigns that target all or a selection of the stages to influence consumer behavior. Awareness creation is a fundamental step in social media marketing by creating the need or want by demonstrating a need and offering a solution, causing an influencer or friend to endorse a product or service. The second step is intervention during the search process. Asking people or searching for a product online can generate data on specific consumer behavior. Because the business environment is often characterized by intense competition, the competition allows users to consider several alternatives and select the one that suits best(Ferrao& Alturas, 2018). The step is then followed by actual purchase decision. Lastly, in the post purchase evaluation the customer evaluates the product to determine if it meets expectations and whether it satisfies their needs or wants.

The user generated content has emerged as one of the key sources of market information with businesses emerging that utilize the collection and packaging of such information for commercial interests (Scholz et al., 2018). Social media sites can be a source of several aspects of interests as far as the customer journey is concerned. Some companies' use social media to manage public relations, share offers for their new products or services, seek the consumer perception of a brand. Research shows that about 90% of online retailers worldwide use social media marketing (Scholz et al., 2018). Anecdotal evidence shows that advertising on some of the social media sites such as Facebook impacts the pre-purchase stages of the consumer decision-making process.

Peer opinions play an increasingly growing role in the customer's decision-making process. Customer generated content often forms the basis for managing the

reputation of online brands. Customers often seek to engage with reviews from previous customers to gain valuable insight into the quality of a product or service and identify any potential risks before making purchase decisions (Constantinides & Holleschovsky, 2016). One of the studies showed that there is often increased attention to negative comments in comparison to positive comments (Chen et al., 2022). The drawbacks of peer reviews are that consumers are often not able to identify false comments which tend to get more attention. On a positive note though, people who have had a positive experience tend influence others through referrals (Naseriasl et al., 2015). A referral from someone known to a potential customer act as a strong indicator of the quality of a product or service and reduces the perceived risk of making a decision. Hearing about a brand, product or service from friends or family is referred to as word of mouth referral and it holds a greater impact on purchase decision (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Word of mouth tends to have a greater impact where the person involved is close and highly reputable.

Reputable brands tend to overcome the trust gaps because they have a superior image in the eyes of the public. The image or reputation of a company can also be a factor in risk avoidance (Mao et al., 2020). A company with a good reputation is more likely to be trusted and perceived as having lower risk and even people who have not used a particular product may opt to try it out due to the brand appeal. This approach has been used by major brands such as Apple and Dyson to inform diversification into other areas.

The benefits derived from market deals have been reported to lead to more use of social networking sites (Hardwick et al., 2014). This means that the sites and commercial applications are in a mutually symbiotic relationship. However, there recent research shows that the combined range of activities that can be conducted on

social media has led to functioning challenge among adults and poor development among some segments of the population especially children. It is not yet clear how the race for a reduction in exposure to social media time will affect businesses that depend on social media to make sales.

<center>Consumer Purchase Decision Theories</center>

Consumer behavior theories assume that consumers can examine their actions and the reason for why they would like to purchase a product or service. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI), and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) are among the most common theories that explain consumer purchase decisions (Alkhaldi & Kharma, 2019). Identifying the theoretical basis of a study is extremely important because it provides a conceptual framework for understanding a given subject, and helps to guide the research process(Taherdoost, 2018). It enables researchers to develop hypotheses and test them in a systematic and controlled manner, and to draw meaningful conclusions from their results. Additionally, identifying a theoretical basis can help to provide a context for the research and to enable the researcher to explain the findings in a meaningful way(Burnes & Cooke, 2012). Finally, identifying the theoretical basis of a study can also help to ensure that the research is conducted in a rigorous, ethical, and responsible manner.

The theory of consumer decision-making has evolved over time, beginning with the neoclassical revolution of the 1870s, when psychology was introduced into economics(Durante & Griskevicius, 2016). During this period, the theory of reasoned action developed, which suggested that people make decisions based on their beliefs and attitudes(Yousafzai & Foxall, 2010). This theory was later expanded upon by the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model, which placed more emphasis on the influence of external factors such as marketing campaigns. In the 2000s, evolutionary psychology began to be incorporated into the study of consumer decision-making, suggesting that humans are hardwired to make certain choices in certain contexts(Santos & Gonçalves, 2021). This approach has been used to explain the formation of preferences, the emergence of brand loyalty, and other aspects of consumer decision-making. In this study, emphasis is placed on the UTAUT2 model.

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model is a theoretical framework that explains how and why people use technology (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2020). It is an extension of the UTAUT model, which was developed to explain technology adoption, and adds four additional constructs (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions) to the UTAUT model. The UTAUT2 model is used to explain the factors that influence user acceptance and adoption of technology and to determine the factors that can be used to predict user adoption and usage(Gharaibeh& Mohd Arshad, 2018). The model is often used in research in the fields of information systems and technology, and has been applied to investigate the effects of performance and effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions on user acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2012)..
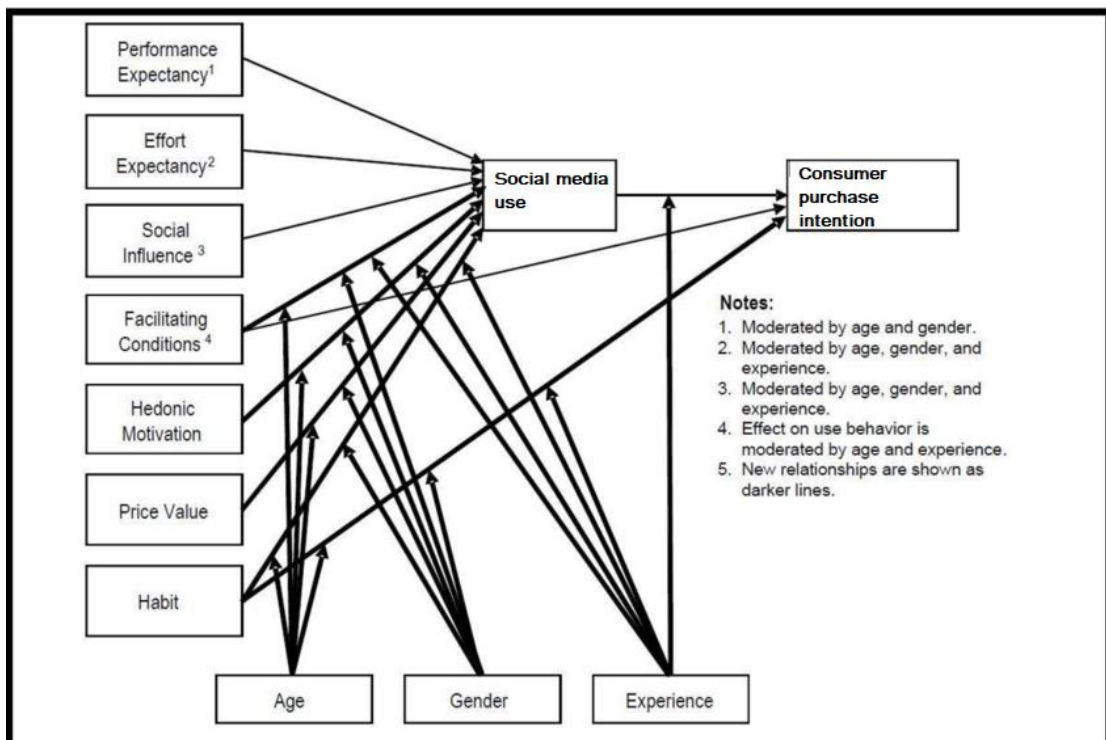
Figure 1. Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT2) Model (Adapted from: Venkatesh et al., 2012: 160)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) is a model that describes how users adopt and use technology. The model consists of eight elements: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitators, hedonic motivation, price value, habit, and self-identity(Venkatesh et al., 2012). Performance expectancy is the belief that a technology will perform effectively in a given situation. Effort expectancy is the perceived ease of use of the technology, social influence is the influence of peers and other social influencers on an individual's attitude towards the technology, facilitators are the resources, both external and internal, that help facilitate the use of the technology, hedonic motivation is the pleasure derived from the use of the technology, price value is the perceived relative cost of use of the technology, habit is the tendency to use the technology out of routine and self-identity is the belief of an individual that the use of the technology reflects who they are(Nikolopoulou et al., 2021). Factors like performance expectancy and effort expectancy influence the user's attitude towards the technology, while social influence, facilitators and hedonic motivation influence the user's intention to use the technology. The price value, habit and self-identity influence the user's actual use of the technology. The next section will examine the independent variables performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value and habit in detail.

Performance Expectancy

Performance expectancy is one of the main constructs in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model. It refers to the extent to which an individual believes a technology or system will help them do a job (Nordhoff et al., 2020). In Qatar, social media is widely used in accessing government services besides social networking enhancing its appeal to citizens. Such aspects tend to have a positive

effect on an individual's intention to use social media. Performance expectancy can be influenced by factors such as the system's usability, the user's perceived knowledge and experience, and the system's perceived usefulness. Social media helps to keep people in communication with others at a much cheaper cost compared to other means of communication. Because people are already widely using social media, it is natural for them to progress in using social media for marketing and online purchases(Rohm & Weiss, 2014).

Effort Expectancy

It is defined as the degree of ease associated with the use of the system. It is concerned with the perceived amount of effort necessary to use the system(Qasim& Abu-Shanab, 2016). Effort expectancy is a factor or duration of use, number of users and the amount of support available to support the technology. High effort expectancy would mean that the user perceives the system as difficult to use and low effort expectancy would mean that the user perceives the system as easy to use. It is believed that the higher the effort expectancy, the lower the user's behavioral intention. Therefore, it is important for designers to ensure that the system is designed to be as easy to use as possible to increase the likelihood of successful adoption and use(Ho & Rezaei, 2018). Some of the issues that could increase effort expectancy include aspects such as management of passwords, the user interface and general ease of use.

Social Influence

This construct refers to the influence that social factors such as friends, family, peers, and colleagues have on an individual's decision to accept and use a particular technology(Qasim& Abu-Shanab, 2016). Social influence has been found to be a significant predictor of behavioral intention to use a technology, and has also been found to have a positive effect on hedonic motivation, facilitating conditions, and

performance expectancy. As more people use social media, effort expectancy will decrease and performance expectancy will likely increase. However, social influence is a factor that is independent from the two. Social influences such as peer pressure, group norms, and external influences can lead to people adopting or rejecting technologies. Social influence can also lead to people using technologies differently than they would if they were making the decisions alone. For example, people may be more likely to adopt a technology if their friends and family are also using it, or if they are presented with positive messages about the technology from outside sources (Jin, 2019). Social influence is often the basis for using social media influencers in marketing.

Facilitating Conditions

The general outlook of a country or place also determines the speed of adoption of technology. This construct suggests that a person's use of technology is determined by the degree to which they can access organizational and technical infrastructure that supports the use of the technology(Gharaibeh& Mohd Arshad, 2018). The variable focuses on the user's perception of the availability of resources, such as training, technical support, and user-friendly design, and the degree to which they believe these resources will help them to use the technology. Research has found that facilitating conditions have a direct positive effect on a person's intention to use the technology, as well as on their overall use of the technology (Jaradat & Al-Mashaqba, 2014). Additionally, research has shown that the effect of facilitating conditions on a person's intention to use technology is moderated by gender, with females being more sensitive to the presence of facilitating conditions than males.

Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic motivation is among the constructs that were added later in the UTAUT2 model and fits best with the individual drive to achieve satisfaction and

gratification from using social media. This construct was added to UTAUT2 to account for the user's pleasurable experience when interacting with a technology(Nikolopoulou et al., 2021). HM is defined as "the fun or pleasure that users associate with using a technology" and is considered to be an important factor in determining user acceptance and usage of a technology. It is suggested that users who perceive the technology as pleasurable are more likely to use and accept it. Hedonic motivation is believed to be an important mediating factor between external variables and the user's behavior intention. However, this aspect of social media usage has in the recent past been criticized for leading to negative habits that are discussed in the next section.

Price Value

It is defined as the cognitive tradeoff between the perceived benefits of a technology and the monetary cost for using it(Venkatesh et al., 2012). The idea is that users will be more likely to adopt a technology if they perceive the benefits to be greater than the cost. Price value is closely related to the concept of perceived value, which is the difference between the perceived benefits and costs associated with the technology. The ubiquitous nature of social media in Qatar makes it cheaper to advertise on social media because many people can be reached at a small cost compared to traditional marketing avenues such as TV and bill boards(Shoheib& Abu-Shanab, 2020). However, to get the most out of social media advertising, companies have to invest in social media analytics which can considerably increase costs.

Habit

Habit is considered one of the primary factors driving behavior. It has both a direct effect on use and an indirect effect through behavioral intention(Nikolopoulou et al., 2021). Additionally, habit can be a key factor in changing user behavior, as it can be used to make it easier for users to adapt to new technologies. UTAUT2 also suggests

that making use of existing user habits can help to encourage adoption of new technologies (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Social media has been linked to increased binging and procrastination as people tend to postpone other productive engagements in exchange for social media activity that gives them immediate satisfaction explained in hedonic motivation. Consumer rely on this factor to gain more contact time with social media users a factor that explains rapid growth in digital advertising (Rana & Arora, 2021). Unfortunately, the negative habits have recently led to a pushback with some of the users voluntarily quitting social media usage while some employers and countries consider limits on social media access and usage while at work.

The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) as adopted to GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia indicate that social and religious values have a greater influence on the use of social media and consumer purchase decisions(Alkhaldi&Kharma, 2019). Social influences are expected to have far reaching influence on the consumers' purchase decisions especially on Trust constructs. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) model is critical in the understanding of social influence constructs and it has widely been used to demonstrate its link to user intentions(Venkatesh et al., 2012).

In this study, the dependent variable is the consumption of social media marketing information which eventually leads to the expected behavior change that is the consumer purchase decision.Age, gender, and experience are not considered direct predictors of behavioral intention, but rather factors that may influence an individual's perception of the independent variables and their impact on behavioral intention. For instance, age may influence an individual's performance expectancy and effort expectancy. Older individuals may have lower performance expectancy if they perceive that their age makes it more difficult for them to learn how social media marketing

works before using the information to make purchase decisions. Similarly, older individuals may have higher effort expectancy if they perceive that seeking information on social media is more difficult to learn. Gender may influence social influence, as individuals may perceive different levels of pressure from their social networks based on their gender (Odewumi, 2018). For example, women in Qatar are more likely to try out technology recommended by a male relative or partner but women may have less influence on their male counterparts due to a highly patriarchal society. Experience may influence performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and facilitating conditions (Puspitasari&Setyadi, 2019). Individuals with more experience using similar technologies may have higher performance expectancy and lower effort expectancy for new technology. Additionally, individuals with more experience may have better-facilitating conditions, such as access to technical support or training.

<div align="center">Empirical studies</div>

The empirical studies cited in this review contain studies conducted in Qatar and other countries that offer valuable lessons on the impact of social media on purchase intentions(Gupta et al., 2016; Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2022). Studies have found that social media has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions, because it allows consumers to access a wide range of information, including product reviews and recommendations from other users (Chen et al., 2022; Ho & Rezaei, 2018; Scholz et al., 2018). The study by Chen et. al (2022) conducted in China found that participants spent more time looking at products with positive reviews, and these products were more likely to be selected for purchase. Additionally, the study found that the presence of reviews, regardless of whether they were positive or negative, influenced participants' purchasing decisions more than the actual content of the reviews. Similar findings were reported in Ho & Rezaei (2018) that focused on

consumer intentions for online app purchases in Malaysia and Scholz et al. (2018) that focused on a comparison between user and market generated content. Overall, the studies found that consumer-generated content on social media platforms, such as product reviews, have a strong influence on consumer purchasing decisions.

Social media platforms influence consumer behavior by creating a sense of community and social influence among users. Consumers who feel a sense of community on social media platforms are more likely to engage in purchase-related activities, such as sharing product information with others and writing product reviews (Kujur & Singh, 2017). Users with a positive attitude towards social media are more likely to stay longer on the networks and engage more. It is therefore essential for social media networks to counter any negative perceptions of their use if its market growth is to be maintained. Another study found that social media platforms can create a sense of social influence among users, as users are more likely to trust and be influenced by the opinions of their friends and family on social media (Gharaibeh & Mohd Arshad, 2018). This sense of social influence can lead to increased likelihood of purchasing a product or service as seen from the study from Jordan where close family ties led to growth and usage of online banking advertised through social networks. Jordan has some similarities to Qatar in terms of social settings and religion.

Another study found that the uses and gratifications theory can be applied to social media usage, where people use social media for different reasons, such as for information seeking, entertainment, relationship building, self-expression, and surveillance, and this usage affects their purchasing decisions. Different motivations for using social media can have an impact on purchasing decisions(Gharaibeh& Mohd Arshad, 2018). For example, individuals who use social media primarily for information seeking may be more likely to research and compare products before

making a purchase, while those who use social media primarily for entertainment may be more likely to make impulsive purchases based on recommendations from friends or influencers. Additionally, self-expression and surveillance also play a role in consumer behavior as people tend to seek validation and validation from others on social media(Jiang & Ngien, 2020). They tend to purchase items that align with their self-expression and identity or items that they see other people buying and using. This creates a sense of social proof and validation that can influence their purchasing decisions.

When it comes to challenges, online purchases increase potential risk because people interact with many others online who they barely know. The natural reaction from online users is risk avoidance as seen from one study from Pakistan that showed that online purchases were generally low due to a high number of fraudsters operating online (Adnan, 2014). Risk avoidance refers to the desire to avoid potential risks or negative outcomes when making a decision which results in less online purchases in the market. People may be more likely to choose options that are perceived as lower risk, even if they may not be the most optimal choice.

Although studies find that social media usage is positively related to consumer engagement in the purchase process (Hardwick et al., 2014) and that consumer engagement is positively related to purchase intention (Hasan & Sohail, 2020) a recent pushback of social media may slow down the growth of social media marketing. The pushback of social media may lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of social media marketing. As users become more cautious about the information they share on social media platforms, businesses may have a harder time reaching their target audience through these channels (Degeling et al., 2019). Additionally, changes in algorithms and privacy regulations may limit the ability of businesses to collect data on users and target

their advertising. However, it could also lead to an increase in the use of other forms of digital marketing, such as email marketing, content marketing, and search engine optimization. The nature of recommendations from close associates such as friends and family tends to have an influence on the purchase decision and use (Chu & Kim, 2018). If someone sees that others are using or recommending a particular product or service, they may be more likely to choose it as well.

Additionally, some studies have demonstrated locational differences in use of social media due to differences in performance expectancy. Online user behavior tends to be limited by performance expectancy which is a potential customer's expectations about the performance or effectiveness of a product or service (Yaseen & El Qirem, 2018). If someone believes that a product or service will perform well, they may be more likely to choose it. In some markets, the traditional marketing avenues are far more efficient than o line systems that are the nascent stages and riddled with teething challenges. Furthermore, user behavior also tends to be modified by effort expectancy which is the effort an individual need to exert to use the product or service (Qasim & Abu-Shanab, 2016). If that effort is too much, the product or service will be less adopted and vis versa.

The key recommendations from this review is that customers and brands may leverage online data to reduce the risk in online purchase decisions by personalization, fraud detection, price comparison and product reviews or ratings (Dwivedi et al., 2021). The use of big data available online can help to create patterns on individual preferences by observing previous purchases and providing recommendations and suggestions that are aligned to their tastes and preferences (Mackenzie, 2018). The use of fraud detection interventions that identify patterns and anomalies that may indicate fraudulent activity, allows companies to detect and prevent fraudulent purchases and reduce the risk of

financial loss. Consumers may be empowered using technology that facilitates instant price comparison on online shopping platforms in real-time price allowing consumers to make more informed purchase decisions and potentially save money. Online platforms that allow customers to leave reviews and ratings can use big data to analyze and aggregate this information, providing valuable insights into the quality and performance of different products and helping consumers make more informed purchase decisions.

Summary of Literature and Gaps

People are spending more time on social media and thus creating an opportunity for brands to engage them and market their products and services. Theory and empirical studies have been used to demonstrate the likely outcomes of social media advertising. Risk avoidance, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence are factors that can influence an individual's decision-making process. Although most studies promote a positive trend in growth of social media opportunities, there are concerns with regards to negative effects of too much exposure to social media content especially for some age groups. Data security has also emerged as a growing concern causing some users to create conditions for risk avoidance. Qatar has particularly lagged behind in growth of proportion of goods and services offered online compared to what is offered in physical outlets. More research needs to be done to establish the reason for the slow uptake of online purchases despite a high internet penetration and social media usage. One of the suggested leads from previous studies is examining the effect of price value and trust on behavior intention.

The key areas that the study sought to collect data on include the knowledge and practices of Qataris when it comes to social media engagement. Particularly how they engage on the most popular platforms, the contribution friends, families and peers

have over trust in social influence and how such aspects impact perceived value. Additionally, the overall attitude towards social media for different age and gender in Qatar require further examination. The researcher sought to collect data on how reviews, ratings, the use of influencers and other attributes affected their choice consumer journey and purchase decisions. Lastly, participants will also be asked about any challenges that affect their online purchase journey.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

The chapter presents the process taken to fill the gap shown in the previous chapter of literature review. Because the gap could not be filled by the existing data an empirical study is recommended. The method section describes the most appropriate approach to fill the research gap. The chapter contains a section on research design, research philosophy, research tools, data collection process data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The influence of social media on consumer purchase decision in Qatar was a study problem that needed the nature and distribution of social media knowledge and practice. Such a research problem can better be explored using a survey method to get the views of the general public on the topic. A survey method is one of the quantitative research design is a systematic approach to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting numerical data(Daniel, 2016). The goal of quantitative research design is to test theories, establish cause-and-effect relationships, and generalize findings to a larger population. This type of research is often associated with the scientific method, and relies on empirical evidence and statistical analysis to draw conclusions(Marvasti, 2018). Quantitative research designs are often used in fields such as psychology, sociology, education, and business, among others.

A survey design if one of the most popular structured methods to collect data. The method is cost effective because it can help to reach a large number of people at a low cost. The survey was approved by Qatar University Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB) under the reference QU-IRB 2044889-1 (see Appendix B). All study protocols were adhered to as stipulated under the ethics review.

This type of research is characterized by its focus on operational definitions and

precise measurement that is most likely informed by a hypothesis (Greener, 2008). The data collected is analyzed using statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and regression analysis. These techniques allow for the examination of relationships and patterns among variables, and for generalizations to be made about the larger population(Marvasti, 2018). The results of a quantitative study are often presented in the form of tables, graphs, and statistical models, and the conclusions drawn are based on the results of the statistical tests performed.

Research Philosophy

According to Creswell (2014) the research philosophy section of a dissertation outlines the researcher's underlying assumptions about knowledge and the nature of the research problem. It provides a framework for the entire study, including the research design, data collection, and analysis methods. The philosophy chosen should align with the research question and objectives, and be clearly justified (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The section should also describe the dominant paradigm associated with the chosen philosophy and clarify the researcher's epistemological stance. The limitations and potential biases of the philosophy should also be acknowledged, and how they will be addressed in the study. There are about six research philosophies that were considered before selecting positivist philosophy. The others include postmodernism, pragmatism, realism, interpretivism and constructivism.

Positivism is a research philosophy that focuses on objective, verifiable data and empirical evidence(Junjie& Yingxin, 2022). It is well-suited for quantitative research and aims to provide a representation of the population being studied. In this approach, the researcher takes an objective, neutral stance and focuses on uncovering the truth about a phenomenon through data collection and analysis. The results are considered reliable and generalizable to the larger population, making it a popular

choice for dissertations in the natural and social sciences(Trochim, 2006). Furthermore, conducting a survey would be more suited since more people will be reached to present their views with less influence of the researcher.

<div align="center">Research Tool</div>

A questionnaire was created using an online tool called Google Sheets. See a copy of the word version of the form in appendix A. The questions were inspired by dependent and independent variables from the UTAUT2 model such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, age, gender and experience. According to recent studies, PV and Trust are the major determinants of behavior intention for users of social media commerce. The trust items are received from the paper of Said et.al (2007) and Shoheib& Abu-Shanab (2020) that uses the UTAUT. The variables have been modified to suit this research paper. Although there have been a number of studies on the subject, several limitations and differences in focus prevented them from fully addressing the relation (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2020, 2022). Shoheib& Abu-Shanab (2020) particularly recommends that future studies focus on decomposing trust for a detailed study for which its used in the current study.

<div align="center">Table 1. Variables, Definitions and sources- Include this table</div>

Variable	Definition	Source
Performance Expectancy (PE)	The degree to which using social media will provide benefits to consumers in performing certain activities	Venkatesh et al. (2003)
Hedonic Motivation (HM)	The fun or pleasure derived from using a technology	Brown & Venkatesh (2005); Venkatesh et al. (2012)
Trust (TR)	Consumers' expectations about vendors to deal ethically, with integrity, fulfilling commitments, and not	Gefen et al. (2003); Hammouri&

Variable	Definition	Source
	opportunistically in buyer-seller relationship	Abu-Shanab (2017)
Social Influence (SI)	This construct refers to the influence that social factors such as friends, family, peers, and colleagues have on an individual's decision to accept and use a particular technology. Social influence has been found to be a significant predictor of behavioral intention to use a technology, and has also been found to have a positive effect on hedonic motivation, facilitating conditions, and performance expectancy.	(Qasim& Abu-Shanab, 2016).
Perceived Value (PV)	The perceived valuable overall benefits that consumers get compared to what they give or sacrifice.	Zeithaml (1988)
Behavioural Intentions (BI)	The motivating variables that affect a behavior, where the greater the intention, the more probable it will be accomplished.	(Al-Gahtani et al., 2007)
Habit	Habit is considered one of the primary factors driving behavior. It has both a direct effect on use and an indirect effect throughbehavioral intention. Additionally, habit can be a key factor in changing user behavior, as it can be used to make it easier for users to adapt to new technologies.	(Nikolopoulou et al., 2021)

For purposes of this study, the following research model has been adopted from the UTAUT2 Model. – Include the image below
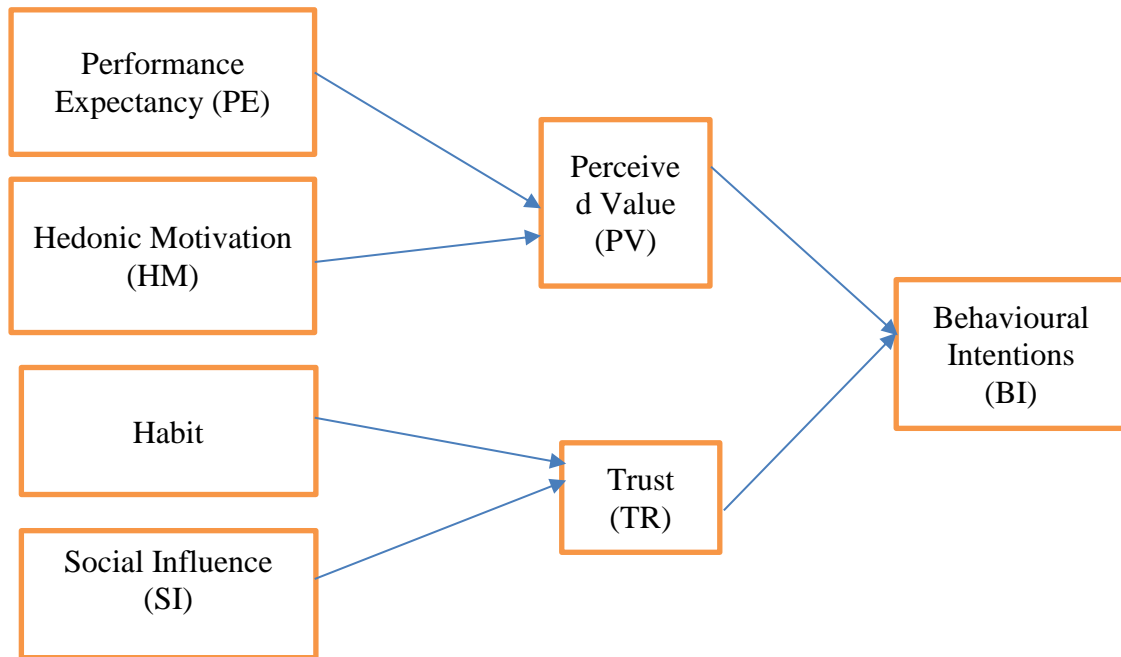
Figure 2. Proposed Research Model

Based on the model, the researcher agrees with previous research on PV and TR being the major drivers of BI. However, when it comes to decomposing PV and Trust the researcher adopted a slightly varied approach. While PE has consistently featured as a composite of PV especially in social influence contexts (Shoheib & Abu-Shanab, 2020), hedonic value is justified according to the definition presented by Kazakeviciute & Banyte (2012) as the expression of value that has not been sufficiently analysed. A low price tends to be a major driver of perceived value but is redundant in the model. In addition, the study argues that value may also emanate from hedonic considerations. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be derived from the relationship between PV and BI.

H1: Perceived value will have a positive and significant influence on behavioural intentions.

H2: Trust will have a positive and significant influence on behavioural intentions.

Trust in the vendor refers to the competence, integrity, and benevolence of a

vendor. According to Al-Dwari et al. (2018) referrals are important in reducing uncertainty. Furthermore, trust in technology as a construct entails the role of technical features of websites and technology, such as ease of navigation, visuals, and ease of search, as signals that convey trustworthiness that have been outlined in social influences (Trivedi & Yadav, 2020). A hypothesized model was proposed where trust and price value were predicted to be positively associated with behavioural intention. The model included the latent variable trust with observed indicators derived from SI and habit, the latent variable price value with observed indicators derived from PE and HE, and the latent variable behavioural intention. The indicators were chosen based on their relevance to measuring trust, price value, and behavioural intention.

H3: Performance Expectancy will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

Performance Expectancy (PE) pertains to the perceived advantages or utility that consumers anticipate gaining from using a certain technology or system. The hypothesis posits that people' perception of increased performance anticipation, meaning their belief in the helpful or useful nature of a technology or system, would have a favourable effect on their perceived worth Venkatesh et al. (2003). Consequently, the greater the extent to which people have faith in the advantages or practicality of a technology, the more they will perceive its total worth.

H4: Hedonic motivation will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

Hedonic motivation, often known as HE, pertains to the satisfaction or pleasure that humans get from using a technology or system. This is typically linked to non-utilitarian factors such as entertainment or enjoyment Brown & Venkatesh (2005); Venkatesh et al. (2012). This theory posits that people who are driven by hedonic

reasons, such as the pursuit of pleasure or satisfaction, would have a favorable impact on their perceived worth. In essence, when people get satisfaction or delight from utilizing a technology, it elevates their sense of its total worth.

H5: Habit will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

Trust in the seller encompasses the conviction in the vendor's proficiency, honesty, and goodwill(Shoheib and Abu-Shanab, 2022). This hypothesis posits that if people have confidence in the vendor's abilities, honesty, and goodwill, it will have a favorable impact on their overall level of trust. Within this particular context, confidence in the vendor plays a crucial role in a more extensive notion of trust, maybe within the framework of social commerce. This suggests that placing faith in the vendor greatly adds to the total trust in the system or platform.

H6: Social Influence (SI) will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

Social influences (SI) refer to a range of elements associated with social commerce platforms, including user-friendly interface, attractive design, and efficient search functionality, which work as indicators of reliability(Shoheib and Abu-Shanab, 2022). This hypothesis posits that the aforementioned characteristics within SI will have a favorable impact on Trust. When social commerce platforms provide features such as user-friendly navigation, visually attractive interfaces, and effective search functionalities, consumers are more inclined to trust the site Hajli (2015).

Data collection Process

Online data collection was utilized to gather the required information from participants. The data collection tool was accessed through a shared link that was distributed among the participants. The data collection process was open for a period of two weeks, after which the server could not receive data. To ensure the quality and validity of the data, clear instructions and guidelines were provided to the participants,

and reminders were sent out to those who had not responded. The collected data was saved in a CSV format and then imported into SPSS for further cleaning and analysis(Marvasti, 2018). In the data cleaning stage, any irrelevant or duplicate entries were removed, and the data was transformed into a format suitable for analysis. The use of an online data collection process offers several advantages, such as a wider reach and accessibility, increased participation rates, and reduced costs compared to traditional data collection methods.

Data analysis and Presentation

The data were analysed using structural equation modelling in the software utilizing the SPSS 21 software. Model fit was evaluated using the chi-square goodness of fit test, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI). Assumptions made during the SEM analysis included the assumption of normality of the data and linearity of relationships between the latent and observed variables.

Ethical considerations

The researcher took several steps to ensure that the study is compliant with university and legal guidelines in Qatar. The study will went through the University ethics and scientific review process under approval number QU-IRB 2044889-1 (see Appendix B). In line with the requirements of the ethics review process, the study is designed to protect the rights and well-being of the participants(Halse & Honey, 2013). To further ensure compliance, the study developed and administered a digital consent form that clearly stated the voluntary nature of participation, and that the study did not offer any personal benefits to the participants. The participants were informed that the study was being conducted for the purpose of advancing knowledge on the research matter. Additionally, the researcher took several steps to protect the confidentiality of the data by ensuring the laptop in use was password-protected and that the researcher

was the only one with access to the data.

Google sheets provides the researcher with the ability to share the survey with target respondents through multiple platforms, such as email or social media. Respondents accessed the questionnaire by clicking on the link and filled in the survey directly in their web browser(Al-Salom& Miller, 2019). The responses were recorded in real-time and synced directly to a secure cloud server operated by Google. This ensured that the collected data as secure and was easily accessed and analyzed by the researcher. The use of Google Sheets for questionnaire design allows for efficient and streamlined data collection, reducing the risk of data loss or errors that can occur with traditional paper-based methods. The online data collection process was also convenient for participants, as they could complete the survey from their own device at a time that was convenient for them.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Participants Background

This section presents the background characteristics of the studied population. Starting with age, the majority of participants, constituting 58.2%, fall within the 21-30 age group, reflecting a significant proportion of young adults. A notable 20.7% are aged 31-40, contributing to a balanced representation of individuals in their thirties. Participants aged 18-20 make up 10.9% of the population, highlighting the inclusion of a segment of younger adults. Additionally, there is a smaller representation in the 41-50 age group, comprising 7.3%, and those aged 51 and above constitute 2.5% of the total sample. The gender distribution among participants reveals a representation of 37.9% male and 62.1% female respondents. In terms of nationality, the majority of the participants are Qatari, constituting 65.5%. Educational backgrounds vary, with 52.4% holding a Bachelor's degree, 24.7% having completed High School, 19.3% obtaining a Post-graduate degree, and smaller percentages representing other educational levels such as Associate, Basic Education, MBA, Middle School, and Primary Stage. This diverse demographic profile, provides a comprehensive understanding of the population under study, forming a solid basis for interpreting subsequent findings in the discussion chapter.

Table 2. Age – include the below table

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18 – 20	30	10.9
	21 – 30	160	58.2
	31 – 40	57	20.7
	35 – 44	1	.4
	41 – 50	20	7.3
	51+	7	2.5
	Total	275	100.0
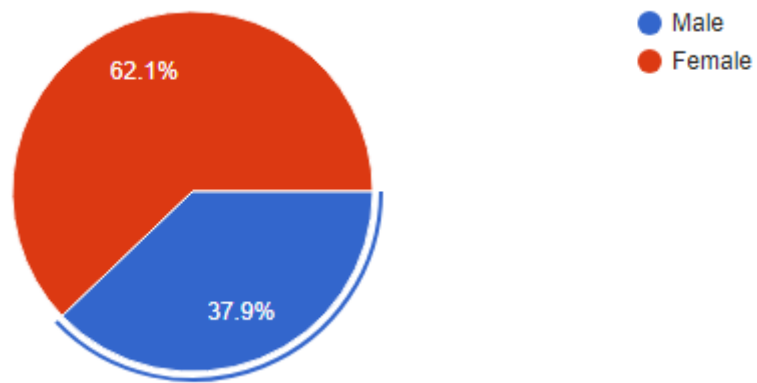
Figure 3. Gender
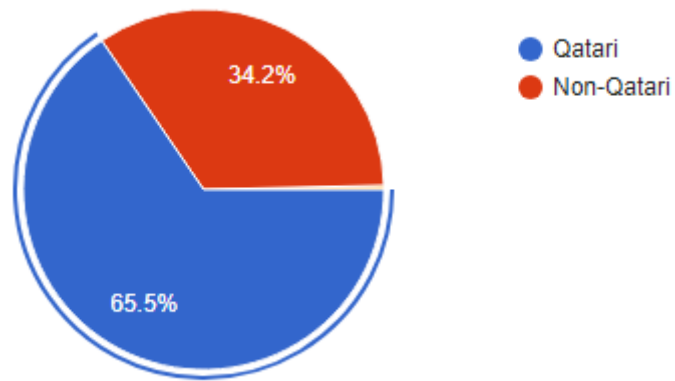
Figure 4. Nationality

Table 3. Highest level of education attained

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Associate	1	.4
	Bachelors degree	144	52.4
	Basic Education	5	1.8
	High School	68	24.7
	MBA	1	.4
	Middle School	2	.7
	Post-graduate degree	53	19.3
	Primary Stage	1	.4
	Total	275	100.0

A total of 275 people responded to the survey. The participants present diverse patterns of social media usage as detailed out in Figure 5. Notably, Instagram emerged as the most widely embraced social media channel, with 175 respondents (63.6%) engaging with it. This was followed by Snapchat which exhibited popularity among 170 respondents (61.8%), demonstrating an equally widespread appeal. The third most popular is Twitter with 122 participants (44.4%) actively using the platform. Followed by 76 individuals (27.6%) reported utilizing Facebook, indicating a substantial but minority presence on this platform. In contrast, TikTok was least mentioned, with 15 respondents (5.5%) indicating involvement with this platform.

Figure 5. Social media usage
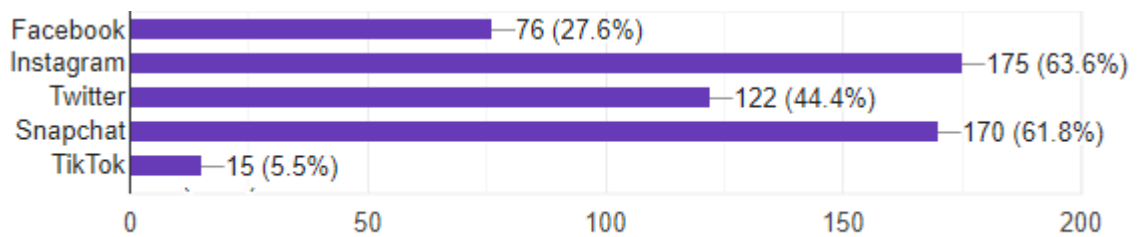
Descriptive Analysis

The analysis of the Performance Expectancy (PE) variable within the Unified Theory of Acceptance User of Technology (UTUAT) reveals that participants generally hold positive attitudes toward the utility of social media. The mean scores for the three statements range from 3.7336 to 3.9380 on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, indicating a moderate to high level of agreement. Specifically, respondents express a strong perception of social media's usefulness, with a mean of 3.9380 for the statement "I find social media sites very useful." The standard deviations, ranging from 0.74735 to 0.80735, suggest a relatively low level of variability in responses, implying a consistent and favorable outlook regarding the performance expectations associated with social media.

The analysis of the Effort Expectancy (EE) variable suggests that respondents

generally perceive using social media for online purchasing with a favorable level of ease. Specifically, participants exhibit a high mean score of 3.8974 for the statement "I have always used social media," indicating a pre-existing familiarity with social platforms. Additionally, the mean scores of 3.7565 and 3.8162 for transitioning to social media for purchase decisions and becoming skillful at using social media websites for online purchasing, respectively, demonstrate a positive attitude towards the ease of integrating these activities into their online routines. The corresponding standard deviations (0.88519, 0.81178, and 0.82132) suggest a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating that while there is generally agreement on the perceived ease, there is some diversity in individual experiences.

The analysis of the Social Influence (SI) variable reveals a nuanced perception among respondents regarding the impact of social influence on their online behavior. Participants reported spending a significant amount of time on social media platforms, as indicated by the relatively high mean score of 3.7619. However, trust in the opinions of individuals interacted with on social media scored lower, with a mean of 3.3223, suggesting a more cautious attitude toward the reliability of information from online contacts. Furthermore, the mean score of 3.3993 for the statement "Most of my contacts on social media promote social media business" indicates a moderate level of agreement, but the standard deviations (0.85217, 0.87370, and 0.86492) across the three statements suggest varying degrees of variability in responses.

The analysis of the Facilitating Conditions (FC) variable suggests that respondents generally perceive favorable conditions for using social media websites for online purchasing. The mean scores for statements such as "I have the resources necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing" (3.7143) and "I have the knowledge necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing" (3.7509)

indicate a positive outlook, suggesting that participants feel adequately equipped for online shopping via social media. The mean score of 3.5662 for the statement "My purchasing decision is compatible with my other social media usage" suggests a moderate level of agreement. Furthermore, the mean score of 3.5993 for "There is online support in case of facing difficulties in making purchases on social media" indicates a perceived availability of support. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.77900 to 0.84022) suggest a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating some diversity in participants' perceptions of facilitating conditions.

The analysis of the Hedonic Motivation (HM) variable within the Unified Theory of User Acceptance of Technology (UTUAT) shows that respondents generally find the use of social media for online purchasing to be a positively engaging and enjoyable experience. The mean scores for statements such as "Using social media for online purchasing is fun" (3.8315), "Using social media for online purchasing is enjoyable" (3.8529), and "Using social media for online purchasing is very entertaining" (3.8235) all indicate a high level of agreement, reflecting a positive hedonic motivation associated with online shopping through social media. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.78625 to 0.82426) suggest a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating some diversity in individual experiences.

The analysis of the Habit (HT) variable within the Unified Theory of User Acceptance of Technology (UTUAT) indicates that respondents exhibit varying degrees of habitual engagement with social media for online purchasing. Participants generally consider themselves regular users of social media, as reflected by a high mean score of 3.8222 for the statement "I consider myself a regular user of social media." However, the mean score of 3.3773 for "I am addicted to using social media websites for online purchasing" suggests a more moderate level of agreement regarding

addiction. The mean score of 3.6320 for "I prefer to use social media for purchases when it is an option" indicates a positive preference for utilizing social media in purchasing decisions. The mean scores for "I conduct most of my purchases on social media" (3.3883) and "I am used to purchasing online and through social media" (3.5531) further suggest varying degrees of habitual behavior. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.73952 to 0.97041) indicate a moderate to high level of variability in responses, underscoring the diverse habits and perceptions regarding the habitual use of social media for online purchasing among the surveyed population.

The analysis of the Perceived Value (PV) variable within the Unified Theory of User Acceptance of Technology (UTUAT) suggests that respondents generally hold positive perceptions regarding the value derived from online purchasing through social media platforms. The mean scores for statements such as "Social media websites offer better value for my money for online purchasing" (3.4963), "Shopping on social commerce websites takes a reasonable amount of time" (3.5441), and "Prices on social commerce websites are reasonable" (3.5166) indicate a moderate to high level of agreement, reflecting a positive perception of the economic aspects associated with online shopping through social media. The mean score of 3.6273 for "Overall, shopping on social commerce websites is worthwhile" further reinforces a positive overall assessment of the perceived value. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.76825 to 0.86761) suggest a moderate level of variability in responses, indicating some diversity in individual perceptions.

The analysis of the Trust (T) variable within Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) indicates a mixed perception among respondents regarding their trust in providers on social media. Participants express a moderate level of agreement with statements such as "Providers on social media give the impression

39

that they keep promises and commitments" (mean = 3.3199) and "Based on my experience with social media providers, I know they care about consumers" (mean = 3.3051), suggesting a level of trust in the perceived integrity and commitment of providers. However, the mean score of 3.1360 for "Providers on social media are trustworthy" and 3.1734 for "I trust providers on social media because they have my best interests in mind" indicate a slightly lower level of trust. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.81311 to 0.89204) indicate a moderate level of variability in responses, reflecting diverse perceptions among the surveyed population regarding the trustworthiness of providers on social media.

The analysis of the Behavioral Intention (BI) variable within the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) indicates positive inclinations among respondents towards future engagement with social media for online purchasing. Participants express a high mean score of 3.7926 for the statement "I predict there will be more demand for the use of social media for purchasing," suggesting a positive outlook on the increasing popularity of social media in the realm of online shopping. The mean scores of 3.6250 for "I intend to use social media websites for online purchasing in the future" and 3.6691 for "I would recommend social media for purchase to my contacts in the future" further demonstrate a positive intention to continue and advocate for online purchasing through social media platforms. The standard deviations (ranging from 0.76778 to 0.82792) indicate a moderate level of variability in responses, reflecting diverse perceptions among the surveyed population regarding their behavioral intentions related to social media use for future online purchasing.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis – Full table included

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Performance Expectancy (PE)		
I find social media sites very useful.	3.9380	.80735
Social media has been helpful at making informed decisions	3.7336	.80190
Social media is a quick and convenient way to get purchasing information	3.8938	.74735
Effort Expectancy (EE)		
I have always used social media	3.8974	.88519
Transitioning to the use of social media for purchase decisions was easy for me	3.7565	.81178
It is easy for me to become skillful at using social media websites for online purchasing.	3.8162	.82132
Social Influence (SI)		
I spent a significant amount of time on social media	3.7619	.85217
I tend to trust the opinion of people I interact with on social media	3.3223	.87370
Most of my contacts on social media promote social media business	3.3993	.86492
Facilitating Conditions (FC)		
I have the resources necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing.	3.7143	.80831
I have the knowledge necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing.	3.7509	.77900
My purchasing decision is compatible with my other social media usage	3.5662	.78925
There is online support in case of facing difficulties in making purchases on social media	3.5993	.84022
Hedonic motivation (HM)		
Using social media for online purchasing is fun.	3.8315	.81856
Using social media for online purchasing is enjoyable	3.8529	.82426
Using social media for online purchasing is very entertaining	3.8235	.78625
Habit (HT)		
I consider myself a regular user of social media	3.8222	.81680
I am addicted to using social media websites for online purchasing.	3.3773	.97041
I prefer to use social media for purchases when it is an option	3.6320	.73952
I conduct most my purchases on social media	3.3883	.88874
I am used to purchase online and through social media	3.5531	.83464
Perceived Value (PV)		
Social media websites offer better value for my money for online purchasing.	3.4963	.80587
Shopping on social commerce websites takes a reasonable amount of time.	3.5441	.83615
Shopping on social commerce websites would improve the way I am perceived.	3.4963	.86761
Prices on social commerce websites are reasonable.	3.5166	.77859

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall, shopping on social commerce websites is worthwhile.	3.6273	.76825
Trust (T)		
Providers on social media are trustworthy	3.1360	.84602
Providers on social media give the impression that they keep promises and commitments	3.3199	.81311
I trust providers on social media because they have my best interests in mind	3.1734	.89204
Based on my experience with social media providers, I know they are honest	3.2132	.86257
Based on my experience with social media providers, I know they care about consumers	3.3051	.87540
Behavioral Intention (BI)		
I intend to use social media websites for online purchasing in the future.	3.6250	.76778
I predict there will be more demand for use of social media for purchasing.	3.7926	.82792
I would recommend social media for purchase to my contacts in future	3.6691	.80180

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson's correlation matrix presents the associations among various factors in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) model. Table 7 shows all the UTAUT2 factors are related to behavioural intention. Each cell in the matrix displays the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between two factors. Notably, all correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Some noteworthy patterns include strong positive correlations between Performance Expectancy (PE) and Effort Expectancy (EE) (r = 0.694), Effort Expectancy (EE) and Social Influence (SI) (r = 0.561), and Facilitating Conditions (FC) and Habit (H) (r = 0.681). The linear relationship between variables is grounds for multiple linear regression analysis especially given all outputs are below 0.7. These findings suggest interdependencies among the UTAUT2 factors, emphasizing the importance of considering their collective influence in understanding user acceptance and use of social media for purchasing. The strong correlations underscore the interconnected nature of these factors, providing insights into potential areas for intervention or enhancement in adoption of online purchasing.

Table 5. Pearsons correlation coefficients – Include tables

		PE	EE	SI	FC	HM	H	PV	T	BI
PE	Pearson Correlation	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
	N	273								
EE	Pearson Correlation	.694**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000								
	N	269	269							
SI	Pearson Correlation	.518**	.561**	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000							
	N	273	269	273						
FC	Pearson Correlation	.586**	.714**	.564**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000						
	N	271	267	271	271					
HM	Pearson Correlation	.542**	.624**	.479**	.616**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000					
	N	272	268	272	270	272				
H	Pearson Correlation	.428**	.446**	.545**	.583**	.600**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	266	263	266	264	265	266			
PV	Pearson Correlation	.348**	.388**	.413**	.553**	.459**	.681**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	270	266	270	269	269	264	270		
T	Pearson Correlation	.220**	.248**	.471**	.451**	.272**	.571**	.610**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	271	267	271	269	270	264	269	271	
BI	Pearson Correlation	.441**	.587**	.466**	.680**	.535**	.624**	.639**	.532**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	270	266	270	268	269	263	268	269	270

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

PLS Results Analysis and Discussions

Measurement Model

A measurement model is a conceptual framework that is utilized in a variety of fields, including statistics, psychology, and the social sciences, with the purpose of helping to clarify the relationships that exist between observable and unobservable

variables. Understanding the relationship between innumerable underlying constructs or pieces is made easier by the employment of data points that are accessible to the individual.

Latent variables are variables that are not directly observable, but are instead deduced from data that has been observed. It is common practice in the field of statistical modeling to incorporate latent variables into a measurement model. In the analysis of the data, the latent variables are considered to be the primary factors that are accountable for the patterns that were discovered. Indicators or observed variables that are assumed to represent the underlying constructs are frequently included in the conceptual framework of the model.

For the purpose of determining the extent to which observable and latent variables are associated with one another, measurement models are frequently utilized in the field of structural equation modeling (SEM), factor analysis, and other statistical approaches. Consequently, this makes it possible for researchers to get a more profound understanding of complex occurrences and to arrive at conclusions regarding structures that cannot be directly observed.

A number of criteria, such as outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity, and convergent validity, are frequently utilized in the process of evaluating measurement models. In the beginning, the measurement model was evaluated to determine whether or not it has convergent validity. In accordance with the methodology described by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), the evaluation was carried out using factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). It has been determined by Chin (1998) that the findings that are displayed in Table 2 demonstrate that every single object loading is greater than the recommended threshold of 0.6. The

values of CR that are greater than the required threshold of 0.7, as indicated by Hair et al. (2006), are indicative of a high level of reliability in terms of internal consistency. In contrast, the average variance extracted (AVE), which is a measure of the proportion of variance in the observed variables that can be attributed to the latent construct, was found to be greater than the recommended threshold of 0.5, as proposed by Hair et al. (2006) respectively.

Validity and Reliability for Constructs

Table 6. Validity and Reliability for Constructs

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Behavioral Intention	0.784779997	0.786650455	0.874868753	0.700083255
Hedonic Motivation	0.913164951	0.914741632	0.945285264	0.85206158
Perceived Value	0.855862015	0.860431717	0.89632761	0.633807466
Performance Expectancy	0.783379594	0.787860346	0.873587905	0.697403475
Social Influence	0.564438900	0.897654098	0.876890990	0.650098234
TRUST	0.896668424	0.897771863	0.923751614	0.708025635
Habit	0.970980908	0.945436786	0.980778900	0.567090987

The table displays essential validity and reliability metrics for different constructs in the research investigation. The Cronbach's alpha values, which indicate internal consistency, are as follows: Behavioral Intention at 0.785, Hedonic Motivation at 0.913, Perceived Value at 0.856, Performance Expectancy at 0.783, Social Influence 0.564, Trust at 0.897, and Habit at 0.970. These values represent the degree of coherence among elements within each construct.

The composite reliability metrics, specifically rho_a and rho_c, enhance the

reliability of the construct. Hedonic Motivation scores 0.914 and 0.945, Trust reaches

0.898, and Habit records 0.945. The high values confirm that the observable variables

accurately represent the underlying constructs.

AVE values offer insights into the extent to which the constructs capture

variance compared to measurement error. The constructs of Hedonic Motivation, with

an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.852, and Trust, with an AVE of 0.708,

provide significant contributions to the observed variations.

The strong reliability and validity measures displayed in this table bolster the

credibility of the research investigation. These metrics together ensure the precision and

uniformity of the measurements, highlighting the dependability of the study's findings

and bolstering the soundness of the conclusions made about the connections between

the defined concepts.

Table 7. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larker Criterion)

	BI	HM	PV	PE	SI	TRUST	H
Behavirol Intention	0.8367098						
Hedonic Motivation	0.5395121	0.92307182					
Perceived Value	0.6324825	0.46496159	0.79612026				
Performance Expectancy	0.4082196	0.5113547	0.36216379	0.83510686			
Social influence	0.6176509	0.9865430	0.3425678	0.28090098	0.7323776		
TRUST	0.539615	0.2725347	0.60795336	0.19077335	0.5024533	0.84144259	
Habit	0.4658977	0.46566675	0.4537809	0.67809088	0.3432210	0.5870908	0.4533290

The table presented implements the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which is a method used to evaluate the discriminant validity between different constructs in a study. This criterion involves comparing the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, which are displayed along the diagonal, with the correlations between distinct constructions, which are shown in the off-diagonal cells.

The diagonal values, which correspond to the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, signify the correlations between the fundamental constructs and their observed indicators. As an illustration, Behavioral Intention exhibits a correlation of roughly 0.837, while Hedonic Motivation has a correlation of about 0.923 with their corresponding indicators.

In order to establish discriminant validity, it is preferable for the off-diagonal values, which indicate the correlations between distinct constructs, to be smaller than the diagonal values. The majority of the values located outside the main diagonal in this table are actually less than the comparable values on the main diagonal. This provides evidence that these constructs are separate from one other and have discriminant validity.

Nevertheless, there are cases in which the off-diagonal values exhibit a proximity to the equivalent diagonal values, such as the Performance Expectancy and Social influence. This implies a possible overlap or connection between these constructs. Although this does not definitively prove a lack of discriminant validity, it suggests the necessity for additional examination or improvement in the model to achieve a more distinct separation between these particular constructs. In general, most of the interactions between constructs in this study meet the criterion, which supports the idea that they are separate from each other.

Table 8. Cross Loadings

	BI	HM	PV	PE	SI	TRUST	H
Q1	0.321983534	0.412983865	0.31333298	**0.827825672**	0.332989682	0.123430355	0.566536312
Q10	0.432749623	0.467310499	0.316030559	**0.580316768**	0.547995123	0.183247845	0.622981421
Q11	0.295519349	0.27227556	0.293336185	0.275984194	**0.858405377**	0.480693558	0.303758056
Q12	0.32759551	0.354573479	0.364739081	0.324213958	**0.842941786**	0.406662456	0.39987866
Q13	0.532525552	0.325069962	**0.804195118**	0.352346448	0.412494209	0.508050254	0.356161192
Q14	0.459686411	0.325014558	**0.756894712**	0.254378734	0.331399845	0.427879692	0.243513361
Q15	0.496727085	0.32463112	**0.832058732**	0.296887141	0.322719422	0.513006377	0.251442315
Q16	0.481520933	0.344636674	**0.799987351**	0.187878368	0.283331564	0.490346059	0.304478128
Q17	0.533687731	0.502459482	**0.785567591**	0.32763407	0.267199472	0.476475876	0.468003465
Q18	0.446194477	0.22859729	0.550074563	0.156155014	0.443221897	**0.841346614**	0.210678081
Q19	0.482880455	0.238446882	0.490993011	0.161164213	0.342427807	**0.80630147**	0.224079974
Q2	0.381919703	0.42195464	0.317905589	**0.860799982**	0.407008306	0.205225252	0.595407135
Q20	0.4028501	0.206569595	0.467431763	0.166433328	0.515260114	**0.879966366**	0.201711517
Q21	0.425615651	0.168308688	0.483635259	0.106515098	0.446142709	**0.831249269**	0.163492835
Q22	0.513100722	0.301256707	0.563609851	0.208795586	0.364316759	**0.84665568**	0.286077542
Q23	**0.862059132**	0.446831864	0.543478082	0.329888669	0.336829201	0.45283249	0.513153992
Q24	**0.788873727**	0.456053858	0.514406992	0.364756022	0.273453118	0.429726905	0.468631455
Q25	**0.857194296**	0.451892121	0.529291474	0.331490628	0.42593101	0.471062924	0.471134758
Q3	0.3158804	0.450381617	0.272840664	**0.816050534**	0.343522561	0.147516321	0.545108191
Q4	0.48688993	**0.934832838**	0.447101455	0.436046652	0.369628521	0.243665913	0.550886638
Q5	0.533125163	**0.910014626**	0.427308678	0.502118917	0.410872211	0.238899173	0.595417456
Q6	0.473832866	**0.924200026**	0.411869491	0.480012629	0.38761322	0.273388229	0.589041281
Q7	0.45042759	0.501346587	0.309895244	0.623188583	0.34249473	0.13200535	**0.828993814**
Q8	0.511460073	0.588786438	0.396384495	0.608014322	0.492086081	0.284457888	**0.902340583**
Q9	0.549950795	0.538237343	0.368891539	0.583904389	0.421090693	0.214779012	**0.893200998**

Notes: Bold values are loadings for items which are above the recommended value of 0.5: **AVE:** Average variance extracted; **BI**; Behavioral Intention, **HM**; Hedonic Motivation, **SI**; Social influence, **PE**; Performance Expectancy and **Trust**, **H** Habit.
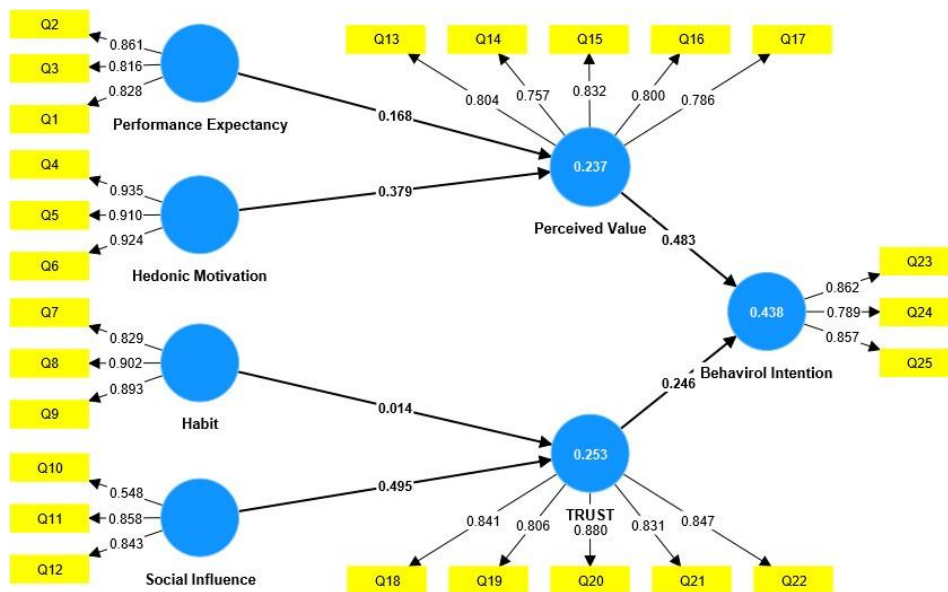
Figure 6. Structual Model

The structural model:

Using a structural equation modeling framework, the structural model in Smart PLS analysis is a representation of the hypothesized relationships between latent constructs and observed variables. It relies on manifest variables, which are explicitly measurable indications of these hidden components, and latent variables, which embody unobservable constructs. Using arrows or lines, the model shows paths that indicate the expected links between these variables, which can be causative or correlational. SmartPLS determines the direction and strength of these connections by calculating path coefficients; this allows researchers to use different statistical methods to evaluate the model's fit and determine the relevance of links. The use of SmartPLS for hypothesis testing and modeling has many applications in the social sciences, business, and other areas where complicated interrelationships between variables need to be understood.

Figure 5 displays the findings of the structural model without the impact of the interaction factors. The expected direction is indicated by the beta path coefficients, which are positive and statistically significant (at $p < 0.05$).

Multiplying the respective indicators of the moderator and predictor constructs yielded the interaction terms that were used to simulate the interaction effects. In addition, we built and compared models with and without the corresponding interacting structures by following their recommended hierarchical procedure. The outcomes of the interaction-effects structural model are displayed in Figure 4. It displays the structural model's outcomes when controlling factors are included.

Emphasizing the impact of pleasure and satisfaction on product or service perception, perceived value showed a substantial positive relationship (coefficient = 0.379, $p < 0.001$) with behavioral intentions. Behavioural intentions were positively impacted by trust (coefficient = 0.483, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that trust plays a role in influencing purchasing decisions and recommendations. On the other hand, performance expectancy had a somewhat lesser effect on perceived value ($p = 0.036$, coefficient = 0.167). On the other hand, the importance of social commerce characteristics was highlighted by the considerable influence of hedonic motivation on perceived value (coefficient = 0.497, $p < 0.001$). The study found no significant association between habit and trust (coefficient = 0.021, $p = 0.645$), however social influences had a beneficial effect on total trust (coefficient = 0.488, $p < 0.001$). This highlights how important it is for vendors to earn their customers' trust in social commerce settings.

Table 9. Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	BI	HM	PV	PE	SI	TRUST H
BI						
HM	0.63795					
PV	0.76772	0.51699				
PE	0.52008	0.60738	0.4334			
SI	0.65409	0.65643	0.59000	0.71367		
TRUST	0.64359	0.30088	0.69213	0.22581	0.60541	
Habit	0.69032	0.68900	0.46065	0.85567	0.65433	0.2790

The table illustrates the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which is utilized to evaluate the discriminant validity among constructs in a study. This approach assesses the correlations between several constructs relative to a predefined threshold value, typically set at 0.9, in order to ascertain whether they significantly deviate from unity. This deviation suggests the presence of discriminant validity.

In the table:

- Diagonal Values: These are all 1s as they represent the correlation of each construct with itself.

- Off-Diagonal Values: Every individual cell denotes the correlation between distinct constructs. The correlation coefficient between Behavioral Intention (BI) and Hedonic Motivation (HM) is roughly 0.638, but the correlation coefficient between Hedonic Motivation and Trust (TRUST) is approximately 0.301.

The HTMT values should ideally be less than 0.9 to indicate discriminant validity, indicating that the constructs have stronger correlations with themselves than with other constructs. The table shows that the bulk of results are below 0.9, which suggests a clear distinction between the different constructions.

Nevertheless, there are a limited number of cases in which the HTMT values get close to or surpass 0.9, such as the correlation between Habit and Performance Expectancy (0.855) or the correlation between Social influence and Performance Expectancy (0.713). These values indicate that there may be a lack of discriminant validity between these specific pairings of components. This suggests that further analysis or improvement of the model is needed to establish a clearer separation between them.

In general, most associations between constructs satisfy the requirement for discriminant validity. However, in cases where HTMT values are near or exceed 0.9, it

may be necessary to carefully analyze or modify the model in order to improve the differentiation between these constructs.

Table 10. Goodness of Fit (GoF) Index

	Average variance extracted (AVE)	R Square
Behavioral Intention	0.700083255	0.43819208
Perceived Value	0.633807466	0.237145117
TRUST	0.708025635	0.252611253
Habit	0.453489076	
Hedonic Motivation	0.85206158	
Performance Expectancy	0.697403475	
Social influence	0.453889706	

Table 11. Structural Estimate (Hypothesis Testing) inclue the table

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Hedonic Motivation -> Perceived Value	0.379	0.377	0.072	5.250	0.000
Perceived Value ->Behavioral Intention	0.483	0.484	0.071	6.826	0.000
Performance Expectancy -> Perceived Value	0.167	0.171	0.080	2.095	0.036
Social Influence -> TRUST	0.488	0.433	0.043	7.223	0.000
TRUST ->Behavioral Intention	0.245	0.245	0.067	3.681	0.000
Habit -> TRUST	0.021	0.243	0.065	0.156	0.0645

H1: Perceived value will have a positive and significant influence on behavioral intentions.

The study provides evidence for this hypothesis by demonstrating a statistically significant positive correlation (coefficient = 0.379, p-value = 0.000). This suggests that when individuals are driven by pleasure or enjoyment, it has a positive influence on their perception of the worth of a product or service.

H2: Trust will have a positive and significant influence on behavioral intentions.

The study validates this hypothesis by demonstrating a statistically significant positive correlation (coefficient = 0.483, p-value = 0.000). This suggests that when individuals perceive greater worth in a product or service, they are more likely to engage in activities such as making a purchase or recommending it.

H3: Performance Expectancy will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

The study provides evidence in favor of this hypothesis, demonstrating a positive correlation (coefficient = 0.167, p-value = 0.036). Nevertheless, the influence of performance expectancy on perceived value is somewhat less significant compared to the other interactions that were examined.

H4: Hedonic motivation will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

The study provides robust evidence in favor of this hypothesis (coefficient = 0.497, p-value = 0.000), suggesting that the fundamental aspects of social commerce play a substantial role in establishing trust among consumers.

H5: Habit will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

The study rejects the hypothesis as the investigation reveals no substantial correlation or significance (coefficient = 0. 021, p-value = 0.645) between Habit and trust. Within the confines of this study, it is indicated that confidence in the seller does not have a substantial effect on the overall perception of trust by consumers in social

influence situations.

H6: Social Influence (SI) will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

The study validates this hypothesis by demonstrating a statistically significant positive correlation (coefficient = 0. 488, p-value = 0.000). This indicates that greater levels of trust result in higher behavioural intentions, such as making purchases or interacting with the business.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to identify the intricate relationship between social media usage and online purchasing behavior in the Qatari context, combining insights from a diverse demographic and comprehensive survey data. The findings indicate a high prevalence of social media usage, particularly on platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, among the Qatari population. However, this does not align with the relatively lower percentage of online purchases in Qatar compared to global averages. However, the gap shows potential to intervene and improve use intent. The above discussion emphasizes the multifaceted influence of factors such as trust, perceived value, and habitual engagement on consumers' behavioral intentions(Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012). The tests on the data indicate that the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) provides a valuable framework for understanding user behavior in the realm of online purchases through social media. But despite the positive attitudes toward social media's utility, certain challenges, including concerns about trust and authenticity, influence consumers' decision-making processes that may explain low rates of conversions in Qatar.

H1: Perceived value will have a positive and significant influence on behavioral intentions.

The established positive correlation between perceived value and behavioral intentions highlights the essential influence of perceived value on customer behavior. Companies should prioritize the development and clear communication of value propositions in order to stimulate desirable customer behaviors, such as making purchases or promoting their products/services.

H2: Trust will have a positive and significant influence on behavioral intentions.

The established impact of trust on behavioral intentions reinforces its importance in motivating consumer behaviors. It is crucial for businesses to give high importance to establishing and maintaining trust with their audience in order to promote desirable actions such as making purchases, active involvement, and long-term commitment.

H3: Performance Expectancy will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

Although the influence of performance anticipation on perceived value is noteworthy, it is somewhat less pronounced compared to other connections examined in the research. However, it emphasizes that customers' expectations about a product's performance do really influence its perceived worth. Businesses should aim to surpass customer performance expectations in order to favorably impact perceived value.

H4: Hedonic motivation will have a positive and significant influence on Perceived value.

The research demonstrates a significant and favorable correlation between hedonic drive and perceived worth. Consequently, when customers experience pleasure or delight from a product or service, they are more inclined to see it as valued. Therefore, firms should contemplate tactics that improve the experiencing elements of their products or services in order to favorably impact the perceived worth.

H5: Habit will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

Research found no significant association between Habit and overall social commerce trust, which was contrary to expectations. Customers' trust in the seller does not directly correlate to their overall trust in the social commerce scenario, according to this research. In order to better understand and increase overall trust perceptions among consumers, firms may need to explore additional elements or dynamics outside

of Habit.

H6: Social Influence (SI) will have a positive and significant influence on Trust.

Findings from the study that social influences correlate with trust emphasize the critical role that social commerce ecosystem elements play in encouraging consumers to have faith in a brand. In order to boost consumer trust, platforms and vendors should work on creating a trustworthy and interesting environment, complete with features like user reviews and social interactions.

Practical and Policy implications

Implications for practice

The findings of the study offer valuable practical implications for businesses, marketing professionals, and policymakers operating in the Qatari market. Firstly, businesses should leverage Instagram and Snapchat, recognized as the most popular social media platforms, to enhance their online presence. Given the high usage of social media among Qataris, companies can optimize their marketing strategies by focusing on these platforms. Additionally, recognizing the positive perception of online marketing among the majority of consumers, businesses should invest in influencer marketing to build trust and authenticity(Jin, 2019). Policymakers may consider initiatives to regulate and ensure transparency in influencer marketing to address concerns related to content authenticity. Moreover, addressing the discrepancy between high social media usage and low online purchase intentions requires targeted interventions, such as educational campaigns emphasizing the benefits and safety of online purchases according to Hasan & Sohail (2020). Enhancing the perceived value of online shopping experiences, perhaps through exclusive promotions or personalized offers, can further stimulate consumer interest.

Implications for research

Given the findings that support the favorable influence of hedonic motivation

on perceived value, firms might strategically focus on improving the experience elements of their products or services. This involves creating items or services that elicit pleasure or delight, therefore enhancing the perceived value. It is important to effectively communicate these pleasurable features, since they are closely related to the perceived value and behavioral objectives. Effective and persuasive communication of value propositions, highlighting distinctive selling elements that strongly appeal with customers, may greatly impact purchase choices and recommendations.

Furthermore, the study's confirmation of the impact of performance expectancy on perceived value, while to a lesser extent compared to other connections, underscores the significance of fulfilling or exceeding customer expectations. Effective tactics should prioritize the constant fulfillment of commitments about functionality and usability to enhance the perceived worth.

The results confirm that social commerce structures play a crucial role in developing trust when it comes to building trust within social commerce. Practical measures include platforms and sellers dedicating resources to establish dependable settings by fostering authentic user interactions, promoting transparency, and ensuring the credibility of user evaluations. In order to establish trust, organizations should emphasize efforts to develop trust by consistently delivering high-quality products or services, providing exceptional customer service, and maintaining transparent processes.

Nevertheless, the lack of a meaningful correlation between Habit and general trust in the context of social commerce offers a nuanced viewpoint. This necessitates a more extensive comprehension of trust dynamics that beyond vendor connections. Effective tactics should include firms doing a thorough examination of other aspects that contribute to customers' overall impressions of trust.

From a policy standpoint, our results endorse the need for norms and laws that promote clear and open communication in advertising, provide high standards of quality control, and safeguard data privacy. Policymakers may promote a trustworthy social commerce environment by implementing regulations against fraudulent reviews, ensuring fair corporate operations, and protecting consumer rights.

Essentially, the findings and theories together emphasize the significance of improving customer experiences, successfully conveying value propositions, achieving performance expectations, cultivating trust in social commerce, and comprehending intricate trust dynamics. Pragmatic approaches and regulations should be in accordance with these observations to create a stable, open, and confidence-based environment for social commerce that is advantageous for both companies and customers.

Research implication &Study Limitations

Despite the useful insights acquired from this research, there are still numerous limits that remain and should be recognized. Although the sample employed in this research was varied and represented many parts of the community, it may not fully reflect the total Qatari population. Potential biases may be present due to the voluntary nature of survey participation, which might impact the representativeness of the sample. To enhance the applicability of study results to the Qatari population, it is recommended that future research efforts focus on using bigger and more varied samples.

Furthermore, the research mainly depended on self-reported data, which might possibly introduce response bias or social desirability bias. Integrating self-report measures with behavioral observations or qualitative interviews might provide a more holistic understanding of participants' activities, motives, and perspectives. This comprehensive approach may provide a more profound understanding of how perceived value, trust, and other factors are expressed in real customer behaviors in the

realm of social commerce.

Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design hindered the ability to establish causal links between the variables under investigation. Although the found associations provide useful insights, a longitudinal strategy might more effectively capture the changes in social media usage and online purchase patterns over a period of time. Adopting a longitudinal approach may provide a more comprehensive and nuanced view of the evolution and interaction of these characteristics, hence strengthening the study's reliability and depth.

Lastly, in order to get a deeper knowledge within the appropriate framework, future research should investigate and include cultural subtleties and special contextual elements that are exclusive to Qatar. By including this element, a more comprehensive comprehension of online consumer behavior within the socio-cultural context of the area might be achieved. An in-depth analysis of the interplay between cultural factors, perceived value, trust, and behavioral intentions in the Qatari environment has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of tactics designed for this particular market.

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of socialinfluece. However, to improve the depth, reliability, and applicability of future research on online consumer behavior in Qatar, it is recommended to address the limitations by using larger and more diverse samples, employing mixed-method approaches, conducting longitudinal studies, and considering cultural contextualization.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for Online Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1NuCMSLpyYgj1-Zo3BXK-GxS4XUQD8NFiAo4Wb92b7Ok/edit

The Influence of Social Media on Consumers Purchase Decision: The Case of Qatar

I am inviting you to participate in this research as part of the requirements for an MBA program at the college of Business and Economic, Qatar University. This survey aims at examining the influence of social media on consumers purchase decision in Qatar.

The study will involve posing questions on your social media activity and factors that influence online purchase intentions. The information you provide will be confidential and only used for purpose of the study. Your participation in the survey may take an average of 10 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, you may choose to skip questions you are not comfortable with and you are free to withdraw at any time. However, I hope that you will find your participation meaningful. You are free to ask any questions or seek clarification.

This study poses no risks to participants. Privacy and confidentiality will be adhered to in the process of data collection. The collected data will be stored safely in a secured laptop to ensure that the data are available only to the researchers. In processing the data for the report, personal identifying information, if reported, will be removed and data anonymized. Results and work published will be available for subjects if requested. In addition, all data collected will be destroyed after 3 years.

Your responses to the questions in this survey will of great help in completing this study. If you have any concerns, please reach me through this email address

na080375@qu.edu.qa. You may also reach Professor Emad for any design or ethical concerns. This study is approved by the Qatar University Institutional Review Board with the approval number [xxx]; If you have any question related to ethical compliance of the study you may contact them at QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa or at 4403 5307. Also, the data collected and application details is accessible to QU-IRB and MoPH.

Sincerely,

Student: Nawal Nasser R H Almarri

Email: na080375@qu.edu.qa

Prof. Emad Abu-Shanab

eabushanab@qu.edu.qa

College of Business & Economics – Qatar University

- **If you are below 18 years, please do not fill this survey.**
- **If you agree on participating in this study, please check the box "Next"**

Background information:

Let me know what aspect best describes you in terms of:

1- **Age**

18-20	21-30	31-40	41- 50	51+
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2- **Gender**

Male	Female
☐	☐

3- **Education Level**

Basic Education	High School	Bachelorsdegree	Postgraduate degree
☐	☐	☐	☐

4- Nationality

          Qatari ☐   **Non-Qatari** ☐

5- What social media platforms you are currently using?

Facebook ☐

Instagram ☐

Twitter ☐

Snapchat ☐

Other, please specify …………………………
☐

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Performance Expectancy (PE) When purchasing online…..	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I find social media sites very useful.					
2	Social media has been helpful at making informed decisions					
3	Social media is a quick and convenient way to get purchasing information					
	Effort Expectancy (EE)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have always used social media					
2	Transitioning to the use of social media for purchase decisions was easy for me					
3	It is easy for me to become skillful at using social media websites for online purchasing.					
	Social Influence (SI)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I spent a significant amount of time on social media					
2	I tend to trust the opinion of people I interact with on social media					
3	Most of my contacts on social media promote social media business					
	Facilitating Conditions (FC)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have the resources necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing.					
2	I have the knowledge necessary to use social media websites for online purchasing.					
3	My purchasing decision is compatible with my other social media usage					
4	There is online support in case of difficult making purchases on social media					
	Hedonic motivation (HM)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Using social media for online purchasing is fun.					
2	Using social media for online purchasing is enjoyable.					
3	Using social media for online purchasing is very entertaining.					
	Habit (HT)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I consider myself a regular user of social media					
2	I am addicted to using social media websites for online purchasing.					
3	I prefer to use social media for purchases when it is an option					
4	I conduct most my purchases on social media					
5	I am used to purchase online and through social media					
	Perceived Value (PV)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Social media websites offer better value for my money for online purchasing.					
2	Shopping on social commerce websites takes a reasonable amount of time.					
3	shopping on social commerce websites would improve the way I am perceived.					
4	Prices on social commerce websites are reasonable.					
5	Overall, shopping on social commerce websites is worthwhile.					
	Trust (T)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Providers on social media are trustworthy					
2	Providers on social media give the impression that they keep promises and commitments					
3	I trust providers on social media because they have my best interests in mind					
4	Based on my experience with social media providers, I know they are honest					
5	Based on my experience with social media providers, I know they care about consumers					
	Behavioral Intention (BI)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I intend to use social media websites for online purchasing in the future.					
2	I predict there will be more demand for use of social media for purchasing.					
3	I would recommend social media for purchase to my contacts in future					

Any comments?

………
……………………………
………
………………………….…………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………….

Thank you!

Appendix B: Information sheet and consent form

I am Nawal Almarri inviting you to participate in this research as part of the requirements for an MBA program at the college of Business and Economic, Qatar University. This survey aims at examining the influence of social media on consumers purchase decision in Qatar.

The study will involve posing questions on your social media activity and factors that influence online purchase intentions. The information you provide will be confidential and only used for purpose of the study. Your participation in the survey may take an average of 10 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, you may choose to skip questions you are not comfortable with and you are free to withdraw at any time. However, I hope that you will find your participation meaningful. You are free to ask any questions or seek clarification.

This study poses no risks to participants. Privacy and confidentiality will be adhered to in the process of data collection. The collected data will be stored safely in a secured laptop to ensure that the data are available only to the researchers. In processing the data for the report, personal identifying information, if reported, will be removed and data anonymized. Results and work published will be available for subjects if requested. In addition, all data collected will be destroyed after 3 years.

Your responses to the questions in this survey will of great help in completing this study. If you have any concerns, please reach me through this email address na080375@qu.edu.qa. You may also reach Professor Emad for any design or ethical concerns. This study is approved by the Qatar University Institutional Review Board with the approval number 2044889-1; If you have any question related to ethical compliance of the study you may contact them at QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa or at 4403 5307. Also, the data collected and application details is accessible to QU-IRB and MoPH.

Sincerely,

Student: Nawal Nasser R H Almarri

Email: na080375@qu.edu.qa

Prof. Emad Abu-Shanab

eabushanab@qu.edu.qa

College of Business & Economics – Qatar University

Appendix C: CITI certification

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 02-Jun-2023
Expiration Date 02-Jun-2026
Record ID   55775753

This is to certify that:

Nawal Almarri

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE) Comprehensive
(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE) Comprehensive
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Qatar University

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w8001b1bd-65a3-4c33-a59b-f603a31c0616-55775753