

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SAUDI BUYER BEHAVIOR IN THE FASHION MARKET

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Abstract: This research endeavor sought to examine the influence of social media on the purchasing behavior of female consumers engaging with online fashion retailers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The demographic of interest comprised female Saudi users of the platform X, aged between 18 and 35 years, which totaled 996.1 thousand individuals in 2022, accounting for 43.8% of the overall Saudi population in Riyadh. A purposive sampling technique was employed, with a recommended sample size of 387 female Saudi consumers. The nature of the study is quantitative and is categorized descriptively. A structured questionnaire served as the instrument for gathering primary data, utilizing a Five-Point Likert Scale for measurement. The findings indicate that there is no reasonable impact of social media engagement on the purchasing behaviors of Saudi female consumers. Conversely, it was found that online sales promotion strategies and perceived e-credibility have a positive influence on Saudi female purchasers. The study offers various recommendations and practical implications aimed at optimizing the utilization of social media within the Saudi Arabian fashion sector.

Key Words: SM, Buying behavior, Engagement, Online Sales Promotion, Online Credibility, Fashion Market, Saudi Arabia.

1. Introduction:

The global financial crisis of 2008 led to significant economic and psychological changes in the retail sector worldwide (Mohr, 2013). Financially, it became increasingly difficult to encourage new innovators and early adopters to purchase their preferred fashion items, as demand from affluent consumers declined. Research indicates that these affluent consumers represented as much as 60% of the fashion industry market share (Christians, 2011). On a psychological level, planning for upcoming fashion events became crucial, but many strategies proved inadequate, resulting in declining sales for major global retailers such as Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Nordstrom (Mohr, 2013). This downturn reflected consumer emotions and sentiments in the international fashion hub of Paris, where buyers became more cautious and risk-averse. Many developed feelings of anxiety and distrust regarding future spending on fashion items, while low-income consumers displayed increased sensitivity to price changes (Kapferer, 2012).

The underlying cause of this apprehension stems from the ongoing global financial crisis, which has prompted affluent individuals and elites to reevaluate their consumption patterns concerning luxury items. Wealthy consumers are now compelled to prioritize both the pricing and quality of fashion products in comparison to their competitors (Godey et al., 2016). Additionally, the competition among fashion enthusiasts has significantly influenced consumer focus, preferences, and the criteria used to assess product quality and quantity (Lutz, 2016). As a result, reduced purchasing behavior and increased savings have emerged

as a new consumer trend (Ahmad et al., 2015). In light of the current challenges, global fashion retailers are increasingly focusing on innovative solutions, methodologies, and strategies to navigate the ongoing crisis effectively. It is essential to consider varying economic conditions, evolving consumer trends, and urbanization rates in developing nations (Lutz, 2016). Consequently, there is a strong consensus among fashion producers worldwide regarding the need for marketing-oriented strategies. This trend drives international retailers and fashion designers to develop new marketing approaches and explore untapped markets to attract a broader customer base (Tufekci& Wilson, 2012).

In 2009, producers and retailers of luxury brands began using contemporary technologies and social media as powerful marketing tools for quick access, broad reach, and direct interaction with consumers (Ritura, 2019). This type of interaction enhances awareness, engagement, brand recall, and purchasing motivation (Sheela &Sneha, 2017). The rise of new technologies has established social media as an effective mechanism for building customer relationships and attracting fashion consumers (Geissinger& Laurel, 2016). Research shows that social media users actively express their preferences and share ideas and opinions about global fashion products (Kurutz, 2011). Additionally, social platforms enable users to leave comments, evaluate products, and provide immediate feedback from anywhere (Grubor et al., 2017). Social media has fundamentally transformed communication and dialogue between companies and consumers while increasing the entertainment value of perceived trust (Farook&Abeysekara, 2016). Information is now easily accessible through social networks, forums, blogs, microblogs, wikis, and multimedia content such as images and videos (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010). Social media plays a crucial role in developing and nurturing online relationships (Golden, 2011). It has become an essential part of the innovation process and a primary source of informative content (Evans, 2010). Scholars argue that social media has significantly improved engagement, transparency, discourse, and connectivity among users in virtual communities. Furthermore, social media empowers users to create individual profiles, express their thoughts, emotions, interests, and preferences, and connect with friends and peers (Trusov et al., 2009).

Social media (SM) has become one of the most important communication tools of the 21st century, fundamentally changing what defines success and how businesses operate. It has redefined corporate visions and strategies necessary for thriving in the marketplace (Singh et al., 2020). SM represents a new marketing paradigm (Hawi&Samaha, 2017) that fosters product innovation aligned with consumer demands (Golden, 2011). Additionally, SM has improved organizational performance by creating streamlined channels for feedback, recommendations, and consumer evaluations. In conclusion, social media has not only enabled innovative and proactive interactions and offerings but has also improved content quality and organizational effectiveness, thereby creating additional value for consumers. It effectively supports relationship management within business models and among stakeholders (Marketingpower.com, 2022). SM has allowed direct communication between businesses and users (Kaplan &Heinlin, 2010). This beneficial relationship between consumers and brands, characterized by open dialogue and mutual respect, has been confirmed (Al-Nsour et al., 2021). Furthermore, social media has accelerated the spread of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Trusov et al., 2009). These platforms have empowered consumers, providing them with the skills to become opinion leaders and market influencers (Kolhar et al., 2021). Consequently, this has had a significant impact on marketing strategies and purchasing decisions (Ahmed et al., 2017). Over time, SM has become an essential part of consumers' lifestyles, communication habits, feedback mechanisms, and interactive engagements (Al-Nsour&Aiaf, 2024).

2. Literature Review and Development Hypothesis:

1.2 The Concept of Social Media:

Social media was first established in Tokyo, Japan, in 1994 with the launch of Matisse (Aichner et al., 2021). This marked the beginning of the initial social media platforms during the early phase of the commercial Internet. Over time, the number of social platforms and their user bases grew significantly, making them some of the most widely used applications on the Internet. As a result, businesses began to shift their marketing strategies to these social platforms, drawn by the engagement opportunities they offered for both companies and their customers (Lomborg, 2015). The evolution of social media in recent years can be attributed to the decline in the importance of traditional media. As a consequence, social media has caused a decline in television viewership and reduced profit margins for traditional media outlets (Al-Nsour&Alsahli, 2022). The growing significance of social media in everyday life is linked to the shortcomings of conventional communication methods and the changing business landscape (Makudza et al., 2020). These technological and economic shifts in the business environment align with emerging trends and consumer preferences. Consequently, many companies have redirected their advertising budgets toward online platforms and innovative technologies (Aichner et al., 2021).

For a long time, organizations primarily relied on one-way communication through traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio (Gupta & Kumar, 2022). These conventional methods do not allow for quick and effective responses to the views of individuals and groups (Makudza et al., 2020). However, the rise of the Internet has greatly improved interaction, enabling suggestions and complaints to be made easily, while providing equitable access to information and greater autonomy (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2020). Social media has become a powerful tool for building relationships and sharing relevant information and innovative ideas. It allows communication to transcend borders; for instance, a person in the United States can share information with peers in India, the United Kingdom, and various regions in the Middle East (Alsahli et al., 2025). As a result, communication, as a sociocultural process, promotes the exchange of knowledge among diverse communities (Donnellan et al., 2020).

Social media comprises various individual communication tools, functioning similarly to newspapers as a means of social communication. It provides not only information but also facilitates interaction during the exchange of that information (Gupta & Kumar, 2021). This interaction can include asking for comments, voting on specific posts, sharing information within a network, and engaging in conversations with others (Donnellan et al., 2020). Moreover, the core social function of social media has positioned it as a platform capable of adapting to changes in communities and organizations (Arora &Sanni, 2019). While this form of interaction may seem modern, it is essential to recognize that the culture of communication is a fundamental and inherent human need that drives us to connect, develop, and innovate new methods of interaction (Dijck&Poell, 2013). Social media serves as an online channel that allows immediate interaction and grants access to users interested in content generated by others (Pratama et al., 2020). In this context, the interactive nature of social media has evolved into a valuable societal tool (Sharma & Bhatt, 2018). This evolution is closely associated with the concept of "Web 2.0," which emerged after 2004 and introduced interactive features in websites, online communities, social networking sites, and microblogs (Ziyadin et al., 2019). This period marked a revolution in the business world, driven by advancements in the computer industry and the Internet. Numerous studies have explored how these innovations function, how applications and content are continuously updated, and

how they facilitate collaborative or participatory exchanges among users across the system (Pratama et al., 2020).

Social media encompasses a range of platforms and tools designed for communication, characterized by Web 2.0 features such as sharing, collaboration, and user empowerment. These platforms foster the development of consumer socialization, allowing individuals to communicate with peers and influence each other's decisions (Işık, 2024). Social media provides a virtual space for personal interaction, as emphasized by Al-Nsour (2023). For organizations, social media serves as a valuable source of social capital by gathering marketing information, identifying market opportunities, and monitoring customer behaviors across these networks (Pang, 2021). It is also a medium for content created collectively, encouraging users to engage with online platforms where they can participate, discover, learn, and share knowledge (Dwivedi et al., 2018). Some researchers suggest that this interaction signifies a strengthened relationship between sociology and technology, creating an online environment where people can formally or informally share their experiences and expertise (JagadeeshBabu et al., 2020).

Studies indicate that the increasing importance of social media correlates with the rise and digitization of these platforms, alongside the emergence of new generations of users (Putter et al., 2017). Furthermore, social platforms have transformed individual behaviors and societal norms, adapting human needs to accommodate digital technologies (Gemma & Ángel, 2013). Social media encompasses a diverse array of online information sources, enabling users to share information and collaborate in creating and benefiting from web content (Kohli et al., 2014). It reflects users' online practices and behaviors, allowing them to share information, knowledge, and opinions with others (Adegboyega, 2020). Additionally, these technologies rely on the Internet, thus mirroring its nature. Social media has facilitated creativity, information sharing, and collaboration among users. Social networks and communities have fostered a new form of cooperation and communication among individuals (Allcott et al., 2019).

2.2 Importance of Social Media

A common misconception about social media is that it is limited to platforms like Facebook and Twitter. However, research indicates that social media encompasses much more (Aras & Çolaklar, 2015). It serves as one of the fastest ways to transmit visual and audio messages over long distances (Aras & Çolaklar, 2015). Historical accounts demonstrate that ancient methods of communication, such as fire signals and smoke, were used in China. In Egypt and Greece, drums were employed in various regions around the world to amplify the human voice for communication. Evidence suggests that the origins of social media can be traced back as far as 550 BC (Baruah, 2012). In terms of technological advancements from the 19th and 20th centuries, notable developments include the Telegraph in 1837, the Telephone in 1876, and the Radio in 1891. These inventions significantly improved the ability to send and receive messages over long distances and marked important milestones in the evolution of communication (Drahošová & Balco, 2017).

The advent of the Internet marked a significant turning point in the 20th century, ushering in the digital era of interpersonal communication through web-based platforms and email (Renu & Gupta, 2020). These tools have transformed communication in modern society, making it essential to use computers for sending files and photos daily (Renu, 2018). The origins of computers, however, date back to 1969. Email initially gained popularity among students in schools and universities as a convenient tool for instant messaging (Morrow, 2014). This development encouraged online interaction and social participation. In the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a technological boom that has significantly changed and integrated into society. This evolution has transformed communication patterns

and methods, moving toward interactive dialogues and social media, primarily through websites and mobile devices (Lisette et al., 2017).

Social media serves as a comprehensive platform for social interaction, fundamentally changing the way people communicate with each other, organizations, and communities. It has become globally accessible through scalable techniques. According to the literature, social media can be categorized into six distinct types (Nemekhjargal&Myadagbadam, 2019): 1. Cooperative sites, such as Wikipedia 2. Blogs and microblogs, like X 3. Content communities, such as YouTube 4. Social networking sites, like Facebook 5. Virtual gaming worlds, such as World of Warcraft and Cartridge 6. Virtual social worlds, which use techniques similar to Second Life These categories highlight the various ways in which social media facilitates communication and interaction among users.

Social media has evolved into an interactive communication channel that enables the creation of engaging web content and promotes collaboration and exchange among individuals within virtual communities (Aichner et al., 2021). Research shows that these platforms differ significantly from traditional media due to their social network structure, the equal status of their users, and the lack of constraints on how communication messages can be presented—constraints often found in other media (Renu& Gupta, 2020). Furthermore, advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have significantly influenced many societies, transforming their economic, political, social, and cultural structures (Al-Nsour, 2017). The Internet has revolutionized the way we live, communicate, and interact, making it one of the most engaging platforms for users (Bishop, 2019).

3.2 Global Context of SM in the Fashion Industry:

After the global financial crisis ended in 2008, the importance of planning in the fashion industry increased significantly, as businesses sought ways to boost demand for fashion products (Mohr, 2013). Accelerated technological development forced companies to adopt new strategies to adapt to the changing external marketing environment (Kian et al., 2021). As competition rose, businesses faced challenges in attracting and retaining consumers. Economic theory suggests that unstable conditions lead to a decrease in the purchase of fashion products, which are classified as normal goods with a positive relationship between demand and income (Koufie&Kesa, 2020). Organizations aimed to enhance communication, seek new customers, and develop content as part of their focus on new marketing strategies (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Some literature has emphasized the importance of social media (SM) strategies in complex, rapidly changing business environments with broad geographical scopes (Fassi et al., 2025).

Studies have shown that fashion stores have successfully created marketing tools that allow them to lead the market, build awareness, and enhance their brand image (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). The literature indicates that social media (SM) is one of the key models that global fashion retailers have effectively implemented, combining marketing and social communication (Kumar et al., 2016). Applied experiments demonstrate that social media has helped numerous economic sectors achieve their objectives. The use of social media ensures compatibility between available marketing resources and the requirements for consumer engagement (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). The success of social media depends on factors such as brand awareness, reputation, customer relationship management (CRM), and sales. Additionally, effective communication, consumer engagement, efficient allocation of marketing resources, and enhanced client orientation are vital performance indicators of the social media model (Li et al., 2021). Studies reveal that the fashion sector has benefited from these SM strategies since 2009. The industry has invested in innovating various applications and business models associated with social media. Fashion retailers have adapted their marketing strategies to align with global trends, reducing the risks associated with their

brands (Lilima, 2020). They have leveraged SM to promote products and create virtual communities for brand enthusiasts (Cheung et al., 2020). This approach has fostered loyalty through innovative and non-traditional methods that align with SM. There has been a notable shift toward incorporating brands into well-planned social media marketing campaigns, which have proven effective in creating engaging and appealing content for users (Li et al., 2021). These social media marketing campaigns have played a significant role in maintaining customer relationships and building brand loyalty, stemming from interactions and engagements within virtual communities (Lilima, 2020).

Studies confirm that SM positively impacts buying decisions in the fashion industry and directs consumers toward specific brands (Makudza et al., 2020). SM has helped reduce working time and costs, leading to simpler product designs. These benefits are particularly evident in global fashion stores, including those in the Fast Fashion sector (Cheung et al., 2021). As a result, performance indicators for fashion stores have shown improvement. The use of SM in the fashion industry has effectively attracted followers, facilitated information sharing, promoted brand awareness, and shifted consumer roles toward research, exploration, and information collection (Makudza et al., 2020). Additionally, studies indicate that SM's diverse communication mix can integrate consumer self-expression, advertising, and entertainment into shareable content (Kent & Taylor, 2021). Research has shown that SM in the fashion industry allows users to rate fashion products and maintain direct contact with brands (McCashin& Murphy, 2022). Furthermore, SM identify factors influencing consumer behavior and purchasing decisions regarding fashion products, enhance customer satisfaction, expand market coverage, and leverage user recommendations based on provided content (Masa'deh et al., 2021). SM has successfully targeted consumers, efficiently segmented the global fashion market, and quickly engaged with fashion enthusiasts (McCashin& Murphy, 2022). It serves as an educational resource for brand audiences and fashion lovers while also addressing brand challenges (Alshammari et al., 2024). SM enhances the buying experience by helping users discover and comprehend information while minimizing misunderstandings with brands (Moisescu et al., 2022).

The literature also suggests that SM increases social communication participation and followers of fashion products (Yonathan&Pupung, 2025). The level of connectivity between sales representatives, retailers, distribution channels, and consumers has significantly improved (Nabi et al., 2023). Information indicates that SM is becoming an increasingly vital source for fashion retailers. There are 249 million active daily users of social media, with social media advertising being the third most favored marketing communication tool, accounting for 13% of users' preferences (following television advertising and live research). The e-advertising market was estimated at about \$333 billion, with Google earning the highest revenue of \$103 billion. In 2019, SM revenues for global companies reached \$587 billion (www.Statistics, 2019). In this industry, fashion blogs have a significant influence on the buying decisions concerning three globally popular fashion categories: casual clothing, occasion wear, and fitness apparel (Hutchinson, 2017). SM is becoming more mature and visible in businesses, emerging as one of the most critical customer-oriented strategies. Utilizing SM has led to increased effectiveness in promotions, marketing intelligence, sentiment analysis, public relations, marketing communications, and product management (Nabliah et al., 2021).

Social media platforms have become the most influential broker of social interactions affecting business performance, especially with 1.92 billion users engaged in online shopping, which represented 55.1% of social media users in 2019 (www.Statistics, 2019). SM focuses on fostering customer relationships with fashion stores, manufacturers, and consumers rather than relying on mass marketing campaigns (Al-Nsour&Alsahli, 2025).

SM has been instrumental in developing competing strategies to enhance brand image and customer loyalty (Pang, 2021). These factors contribute to the effectiveness of interactive face-to-face selling and its positive outcomes when implementing marketing campaigns within a short timeframe (Nabliyah et al., 2021). It is important to note that SM presents a strategic opportunity for businesses of all sizes and sectors. Its significance is particularly pronounced for small retailers lacking sufficient financial resources to conduct extensive marketing campaigns or facing high costs to reach a large audience quickly (Nabi et al., 2023). On a similar note, global fashion companies effectively communicate product information to international markets, allowing for rapid outreach to diverse geographical areas (Islam, 2021). SM plays a crucial role in customer acquisition, standing out as a prominent feature compared to other marketing communication tools (HubSpot). Moreover, SM has legitimized youth casual wear and improved sales figures in global markets (Alsahli, 2024).

Social media plays a crucial role in driving purchasing intentions, increasing brand awareness and loyalty, and enhancing brand equity (Alsahli, 2024). Additionally, SM serves as a tool that has improved brand reputation and customer behavioral intentions (Khoirunnisa&Astini, 2021) while positively influencing post-purchase behavior (Almarzouki et al., 2022). SM has opened avenues for creating, sharing, and disseminating positive narratives and experiences within the fashion industry, fostering effective communication and customer relationship management (Zahra &Abdol Hamid, 2020). Importantly, the proliferation of the Internet, mobile phones, and digital platforms in the Saudi market acts as a primary channel for the fashion industry. These platforms have provided consumers with vast amounts of information, allowing brands to gain insights into consumer behavior, monitor reactions closely, and respond proactively to their preferences (Dogan-Sudas et al., 2021). Fashion marketers have benefited from tracking data, gauging attention, and utilizing focus groups (Dewia et al., 2022). With SM, it has become easier to adjust marketing strategies to align with customer needs, design pricing strategies, create effective promotions, and select appropriate communication plans regarding messaging, targeting, and language (Aggarwal & Mittal, 2022). Moreover, smartphones and tablets enable customers to make informed purchases, stay updated on the latest global fashion trends, engage socially, and receive immediate updates about fashion products (Dewia et al., 2022).

Overall, SM has generated a “positive buzz” for fashion products in both global and local markets, allowing for precise targeting of consumers. It has increasingly become an effective means for disseminating the latest fashion trends worldwide (Al-Nsour& Al-Saleh, 2025). Through SM, we can identify consumer segments, their buying intentions, levels of brand admiration or dislike, and the degree of brand recall (Aggarwal & Mittal, 2022). Social media marketing (SMM) has effectively targeted the digital generation, serving as a tool to expand audiences and penetrate remote and closed cultures. It facilitates continuous updates on fashion products, promotes word-of-mouth marketing, and encourages viral marketing among luxury brands (Kim et al., 2015). Research indicates that celebrity appearances, such as those in "Casual Style," turn into daily events on social media, characterized by comments, drawings, designs, videos, and TV shows (Al-Nsour, 2024). In some cases, this offers opportunities for self-expression; followers may become critics, presenting challenges for the world’s fashion creators (Khoirunnisa&Astini, 2021).

The literature confirms that social media (SM) serves as a platform for young people and fashion enthusiasts to share information, exchange opinions and feedback, and evaluate brands, often accompanied by feelings of fear (Moran, 2012). Practical experience also shows that social media has enhanced brand awareness and improved the understanding of fashion

customers, facilitated feedback, and increased traffic to company websites (Dewia et al., 2022). Studies indicate that social media is the most effective way to measure brand performance and marketing campaigns due to its high levels of effectiveness. It provides global access to brands and fashion products quickly and easily (Trad&Dabbagh, 2020). Fashion is a visual industry that heavily relies on the feedback from social media users; anyone can share and assess brands, contributing to the overall definition of the brand, expanding the communication message, and ultimately improving sales (Faizan et al., 2025). Under social media, the immediacy of feedback has increased, as has the sharing of information among users (Bruno et al., 2022).

4.2 The Social Media and Consumer Behavior in the Fashion Market:

Social media (SM) has positively influenced consumer buying decisions and has fostered greater engagement within the fashion industry (Alalwan et al., 2017). It has streamlined workflows, reduced production costs, and simplified product design, all contributing to the global trend of "Fast Fashion" (Alnsour et al., 2025). Consequently, key performance indicators such as profits and market share have improved. In the fashion sector, SM has successfully attracted followers, facilitated information sharing, promoted brand awareness, and empowered consumers to research, explore, and gather information (Leung et al., 2013). Research indicates that SM in the fashion industry enables users to rate products and connect directly with brands (Labrecque, 2014). Understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior, purchasing decisions, satisfaction, market reach, and recommendations regarding content is essential (Khoirunnisa&Astini, 2021).

Additionally, SM effectively targets consumers, segments the fashion market, and collects feedback from a global audience of fashion enthusiasts (Ibrahim & Ahmed, 2019). It also serves as an educational platform for audiences and fashion lovers, helping to address brand-related issues (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In summary, SM enhances the user experience and understanding of information while reducing inconsistencies related to brand messaging (Kim & Ko, 2012). It promotes communication and encourages social engagement among friends and followers of fashion products (Ramesh et al., 2025). Social media has become increasingly important in business, playing a crucial role in strategies aimed at attracting customers. According to Tanuri (2010), SM enhances promotions, marketing intelligence, sentiment research, public relations, marketing communications, and product management (Singah et al., 2025). Fashion blogs have notably influenced purchases in three key categories: casual clothing, occasion clothing, and fitness clothing (Hutchinson, 2017). A study by Rituraj (2019) revealed that the most popular platforms for consumers buying professional clothing include Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and Twitter. SM facilitates customer relationship management (CRM) for fashion retailers, aiding in consumer engagement, brand image enhancement, and loyalty building (Coon, 2010).

Furthermore, SM legitimizes the casual styles associated with youth clothing and positively impacts sales and marketing metrics. Ultimately, social media marketing (SMM) serves as a motivating factor in shaping purchasing intentions (Dehghani&Tomer, 2015), raising brand awareness, fostering brand loyalty, and enhancing brand equity (Al-Nsour et al., 2023). Additionally, SM has improved business reputation and influenced customer behavior (Keh&Xie, 2009), as well as post-purchase behavior (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In conclusion, SM provides fashion retailers with opportunities to create, share, and promote positive narratives and experiences (Kumar et al., 2016), foster positive communication, and enhance customer relationship management (Malthouse et al., 2013). Based on the above insights, the research hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- ***HO₁: HO₁: Social media has a statistically significant effect on consumer behavior regarding e-fashion stores in Saudi Arabia at the 5% level.***

3. Research Design:

- 1.3 Research Population: The research population consists of all Saudi households in Riyadh, specifically targeting users of the well-known electrical appliance market. According to data, the total number of Saudi households in Riyadh was approximately 996,100 in 2022, accounting for 43.8% of the overall households in the city (Stat.gov.sa, 2022).
- 2.3 Sampling Techniques: The target population for this study includes Saudi females aged 15-34 who are users of the specified products. This age demographic is estimated to comprise 26.2% of the total Saudi female population for 2022. The overall number of Saudi females reached 9,358,131 (Authority of Statistics, 2022). A purposive sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling technique, was employed. The analysis focused on five prominent online fashion stores in Saudi Arabia: Amazon Saudi, City Max Fashion, Center Point, Temu, and Nashmi. A recommended sample size of 386 female consumers was determined.
- 3.3 Research Instrument: A fully structured questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate method for data collection. This questionnaire was developed based on relevant previous studies and evaluated by academics and professionals to confirm its external validity, relevance, and effectiveness in achieving the research objectives. The questionnaire underwent refinement until it reached its final form. It was then distributed electronically via the Google Drive platform, resulting in a response rate of 100%.
- 3.4 Measurement: The study utilized a five-point Likert scale to measure the research variables. The response levels ranged from 1 to 5, where 5 indicates a very high response and 1 indicates a very low response. The interpretation scale for these response levels is as follows: (1) A score of 5 to 4.2 signifies a very high level, (2) a score greater than 3.6 but less than 4.2 indicates a high level, (3) a score greater than 2.4 but less than 3.6 represents a moderate level, (4) a score greater than 1.6 but less than 2.4 signifies a weak level, and (5) any score below 1.6 indicates a very low level. Sample responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including indicators such as the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative frequencies. This analysis aimed to assess the level of social media involvement and its impact on online purchasing decisions through the Facebook platform (Al-Nsour& Al-Shaibani, 2024).
- 3.5 Data Analysis: The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with PLS Smart software. This technique is based on various statistical assumptions and indicators. The p-value indicates the direction of the relationship between research variables, while the Standardized Beta reflects the strength and direction of the relationship. The f^2 and R^2 values assess how well the independent variable explains the dependent variable. The Q^2 metric predicts the behavior of the research variables, and the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) evaluates the overall performance of the regression model.

6.3 Descriptive Statistics:

A) Independent Variable: Social Media

1. Social Media Uses: This variable consists of 5 items, with a moderate response level. The arithmetic mean is 3.091, and the standard deviation is 1.158. This indicates that the use of social media by female shoppers in Saudi Arabia is moderate, as reflected in 39.3% of the responses. The confidence interval is between 1.933 and 4.249.
2. Sales Promotion Techniques: This variable consists of 6 items, with response levels ranging from moderate to high. The arithmetic mean is 2.7 and the standard deviation is 1.182. Thus, the level of sales promotion via social media

is considered moderate, with 25.8% of responses indicating approval. The confidence interval is between 1.518 and 3.882.

3. E-Credibility: Comprising 5 items, this variable also shows a moderate response level. The arithmetic mean is 2.929 with a standard deviation of 1.133, indicating a moderate level of credibility via social media, as noted by 31.5% of the responses. The confidence interval is between 1.796 and 4.062.

- B) Dependent Variable: Buying Behavior from E-Fashion Stores in Saudi Arabia**
This variable consists of 6 items, with an arithmetic mean of 3.352 and a standard deviation of 1.0768. This shows that the buying behavior of female shoppers in Saudi Arabia via social media is moderate, according to 46.8% of the responses. The confidence interval is between 2.2752 and 4.4288.

4. Validity and Reliability:

Cross-loading (Individual Item Value) assesses how items are distributed among different latent variables in the measurement model. According to statistical guidelines, an acceptable value is above 0.7 (Fornell&Larcker, 1981). All items in this analysis have values exceeding 0.7, confirming their accuracy and statistical acceptability. Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency among scale items. It is statistically acceptable, as values between 0.7 and 0.95 (Hair et al., 2014) indicate good internal consistency. Construct reliability offers a more comprehensive assessment of internal consistency among scale items (Brunner & Süß, 2005). The composite reliability value serves as an indicator of this consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test evaluates the variability within the measurement construct, focusing on how much of the underlying construct or latent variable's differences are explained (Henseler et al., 2014). The minimum acceptable value for AVE is 0.5, with values above 0.7 considered very good. All variables in this construct have AVE values above 0.5, confirming their statistical acceptability.

Table 1: Results of Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, and CR

Construct	Items	Individual Item Validity	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	VIF
X (Engagement)	X1	0.783	0.897	0.636	0.856	2.492
	X2	0.798				
	X3	0.826				
	X4	0.834				
	X5	0.744				
W (Sales Promotion)	W1	0.795	0.927	0.680	0.905	2.253
	W2	0.853				
	W3	0.819				
	W4	0.859				
	W5	0.861				
	W6	0.754				
A(E- Credibility)	A1	0.845	.9250	0.711	0.989	2.676
	A2	0.862				
	A3	0.849				
	A4	0.849				
	A5	0.821				

M (Buying Behavior)	M1	0.882	0.933	0.701	0.934	
	M2	0.887				
	M3	0.855				
	M4	0.877				
	M5	0.854				
	M6	0.842				

Table 2 illustrates collinearity, which refers to the correlation between independent variables and the strength of that correlation. It highlights the challenges of incorrectly regressing parameters (Montgomery et al., 2012). PLS-SEM computes the variance inflation factor (VIF), which starts at 1 and has no upper limit. According to statistical guidelines, a VIF value below 5 indicates that the collinearity problem is minimal. A value above 5 suggests a significant collinearity issue, and a value exceeding 10 indicates a very concerning level, leading to inaccurate regression estimates (Frost, 2020). Table 1 presents a VIF value of 5, indicating that the level of collinearity among the independent variables in this study is not a serious concern.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker Criterion & VIF

<i>Items</i>	<i>Engagement</i>	<i>Sales Promotion</i>	<i>E- Credibility</i>	<i>Buying Behavior</i>	VIF
<i>Engagement</i>	0.798				2.492
<i>Sales Promotion</i>	0.611	0.824			2.253
<i>E- Credibility</i>	0.593	0.651	0.843		2.676
<i>Buying Behavior</i>	0.511	0.537	0.720	0.866	

5. Research Outcomes:

Path analysis is used to determine the relationships between latent independent variables (IV) and dependent variables (DV) and to measure their impact. Key statistical indicators for assessing model fit include standardized beta coefficients and t-statistics (Coffman & MacCallum, 2005). A P-value of less than 0.05 (Probability of Errors) is considered statistically significant and indicates a direct relationship between the two variables. The standardized beta not only indicates the strength of the relationship but also its direction; a positive (+) value signifies a positive relationship between the variables. Table 3 below illustrates the positive direct relationship between sub-independent variables—Engagement, sales promotion, and e-Credibility—and buying behavior from e-fashion stores. The effects of social media (SM) sub-variables on buying behavior were significant, as evidenced by a significance level of $P < 0.01$. Additionally, the f^2 statistic measures the impact of the independent variable (IV) on the dependent variable (DV) (Kline, 2004). According to statistical guidelines, an f^2 value greater than 0.35 indicates a high effect, a value between 0.15 and 0.35 suggests a moderate effect, a value below 0.15 indicates a small effect, and a value less than 0.02 reflects no effect. The results indicate multiple influences of social media components on buying behavior. Specifically, there is no effect from Engagement, while sales promotion techniques and e-Credibility have a moderate effect on the buying behavior of e-fashion stores.

Table3: Path Direct Effects of First Hypotheses

H	Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Erro	T- Value	P- Value	Decision	f^2	Decision
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		r							
H₁₁	Engagement Buying Behavior	0.121	0.005	23.49	0.00	9	Supported Positive Relationship	0.001	No Effect
H₂₁	Sales Promotion Buying Behavior	0.162	0.006	27.90	0.00	7	Supported Positive Relationship	0.23	Moderate Effect
H₃₁	E-Credibility Buying Behavior	0.162	0.006	27.89	0.00	1	Supported Positive Relationship	0.16	Small Effect

Significant at $P_0^* < 0.01$.

Significant at $P_0^{**} < 0.05$.

The R^2 Coefficient of Determination is a statistical measure that assesses how well variation in the dependent variable (DV) can be explained by the independent variable (IV). Many researchers utilize this measure for path analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Table 3 presents the R^2 determination coefficient test regarding online buying intention and its variation due to social media (SM) components. The structural model accounts for 58.71% of the differences among the variables ($R^2 = 0.587$). According to statistical guidelines, this indicates that social media has a strong capacity to explain the differences in e-buying behavior. There is a significant positive relationship between social media and consumer behavior, as indicated by a beta value of 0.145 and a p-value of 0.00. Effective prediction relies on both the R^2 coefficient of determination and the Q^2 indicators. The results from Blindfolding show that Predictive Relevance measures the prediction of the omitted parts in the model. The Q^2 value reflects the potential for restructuring the data collected by the structural model and its performance indicators (Chin, 2010). According to the statistical rule, Predictive Relevance exists if the Q^2 value is greater than 0.00. Based on this, Table 3 demonstrates that the differences in online buying intention ($Q^2 = 0.438$) attributed to social media are significant, indicating a high level of predictability for e-buying intentions. Finally, SmartPLS calculates the Goodness of Fit (GoF) test value to evaluate the overall performance of the model (both Measurement Model and Structural Model). Table 4 below displays the GoF test results, which confirm a high level of predictability for the general model (Measurement & Structural).

Table4 :Other Statistical Measures

Construct	Measure	Value	Result
<i>Buying Behavior</i>	R^2	0.587	Large Power of Explanation
	Q^2	0.438	Large Predictive Relevance
	GoF	0.864	Large Goodness of Fit.

6. Discussion and Recommendations:

The study aimed to measure the effect of social media (SM) on consumer behavior among Saudi females shopping in online stores. The findings revealed that SM influences the purchasing behavior of approximately 68.8% of Saudi female youth. This suggests that SM is a strong predictor of buying behavior among female respondents. The sub-independent variables were found to be statistically significant and positively correlated with buying behavior. The study concludes that SM has a moderately significant effect on buying behavior, with electronic credibility identified as the key factor. However, engagement on social media did not have an impact on purchasing behavior from online fashion stores. These results are inconsistent with previous studies regarding the influence of SM on buying behavior. According to these findings, extensive use of social platforms contributes to

behaviors associated with online addiction (Kuss et al., 2013). The use of electronic media is based on two different dimensions: content gratification and process gratification. Content gratification occurs when individuals seek information via social platforms for everyday activities, such as finding news or exploring popular international fashion brands. In contrast, process gratification arises from engaging with social media content. Theoretically and practically, there is no correlation between content gratification and process gratification across social platforms. Process gratification happens when a shopper methodically searches online for their needs, preferences, and interests. This type of satisfaction is particularly prevalent in Saudi culture. The low level of social media participation among Saudi female shoppers can be attributed to the nature of their satisfaction process. Social media is a significant influence on these shoppers, who often use the internet for entertainment, communicating with others, and engaging in games, rather than for thorough and planned purchases. According to communication literature, social media is one of the quickest ways to send visual and audio messages over long distances (Miller & Nelson, 2022). Many fashion retailers worldwide utilize these platforms to interact with customers, share ideas, engage in discussions, and make recommendations (Daugerty & Hoffman, 2014). This engagement allows shoppers to create pages that foster brand affinity and share their experiences and preferences (Dewi et al., 2022). Additionally, social media helps build consumer awareness, attract new customers (Moran & Muzellec, 2014), influence buying intentions, and promote motivations for using brands (West, 2019). As a result, the participation of Saudi female shoppers in social media can be characterized as spontaneous, unplanned, and unintended. This situation clarifies why the impact of social media on their purchasing behavior in e-fashion stores is minimal.

In a different context, social media (SM) positively influences buying behavior through sales promotion techniques and e-credibility. Sales promotion is a key component of the marketing communication mix, involving news, persuasive messaging, and remnant functions (Koc-Damgaci & Aydin, 2018). These promotions are typically classified as short-term cash and non-cash incentives designed to attract customers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). They encourage the purchase of specific products and help brands stand out from competitors (Dhar & Jha, 2014). Incentives and promotional rewards are informative communications that enhance interaction between sellers and buyers, stimulate purchasing decisions, and ensure immediate responses from customers (Zafar et al., 2018). These strategies contribute to gaining a competitive edge and fostering customer loyalty (Omotayo, 2011). The direct financial benefits associated with rewards and promotional incentives are linked to factors such as quality, convenience, value expression, exploration, and entertainment (Al-Sahli & Al-Nsour, 2022). The adaptability of incentives and promotional rewards, along with a variety of marketing methods—both financial and non-financial—make them effective tools for improving communication with the target market and addressing challenges faced by businesses (Ofosu-Boateng, 2020). Previous studies support the notion that incentives and promotional rewards can significantly alter the buying behavior of consumers (Hassan & Shahzad, 2022). These strategies have influenced purchasing timing, the number of items bought, sales turnover, and the entry of new consumers into the market (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020). Incentive-based and rewarding online buying behavior is often strategic and methodical, contrasting with more spontaneous purchasing patterns (Zhang et al., 2023). The findings from the current study affirm that incentives and promotional rewards strongly influence buying decisions, including brand choice, the timing and quantity of purchases, and preferences for certain brands. These promotions tend to reduce price sensitivity among some consumers (Rohman & Tambunan, 2024). Ultimately, they impact sales volume and profitability (Hadi & Hafnidar, 2019). Sales activation programs encompass

a variety of promotional items combined with compelling brand messaging aimed at encouraging consumers to engage with products at the point of sale (Jakštieņe&Meište, 2024). These promotions help steer customers toward a brand and secure purchasing deals that may be challenging to obtain after the promotional period ends (Juliano&Puji, 2023).

Many studies have indicated that social media offers the advantage of two-way communication in an interactive manner between brands and consumers (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010). This interactive content allows consumers to engage with brands by creating and sharing content with others (Jacob et al., 2021). As a result, social media can stimulate online purchasing behavior. Researchers have noted the importance of providing economic incentives to online consumers, linking consumer access to economic benefits with their interactions on virtual platforms (Ou et al., 2024). Customers are often attracted to brands through various incentives, such as promotional benefits, discounts, special deals, and financial gains. These rewards are considered significant drivers for using social media and participating in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication (Pang, 2022). Moreover, online marketing encompasses various incentives, such as enhanced brand value and unique product offerings, alongside logistics services (Gupta & Vohra, 2019). Some studies highlight that consumers appreciate the risk-free aspect of shopping online at any time (Pang, 2021). Trust is a crucial element in the relationship between individuals and companies, especially when engaging in online shopping (Al-Nsour et al., 2024). Typically, social media users prefer to make purchases through reliable and credible websites (Şahin et al., 2025). Establishing trust during the communication process can boost interaction and customer engagement on social media, which in turn influences online purchasing decisions. Research has confirmed that trust significantly impacts buying intentions (Razick et al., 2023). Additionally, social media marketing enhances customer perceptions of a company's credibility, leading to positive attitudes towards online purchasing (Al-Nsour& Al-Sahli, 2022). Ultimately, online trust plays a vital role in pre-acceptance of online transactions (Karlsen&Aalberg, 2021).

The current study demonstrated that the moderated effect of social media on e-credibility serves as an intermediary factor influencing the relationship between online credibility and online buying decisions. This effect is notably stronger compared to other social media components examined in the study. Marketing literature suggests that credibility relies on various factors, particularly the recipient's experience, which significantly impacts the credibility of the communication message. Experience encompasses knowledge, skills, and perceived familiarity with the sender (Chen et al., 2024). It is associated with the sender's ability to provide accurate and reliable information. Research indicates a positive correlation between user confidence and the sender's technical expertise (Rezaei, 2015). Technical expertise refers to specialized knowledge and skills, while practical experience involves skills acquired through direct participation in related marketing activities (Karlsen&Aalberg, 2021). Additionally, information about the sender's identity—including real name, gender, location, hobbies, and reputation—can guide customers and enhance credibility (Al-Nsour& Al-Shaibani, 2024). Positive attributes of the communication message can further increase the message's persuasiveness (Rezaei, 2015). Experiences with major e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon and Tao Bao, showcase their efforts to promote what is commonly known as the herd effect (Chang & Zhu, 2012). These platforms aim to strengthen the relationship between e-shoppers and the communicators of their messages (Şahin et al., 2025). The credibility of messages shared via social media enables consumers to evaluate intangible electronic products before making a purchase. This allows buyers to anticipate the risks associated with their purchasing decisions and enhances their overall decision-making process (Ilieva et al., 2024).

Credibility significantly influences consumers' buying attitudes and intentions toward e-stores, brands, and products (Do Yuon&Hye-Young, 2023). Research shows that the credibility of information sources affects young shoppers' acceptance of e-stores (Al-Nsour et al., 2021; Shuang et al., 2023; Mabkhot et al., 2022). Modern internet-based technologies have created innovative opportunities for communication with retailers. This development has become a key factor in integrating communication strategies that influence buying decisions (Dhanesh&Duthler, 2019). Credibility through social media complements advertising and impacts buying intentions, shaping consumer attitudes. In contrast, the effect of advertising alone on these intentions has not been demonstrated (Ata et al., 2022). The credibility of a communication message significantly alters shoppers' buying attitudes. It plays a crucial role in enhancing buying intentions, evaluating brands, and promoting interaction between the message and the sender (Mabkhot et al., 2022). The credibility of a product's written advertising message fosters a clear bias toward online decision-making and encourages positive brand reviews. Engaging with online marketing texts improves the perceived credibility of communication messages (AlSahli et al., 2025). Literature indicates that readable, accurate, and easy-to-understand texts are considered more reliable than difficult-to-read messages (Alnsour et al., 2025). Consequently, clearer messages tend to receive higher ratings, improve the online consumer experience, promote positive feelings about online shopping, and increase customer loyalty (Makudza et al., 2020). Satisfaction with the online shopping experience drives repeat purchases, fueled by trust in the source of the message, as previously noted (Ao et al., 2023). Overall, the evidence supports the notion that the credibility of communication messages affects buying decisions, highlighting the need for effective integration of this factor into online marketing communication strategies (Ao et al., 2023). The findings of Md. Rakibul et al. (2019) highlight the significant role of credibility in social media tracking and the importance of privacy and confidentiality on online social platforms. Additionally, a study by Martiningsih and Setyawan (2022) indicated that low credibility negatively impacted purchasing intentions on the Shopee market during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research revealed that factors such as attractiveness, trustworthiness, and experience accounted for 49% of the influence, while 51% of the impact was attributed to other aspects related to social media

7. Implications:

- A. Academic Contribution: This study aims to bridge the gap between academic research and practical application in the fields of communication and marketing, specifically regarding social media (SM) and the significance of e-social platforms in marketing activities. There has been a substantial daily increase in the volume of marketing, technical, and communication research, which has led to confusion and fragmentation concerning the impact of this research on young adolescents across various environments and industries. Therefore, there is a need for more empirical evidence to understand the psychological relationship between young adolescents and fashion products within the fashion industry. Following the global crisis of 2008, many studies emerged focusing on SM in the fashion sector, although they were largely categorized as exploratory. These studies call for a redefinition of organizational stakeholders, the relationship between culture and organizational structure, and an integration within a new framework named SM, which is fundamentally different from traditional trends. This has resulted in the emergence of several modern concepts in management and marketing that affect the current study's subject, requiring substantial applied evidence for aspects such as formality, centralization, specialization, and division of responsibilities.

- B. Practical Contribution: This contribution is derived from selecting a highly relevant topic. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of SM on buying behavior. Beyond the studies discussed, there are investigations into how various components of SM affect other variables within research. This study highlights the significance of SM in a vital and promising economic sector globally—the fashion industry—while particularly noting the interest of Saudi females, who represent about one-third of the Saudi population. It also enhances the understanding of key variables, latent variables, and sub-variables within the contexts of marketing and communication.
- C. Contribution to Industry: A thorough literary review revealed a lack of global studies examining social media performance specifically within the fashion industry. Research has indicated that interpretations from social theories vary according to diverse cultures, which leads to differences in the implementation of SM strategies. Studies conducted in other industries and sectors in developed countries have relied on multiple variables and indicators to evaluate SM's effectiveness. In this regard, this study contributes to developing new variables to assess SM, such as incentivizing rewards and discounts through social media networks, which are fundamental to the successful application of SM strategies worldwide.
- D. Contribution to Society: Finally, this study reinforces the importance of SM, particularly via Facebook, as a tool for interactive communication between consumers and various formal and informal entities in society. It also confirmed that the most common behavior among Saudi buyers includes seeking amusement, interacting with others, and engaging in video games. The engagement of Saudi females on X (formerly Twitter) appears to be spontaneous, unplanned, and lacking meaningful activities, focusing primarily on maximizing their experience with online fashion stores. These objectives differentiate Saudi society from prior marketing and communication literature. It can be argued that these factors are insufficient to enhance participation rates for females seeking information, increase their immersion in purchase decisions, or attract attention to brands on the X platform

Conclusion:

In most of the studies reviewed, social media offers the advantage of bilateral communication in an interactive manner between users and brands (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010). This interactive content allows consumers to engage with brands by creating and sharing content with others (Jacob et al., 2021). As a result, the enjoyment of using social media can stimulate online purchasing behavior. Many studies emphasize the importance of providing economic incentives to consumers online, linking consumers' access to these incentives with their interactions on virtual platforms (Azar et al., 2016). Customers are attracted to various incentives, such as promotional benefits, discounts, special deals, and financial gains, which enhance their interest in the brand. The literature suggests that these rewards are among the most significant factors driving the use of social media and participation in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Pang, 2021). Research shows that online marketing incorporates incentives and rewards, including valuable brand recognition and unique products as well as logistics services (Bellenger, 2007). Additional studies highlight the appeal of risk-free shopping available at any time online (Pang, 2021). Trust plays a fundamental role in the relationship between individuals and companies during online shopping communications. Social media users generally prefer to buy from reliable and credible websites (Rune & Aalberg, 2021). Establishing trust in the communication process can enhance interaction and customer engagement on social media, positively influencing online purchasing decisions. Studies confirm that trust has a strong impact on buying

intentions (Subawa et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media can improve customers' perceptions of a company's credibility, leading to more favorable attitudes toward online purchases (Purwaamijaya, 2020). Online confidence also plays a critical role in the acceptance of online transactions (Azhar et al., 2023)

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