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The role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students

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I dedicate this work to my parents, who helped me from the very beginning to be what I am, and I wish this dissertation would please and honour them.

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Abstract

This era is characterised by rapid development in technology and communication, which has led to many rapid changes locally and globally. This study investigates the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. The investigation explores the interferences and opportunities of social media in cultural and social development in Saudi Arabia. The research uses mixed methods to analyse the responses of 400 Saudi university students and 15 interviews conducted with university professors. It found that social media dramatically enhances students' cultural interaction and educational engagement. It increases the level of harmony in society and facilitates communication with specialists and official cultural accounts. The work addressed individual, political, economic, and cultural interferences on social media, which affect cultural awareness. It recommends combating information distortion and extremism. Moreover, activating the role of educational institutions, improving systems to monitor misleading content, and increasing diverse cultural content could lead to critical use and cooperation with others to promote diversity, exchange, and meaningful dialogue.

Keywords: Saudi Society; Social Change; Politics; Economy; Religion; Social Media; Culture; Awareness; Interaction; Exchange; Participation; Cultural Identity; Cultural Diversity; Interferences.

Resumen

La era actual está caracterizada por un rápido desarrollo de la tecnología y las comunicaciones, lo que ha llevado a muchos cambios rápidos a nivel local y global. Este estudio investiga el papel de las redes sociales en la configuración de la conciencia cultural entre los estudiantes universitarios en Arabia Saudita. La investigación explora las interferencias y oportunidades de las redes sociales en el desarrollo cultural y social en Arabia Saudita. La observación utiliza métodos mixtos para analizar las respuestas de 400 estudiantes universitarios sauditas y 15 entrevistas realizadas con profesores universitarios, se encontró que las redes sociales mejoran dramáticamente la interacción cultural y el compromiso educativo de los estudiantes. Aumenta el nivel de armonía en la sociedad y facilita la comunicación con especialistas y cuentas culturales oficiales. El estudio abordó las interferencias individuales, políticas, económicas y culturales en las redes sociales, que afectan la conciencia cultural, este recomienda luchar contra la distorsión de la información y el extremismo. Además, activar el papel de las instituciones educativas, para mejorar los sistemas, que monitoreen los contenidos engañosos y aumentar los contenidos culturales diversos, lo que podría conducir a un uso crítico y a la cooperación con otros para promover la diversidad, el intercambio y el diálogo significativo.

Palabras clave: Sociedad Saudita; Cambio social; Política; Economía; Religión; Medios de comunicación social; Cultura; Conciencia; Interacción; Intercambio; Participación; Identidad cultural; Diversidad cultural; Interferencias.

Resum

Aquesta era es caracteritza per un ràpid desenvolupament de la tecnologia i les comunicacions, fet que ha provocat molts canvis ràpids a nivell local i global. Aquest estudi investiga el paper de les xarxes socials en la configuració de la consciència cultural entre els estudiants universitaris a l'Aràbia Saudita. L'estudi explora les interferències i oportunitats de les xarxes socials en el desenvolupament cultural i social al país. Utilitza mètodes mixtos per analitzar les respostes dels estudiants universitaris saudites i les entrevistes realitzades amb professors universitaris. L'estudi va trobar que les xarxes socials milloren de manera significativa la interacció cultural i el compromís educatiu dels estudiants, augmenten el nivell d'harmonia en la societat i faciliten la comunicació amb especialistes i comptes culturals oficials. També va abordar les interferències individuals, polítiques, econòmiques i culturals a les xarxes socials, que afecten la consciència cultural. L'estudi recomana lluitar contra la distorsió de la informació i l'extremisme. A més, es proposa activar el paper de les institucions educatives, millorar els sistemes per monitorar continguts enganyosos i incrementar el contingut cultural divers, fet que podria conduir a un ús crític i a la cooperació amb altres per promoure la diversitat, l'intercanvi i el diàleg significatiu.

Paraules clau: Societat Saudita; Canvi social; Política; Economia; Religió; Mitjans de comunicació social; Cultura; Consciència; Interacció; Intercanvi; Participació; Identitat cultural; Diversitat cultural; Interferències.

1 Introduction

The information technology revolution of the late 20th and early 21st centuries is the most remarkable invention people have used to foster cohesion, communication, and a culture of cooperation. This advancement appeared as the international focus shifted from local operations to a global outlook, emphasising people and culture. As Shirky (2009) asserts, people increasingly view continuous communication as the best way to stay informed about current events. They receive the latest developments locally and globally while supporting vital connections with friends and others in diverse circles. The need for this communication grows daily as more people join social networking platforms.

In general, the current time is characterised by a global development in knowledge and technology, which has resulted in many radical changes in thinking and analysing critical issues. That has also caused some changes in people's behaviours, beliefs, and cultural awareness. Social media platforms through the internet have helped to review conflicting opinions, cultural exchanges, and free expression without being subject to censorship. It also helped to gather people with the same opinions, culture, and trends worldwide on a specific social platform, depending on their passions and desires.

Although social media, as the latest communication model, helped societies to be open to the outside world, spreading certain information and concepts could also negatively influence many users. Moreover, destructive ideas and beliefs may be presented and repeated according to foreign interests, countries may be destroyed, and their people may be exterminated in favour of other countries. As platforms significantly affect the formation and awareness of their users, negatively or positively, the media can act as a social agent and change the nature of awareness (Lee, 2017).

The technological challenges and the development of social networking sites have produced many changes, especially in the last decade. This led to a transformation from a restricted network to a virtual community and from traditional media to social media, freely available on smart device applications. It becomes possible for social media users to share essential props in presenting issues, using many sorts of Multimedia, such as images, audio, and video clips. That could significantly impact people's cultural awareness, choices, and reactions to many social issues (Husein et al., 2013).

The role of social media and its impact on cultures and societies leads us to McLuhan's technological theory, one of the most modern theories. McLuhan called it “technological determinism theory”, linking the message and the media, while some media researchers believe that the means decide the type and impact of communication. McLuhan believes that the medium is the message, indicating that the

content of the media cannot be viewed independently of media technologies; the subjects and the audience influence what those means say, but the nature of the media that people use to communicate shapes the societies more than the content of the communication (Azam et al., 2020).

This study looks at the cultural awareness of Saudi university students in the backdrop of Saudi Arabia's rapid development. Saudi Vision 2030 outlines substantial organisational, political, economic, and cultural developments that have helped the Kingdom reach high standards in various disciplines. Western specialists and observers have recognised rising young populations, political upheavals, and regional revolutions as essential drivers of these transformations (Grinin, 2022).

The Saudi government has actively pursued economic restructuring and diversification to ensure the prosperity and sustainability of its citizens. Given the high percentage of young people in Saudi Arabia, with an average age of 29 (General Authority for Statistics, 2022). University students represent a critical demographic for understanding the evolving cultural landscape. This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of cultural awareness among Saudi youth, providing valuable insights for policymakers and researchers.

1.1 The Founding of Saudi Arabia

In the fifth century, Banu Hanifa moved to a place called Al-Yamamah, which is known as Najd nowadays. It must be mentioned that the story of Saudi Arabia started in Al-Yamamah, located in Najd at the heart of the Arabian Peninsula in Wadi Hanifa(1). However, after the emergence of Islam, Al-Yamamah was a part of the state of Alnubwah, which was the first period of Islam. Consequently, Al-Yamamah was also a part of the state of AlKhilafa(2). Still, after the collapse of AlKhilafa, the situation underwent many changes in the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, this collapse has forced Al-Yamamah to lose many important things, such as stability, security, and neglect.

Furthermore, the area was almost forgotten, particularly when the capital of the Islamic State moved from AL Madinah in the Arabian Peninsula to Iraq. Although Alkhodairiah and a few states were set up in the third century, the situation of Najd was worse, and many people continued to immigrate (founding day. Sa, 2023).

Inherently, a tribe of Banu Hanifa has established a city in the east of the Arabian Peninsula called Diriyah, which refers to the name of a tribe member called Ibn Dira. In the fourth century, the tribe

(1) Wadi Hanifa: the valley of Hanifa.

(2) Khilafah in Arabic denotes the office of the Muslim community or state's political leader, particularly from 632 to 1258.

moved from the east to the medial of the Arabian Peninsula because of the return of many other tribes of Banu Hanifa. However, Mani Al-Muraydi Al-Hanafi has also moved with his tribe from the east to the heart of Al-Yamamah to establish Diriyah in the middle of The Arabian Peninsula.

In 1446, Mane Al Hanafi established Diriyah to build a vast state and provide security and stability. Nevertheless, in the middle of the ninth century, this event was one of the essential events because the location of Diriyah was significant. Despite the important geographical position of Diriyah, which is located on Wadi Hanifa, it also became one of the most ancient trade routes. In addition, the situation of Diriyah has continuously developed in terms of knowledge and culture because the old trade routes connect Iraq with Makkah in the west and Yamen in the south and the east of the Arabian Peninsula.

Moreover, Diriyah succeeded in serving and securing that ancient trade route, which pilgrimages from Iraq and Middle Asia had always used. Although Diriyah expanded over two hundred years and contracted according to political stability, it underwent remarkable cultural and political development (Bsheer, 2020).

On 22 February 1727, and for almost 40 years, Imam Muhammed bin Saud established the first Saudi State and succeeded in

building a united nation. Many accomplishments were achieved; Muhammad bin Saud united the two parts of Diriyah, strengthening the community. He took charge of the internal and economic concerns, expanded the capital, and made allies in Najd, which made Diriyah an excellent example of stability. Moreover, he supported Sheikh Muhammed bin Abd AlWahhab, who chose Diriyah to preach reformist doctrines and unite the Arabian Peninsula under one leadership.

By leveraging his relationships with other town leaders in Najd, Muhammad bin Saud successfully facilitated the inclusion of Diriyah in the first Saudi state and contributed to constructing its defensive wall. This achievement granted Diriyah a degree of political autonomy, whereas other parts of the Arabian Peninsula remained under the influence of regional leaders. Undeterred, bin Saud embarked on a series of campaigns to unify the peninsula. News of this nascent state spread readily among tribal leaders. Notably, he secured the Hajj pilgrimage routes, solidified the first Saudi state's legitimacy, and repelled local attacks bolstered by regional forces (Bañón Castellón, 2016).

The first Saudi state continued to expand until almost all parts of the Arabian Peninsula joined under one leadership. Aiming to spread knowledge and Dawah based on Islamic sources is essential to teaching the people. Although the first Saudi state ruled the peninsula for almost 70 years, there were several failed attempts to destroy

the new Saudi state, especially by the Ottoman Empire that used to rule AL Hijaz through a local tribe called Al-Ashraf.

However, after AL Hijaz and many other parts joined the first Saudi state, the Ottoman Empire insisted on dismantling the Arabian Peninsula. Still, it was more challenging than expected by the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, a considerable force was sent from Egypt, commanded by Ibrahim Basha, with continuous support and heavy weapons to defeat the Saudi resistance and besiege Diriyah.

On the 9th of September 1818, Diriyah and other towns in Najd were destroyed after a few months of siege. The last leader of the first Saudi state, Abdullah bin Saud, decided to surrender for the safety of Najd and its people. The situation in the Arabian Peninsula has been changing since the collapse of the first Saud state, and the Othman Empire retook control of AL Hijaz. Consequently, Ibrahim Basha departed Najd with the remaining Saudi leaders and sheikhs, who were executed and put in prison, but he also left garrisons in Najd (Bsheer, 2020).

Mohammed bin Moammar was the first man who tried to establish a second state in Najd after the collapse of the first Saudi state in 1818. He decided to start from Diriyah because of its importance to the people of Najd, which encouraged many other towns to join the organisation. However, the return of Meshari bin Saud, the

brother of the last commander of the first Saudi state, created a conflict between the leaders in Najd, resulting in the death of Meshari bin Saud. Therefore, Turki bin Abdullah and his supporters were able to defeat Bin Moammar and accordingly chose to start the establishment of the second Saudi state in Riyadh.

The Family of Al Saud experienced a significant rivalry for power, especially between the sons of Faisal bin Turki, during the period (1865-1891). The competition led to an armed conflict supported by the Othman Empire and other local leaders that resulted in the death of Saud bin Faisal in 1875. However, Bin Rashid managed to use these continuously equipped battles between the sons of Faisal bin Turki to enter Riyadh and take control of it (عبد حمادي الكشاوي, 2022).

The third Saudi state was created by King Abdelaziz bin Abdulrahman bin Faisal Al Saud, who was in Kuwait after the collapse of the second Saudi state. On the 15th of January 1902, King Abdelaziz managed to retake Al Riyadh into the Saudi power, known then as Al Riyadh Emirate. Therefore, after the extension of the Emirate to include all parts of Najd and Al Ahsa, it was named the Emirate of Najd and Al Ahsa. However, after his control of Riyadh, King Abdelaziz continued to plan the unity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia based on the Quran and Sunnah.

Consequently, six months after the return of Riyadh, all southern towns in Najd became parts of the new Kingdom. Al Ahsa was a part of the first and second Saudi states. Because of its important location in the Arabian Gulf, King Abdelaziz decided to recover it from the Ottoman Empire. The king communicated with the leaders of Al Ahsa about its terrible situation while the Ottoman Empire was busy with the Balkan wars (Barrett, 2015).

Furthermore, King Abdelaziz moved his army toward Ahsa to take control of it in 1913 after coordinating with the local leaders while the forces of the Ottoman Empire were left with their ships. Moreover, King Abdelaziz used the conflicts between Al Rashid in the north of Najd to besiege and recapture the North in April 1921. Meanwhile, Asharaif AL Hussain, governor of Al Hijaz, increased his forces and took over the remaining army and weapons of the Ottoman Empire after the defeat in the Second World War. Although Asharaif started to expand toward Najd, he faced tribal resistance from tribes who preferred the leadership of Abdelaziz.

In 1924, the army of King Abdelaziz arrived at Al Taif and defeated Asharif, who escaped to Jeddah. Thus, the leaders of Al Hijaz decided to elect Ali bin Al Hussain as a king instead of his father. Consequently, the Army of King Abdelaziz entered Makkah peacefully without any defences and managed to surround Jeddah in the same year. Therefore, King Abdelaziz sent his messages to Al Madinah asking their leaders to surrender, but they did not respond. Thus,

he also had to blockade the town for almost ten months. Eventually, the commanders in Al Madinah realised that they must give up because Ali bin Al Hussain was getting weak in Jeddah, while the army of King Abdelaziz was getting stronger (Rundell, 2020).

In 1925, Al Madinah became a part of the new Kingdom; therefore, the situation worsened in Jeddah, forcing Ali bin Al Hussain to give up and leave for Iraq. Accordingly, the west of the Arabian Peninsula has become a part of the Kingdom, while many parts in the south were interested in joining the Saudi Kingdom. It was around 30 years since King Abdelaziz controlled Riyadh until he successfully united most parts of the Arabian Peninsula under one leadership based on the Quran and Sunnah (Barrett, 2015).

1.1.1 Saudi Cultural Background

Culturally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is strongly related to Islamic heritage and deep Arabic values, as well as related to many civilisations. These values and customs have adapted to modern life because of the geographical location, as a central network for commerce and spreading around the globe. The emergence of Islam in the seventeenth century contributed to shaping the civilisation of the Arabic region. Islamic religion and culture have spread to Europe in the West and China and India in the East.

In addition, for more than fourteen centuries, pilgrims have travelled as individuals and groups to Makkah and Madinah from worldwide, which culturally and economically enriched the region. Throughout history, the Arabian Peninsula has been characterised by geographical, regional, and tribal diversity due to the expansion of its space.

Nowadays, Saudi Arabia is the largest country in the Middle East. It has maintained the multiplicity and diversity of social patterns, customs, and traditions attributed to geographical, environmental, and topographical factors. These cultural differences are generally represented in dialects, housing patterns, clothing, food, games, dances, songs, and other artistic patterns that affect and enrich Saudi society. The cultural aspects of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are revealed in its depth of civilisation, which represents many antiquities and heritage as it has been a crossroads of culture and a bridge of communication between nations. Additionally, it has always been a homeland for many kingdoms. Moreover, Saudi Arabia contains the land that is the cradle of Islam and Arab, which is the holy Mosque of Makkah (the qibla that is the Islamic direction for prayers all around the world); it also contains the holly mosque of Madinah (Salam,2021).

Saudi Arabia, a country that harmoniously blends modernity and traditions, offers a rich tapestry of cultural practices. Islam, which originated in Saudi Arabia and spread worldwide, is the most

followed religion in the kingdom today. The country's traditions, values, clothes, food, behaviours, and routines are deeply rooted in Islamic culture, offering a unique and fascinating cultural context. While it can complicate foreign business practices, this context also underscores the need for investors' cultural understanding to guarantee success (Menéndez Álvarez, 2020). The lifestyles of Saudis are significant and exciting, and the people are kind and very close to each other. Unlike Saudi women, it is usual to see men shaking hands with strangers, but everyone is helpful towards others, especially guests. Modest and loose clothes are preferred in Saudi Arabia, whether for males or Saudi females. Men typically wear Thoop and Ghotra, while women dress in Abaiah and wear scarves. While these unique and exciting cultural practices can pose challenges for foreign trades in Saudi Arabia, they offer a wealth of cultural richness to explore and understand.

Organizationally, many national and international companies and institutions have strongly adopted the use of social media in Saudi Arabia. Social networking sites have brought to society a new platform that allows people to communicate in real-time at highly reduced costs. In the community, social media has become the ultimate place for everybody. Facebook has over 800 million users, while Twitter has over 400 million users globally. The role of these social networking sites, in agreeing with (Powell et al., 2011), has come under sharp scrutiny, especially from a security point of view. Scholars continue to ask whether these social networking sites can be used

for highly personal and confidential personal or corporate information.

Economically, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has many natural resources due to its tremendous geographical location as a link between three continents. It has become one of the biggest economies in the world and a fundamental member of the G20 group. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is an essential country that plays a significant role in the global economy and oil market. The kingdom owns a robust financial system and many large companies based on highly professional Saudi employees (Saudi Vision, 2030).

Ultimately, the Saudi basic government system states that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a complete dominion of Arabic and Islamic states. Its religion is Islam, and its constitution is the holy book of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammed; peace be upon him; its language is Arabic, and its Capital is the city of Riyadh. The monarchy system in Saudi Arabia has always been based upon people contributing and participating in multiple decisions through the Shura Council, where experts can discuss fundamental issues and deliver important thoughts (Alatawi, 2021).

1.1.2 Saudi Vision 2030

In 2016, the Saudi government announced the Saudi Vision 2030, which includes many developments that seek to enhance a diverse economy and reduce dependency on oil. The kingdom has released many supportive initiatives and structural reforms within the Saudi Vision 2030, which promotes local products and establishes many Saudi projects. The announced projects contain multiple programs, including politics, economics, culture, entertainment, and tourism.

These dramatic developments in the Saudi economy have brought multiple projects to encourage national and international investments. In 2016, the Saudi government established The General Entertainment Authority, which seeks to make Saudi one of the best destinations in the world. It attracts international exhibitions and establishes unique arenas for sports, music, theatre, and live performances. The targets are supporting the economy, creating jobs for Saudi people, and providing excellent opportunities for Saudi companies. In addition, it creates an outstanding environment to attract visitors, tourists, and more investments (Vision, 2030).

Revolutions in several Arabic countries, including Egypt and Syria, have had a significant impact on the political landscape of Saudi Arabia. However, the Saudi government has demonstrated remarkable resilience, introducing dramatic reforms in response to these events. This flexibility is particularly noteworthy in the context

of the emergence of Iran and the division in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia strives to increase and maintain its influence as the most crucial country in the Arabic and Islamic world. In 2016, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) unveiled a new strategy that was part of a comprehensive plan known as the Saudi Vision 2030. This plan has allowed Saudi Arabia to navigate regional and global challenges with a focus on the national agenda. It is important to note that these reforms could potentially affect Saudi Arabia's role in addressing fundamental regional crises (De Olazábal & Martínez, 2021).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study shows the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students who are experiencing social changes and openness in Saudi society. The fast technological advancements have allowed the public to participate and contribute their thoughts through active accounts on social media. These activities on social media enhance cultural exchanges and aid the freedom of expression. The users' points of view about many concerns of culture, such as religion, values, and customs, can be easily presented at a time when social media has brought many changes to societies worldwide. This could lead to a considerable challenge in terms of cultural aspects (Achmad, 2021).

The role played by social media could influence people in many aspects due to the strength of communication. This could help shape

cultural awareness as students follow a lot of cultural accounts, experts, and analysts. Moreover, many constructive programs and famous personalities strongly affect students' understanding of many fields, such as culture, politics, organisation, and economics. Although social media is a vital source of freedom and a pillar that helps cultural development, in many cases, it is also a source of illegal polarisation, especially regarding misleading, terrorism, and national security issues (Hadžić, 2020).

Many factors push individuals and societies toward change, making change an important choice, whether that change is cultural or not. Therefore, some recent studies refer to the impact of social media on cultural identity, values, and religion, particularly in a society like Saudi Arabia. It is known as a conservative and religious community with a social and Islamic identity due to its history and location. However, since the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom has been experiencing accelerated social changes and cultural openness. Thus, conservative members of society have always criticised all changes threatening religion, culture, and morals (Hudhayri, 2021). Interaction through social media, whether posts, images, or videos, is a public reaction that could create and represent cultural awareness. However, the current developments and changes in Saudi Arabia attract social involvement.

Overall, the study will evaluate the role of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat) in

shaping cultural awareness among university students. It will seek to recognise the reality of the role of social media platforms. Moreover, the study will discover the interferences that might shape cultural awareness through social media sites. Finally, the study aims to suggest recommendations to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students.

1.3 STUDY QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. **To what extent** does social media facilitate cultural interaction among Saudi university students?
2. **How** does social media contribute to the cultural engagement of Saudi university students?
3. **Has** social media played a significant role in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students?
4. **Do** Saudi university students primarily rely on social media for cultural content?

5. **What** are the key interferences that may hinder the positive impact of social media platforms on cultural awareness?

As a result of this, the research is presenting suggestions to improve the role of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat) in shaping cultural awareness for university students in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 Study Aims

The current study examines social media platforms' role in addressing cultural changes within Saudi society. The study will seek to discover the reality of social media platforms' role in shaping Saudi university students' cultural views and knowledge. It also aims to find the interferences that might face communications through social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness. Moreover, the study will present suggestions to improve the role of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat) in cultural awareness. Therefore, the aims of the study are as follows:

- 1- Identify the specific ways in which social media platforms influence the cultural views and knowledge of Saudi university students.

2- Explore the interferences that may hinder the positive impact of social media platforms on cultural awareness.

3- Propose concrete recommendations to enhance the role of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat) in fostering cultural awareness.

1.5 Importance of Study

The current study focuses on the role of social media in creating the opportunity for Saudi students to discuss important issues in society through various groups, pages, and accounts on the Internet. New media provides platforms for participation, interaction, information sharing, and exchange of culture with a vast number of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Social media platforms are a new alternative media platform that enables university students to discuss, criticise, and express their opinions freely. This helps them become aware of local and global developments and increases their ability to manage the future and develop society (Bimber & Copeland, 2011). Consequently, the importance of the current study and the reasons for choosing it can be summarised as follows:

I) The study points to the need to continue adopting more advanced methods of communication while addressing existing challenges of

using social media. Therefore, these platforms can positively transform society and organisations to achieve better results in cohesion and profitability. Notably, communication could create a potent force that can help to manage awareness and promote peace by facilitating communication and friendship through social media. Overall, this study is essential and motivating because it promotes cooperation in society and enhances awareness among Saudi university students, which could lead to more significant and faster progress. Accordingly, using the findings of this study, which will be drawn from Saudi society, can create an excellent chance for speedier progress.

II) The study is a lever for promoting diversity in society and organisations, which is needed to develop natural and human resources. Communication, as brought out by (Wong & Burton, 2000) and (Hertel et al., 2005), remains one of the most significant factors in finding the cohesiveness of society and the operations of a community or organisation. By exploring the role of social media, this study strongly advocates for continued communication between the members of organisations and communities to make better decisions. Furthermore, by identifying the essential role of using social media, this study strongly promotes diversity in cultural aspects, community, businesses, operations, and decision-making. The study recommendations will, therefore, act as a critical precursor for taking cohesion in society.

III) The study creates a strong focus on the aspects of change in society, which should match the needs of society members. In his change management theory, Kurt Lewin called for holistic changes involving all stakeholders in reducing resistance (Schumann et al., 2012). This study promotes continued objectivity by evaluating social media use as a communication model, especially in times of change. More people will be able to have crucial information that can adopt how effectively they make personal and community decisions for change. As a tool for change, social media is also used to communicate in culture to help people exchange knowledge to make changes within their communities or criticise and guide them through public opinion. Exploring this topic is essential in taking society to further action and better advancement (Baruch & Lin, 2012).

IV) The current study's findings could read and enhance the role of social media in cultural awareness within Saudi society while the country is establishing many massive projects which attract local and global companies. Consequently, social networking sites have revolutionised how management relates to virtual teams dispersed globally. Virtual teams have become essential in modern international ventures because they make it easy to coordinate operations separated by both time and space. Multinational organisations and companies established subsidiaries that operate on their behalf outside their home headquarters and countries. (Lin et al., 2008) explain that by using different teams, the management of these companies disseminate their mandates and compete effectively with related companies. At big companies, individual teams away from the headquarters are

carefully managed to quickly colonise every market the giant hyper ventures into (Goel et al., 2012).

V) The current study is vital for cultural awareness, particularly in the Saudi market, where social media could not have come at a better time. More organisations are increasingly adopting social media for their marketing. Social media is used for media releases, advertisements, and public relations. (Benkler, 2006) argue that social networking sites give management and administration the best platform to reach the most significant number of people quickly. For businesses, the effects are even more robust as they advertise and reach their customers across borders without political or administrative barriers.

VI) There is a significant interest in cultural aspects, according to Saudi Vision 2030, such as knowledge, religion, archaeology and heritage revival. Therefore, many cultural investments have appeared recently in Saudi Arabia to boost social and cultural awareness and enhance the economy and tourism. The current study will focus on the use of social media in shaping cultural awareness for Saudi university students.

VII) This study urges new studies to investigate social media deeply because these new media types continually appeared after the foundation of Facebook in 2004. Therefore, the studies conducted on social media are few compared to those on traditional media. In addi-

tion, many recent studies have studied the role of social media in political and economic contexts. Most of these studies recommended supporting new research and projects investigating social media and its relationship with culture.

1.6 Justification of the Topic

The study topic comes at a time when modern technologies and social media are becoming the critical driving force in organisations and community decision-making. The notion of social media reflects this technological advancement and further points to the need for continuous changes over time, reminding us of the Technological Determinism Theory. The founder of this theory argues that the use of mean has a significant role in shaping society, and it should be looked at as well as looking to its content (McLuhan, 1994). However, it is essential to note that technology is indeed emerging as a demand rather than an option that should be done away with.

As it has turned out recently, social media remains an essential tool for the younger generation and organisation management to advance personal and social objectives. Thus, it can also be used to enhance awareness in societies. The study, therefore, reflects how people relate and make decisions, focusing on university students as an essential part of society.

Recent studies have indicated a concerning trend among university students in Saudi Arabia. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact, with 37.4% of these students becoming addicted to social media on smartphones and 7.7% showing high academic procrastination. In comparison, 62.8% presented a moderate level of academic procrastination of 556 students as the study sample. Regardless of location, this data has included multiple countries with social differences, such as China, Peru, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, highlighting the pervasive influence of social media and its impact on student's health, sleep, and real social opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the use of virtual communication in education and daily activities. It has also led to increased academic pressure and procrastination trends that warrant further investigation and intervention (Reátegui & Álvarez, 2023).

Overall, the topic could be summarised to reflect the need for modern methods of communication in propelling organisations and society to advanced levels through creating and shaping cultural awareness. Therefore, the topic focuses on cultural aspects such as knowledge, religion, and traditions of Saudi society. Moreover, the study aims to recognise the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. In the last few years, the Kingdom has moved to successfully achieve the goals of its Vision 2030, which emphasises cultural investments as one of the vision's targets.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

A preliminary evaluation of this study indicates that the central hypothesis is based on the need to understand and advance modern methods of communication in society. However, the ability to effectively adopt modern methods of communication in society is considered an essential factor that supports societal and organisational success, change and even profitability. Holding the view that owing to the emerging demand for more communication, social media will continue to be important in driving more cooperation and societal cohesion (Ali Qalati et al., 2020). In line with theories of learning, motivation, and change management, the study points out that social media contributes to decision-making and maintaining commitment toward change and progress in society. Overall, the study investigates the medium and the cultural perspective of the users as central parts of the communication process based on the following theories:

1.7.1 Media Dependency Theory

The Media Dependency Theory, introduced by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976, posits that individuals, groups, and societies rely on media to fulfil their goals. This dependency intensifies when media control vital information for achieving individual or societal objectives (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976).

Key contributors to the theory, in addition to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, include James W. Tankard Jr., Robert E. Hornik, and Gregory J. Power. These scholars have expanded upon the original theory, exploring its implications for various media contexts and societal dynamics.

In this study, the theory is applied to analyse how Saudi university students depend on social media to obtain information, satisfy social needs, and participate in public debates. Given what the theory is based on, the study assures the theory of media dependency by focusing on the used media and recognising its importance to the recipient in acquiring knowledge and information. The theory of media dependency is defined as the theory that aims to study the relationship between the goals of individuals and the extent to which these goals are related to the resources of the media system that can create, collect, process, and disseminate information. In its infancy, the theory relied on studying the relationships of dependency on mass communication channels (TV, radio, and newspapers), then moved to using the Internet.

The importance of the media dependency theory is also due to the danger of the degree to which they rely on information from all fields through social media. The theory is also concerned with focusing on the types of individuals' dependence on the media system in

general or on a specific medium, as the theory considers that the degree of individuals' dependence on different types of media depends on the other goals and the distinct nature of the media and their ability to satisfy the diverse needs of individuals (Chen & Chang, 2017).

1.7.1.1 Hypotheses of the Theory

1. The first hypothesis is based on two main factors as follows:

- The extent of conflicts or changes in society.
- The importance of the media as a source of knowledge and information.

This hypothesis is employed in the interest of Saudi university students in the changes that pervade the Kingdom to participate in general improvement and quality-of-life standards that match Saudi Vision 2030. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to achieve sustainability and quality in several areas, including the cultural, economic, tourist and political fields (Saudi Vision, 2030).

However, engaging in social media is a challenge for youth. The degree of changes that spread in society pushes people toward interaction and cultural exchanges to pursue knowledge and information. Therefore, social media platforms are essential sources that help users know the rights and duties that must be taken as commit-

ments (Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993). Additionally, university students can discuss, express opinions, exchange experiences, and communicate with others through social media such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, and Facebook.

2. The second hypothesis is affected by the presence of alternatives and other sources, especially the dependence on social media, where censorship is extremely low (البديري et al., 2018).

- This hypothesis is employed in the current study through the existence of alternative effective platforms that enable university students to easily communicate, debate, and manage dialogue, unlike traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers.

3. The third hypothesis posits that individual dependence on media is influenced by four key factors, as follows:

- Motivations and needs of individuals.
- Emotional and cognitive stimulation.
- The desire for participation.
- The level of harmony (Tao & Isan, 2003).

This hypothesis is employed in the current study through the ambitions and motivation of Saudi university students to communicate. Social media provide the means that effectively enable them to meet their knowledge or emotional needs. However, some users find Twitter the best platform for raising issues, getting to know opinions,

or expressing them briefly. It allows them to identify their reactions to these opinions through comments or likes. On the other hand, some users prefer WhatsApp, which lets them know who is involved in the conversation by identifying their phone number and providing individual or group chats.

In addition, social media platforms allow the exchange of videos and audio clips. Users can have sufficient time to talk and share their opinions and ideas through YouTube channels. Others might prefer to use Snapchat, which allows users to exchange photos and videos with the ability to specify a time of several seconds before it automatically disappears from the recipient's device. Furthermore, Snapchat servers provide modifying images, add different filters, and refer to friends when sharing content (Mack et al., 2020).

1.7.2 Technological Determinism Theory:

The theory explains the existence of development and change in societies as a determinism brought by technology, which is clearly understood when the theory is mentioned. The Canadian philosopher and communications expert Herbert Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) established the Technological Determinism Theory. Communication technology is the primary variable in explaining the mechanisms of social development.

However, the Technological Determinism Theory confirms that technology's impact does not only affect opinions and concepts. It can regularly change the level of feeling and the pattern of awareness; thus, media content must be studied in various ways besides the technological means of communication. Technological Determinism states that understanding how media works makes understanding the cultural changes that appear in societies easier. Many studies have investigated McLuhan's theory; for example, Manheim indicates that depending only on Television to obtain political information leads to a low level of mental awareness to process this information; this also could apply to digital media when depending on one tool (McLuhan, 1994).

Furthermore, Marek (2022) argues that determinism arises from adopting only one variable without considering others. For example, explaining social development solely in terms of industry is known as technological determinism, while attributing it to social movements is regarded as social determinism. In his book "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man," McLuhan noted that technological media are akin to natural resources. Consequently, reliance on one of these sources can influence societal patterns, and dependence on a specific medium can shape the psychological life of a society. This creates a unique cultural feature, as such a tool becomes an extension of humanity. Social media can also utilise users' personal information and data, further emphasising how humans have become extensions of these platforms (Logan, 2019)

Regarding the meaning of technological determinism, many researchers have shown that technology is influenced by users and environmental surroundings, particularly in knowledge and education. Therefore, others might argue that technology is not neutral, such as Pierre Lévy, who did not accept one side of technological determination. Lévy described technology as a global angle that can analyse socio-technical systems, saying that cyberspace is a part of the social movement. The cultural and social situation is extremely complicated, and the harmful impact of technological developments on society is not from the nature of technology itself but is a result of the harmful use of people (Hauer, 2017).

1.7.2.1 Hypotheses of the Theory

1. The media is an extension of the human senses: McLuhan (1964) famously posited that each new medium is an extension of a human sense, influencing behaviour and thought patterns. Understanding these extensions is crucial for comprehending cultural and social changes (Gao & Zheng, 2019).
2. The medium is the message: McLuhan argued that the nature of a medium itself, rather than its content, shapes society. The me-

dium, not the message, is the primary influence. For example, the television, not the programs it broadcasts, is the primary message (McLuhan, 1964).

3. Hot and cold media: McLuhan introduced the concepts of "hot" and "cold" media to describe the sensory experience and structure of different media types. Hot media, such as radio and print, require less audience participation and imagination, while cold media, like television, demand more active engagement.

In this study, the hypotheses are applied to the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, etc. These platforms offer university students opportunities for accessible communication, debate, and dialogue, unlike traditional media. The experience of using social media through the internet can be seen as both hot and cold, as it can stimulate imagination while also fostering interaction and engagement.

Social media could also be counted as cold media because of the high attraction that comes from the possibility of interaction between many users. Some social media sites also provide live podcasting or videos that facilitate communication. Hence, according to McLuhan's theory, social media is classified as hot and cold; it can direct the way of thinking in many directions using multiple mediums (JOEL, 2020).

1.8 STUDY TERMINOLOGIES

This section aims to clarify the definitions of the terminologies used in the current study, which investigates the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students. However, this section provides contextual explanations and definitions according to academic dictionaries and studies. Additionally, some concepts are categorised based on disciplines or other relevant classifications.

1.8.1 Social Media Platforms

Forms of electronic communication or social networking websites by which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. It is also an electronic network system linked through an electronic social system (Al-Sabbagh, 2010). It is represented in several interactive programs among people via the Internet to exchange political, economic, and cultural opinions. Moreover, social media platforms engage in many local and global issues, presented in digital content, whether visual, written, or audio, represented on WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook...etc.

1.8.2 Culture

The term was defined in a lot of literature and studies. Therefore, this section will explain it using Arabic, Spanish, and English literature or dictionaries. As known in many bibliographies, culture is connected to several subjects, such as languages, traditions, values, and knowledge. However, regardless of the arguments, whether the culture is an independent structure or could be acquired. Culture is a part of the environment resulting from an interaction that people develop as members of a nation or society through history. (محمد الهادي عفيفي, 1983) Introduces a comprehensive definition of culture, which refers to all things humans made in their environment throughout their long history. It includes languages, traditions, values, general behaviours, tools of knowledge, social levels, and the economic, political, educational, and judicial systems.

Almost the same concept is frequently repeated in many Spanish references as an ethnographic meaning where culture is represented as a complex whole. This includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs, and other capacities and habits humans acquire as members of society (Luna, 2013).

Edward Tylor has also set up one of the most popular explanations of the culture's concept. He described culture as a holistic phenomenon that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, ethics, laws, and customs. In addition, all habits and other traits that a human gets as a member of a nation or society (Bekiyeva, 2022).

1.8.3 Awareness

The term is usually used with an adjective because it has different classifications. The concept could be understood from the context of this study as (cognitive awareness) since it is primarily used in many studies and literature. Cognitive is a synonym for the word “knowledge” and presents itself as a central component of culture. The specific meaning of awareness here is an individual’s understanding or human way of thinking that can play an essential role in making decisions and actions and a deep knowledge of issues (Carden et al., 2022).

According to the (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023), “awareness” is “ knowledge and understanding of a particular activity, subject, etc.” However, having cultural awareness is being familiar with the cultural differences and similarities among different groups. Understanding diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and values and gaining the ability to communicate and form connections across cultural barriers may all contribute to cultural awareness. Hence, the component of culture involves being conscious of cultural beliefs, values, traditions, etc. and how they might differ from other cultural groups (Luquis & Pérez, 2021).

1.9 Limitations of Study

This part will briefly indicate details regarding the topic, location, population, sources, sample, and study period. Moreover, some study limitations will be presented according to the researcher's views while conducting the study. However, the current study considered a case study focusing on cultural and social changes in Saudi society. The study topic is the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students.

The current study is limited to university students in Saudi Arabia. The sample was chosen according to the study topic, which acknowledged that university students are essential members of the cultural process. The study will focus on the students at Saudi universities, while the highest percentage of the Saudi population is the youth group aged (15-34) years. Additionally, the average age in Saudi is 29, according to (The General Authority for Statistics, 2022).

The study sample comprises university students in Saudi society who are enrolled in multiple Saudi universities and levels of education, regardless of their level, age, location, and gender. However, the study will mention the differences between individuals to present the comprehensiveness of the sample. It contains 400 students from Saudi Arabian institutions voluntarily responded to the survey in this study.

The sample contains male and female students, with almost 50% responses for each gender; the students are enrolled in various academic levels and faculties. The majority of replies were from bachelor students, with 311 responses. Furthermore, the study sample included 42 replies from master's students and 30 responses from PhD students. Additionally, diploma students contributed to the survey with 17 replies.

The study is limited to Saudi society, which experienced many projects and developments in many aspects of culture. Therefore, the study investigates social change phenomena in society in the last few years, as well as the relationship between these changes and students' cultural awareness through the role of social media. The study received responses from university students from all parts of Saudi Arabia, where almost 42 universities are located in different parts of the Kingdom (Saudi Ministry of Education, 2022).

The literature review publications about the role of media will be collected and analysed concerning cultural aspects in Saudi Arabia from Arabic, Spanish and English academic recourses. The study focuses on the most active social media platforms, namely (Facebook - WhatsApp - Twitter – YouTube – and Snapchat). According to many previous related studies, which will be included in the literature review chapter, these platforms have been trendy in the community. Saudi Arabia has an excellent market for social media platforms in

the Middle East, with 40% of Twitter users in the Arab world, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Facebook. These social media sites encourage users to talk and participate in many topics, including Saudi Vision 2030 (Rahman, 2023).

The current study is three years, starting in October 2021 and ending in October 2024. The field of this research study is the role of social media through the users' views and interactions related to Saudi culture and social changes. The study period started almost five years after the announcement of the Saudi Vision 2030 to consider the contemporary situation in Saudi Arabian society.

The study is based on three primary sources:

1. Publications, documents, and official sources related to the Saudi cultural aspects, social changes, and development plans.
2. A questionnaire was directed to university students in Saudi Arabia.
3. Interviews with academic experts and specialists to support the findings.

1.10 Procedural definition of the study

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the cultural landscape of Saudi Arabia and the role of social media in shaping societal awareness. The study aims to identify factors contributing to societal change and openness by analysing past and present cultural developments.

Specifically, the research focuses on:

- **Examining the current state of cultural awareness** in Saudi Arabia, including its consequences and the role of social media platforms.
- **Investigating university students' communicative activities and interactions** on social media platforms to understand their participation in contemporary social change.
- **Analysing the challenges** facing Saudi society at both local and global levels, with a particular focus on opportunities for discussion, expression of opinions, and identification of strengths and weaknesses.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Over the last decade, social media has played a significant role in various fields worldwide. It is also called social networking sites, new media, and digital media. However, according to some recent studies, the new media is the most powerful communication tool in our lifetime. People have unlimited access to information through many platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc. Moreover, many governmental and global organisations use social media to spread or gather information and respond to public issues (Sellnow et al.,2020).

As the most updated form of communication, social media can provide widespread interaction between different societies. Unlike traditional media, which can be affected by geographical boundaries and censorship restrictions, social media has helped exchange ideas locally and globally. Additionally, the expression level on social media is high because it allows users to share their thoughts, talents, and experiences in multiple areas. This interaction between users from different backgrounds and cultures has led to an increase in the level of cultural awareness about various topics. Cultural awareness is “the foundational component of cultural competence, which involves being conscious of one’s own cultural beliefs and values and how

they may differ from those of other cultures.” (Luquis & Pérez, 2021).

Social media platforms have influenced societies in many aspects, such as politics, religion, culture, industries, journalism, marketing, etc. Additionally, social media platforms have helped to bring the public together about many social and cultural concerns. It fostered a positive public discourse atmosphere and promoted interaction and social cohesion. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the relevant literature review to recognise the role of social media platforms in shaping awareness. The literature review is divided into five sections, according to the most recent studies of the cultural aspects of Saudi society.

2.2 Social media and organisations

This section will review the previous studies on social media, political awareness, and organisation. Many organisations have adopted the use of social media platforms. The new media's vital role in organisational and cultural systems must be considered. Notably, in the last decade, social media has played a significant role in political events, especially in the Arab world. However, these political issues have had devastating consequences for many Arab countries. As Al-Jazeera (2011) reported, the Arab Spring uprisings, fuelled partly by social media, led to significant political upheaval and instability in the region. While the specific role of social media in these events

remains a subject of debate, it is clear that these platforms played a significant role in mobilising populations and facilitating the exchange of information.

(Tariq & Zeib, 2023) investigated the political empowerment of youth in Pakistan through social media use. The study sample was 410 young Pakistani voters from 14 to 25 years old to understand political participation, such as partisanship, political expression and interests. The study found a significant relationship between youth political expression and party affiliation in Pakistan. According to the survey, it also exists in politically stable environments such as the United States of America and South Korea. However, in an unstable political environment, this relationship demonstrates the remarkable effect of partisanship on political expression. The results show that political interests enormously enhance political expression and present individual positions as public opinion, especially in an environment with a similar ideology.

Twitter is one of the most important social media platforms in Saudi Arabia. It has succeeded in promoting participation between the public and decision-makers in the policymaking process of the Shura Council of Saudi Arabia (Alajlan, 2021). The study has revealed how Twitter could involve public opinion in shaping and changing members' decisions. The research was based on surveys and interviews with the council's members in Saudi Arabia. Alajlan states

that Twitter has opened politics to the public since the decision-makers have a favourable view of using Twitter. To examine public interests, comment on some public issues, and even be involved in a conversation with the audience. The study illustrates that a few members agreed that Twitter affects their decisions. However, the majority of the members think that social media platforms are beneficial for the public as well as for governmental authorities. They believe Twitter helps them understand the public and make significant decisions in different aspects such as culture, economy, and politics.

(Alsolami et al., 2021) have defined the top ten Saudi political influencers on Twitter. Based on their political or cultural activities, number of followers, and use of political hashtags. The study analysed 3200 tweets and claimed that the political influencers on Twitter have a strong ability to affect political and cultural views, whether positively or negatively. Moreover, the influencers have built a good reputation among their followers because of their knowledge and experience in cultural and political issues. That is an essential factor in influencing the public since the news and ideas first come from the press and then from the opinion leaders to spread to the public. The study chose Twitter as an essential platform for reviewing public opinion in the kingdom. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia has many Twitter users who are significantly active in tweeting about cultural or political agendas and ideas on the platform. The findings also showed that most Twitter political influencers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are political journalists.

Significantly, the administration of “Twitter” at the end of July 2023 has changed its name to “X”. However, the platform is top-rated in Saudi society, according to the previous study and other studies that will be reviewed and included in this chapter. Many studies adopted Twitter or X when investigating social media in Saudi society because most organisations have Twitter accounts. Therefore, the dependency level on Twitter is high, especially regarding fundamental issues such as politics and other cultural aspects.

The government of Saudi Arabia is effectively participating in social media with citizens by almost 90%, according to (Alkathiri, 2020). The study illustrated that the Saudi government cooperatively uses social media platforms to strengthen its relationship with the public. Therefore, facilitating social media sites can allow members of society to have fascinating views regarding many issues. Moreover, the findings showed that Saudi citizens regularly visit social media sites that provide updates on Saudi changes and Vision 2030. Thus, according to the study, the Saudi government aims to involve the public in local changes in economics, politics, and culture. Additionally, the dependency on social media was beneficial in sharing governmental information, services, events, and community initiatives. The participants think the authorities provide valuable and essential information through comments, responses, and social media messages.

Nevertheless, the extent to which individuals depend on the media is shown through four stages according to the hypothesis of the media dependency theory (Tao & Isan, 2003). The first stage appears through the motivations and needs of individuals to seek knowledge and information. The phenomena of social changes increase the desires of community members to cooperate with the new plans of society. Additionally, emotional and knowledge excitation comes as a second stage according to the hypothesis of the media dependency theory. On the other hand, the need for individual participation comes as an essential stage during social change. Therefore, harmony between the parts of society should be increased in the final stage.

(Al-Jasser, 2020) aimed to discover the role of the new media, represented by Twitter, in shaping the awareness of Saudi university youth of political issues. The study used the descriptive survey method, a questionnaire applied to a sample of (497) male and female students from the undergraduate level. The study concluded that the students rely heavily on Twitter to obtain political knowledge. Moreover, the study assures that the students prefer to use Twitter due to the speed and ease of obtaining news. The results also claimed that there is a notable increase in the level of political awareness among students who continually interact through Twitter.

Since the emergence of social media platforms, communication and free expression have increased in many societies. (Saud et

al., 2020) aimed to investigate social media's dynamic role in promoting political participation in Lebanese society. A quantitative survey method was used to collect data from the study field; thus, 260 questionnaires were filled out during the study period. As a result, the study shows that individuals freely participate in political issues. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made innovative advances, especially for political purposes. These social media platforms provide the exciting freedom to share videos, photos, and status updates. Social media sites and apps increasingly allow users to participate in political discussions.

Furthermore, (Ahmad et al., 2019) studied how online political activities have affected political effectiveness and realistic political participation among university students in Pakistan. In addition, this study also highlighted the relationship between political activity and political awareness. It conducted an online survey of (N = 200) university students from Narawal University in Pakistan. The study used qualities to distribute the questionnaire among students for data collection. The study claimed that most students use social media for political information.

Moreover, political effectiveness is largely dependent on online political participation. In addition, social media is a vital platform for Internet users to participate in political activities. The study

results indicate that online political activities are closely linked to political awareness and political participation outside the Internet. However, young generations from rural areas in Pakistan interact on social media to participate in political events and other events.

Furthermore, WhatsApp is a top-rated social media platform that is primarily used among students and employees in worldwide organisations and institutions, especially in Saudi Arabia. (Reeves et al., 2019) examined the usage of WhatsApp as a supportive tool for students and institutional staff in Saudi Arabia. The study applied a questionnaire tool to almost 200 students and employees from Al Qassim University. The findings indicate that 75.5 % of the students find WhatsApp valuable and helpful in learning their studies, and 90.25 % agree that it is straightforward to use. Furthermore, the results indicate that 100% of the study sample used WhatsApp to share locations and exchange information to follow up on exams and academic lectures. Finally, the data demonstrate that WhatsApp has excellent potential to become an organisational and conventional teaching tool.

(Jarrar & Hammud, 2018) Explore the role of social media in developing social responsibility and political awareness in Jordanian youth. The study followed a descriptive approach to achieve its aims. A specific questionnaire was designed for students from Philadelphia University, including all levels of education for the academic

years (2016-2017). The study observed the critical role of social media in developing social responsibility and political awareness of Jordanian youth. However, the study recommends carrying out similar research in different societies. As well as conducting training courses to improve young people's understanding of the role and impact of social media.

The effectiveness of social media has a significant impact on many cultural aspects, such as seeking knowledge, teaching, and learning. (Khatun & Al-Dhlan, 2017) investigated the efficacy of WhatsApp as a social media tool in the interaction and activities of university students in Saudi Arabia. The study used questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of WhatsApp from students' perspectives inside and outside the classroom. The study was applied to 75 students and indicated some advantages of using WhatsApp, such as increasing engagement and interaction between students and teachers and providing more assistance for students. However, the study claims that WhatsApp may divert students' attention in the classroom and could generate difficulties, which is a disadvantage of social media tools. The findings show that 99% of students use smartphones, and 96% adopt social media for communication. Moreover, the result shows that 97% of students have a WhatsApp group belonging to class and university.

(Kuppuswamy & Rekha, 2015) discussed how social media platforms have contributed to gathering the public around many social and cultural issues in the Arab world. It managed to create a suitable environment for social discussion and promote citizen journalism and cooperation between government and society. The study was an initiative to understand the responsibilities of social media in terms of citizen welfare and women's rights in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it is crucial to understand the political conflict that happened in many Arab countries, such as Libya, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Iraq. The findings indicate that the Saudi government has encouraged social networking sites to cooperate with the community. It sought to understand public needs and enhance the quality of life in society.

(Allothman, 2013) indicated that social media platforms promote social improvements in Saudi Arabia. The study noticed Saudi people's significant use of social media for cultural, political, and social purposes. They find many spaces to freely express their opinions and deliver their thoughts regarding different cultural, political, and social issues.

Allothman argues that social media alone cannot make cultural changes, but it can create a chance for excellent cooperation between society and government. Social media in Saudi Arabia have smoothly enhanced social movements in many fields, such as cultural and political reforms, human rights, economic improvements, and fighting corruption. The study recommends that decision-makers pay

more attention to social media to develop society and organisations gradually.

(Yunus, 2013) aimed to understand the role of social media in creating political awareness and mobilising political protests in Turkey. The study used combined qualitative and quantitative research methods as a case study. However, the literature review related topics such as social media, politics, and information flow in social networks. Additionally, two interviews and an analysis of social networks were conducted to understand the role of social media. Particularly in Turkey's last major social movements, the Gezi Parki and Internet censorship protests.

The results found that social media has already become essential to social movements in Turkey. Furthermore, there is a strong interest among the young generation in Turkey in joining social networks online because these social networks create links between people. These connections also enable the rapid flow of political information on these networks. In addition, providing information about political news or ideas can contribute to creating political awareness and mobilising political protests.

Additionally, a previous study dealt with the relationship between the use of social media and the formation of political awareness among young people in various countries. (Husein et al., 2013).

The impact of social networking sites in figuring out student orientations in private Jordanian universities was shown. The researchers adopted the descriptive and analytical approach to highlight the concepts related to the subject of the study. The investigation analysed and developed the results through the opinions of a random sample of (351) male and female students in private Jordanian universities. The data was collected and analysed using the tool of a questionnaire consisting of (22) items designed to collect preliminary information. The study concluded that social networking sites impact students' (political, social, and cultural) trends in private Jordanian universities.

2.2.1 Commenting on the Studies

To summarise this section, the previous studies generally discussed the impact of social media on political awareness and cultural dynamics. As mentioned, X, formerly Twitter, has significantly influenced political and social engagement, especially within Saudi society. The studies investigated many aspects of society, including individual and governmental engagement. Additionally, some studies shed light on the impact of social media platforms on Saudi social and political systems.

(Al-Jasser, 2020), (Alsolami et al., 2021) and (Alajlan, 2021) showed that in Saudi Arabia, Twitter, lately X, is an essential

platform for political engagement. It works as a connection platform between the public and political influencers who share their ideas to be discussed with the audience. On the other hand, it provides an update for the government and organisations concerning public needs and social discussions. However, these studies emphasise the ability of Twitter to increase the level of interaction and participation. As well as the impact of this platform on political awareness and the appearance of political influencers.

Social media has provided great opportunities for interactions between citizens to express their opinions and share information. (Alkathiri, 2020) social media plays a significant role in sharing ideas, services, information, and social initiatives. The study assures that government activities and public engagement are strongly presented on social media. Therefore, cohesion and harmony are enhanced by social media within Saudi society on various topics and social issues.

This section has also included some studies conducted in Islamic societies beyond Saudi Arabia to review the international perspective of social media and its impact on political awareness and participation. (Saud et al., 2020), (Ahmad et al., 2019), (Jarrar & Hammud, 2018) and (Yunus, 2013) present how social media platforms enable users to interact in political discussion and participation. Additionally, these studies demonstrate how social media exceeds geographical boundaries and assists in political movements.

In addition, research by (Kuppuswamy & Rekha, 2015) (Allothman, 2013) and Hussein et al. (2023) highlights the significant influence of social media on culture and society. The studies examine how social media sites enable users to engage and express their opinions on social, cultural, and political problems. Highlighting how social media has enriched social interaction between university students in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

However, the previous studies were concerned with the role of social media and the formation of political awareness among young people. It is found that the objectives of the studies are varied, as the survey (Jarrar & Hammud, 2018) was interested in exploring the development of political awareness among young people. Moreover, the study of (Husein et al., 2013) aimed to identify students' attitudes in terms of the use of social media. The study by (Saud et al., 2020) aimed to find the extent to which the dynamic role of social media in promoting political participation. However, the result of the study is consistent with the report of (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Furthermore, (Yunus, 2013) examined the role of modern social movements in Turkey as case studies to understand the role of social media in political movements. In contrast, the study (Al-Jasser, 2020) was limited to identifying the role of the new media represented by Twitter in shaping the political awareness of youth.

On the other hand, WhatsApp is a top-rated social networking tool widely utilised by students and employees in global organisations and institutions, particularly in Saudi Arabia. (Khatun & Al-Dhlan, 2017) Then, (Reeves et al., 2019) highlighted the use of WhatsApp among employees, students, Saudi organisations, and institutions. The studies indicated that WhatsApp is essential for sharing information and exchanging knowledge. Additionally, it assists in facilitating group work and helps to follow up with teams of work or study.

Overall, the studies have emphasised that social media are fundamental tools in creating and shaping the awareness of users. It crosses geographical limits and increases public and government interaction, enhancing cultural and social changes. The studies generally explained how social media succeeded in providing many factors that influence the social and cultural systems in Saudi Arabia and other countries. Furthermore, in some of these studies, Twitter, currently X, is the most effective platform for promoting political awareness within the society of Saudi Arabia.

2.3 Religion and Saudi Society

In the last decade, Saudi society has experienced significant interaction on social media. The interactions adapted many issues, such as culture, politics, and religion. The studies in this section will focus on the role of social media in shaping religious aspects in Saudi Arabia. However, Technological Determinism and social media facilitated communication and dialogue in many societies, including Islamic and conservative communities like Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it was important for this traditional society to cooperate with the social changes and cultural openness, especially after introducing Saudi Vision 2030.

However, it is essential to note that in a conservative society, religion plays a significant impact in culture. Therefore, in Islamic societies such as Saudi Arabia, religion should be discussed as a fundamental part of the culture. Edward Tylor also created one of the most well-known justifications for the notion of the culture. According to him, culture is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing knowledge, ethics, laws, and customs. Additionally, all routines and other characteristics that a person picks up through being a citizen of a country or community (Bekiyeva, 2022).

(Zaid et al., 2022) discussed the role of social media influencers in renewing digital Islamic culture through their religious digital

content in Saudi Arabia and the Arabic Gulf. The study stated that new media influencers do the same jobs as traditional religious influencers. However, it is done modernly and creatively, making their religious content more connected and attractive to Muslim youth.

The study claims that while Islamic institutions are losing power, social media influencers are gaining power. Particularly during the pandemic of COVID-19, since people were not able to practice their faith in Mosques or public places as groups. In addition, digital religious influencers can create a massive change in the practices and behaviours of young people, positively or negatively.

According to (Hudhayri, 2021), conservative social organisations have criticised the developments and openness in Saudi society. Especially if they are considered dangerous to morals, culture, or religion. Nonetheless, social media interactions, such as postings, pictures, and videos, are crucial for promoting this rotation's cultural awareness. The research in this section demonstrated how social media functioned in Saudi culture as a hot and cold medium, including X, previously Twitter.

(Al Asmari, 2021) argue that the youth represent the most social media users. Thus, they are the most positively or negatively affected by the posted cultural information. The study used a descriptive-analytical method to analyse the role of social media in promoting moderation values. The study was randomly applied to 1325

Saudi youth, the most influential group in achieving societal development. The finding shows that social media positively affects Saudi youth, which enhances moderation, centrism and positive thinking. This could be applied in real life and involve all segments of society in different issues. It also offers diversity, differences, freedom, and thoughts without intolerance or extremism and promotes tolerance values. As well as reconciling personal interests with the interests of others. The study recommended developing educational programs to protect young people from isolation and extreme thoughts.

During the last few years, Saudi Arabia has introduced many reforms and social changes. (Thompson, 2021) argues that recently, criticism of religion has been regularly spread on social media platforms in many parts of Saudi Arabia. The criticism of activities around the new reforms greatly challenged the religious party. According to the author, the release of Saudi Vision 2030 in April 2016 introduced some social and cultural changes in Saudi society.

Consequently, these social changes could affect the community's traditional religious and social principles. Furthermore, the changes have certainly updated and developed Saudi positions in terms of radical religious speech. (Thompson, 2021) has shown that it is difficult to predict the future of religious criticism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Eventually, the country experienced a profound social, cultural, and spiritual transformation.

Twitter is a very active platform in Saudi Arabia, helping the public to express their opinions on multiple cultural, political, and social issues. It is an open window for social and cultural interaction that gathers users around different aspects of culture, including religion. However, this sensitive interaction may create a complicated situation by reflecting intellectual exchanges and radical ideologies. (Noman et al., 2015) analysed Twitter's content in Saudi Arabia and identified the communities that gather around cultural topics. The study reviewed interactions about economic status, politics, women's rights, and misrepresentation of Islam. Conservative and moderate parties are also critical in religious matters and users' identities. According to the study, many Twitter users are involved in such discussions. However, it is hard to tell whether some opponents or supporters are actual Saudi citizens due to the spread of ambiguous and fake accounts on Twitter. The study used a mixed methods approach and recommended conducting more studies on Twitter and Saudi society.

2.3.1 Commenting on the Studies

Overall, the study in this section provided a general understanding of the complicated relationship between social dynamics and social media in Saudi Arabia. The studies emphasise the role of social media in shaping cultural and religious status and sociopolitical dynamics. The conservative people participated against social changes that threatened religious values and culture on social media (Hudhayri, 2021), emphasising the essential role played by social media in shaping cultural awareness.

Meanwhile, (Zaid et al., 2022) explore the role of Islamic influencers on social media during the pandemic of COVID-19. The study indicates that religious activists on social media act to reshape the Islamic dialogue, targeting the audience, especially young people. Accordingly, as indicated by (Al Asmari, 2021), social media positively impacts Saudi youth, social harmony and moderation. As well as diversity and tolerance for people from different backgrounds or cultures.

On the other hand, (Thompson, 2021) investigated the critical activities of religion that appeared on social media. The author claims that Saudi Vision 2030 caused social and cultural changes in Saudi society. Accordingly, the status of religious criticism on social media is unpredictable. However, (Noman et al., 2015) analysed the criticism and interactions about economic status, politics, women's

rights, and misrepresentation of Islam from Twitter's content. The study indicated that it is difficult to prove the identities and citizenship of some activists on social media.

Furthermore, the study recommends understanding social media's role in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, this current study will investigate the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students. The present study will use mixed-methods techniques to focus on cultural awareness, religion, and culture in Saudi society.

2.4 CULTURE AND SAUDI SOCIETY

The involvement of Saudi youth on social media platforms has emerged as a significant phenomenon. It assists in exploring the complex interplay of culture, religion, tribal loyalties, and family values in an era of fast technological breakthroughs and globalisation. Deeply ingrained cultural and religious traditions in Saudi Arabia are integrated with an intricate and substantial societal framework. This considerably impacts how the nation's young interact with local and international problems on social media. Amidst the dynamic shifts ushered in by Saudi Vision 2030, Saudi youth are emerging as a powerful force driven by ambitious aspirations and a keen desire to shape the nation's future. They actively seek to contribute to the Kingdom's progress, pursuing impactful careers and securing their place in a rapidly evolving economy.

Saudi youth's rich and diverse social and cultural tapestry reflects their distinctive identities and aspirations. This generation grapples with the complexities of navigating a society undergoing profound transformation while simultaneously embracing the revolutionary potential outlined in the country's plans. Their perspectives offer valuable insights into the evolving social landscape and the aspirations of a burgeoning young population (Saudi Vision 2030).

Furthermore, it is impossible to overestimate the influence of social media on conversations and exchanges about culture in Saudi society. The cultural initiatives of the General Entertainment Authority attracted much attention. They generated much discussion on social media sites like Twitter, especially those connected to entertainment events in Saudi Arabia. The replies on social media represented a variety of viewpoints, with supporters and opponents split almost evenly. Interestingly, the studies found gender differences in tweet tone, with females posting somewhat more positive messages (Alkhaldi et al., 2020).

This section will focus on the previous studies that revolve around the impact of social media on Saudi culture and identity. Social media's positive and negative effects include psychological, moral, religious, cognitive, and political factors. However, some researchers have investigated social media interaction, focusing on

Twitter and YouTube. Sports, traditions, entertainment, and politics were among the topics that attracted the audience. Collectively, these studies present a multifaceted picture of the changes in Saudi Arabia through social media. Illuminating how it affects adolescent ambitions, impacts cultural dynamics, and provides a forum for public dialogue and individual expression.

(Alshanqiti et al., 2020) studied social interaction and concern in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by analysing 51697 comments on 13 trending YouTube videos. The study uses well-known Arabic words and an optimised algorithm to hunt for any sentimental Arabic text. The findings showed that a regular sarcastic video about entertainment, traditions, politics, or religious issues could spread and gain numerous views. The most attractive videos in the Saudi community were in the categories of (Entertainment, Sport, Traditions, and Sarcastic) by 49%.

Overall, there is a slight difference between males and females, 11%, in each category. However, in the scandals of celebrities, the percentage was higher among females by 26% compared to males. Nevertheless, the interaction between commentators was significantly high underneath the (political and sarcastic videos). Meanwhile, a gradual decrease in interaction was shown in other categories. Finally, there were many non-related comments like ads, which is expected, especially in the most watched YouTube videos.

(Alkhalidi et al., 2020) investigated the users' comments on social media regarding the activities of the General Entertainment Authority in Saudi Arabia. 3817 tweets were analysed to understand the audiences' views on entertainment cultural programs. The study claims that the interaction on social media vastly increased after Wonderland activities in the Riyadh season, especially on Twitter. The finding shows that the percentage of positive and negative comments are almost equal, with 1906 tweets by supporters and 1911 tweets by opposers. There are many repeated tweets from both sides; the study indicated that the females tweet positively 58% and negatively 42%. In contrast, males tweet positively by only 47% and negatively by 53%, showing slightly lower supportive tweets than females. Finally, the study emphasises the tremendous impact of social media on cultural exchanges within Saudi society.

(Thompson, 2019) in his book " Being Young, Male and Saudi: Identity and Politics in the Globalized Kingdom", mentioned that young Saudi people are very ambitious. Indeed, Saudi youth always want to be influential, powerful, valuable and loudly heard. Additionally, Saudi youth are willing to obtain professions and jobs to be active members of national development programs. As a foreign lecturer in Saudi Universities working among Saudi youth, the author has focused on social and cultural aspects.

The author seeks to explore the Saudi Identity from different parts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study sample contains 50

groups of Saudi youth from different parts of the Kingdom. Thompson studies the interaction between young people on social media and the current sociocultural changes in Saudi Arabia. As well as how Saudi youth agree or disagree with these social and cultural changes due to the Saudi Vision 2030. The researcher found that most comments and responses were positive, supportive, and optimistic. Consequently, there is a significant cultural harmony between the government and society, especially among young people.

Many studies have investigated social media's impact on cultural issues in the last decade. (Alqahtani, 2019) evaluated cultural identity and psychological security concerning the use of social media and its effects on Saudi youth. To assess the differences between genders, the study sample is 230 mixed-gender students, 110 males and 120 females. The result of the study claimed that social media has positive and negative impacts on cultural identity and psychological security. The study shows that social media impact fluctuated between medium and low. The positive and negative effects included aspects such as (psychological, religious, moral, cognitive, and political impacts).

However, the result indicates a slightly high impact level of cultural identity and a medium level of psychological security influences. A significant statistical difference between males and females was observed, especially regarding the impact of psychologi-

cal security. Moreover, the result did not illustrate considerable differences in the level of cultural identity effect between males and females.

Furthermore, (Stanger et al., 2017) articulate that culture, religion, tribe, and family have significantly shaped the interaction of Saudi youth on social media platforms. Historically, culture and religion impact each other as well as the tribe and family. In many cases, it is hard to separate the values of culture from religion because they are strongly connected in the society of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, Saudi culture is complex and robust, as is Saudi youth's interaction on social media with local and global issues. The study recommends that social media platform developers consider Islamic culture for more effective engagement. Particularly within this market from Middle Eastern and Saudi users at the time of the global spread of social networking sites.

2.4.1 Commenting on the Studies

Several studies have examined how social media affects Saudi adolescents, illuminating the complex linkages between culture, policies, gender dynamics, and online interactions. (Alshantiti et al., 2020) highlighted the importance of sarcastic videos in cultural discourse by revealing their popularity on YouTube. (Alkhaldi et al.,

2020) described the enormous impact of social media, notably Twitter, on cross-cultural interactions. The connection of Saudi youth aspirations with government-driven sociocultural reforms like Saudi Vision 2030 was stressed (Thompson, 2019).

On the other hand, (Alqahtani, 2019) examined how social media affects cultural identity and psychological stability while pointing out specific gender-based differences. Finally, (Stanger et al., 2017) stressed the significance of taking Islamic culture into account. While developing social media platforms, highlighting the significant effect of culture, religion, tribe, and family on Saudi youth's digital connections.

However, the central tenet of media dependence theory is that the fourth stage demonstrates how much people rely on the media (Tao & Isan, 2003). The first stage may be seen in people's motives and requirements for seeking knowledge and information. The social transformation phenomenon makes it more important for residents to collaborate with society's new goals. According to the media dependence theory's hypotheses, a second stage involves emotional and intellectual excitement. On the other hand, a crucial phase in social change is when individuals are required to participate. As a result, in the last stage, the level of concord between the various segments of society should be improved.

These studies thoroughly show how social media influences cultural relationships, identity, and societal attitudes in Saudi Arabia. In light of the country's dynamic sociocultural changes and young people's ambitions. Additionally, the studies present the participation and interaction that youth could assist with to be a part of social development. Finally, individuals are obliged to participate; according to dependency theory, it is a critical stage in social change.

2.5 Media and Saudi Situation

Social media has played a significant role in reflecting the Saudi stereotype in the Arabic world, as well as the impression of the public concerning Saudi Vision 2030. The interaction on social media reflects an increase in the level of social commerce and economic growth within Saudi society. Many foreign and local investments are taking place nowadays in the kingdom. These investments include sports, tourism, culture, the mining sector, and other projects. Overall, the studies reviewed in this part highlight Saudi Arabia's social, cultural, and economic developments. The studies examine several changes that have taken place in Saudi society, particularly in the most recent years following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030.

Many recent studies have highlighted the impact of social media platforms on different social behaviours. (Alqahtani & Xue, 2022) studied the influence of Snapchat ads on students' buying attitudes in Saudi Arabia. The study is based on the Uses and Gratifications as a theoretical framework, and it encourages other studies to evaluate the influence of social media platforms. The quantitative data were collected from a sample containing 93 students from different faculties through an online survey in Saudi Arabia. 85% of the students were enrolled in undergraduate courses, aged between 18 and 25 years old, while 15 % were over that age and enrolled in post-graduate programs. The findings show that 46% of students only have between 100 and 250 friends on Snapchat, with 95 % indicating that they spend 30 minutes to one hour per day on Snapchat. Furthermore, 100% of the study sample agrees that they receive perceptions regarding many products on Snapchat. The study presents other results and recommends new studies to target the impact of Snapchat and other social media platforms that could influence many Saudi social and cultural aspects.

In the last decade, social media have played a significant role in shaping the general opinions of their users. Nevertheless, social media sites and applications are continuously increasing, but there are differences in their popularity from one society to another. (Alghamdi, 2021), aimed to analyse the participation of Facebook and Snapchat users. The study used a survey and collected 951 responses to understand the behaviours and practices of social media users in

Saudi society. The findings present more popularity for Snapchat vs Facebook in Saudi Arabia, where 89% of the participants have an account on Snapchat, while only 66% of respondents have an account on Facebook.

Moreover, 83% of participants agreed that their minimum use of Snapchat is once per day, while only 15% accessed their Facebook accounts daily. The study indicated that the most common factor that pushes respondents to use these social media platforms is to keep following their friends and family members. Finally, the study encourages such research due to its importance in improving social media applications and understanding users' behaviours and participation.

(Alharbi, 2021) states that culture, tourism, and entertainment investments used to be risky for small and medium-sized business institutions. However, Saudi Arabian tourism and unique places have distinguished the country from the rest of the globe in the present. Therefore, Saudi Arabia currently works on culture and heritage as the best way to be open to the world. Furthermore, Saudi governments and companies consider investing in culture, tourism, and entertainment as tools to enhance the Saudi economy and culture. The study's findings significantly focus on the economy and Saudi youth, as shown by the number of likes, views, retweets, and mentions, especially regarding Saudi Vision 2030.

Additionally, most Saudi investors and companies have favourable views of Vision 2030, including those of tourism and economic growth. The companies and investors that have been interviewed illustrate a deep understanding of duties and rights. The study also showed that youth agreed with the aims of Saudi Vision 2030. They believe it could enhance culture, communication, transparency, and employment. It also creates many job opportunities for youth groups.

The perception and representation of a nation's identity may considerably impact its status on the world stage in an era of fast globalisation. The way Saudi Arabia, as a country steeped in culture and tradition, is viewed by Arabic viewers is a fascinating aspect of this phenomenon. However, the General Entertainment Authority's effect in Saudi Arabia and how it affects the prevalent preconceptions of Saudi culture attracted some studies.

(عوض محمد فيود et al., 2021) evaluated the stereotype of Saudi society among Arabic audiences regarding the influence of the General Entertainment Authority in Saudi Arabia. The study assessed the opinions of 400 Arabic participants to see whether the entertainment programs promoted the Saudi stereotype. The findings of an online survey indicated that 92.3 % of Arabic audiences are well-informed about general entertainment programs. However, 98.3% think that the promotional activities have helped to change the stereotype of

Saudi society and provided a considerable source of information about these programs and activities.

Additionally, 79.5% of the targeted audience has shown a positive view of Saudi Arabia's entertainment projects. The study claimed that the General Entertainment Authority's existence has positively enhanced Saudi Arabia's status. It helped make the kingdom competitive in the global market. The limits of trade have expanded in the digital era beyond traditional street-side businesses, spreading into the vast and active world of social media.

Overall, the research explores the growth of social commerce, a phenomenon that has transformed Saudi Arabia's economic environment over the past few years. Technological determinism theory posits that technological advancements significantly influence the development and structure of societies. While this theory traditionally focuses on the impact of mass media, recent research suggests its potential applicability to the burgeoning phenomenon of social commerce. Social commerce uses social media platforms for marketing and conducting business transactions by individuals and organisations (Smith & Marx, 1994). This integrated approach eases a seamless exchange of information, potentially streamlining the buying and selling of goods and services, fostering economic growth, and enhancing global interconnectedness.

(Albelaihi et al., 2019) Argue that there has been a massive increase in social commerce within Saudi society in the past few years. The study claims that individuals and companies use social media platforms for marketing and business interaction. Economically, social media sites enormously enhance the selling, buying, and sharing of information and services around the globe. According to the Saudi Ministry of Commerce, Saudi Arabia is one of the top ten countries in e-commerce growth, with 28% in 2018. The study presented and analysed twenty literature reviews on the economic use of social media and its weaknesses and strengths. It recommends and encourages researchers to conduct more studies on the culture and behaviours of consumers. Moreover, to investigate the related commerce regulations within the society of Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, (Belloumi & Alshehry, 2018) Studied the economic developments in Saudi Arabia. The study analysed the connection between the local budget, foreign investment, and economic growth in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The finding shows causation in the long term between the growth in non-oil products and foreign investment, as well as with local investment. Moreover, the study claims that increasing foreign investment does not harm local investment. Therefore, Saudis should promote economic growth, diversify non-oil products, and create a great environment that attracts local and foreign investments. The study assumes that the current developments in tourism, the mining sector, and cultural investments are

good models for economic growth. However, increasing women's involvement and developing local military industries led to economic diversity. According to the study, the mining sector in Saudi Arabia is the most significant mineral wealth in the Arabic Gulf.

Numerous recent studies indicate that social media platforms are helpful resources for influencing public opinion and spreading knowledge. It is fundamental to consider how they impact the aspirations and goals of the country. These existing types of research looked at how Twitter affects the public perception of Saudi Vision 2030 in a fascinating way. A comprehensive plan to transform Saudi Arabia's economy and society is called Saudi Vision 2030; it is a major national undertaking.

X, formerly Twitter, created a climate where a sizeable part of the public supports and believes in this audacious national ambition. Nevertheless, Twitter's influence goes beyond simple trust; it is essential to influence public perception and gain support for Saudi Vision 2030. This claim has ramifications for governments and policymakers because it emphasises how important it is for official representatives to respond to inquiries. Interact with the public on social media to guarantee the dissemination of information and promote a better understanding of national visions.

The relationship between social plans and public involvement is crucial, especially in Saudi Arabia, to achieve its Vision aspirational aims. However, some studies explored Twitter's revolutionary potential within the Saudi ambitious Vision 2030 context. (الزهراني et al., 2018) Evaluated the role of Twitter in shaping public opinion regarding Saudi Vision 2030. The study is based on a sample of 400 students who use Twitter. The findings showed that 68.5% of the study sample trusts the content of Vision 2030. Despite multiple interaction tools on Twitter, the first tool is participation in the vision Hashtags with 85.7%. The study also indicates that 87% have great information about the economic goals of the Vision. The study claimed that Twitter has helped shape public opinion toward accepting Vision 2030. The study recommended that the government have official representatives to answer the related questions and reply to comments from Twitter accounts.

The dynamic environment of society in Saudi Arabia has undergone significant changes. Numerous reasons include its importance to the Islamic and Arabic world, the expansion of the economy and the development of culture. (Bañón Castellón, 2016) analysed the stereotype of Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism in Spanish media for six decades (2015-1965). The results show notable changes from positive to negative presentation of Saudi Arabia on Spanish TV due to many geopolitical and economic factors, especially after the 9/11 attacks. The study claimed that there is a lack of Saudi rep-

resentation in Spanish media, which causes Saudi Arabian stereotypes. The study is unique in Spain; it recommends more balance and objectivity in presenting Saudi Arabia on Spanish TV, with a better understanding of Saudi culture. Moreover, the study suggests giving more opportunities for Saudi voices to challenge negative stereotypes, especially in a country such as Spain, which has an Islamic history of 8 decades. Finally, the study provides a comprehensive picture of how Saudi stereotypes were shaped on Spanish TV.

On the other hand, (Al-Madkuri, 2004) investigated the image of Spain in the Arabic world based on critical analyses of many resources such as news articles, academic analyses and literature reviews. The study presented valuable insights into how Spanish stereotypes were shaped in Arabic-speaking countries. The findings indicate that the image of Spain is different from one Arab country to another and is influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors. Generally, Spain is presented in Arabic media as a strange Western country regarding Islamic and Arabic culture. However, there are positive stereotypes in the Arab world, usually connected with the shared history between Spain and Arabs, influenced by different political factors. The study claimed that there is a need for more cultural exchanges and understanding between the Spanish and Arabs to challenge typical stereotypes. Furthermore, Arabic and Spanish media must seek to be more accurate and present balanced stereotypes to enhance dialogue, respect and understanding between the two cultures.

2.5.1 Commenting on the Studies

In the last few years, several studies have provided multiple views based on social media after the latest Saudi economic and societal changes. The studies conducted by (عوض محمد فيود et al., 2021), (Albelaihi et al., 2019), and (الزهراني et al., 2018) present different views about a country that is going through a comprehensive advancement. The studies contribute to a deep understanding of the Saudi situation during this period of social and economic changes.

These social changes in Saudi Arabia have attracted some researchers to study the Saudi stereotype among Arabic audiences on social media. The effect of the General Entertainment Authority in shaping Saudi stereotypes was explored by (عوض محمد فيود et al., 2021). The study emphasises the new cultural and economic changes that have improved Saudi circumstances locally and globally.

On the other hand, (Albelaihi et al., 2019) focus on the role of social media in social commerce and boosting the Saudi economy. The study revolves around using social media to enhance the economy through communication and interaction. However, the research encourages further studies investigating the commerce system for sustainable development and a strong economy.

Furthermore, (Alqahtani & Xue, 2022) studied the impact of Snapchat on shaping students' behaviours since the platform is trendy, especially among Saudi youth. The study indicated that Snapchat influences their perceptions regarding many things and products. Nevertheless, (Alghamdi, 2021) analysed the participation of Snapchat and Facebook users in Saudi Arabia. The study indicates that Snapchat is more popular than Facebook in Saudi Arabia.

Overall, many recent studies underline the role of Saudi Vision 2030 in social changes in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, Twitter has a significant role in shaping public opinion in Saudi Arabia. However, (الزهراني et al., 2018) indicated that Twitter is a vital social media platform in Saudi Arabia. The platform succeeded in enhancing public participation and political communication.

These studies, taken together, provide insight into Saudi Arabia's dynamic transformation, stressing the role of culture, business, and digital communication in determining the country's present and future. Each study demonstrates the deep interaction of numerous components in Saudi culture, including redefining stereotypes via entertainment and increasing economic growth. Social commerce is harnessing social media to generate support for innovative national objectives.

As Saudi Arabia continues on its road of reform and modernisation, these studies urge a complete grasp of the multiple causes

guiding the country's journey. These studies' primary insights go beyond their specific themes, increasing a greater understanding of Saudi Arabia's dynamic evolution. It reviews the potential for additional cultural, trade, public involvement and improvements. These studies give significant insights and a platform for future research and policy creation in this ever-changing context, ensuring that Saudi Arabia's trajectory stays lively and forward-looking.

2.6. Social Media's Influence on Society

Social media platforms have revolutionised communication, transforming how individuals connect, share information, and engage with the world around them. These interactive networks, accessible anytime and anywhere, have blurred geographical boundaries and fostered unprecedented global interconnectedness. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, and Snapchat have become integral to daily life, facilitating the rapid exchange of massive amounts of data across borders (Jarrar & Hammud, 2018).

Initially conceived as tools for social interaction, these platforms have profoundly impacted various aspects of society, including culture, politics, and economics (أبو يعقوب, 2015). The widespread adoption of social media among young people has increased political and cultural awareness. By connecting individuals with diverse per-

spectives and experiences, these platforms encourage active participation in societal issues, such as cultural and political processes, decision-making, and electoral behaviour (2013, حمدي أحمد عمر).

Furthermore, Educational aids and the latest teaching technologies empower individuals to express their opinions, engage in public discourse, and advocate for change. The ability to share information, mobilise support, and raise awareness on various issues has facilitated social movements and amplified the voices of marginalised communities (Al-Sharhan, 2003).

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology is the backbone of any academic endeavour, providing a clear and concise roadmap for both the researcher and the reader (Faryadi, 2019). This chapter outlines the specific methods and procedures employed to conduct the study, focusing on using mixed methods to effectively navigate the complexities of the research area and ensure a harmonious integration of various theoretical perspectives.

The study centers on the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. To understand this relationship, the chapter will delve into the rationale for selecting the study sample and its connection to the research topic and the specific location of the study. Saudi Arabia's rapid development, driven by social plans outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030, has significantly impacted the cultural landscape. By providing detailed information about each step of the research process, this chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes.

The study utilises various statistical processing methods to analyse and manage the collected data, ensuring the accuracy and

reliability of the findings. Reliability coefficient values are determined through a series of tests to assess the accuracy of the survey (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). This chapter will cover the study's methods, sampling technique, limitations, design, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques.

3.2 STUDY DESIGN

The study design is a critical component of the research process, providing a framework for conducting the investigation. Researchers across various fields employ diverse design approaches to guide their studies, and the design choice must align with the specific research question (Festinger, 2005). For this study, a collective case study was selected as the most suitable approach to explore the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia.

The collective case study is a comprehensive research method that examines a phenomenon, group of people, or specific aspects to identify overarching generalisations. This approach involves gathering information from multiple sources across different periods (Stake, 1995). The collective case study was chosen for several reasons:

- **Multifaceted Nature of Culture:** Culture encompasses various elements such as language, religion, traditions, and

art. A collective case study can effectively explore these diverse aspects, providing a holistic understanding of the cultural context (White, 2022). Consequently, the collective case study is the most suitable approach that could help deal with all the study elements, unlike single case studies, which usually focus on one aspect of the consideration (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

- **Cultural Significance of Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia is a culturally rich country with a deep Islamic heritage and a rapidly evolving society. The collective case study allows for a detailed examination of the country's cultural landscape, including its historical and contemporary dimensions (The Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, n.d.). This type of case study is also advantageous when the research deals with a particular phenomenon (George & Bennett, 2005). Saudi society experienced considerable changes and developments that were not expected, especially by radical religious people.
- **Social Media and Cultural Exchange:** Social media platforms facilitate cultural discussions, enabling users to visualise, critique, and analyse social changes. The collective case study provides a comprehensive understanding of how these online interactions contribute to cultural awareness among Saudi university students (Lakshman, 2023). There-

fore, many discussions are taking place on social media regarding the new changes that might affect the culture from a religious point of view. However, the Saudi authorities have made it clear that the radical religious thoughts seen in the past will be directed to be moderate (Chulov, 2017). However, since the study somehow focused on this idea, it was essential to choose the right strategy. Thus, the collective case study was chosen due to its flexibility in dealing with descriptive studies that look at two periods.

By adopting a collective case study approach, the research can delve into the complexities of cultural awareness in Saudi Arabia, including the ongoing discussions about social changes and their potential impact on traditional values. This method offers flexibility in examining historical and contemporary perspectives, providing a nuanced understanding of the evolving cultural landscape.

3.3 Field Study Questions and Aims.

Introducing the questions and aims of the study in the methodology part comes from the importance of clarification and seeks to guide the study to achieve its aims. This study examines the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. As a topic, the study is based on shaping the cultural awareness of university students who enrolled in multiple academic courses in Saudi Arabia. On the other

hand, the investigation concerns university students' use of social media and its role in shaping their cultural awareness. Thus, through the collected data from various sources, the current study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. **To what extent** does social media facilitate cultural interaction among Saudi university students?
2. **How** does social media contribute to the cultural engagement of Saudi university students?
3. **Has** social media played a significant role in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students?
4. **Do** Saudi university students primarily rely on social media for cultural content?
5. **What** are the key interferences that may hinder the positive impact of social media platforms on cultural awareness?

The above research questions were modified according to supervision advice and based on previous related studies, which are included and summarised in the second chapter. The study used the objectives and recommendations provided by the literature studies to fill the gap by conducting the current study. However, based on the current study's findings, the study will present

recommendations to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students.

Firstly, the study seeks to find out how social media is enhancing cultural interaction among university students in Saudi Arabia. To respond to this question, the study tools had to examine the students' cultural exchanges and activities using a set of questions. Aiming to evaluate the level of cultural exchanges as an essential factor that could shape cultural awareness for university students (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). Additionally, it was necessary to consider the use of social media through different categories, such as collaboration and participation. Furthermore, social media platforms and types of interaction by university students in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the current study used a survey that included several questions to answer each study question from different aspects.

Generally, the study had to understand and present the Saudi cultural situation, social phenomena, and history by analysing previous related studies. Moreover, the study briefly introduced the current state of Saudi Arabia and its organisational role in shaping cultural awareness from different perspectives. This included establishment, organisation plans, and Saudi Vision 2030 documentation. However, the study examined the students' viewpoints and experiences regarding cultural engagement on social media. The findings chapter will illustrate cultural topics,

content, and other elements related to engagement on social media.

The third question in this study seeks to expose the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. As explained in the first part, Saudi organisational plans have significantly focused on cultural awareness. However, social media excessively impacts many related topics, such as public opinion and freedom of discussion. Consequently, this question covers different perspectives, including the level of dependence on cultural content presented by social media. The study used various data collection methods and techniques, detailed later in this chapter.

The study also investigated some topics and events on social media in terms of shaping cultural awareness for university students in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, while collecting and summarising the literature review of this study, it has been noticed that X, formerly Twitter, is the most repeated among previous studies. Accordingly, the study will be limited to the top five platforms, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat, due to their popularity in the location of the study (راجع, 2023). However, social media platforms are numerous and continuously increasing and competing. Therefore, this order might change based on the location and time.

Moreover, to improve the role of social media platforms, it was essential to reveal the interferences that might prevent the positive role of shaping cultural awareness. Hence, the study investigates this area through questions to expose the restrictions facing university students or cultural understanding. However, the media dependency theory is based on how much people rely on the media (Tao & Isan, 2003). Therefore, the study will investigate how university students rely on cultural content on social media. Social media could help enhance cultural awareness, but several interferences might make this enhancement difficult. The study will illustrate more details regarding these restrictions in the findings chapter.

Overall, through the research questions, the study will try to focus on cultural aspects due to their importance in the location of the study. As mentioned, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is experiencing rapid development in many factors, including culture. Additionally, the study commented on many literature reviews that examine different parts of the Saudi culture, including religion, traditions, and politics. However, this study will present many aspects of Saudi culture from various sources and perspectives.

3.3.1 Key terms of the questions

Outlining the critical terms of the current research questions in the methodology chapter aims to draw attention to the essential words that each question is based upon. Thus, it will help the reader better understand the research questions' concepts. Additionally, it assists in profoundly focusing on the central words of each question. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, the key terms of the current research questions could be defined in five main terminologies used in the research questions. However, the concepts will include some terms used in the interviews to answer the questions from different perspectives.

The first term is “cultural interaction,” which is one of the processes of cultural spread. The involvement in an interaction relation means that persons or groups affect each other during the cultural process. Therefore, it is logical that the undeveloped side gets affected more than the developed side or group (الجوهري, 1993). The cultural interaction between people could produce cultural changes in many cultures due to communication. However, cultural interaction could happen between two cultures regardless of the impact on each culture in the interaction process (غيث, 1968).

The second key term is “cultural engagement”, seen as “the processes of understanding and communicating with these

practices: its verbal and non-verbal behaviours, value orientations, approaches to conflict, its naming, greeting, work, sporting, wellness/sickness, religious and spiritual practices as well as its ways of knowing and communicating” (Lawrence, 2007). However, the concept of ‘engagement’ is used mainly in other contexts, including “being involved with somebody or something in an attempt to understand them or it” (Oxford Learner’s, 2023). In this study, the second question seeks to understand the enhancement of social media in cultural engagement for university students in Saudi Arabia.

The third research question is based on the terminology of “cultural awareness”, which also contains the concept of “cultural” because it is vital to the current study. However, it is linked here with the term “awareness”, as defined in the introduction chapter. Having cultural awareness is being familiar with the cultural differences and similarities among different groups and understanding diverse cultural practices, beliefs, values, and customs. Having the ability to communicate and form connections across cultural barriers may contribute to cultural awareness. Hence, the component of culture involves being conscious of beliefs, values, and traditions and how they might differ from other cultural groups (Luquis & Pérez, 2021). The study refers to university students and their interests and appreciation of the cultural aspects of the environment. Overall, the third research question

seeks to find out whether social media helped to shape cultural awareness for university students in Saudi Arabia.

Question number four in the current research used the verb “rely” to find whether university students in Saudi Arabia rely on social media for cultural content. Therefore, the key term here is “rely on”, and the noun is reliance, a synonym of dependence. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023) defines relying on something as “to need a particular thing or the help and support of someone or something to continue, to work correctly, or to succeed”. Relying on is “to trust someone or something or to expect him, her, or it to behave in a particular way”.

Nonetheless, according to the media dependence theory (Tao & Isan, 2003), individuals who rely on the media are demonstrated in four stages. The first stage displays individuals' motives and needs for knowledge and information. Social transformation increases the motives and demands of community members to collaborate with society's new intentions. Accordingly, emotional and knowledge stimulation is a second step. Individual participation, on the other hand, is a crucial stage in the phenomenon of social change. As a result, in the last step, the level of harmony between the various segments of society should be improved.

The last question in the current research uses the concept of “interference” in the plural to expose multiple interferences. Particularly interferences that might prevent the positive role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness. (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2023) specifies “interference” as “the act of getting involved in and trying to influence a situation that should not involve you in a way that annoys other people”. However, based on the collected data and related evidence, the study will answer the above questions individually. Moreover, the study uses other associated concepts, such as cultural identity, cultural diversity, and cultural exchanges. These key terms are used in the interviews as sub-questions to add more clarification to the findings.

To clarify the findings, the study will explore the impact of social media on cultural exchanges among university students. “Cultural exchanges” holds two words: cultural and exchanges. The concept of “culture” was defined previously in the introduction chapter, but in the interview questions, it has been used as an adjective linked with the conception of “exchanges”. However, connecting these two phrases means sharing knowledge, traditions, and other sorts of culture, such as languages, beliefs and arts, between groups or individuals. According to (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2023), exchange means “an act of giving something to somebody or doing something for somebody and receiving something in return”.

Furthermore, the study used extra terms in the interview questions, such as “influential”, an adjective of the noun “influence”. The study used the concept to point out the influence of social media on interaction for university students. In other words, the term aims to determine social media's impact on interaction. According to the (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023), influential is an adjective that means “having much influence on someone or something”.

Additionally, the interviews used “Contribution” as a critical concept to refer to the contribution of social media in shaping cultural awareness through social media. The question aims to see how social media contributed to promoting cultural awareness using social media. According to the (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023), a contribution is “something that you contribute or do to help produce or achieve something together with other people, or to help make something successful”. However, the contribution here would be limited to using social media to promote cultural awareness for university students.

The interview questions aim to find more related information supporting the findings. Therefore, the interaction in the first research question includes many cultural exchanges. For example, exchanging knowledge and experiences with academics

or specialists. Moreover, cultural exchanges by sharing information on social media and following cultural institutions and persons. The research is going to provide some suggestions and recommendations to improve the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness for university students in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the aims the current study plans to achieve will be briefly indicated under the following heading.

3.3.2 Study Aims

Including the study aims in this chapter can help the reader understand and evaluate the study procedures. Additionally, it will assist the study in linking the research questions with the study processes, the sampling technique, and the study design. Thus, through the research questions and findings, the present study is going to achieve the following aims:

- 1- Identify the specific ways in which social media platforms influence the cultural views and knowledge of Saudi university students.
- 2- Explore the interferences that may hinder the positive impact of social media platforms on cultural awareness.

3- Propose concrete recommendations to enhance the role of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat) in fostering cultural awareness.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Due to its importance, the sampling technique must be included in the methodology chapter. It is essential to help understand how the study determines and reaches the sample. The results could be evaluated through the sampling process to see whether they can be generalised and representative of the population. The sampling technique adds some quality and credibility to the study since it provides a clear image of the policy that was followed to obtain data.

The current study used voluntary response sampling, which is one of the non-probability sampling techniques. Participants are not randomly chosen but based on their criteria, such as age, profession, level of education, etc. (Bell et al., 2022). This sort of sampling is usually based on easy accessibility since the aim is not to examine the whole population but only university students in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, instead of directly contacting the participants, they were invited to respond to the questionnaire through an online link voluntarily. Hence, the study aims to build an initial understanding of the study sample to evaluate the role of social

media in shaping cultural awareness. The non-probability sampling technique is used in this research due to its flexibility and ability to reach the study sample from different parts of the study location. Therefore, the study received responses from more than ten Saudi universities in various cities and regions. However, receiving replies from students from diverse places within the study location can assist in representing a large population. The fact that the study sample is students reduces the differences between them in terms of characteristics and makes the sample more generalisable. Additionally, including students of both genders and from different levels of education could make the sample more representative of the population.

This study's sample includes 400 students from various Saudi Arabian colleges who willingly replied to the survey. It includes male and female students, with about 200 replies for each gender. The students were from diverse academic levels and faculties in Saudi Arabia. However, most of the answers were from bachelor students (311). The study sample also includes (42) responses from master's students and (30) replies from PhD students. Diploma students also submitted (17) answers to the survey. However, the sample size was determined to be 400 university students based on many aspects of the study's aims. Therefore, the current study's most significant objective is to recognise social media's role in shaping cultural awareness among university students. Accordingly, the aim is not to examine a vast population but to

know university students' general impressions and interactions with cultural subjects on social media. Despite the comprehensiveness of the sample for different universities, levels of education and genders, similar characteristics could appear in university students in one society. Moreover, the features of the study sample almost represent identical age groups.

Another aim of the study is to present suggestions for improving the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness. Moreover, it explores the interferences that might prevent the positive role of social media in promoting students' cultural understanding. Therefore, the size of the study sample is logical since the homogeneity of the chosen sample can help the result to be more exact and generalised. Consequently, as social media users, the participants could add more credibility to the results as they may use social media based on their needs and characteristics. On the one hand, using non-probability sampling techniques such as voluntary response sampling allows the study to choose participants based on particular or non-random characteristics. It could be done quickly at a cheap cost, but on the other hand, using such a sampling technique might be criticised according to its bias. However, some individuals will naturally be more inclined to volunteer than others. This means the outcomes may need more representativity than probability sampling procedures (Kothari, 2014). Therefore, the study had to use individual responses from

different universities, genders, and levels of education to make it more representative of the study population.

Usually, the non-probability sampling technique is helpful for exploratory and qualitative research. In these sorts of studies, the objective is not necessarily to examine the hypotheses about a large population but to understand and evaluate a small portion of the population that has been sufficiently investigated (Ishtiaq, 2019). Therefore, the 400 participants could present an appropriate sample, especially if they have a lot of similarities and characteristics. The current study is a mixed methods study using the strategy of the collective case study, as explained previously in the study's design section.

Overall, the sampling tactic of the present research is using a non-probability procedure and voluntary response approach to ensure responses and resemblance of the study sample. Additionally, the chosen sampling system has helped to save cost, effort, and time in gathering various data and information. Moreover, the collected data indeed represents the study population because it concerns the characteristics of university students in Saudi Arabia.

Regardless of the strong sides of the sampling approach, the study considered critical opinions toward this sampling technique. The tactic has been criticised for being slightly biased because some participants are inclined to volunteer more than others.

Therefore, another approach is used to enhance the study's outcomes since the present study is a mixed method. Accordingly, the study would utilise the qualitative process to boost the credibility of the results. Thus, the qualitative methods will assist in achieving the research aims and answering the study questions again. The current research involves interviews with university teachers to emphasise the findings by presenting their perspectives and experiences.

3.4.1 Population and Sample

The current study sample was collected from a population of university students in Saudi Arabia who are experiencing substantial cultural and social development. Thus, the study needed to point out a sample that enhances the cultural process from the study location. Social media provide cultural exchange and interaction and can shape cultural awareness for university students. Consequently, the study uses the questionnaire and interview procedures to evaluate and analyse the role of social media in cultural understanding. Notably, cultural engagement and the Saudi Vision 2030 emphasise cultural aspects as one of the main patterns that reflect awareness and social goals.

The Saudi authorities emphasise investing in the youth group, which can assist in social improvements and plans in many parts of Saudi society. Therefore, the study will concentrate on students in Saudi universities, as the (15-34) age group constitutes the majority of the Saudi population. Furthermore, according to the (General Authority for Statistics, 2022), the population's average age is 29. This suggests that a large percentage of the population falls within the 15-34 age range, making university students a fundamental group to study. However, the study used quantitative methods to gather data neutrally from the study sample. It also used qualitative methods to note other related aspects of the Saudi culture, such as religion, traditions, politics, etc.

Hence, university students in Saudi Arabia from both genders and various levels of education seek knowledge as an essential part of the culture. The sample was chosen from a population strongly connected with the study area. Firstly, the youth group present the most significant part of the study location. Secondly, their cultural characteristics represent the culture of the society since they are collected from different parts of the Saudi population. Additionally, the environment of universities is appropriate for cultural exchanges since students interact and communicate with people from other cultures and backgrounds. Furthermore, the location of the study generally needs the youth group and university students for sustainability and achieving development aims.

The study population consists of university students in Saudi society who are enrolled in multiple Saudi universities and levels of education. The study will define distinctions between participants to give comprehensive information about the sample. The study sample comprises 400 students from diverse Saudi universities and colleges who responded freely to the survey. It includes responses from male and female students, with around 200 responses by each gender. Students from all academic levels and faculties are represented. Bachelor students provided the majority of responses, with 311 answers in total. There are also 42 replies from master's students and 30 responses from PhD students in the research sample. Diploma students also responded to the survey with 17 replies.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This section points out the procedure used to collect data; the study investigates social media's role in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students. It is designed as a collective case study, often containing multiple study components connected to a single core topic or area. The collective case study is an in-depth analysis of a group of people or features to establish a generalisation that applies to many aspects of the investigated

area. Additionally, the collective case study is based on data from various sources (Yin, 2014).

The current study uses mixed methods that acquire qualitative information and quantitative data. The respondents to the questionnaire are 400 Saudi students from different genders and places within the population. The research employed interviews and extra approaches to collect qualitative data from multiple sources. The data indicate publications, documents, and official sources related to Saudi cultural aspects, social changes, and development plans. The two following sections will provide more details about the data collection tools.

3.5.1 The Questionnaire Tool

The current study uses the questionnaire as a tool, which contains four sets of questions, which will be described in this section. The questionnaire was directed to university students in Saudi society, aiming to explore the role of social media platforms in shaping their cultural awareness. However, before collecting the sample responses, the questionnaire went through two main stages as follows:

The first stage was preparing the original form of the questionnaire by assembling the required information for each

part. The study used the theoretical framework of the current research, relevant previous studies, and recent trends in the research subject. Accordingly, the questionnaire used the five-point Likert Scale as a psychometric response scale. The responders could specify their level of agreement to statements typically in five points: (SD) Strongly disagree, (D) Disagree, (N) Neutral, (A) Agree, (SA) Strongly agree. Rensis Likert invented the Likert Scale in 1932, and it has since become one of the most extensively used scaling tools in social science research. It is a summated rating scale that implies scores to be calculated by summing replies from numerous items or sentences.

However, using the Likert Scale in the questionnaire comes from the need to measure the participants' behaviours and opinions. Furthermore, the Likert Measure is a vital and reliable scale in many research fields, especially social studies. Additionally, it is an easy and flexible sort of measurement that has a significant capability to evaluate a lot of behaviours and opinions (Carifio & Perla, 2007).

The questionnaire contains five parts, each with a set of questions. The survey was also evaluated by academic specialists, including the supervision team for the current study. Therefore, the questionnaire was reviewed according to the research aims and questions to study the role of social media platforms in shap-

ing cultural awareness in Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire explores individuals' participation and cultural engagement through social media platforms. Moreover, the interferences might prevent the benefit of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students.

The second stage is formulating the questionnaire's parts based on the research objectives and questions. The study in this stage had to frequently review each question and objective to establish an appropriate survey. However, the comments received from the academic advisors helped address the questionnaire's weakness. It is recommended that more items be added and some questions be repeated in different phrases to ensure the comprehensiveness and quality of responses. Therefore, the study improved more items and phrases to enhance the applicability of the questionnaire.

Nevertheless, the questionnaire consists of (4) parts, each one consisting of a set of phrases and options. The main questions are (40) and (41) additional sub-questions. Accordingly, the questionnaire comprises (40) phrases distributed over four parts, while the total number of items is (81). However, these items are directly related to the research questions and objectives and are organised as follows:

- **The first part** evaluates the use of social media platforms, consisting of (28) items.
- **The second part** investigates cultural engagement through social media platforms, consisting of (23) items.
- **The third part** examines the role of social media in developing cultural awareness and consists of (18) items.
- **The fourth part** explores the interferences that might prevent the benefit of social media in shaping cultural awareness among university students, and it consists of (12) items.

3.5.2 The Interview Tool

The current study also uses interviews with 15 university professors to support the findings with more details. Therefore, adding this tool could enhance the result with a comprehensive understanding that might not be recognised by using only quantitative methods. However, the interview positively impacts the data collection due to its flexibility with the participants. It uses direct interaction with participants, especially those who prefer talking about the phenomena rather than writing about it. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), “ a qualitative interview occurs when a researcher asks one or more participants in general, open-ended questions, and records their answers.”

There are many different types of interviews, such as structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Telephone and face-to-face interviews might be the most advantageous of these interviews due to their flexibility and concentration. However, taking a long time, extra effort, and cost could be among the disadvantages. Moreover, it might be affected by stress and tension factors or difficulties in reaching some participants sometimes (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

The current study uses unstructured interviews with 15 academic experts and specialists in cultural and social areas. The study seeks to gather extra information to add reliability to the findings by combining the research methods. The interviews will be recorded and conducted using a set of open-ended questions focusing on cultural interaction and exchanges. Moreover, cultural awareness and engagement, as well as the interferences that might face the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness, are also critical. The open-ended questions used in the interviews are as follows:

- 1- To what extent does social media affect interaction for university students?
- 2- To what extent does social media impact cultural exchanges among university students?
- 3- To what extent do university students rely on social media?
- 4- What role can social media play in cultural identity?

- 5- What role can social media play in cultural diversity?
- 6- How is social media shaping cultural awareness among university students?
- 7- How is social media improving cultural engagement among university students?
- 8- How do you evaluate the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness?
- 9 - What are the interferences that prevent the benefit of social media from shaping cultural awareness?
- 10- What do you recommend to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness?

However, the interviews included other questions during the discussion to clarify the respondents' answers and the interviewees' opinions during the response process. The used sub-questions depend on the conversations, aiming to add more information on the main themes of the questions.

3.5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential procedures in the research because they present the moral principles that the study followed to protect participants (Wellington, 2015). Therefore, the current research has considered moral principles to ensure participants' rights. Firstly, all the respondents in the survey were

knowledgeable about the topic and objectives of the study to help them freely choose whether to participate. Furthermore, respondents were informed that they could quit participating if they liked while collecting their responses through the survey or the interviews.

The present study adopted the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) because the study is social research. However, the BASW code has been mainly used for other research to ensure the respect of human rights, dignity, and social justice (BASW, 2012). Despite the low-risk level of this research's findings, the study protects participants' privacy, including identities, job information and recordings. Moreover, the interviews were scheduled at appropriate times for the interviewees who agreed to be recorded for data analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The methodology chapter in this section will indicate the methods used to analyse data to conduct the study. It will explain each step and procedure the study chose to evaluate the research data, including questionnaire stability calculation. There are many data analysis techniques, but not all are appropriate for the current study. Therefore, many previous studies have been reviewed to choose the most fitting tactic for the present research. However, resources, questions, and the research design play a significant

role in picking suitable data analysis methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This research's aims and questions will be reviewed due to their importance in data analysis. Consequently, before categorising the study objectives, the study first had to understand the present reality of the role of social media platforms and Saudi culture. Therefore, the study presented related background information, documentation, and previous studies. As noted, many literature reviews and reports nominated Twitter, currently X, as the most influential in shaping cultural awareness in Saudi Arabia. However, the study included the most popular platforms: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Additionally, the study aims to explore the interferences that might prevent the positive role of social media platforms in promoting cultural awareness. Thus, quantitative and qualitative methods seek to discover these restrictions that may prohibit the excellent role of social media in awareness. Accordingly, the study will present some suggestions to improve the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness for Saudi university students.

As for the study questions, this chapter indicated some key terms to help understand and answer each question. The chosen data analysis technique must address cultural exchanges and

awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, interviewees' perspectives will be discursively analysed to promote cultural understanding. The qualitative methods used in the study will assist in achieving the aims, while the survey will collect data from university students.

Moreover, university students' reliance on social media for cultural content in Saudi Arabia is a crucial term for the study. Therefore, data analysis must be able to cooperate with such a dependence on social media within the theoretical framework. Additionally, two terminologies are essential in the study: interaction and interference. The present study examines interferences that might prevent the positive role of social media. Therefore, techniques must be capable of analysing these types of data to ensure that the questions are addressed, and the study's aims are achieved (Clark et al., 2021).

The quantitative data in the current research were gathered from 400 university students in Saudi Arabia. Male and female students from different locations and academic programs made responses to the questionnaire. Qualitatively, the research used the interview procedure, official information, and resources to support the findings. However, the following sections will describe the data analysis techniques, the study population, and the questionnaire stability calculation.

3.6.1 Description of the techniques

The study used different procedures to analyse the quantitative data collected to ensure its reliability and validity. These techniques and methods will examine the study sample's size and psychometric characteristics to be more understandable and relevant in the study context. Furthermore, the stability of the questionnaire will be evaluated according to highly recommended methods to ensure the correct measurement. Therefore, the current study used Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half for its questionnaire stability (Revelle & Zinbarg, 2009).

However, the qualitative data in the current research employed multiple approaches to collect and provide information from Saudi culture. The information included interviews, official cultural plans, Saudi Arabia's history, related literature and reports. The collected qualitative data will be presented and described according to the theoretical framework and data collection methods.

Since the study uses mixed methods, it will combine qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, the current research is conducted as a collective case study, which matches the study topic due to its holistic content. The study investigates Saudi cultural aspects throughout the social change. It also addresses the location

of the study in terms of historical and cultural situations. Accordingly, new changes within the study location must be considered to achieve the study's aims. Thus, the collective case study is highly recommended for such an area of study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The present research used Python version 3 to analyse the quantitative data for statistical purposes. However, the questionnaire calculations used Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half method to ensure stability. Python is a statistical software that allows researchers to use different methods to analyse and visualise data. Furthermore, the software was used to calculate the frequencies and percentages, arithmetic averages, and standard deviations to perform the statistical processing of the questionnaire. Additionally, Python provides the technical processing program and methods to draw the plots of the findings (Revelle, 2017).

The psychometric characteristics sample consists of 70 participants from the same study sample. However, the current study evaluates the stability of the survey according to Cronbach's alpha and the split-half coefficient. The study employed these measurement tests to ensure valid findings and stability. Accordingly, the next section will fully illustrate the calculation of questionnaire stability.

3.6.2 *Questionnaire Stability Calculation*

Stability is one of the psychometric conditions that many studies use to measure the accuracy of the survey based on the responses of individuals. Some popular tests can ensure that the questionnaire is stable by measuring a small model from the actual sample. Using such tactics represents stability and adds validity and reliability to the findings. Additionally, these measurements are appropriate for examining participants with similar characteristics or conditions (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Consequently, to check the stability of the questionnaire, the study used two tests: Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half, as indicated below.

Cronbach's Alpha (α): This research used Cronbach's alpha coefficient method to calculate the stability of the questionnaire by applying it to a sample of 70 out of 400 university students. Accordingly, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated individually for each part of the questionnaire, and the total items were calculated as one part. The reliability coefficient values in the current study aimed to present the stability of the questionnaire; the values are illustrated in detail below. TABLE 3.6.2.1 shows the value of the alpha coefficient, Cronbach's, for each part of the questionnaire and the questionnaire as a whole.

TABLE 3.6.2.1 *The reliability coefficient values using Alpha Cronbach's method.*

The parts of questionnaire	number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
1. The use of social media platforms	28	0.72
2. Cultural engagement through social media platforms	23	0.85
3. The role of social media in developing cultural awareness	18	0.86
4. Reasons that might prevent the benefit of social media in shaping cultural awareness among students	12	0.21
The questionnaire as a whole	81	0.71

[Table 3.6.2.1] presents the calculation of Alpha Cronbach's technique to show the stability of the questionnaire by using a sample of 70 responses out of 400 participants. The survey contains four parts and 81 items, each investigating a particular aspect. Accordingly, the first part focuses on using social media

platforms, consisting of 28 items, calculated at 0.72 by Alpha Cronbach's procedure. The second part checked the cultural engagement through social media platforms, consisting of 23 items calculated at 0.85 by Alpha Cronbach's process. The third part addresses the role of social media in developing cultural awareness and consists of 18 items, scoring 0.86 according to the measurement used.

In addition, the above table indicates the fourth part of the questionnaire, which presents the reasons that might prevent the benefits of social media from shaping cultural awareness. This was measured at 0.21 by Alpha Cronbach's procedure due to the small number of items. The part contains only 12 items aimed at exploring the interferences that might prevent the positive role of social media platforms in promoting cultural awareness. However, the table also shows the questionnaire score, including the four parts and 81 items, on a scale of 0.71 according to Alpha Cronbach's technique [Table 3.6.2.1].

Overall, the study reviews the survey measurements based on the number of parts and items, which will be indicated individually in the graphs in the next chapter. The presented values in [Table 3.6.2.1] show that the questionnaire has appropriate stability and can be trusted and valid according to Alpha Cronbach's method. However, the study also used another measurement called the Split-Half

technique to ensure more reliability for the findings and the questionnaire.

Split-Half: This is a psychometric method popularly used to check the stability coefficient of the questionnaire in the present study. It calculates the survey items by splitting them in half to examine each part through the obtained scores to ensure reliability (Pronk et al., 2022). However, this technique is used due to its popularity among researchers, as noticed while collecting the literature review of the current study.

Consequently, the stability coefficient of the questionnaire was also calculated using the split-half method. Thus, the scores in each dimension were divided into two halves. Accordingly, the Pearson correlation coefficient was extracted between the scores of the two halves of the questionnaire. They were corrected using the Spearman-Brown formula and the Guttman scale. [Table 3.6.2.2] presents the second psychometrics method in more detail to ensure the stability coefficient of the questionnaire.

***TABLE 3.6.2.2** The values of the stability coefficient of the questionnaire using the split-half method.*

The study’s questionnaire	Pearson correlation coefficient	Spearman-Brown formula	Guttman scale
The role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness among university students in Saudi Arabia.	0.92	0.83	6.09

[Table 3.6.2.2] illustrates the evaluation of the stability coefficient of the questionnaire, which investigates the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness. According to the split-half procedure, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the scores of the two halves of the questionnaire at 0.92. However, it was adjusted using the Spearman-Brown procedure at 0.83 and the Guttman scale at 6.09. Consequently, these values indicate that the questionnaire has an appropriate degree of stability to measure the role of social media platforms in shaping cultural awareness among university students. It seems that the values are relevant and reliable and could indicate the validity of the questionnaire.

3.6.3 *Statistical Processing Methods*

The current study employed Python Version 3, a statistical software enabling users to analyse data. The software is a statistical tool that allows researchers to apply various statistical approaches to resolve and present data. Therefore, the study utilised Python to analyse data by calculating frequencies and percentages, arithmetic averages, and standard deviations. Using this technique, the study employed some procedures that ensure the stability of the questionnaire, such as Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the split-half. Moreover, the study statistically analyses the collected study data and creates graphs of the provided data using the software.

The data were processed statistically using the statistical Python package, according to the following tests and methods:

- Cronbach's alpha to calculate the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire.
- Split-half, Pearson correlation coefficient, Spearman-Brown formula and Guttman's scale method to calculate the stability of the questionnaire.
- Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic averages, and standard deviations to perform the statistical processing of the findings.

4 FINDING

4.1 Introduction

This part of the research will illustrate and analyse the study's findings. It will present the responses to the survey directed to 400 Saudi university students. The reactions were voluntarily submitted by university students from different parts of Saudi Arabia, including male and female students. The study sample also included various levels of education, including postgraduate, undergraduate, and diploma students already enrolled in academic courses.

The questionnaire focused on four main items about the role of social media in shaping the cultural awareness of university students in Saudi society. The first item examined the uses of social media platforms, including forms of use, followed accounts, goals, types of interactions, and the daily time of participation. The second item of the findings reviewed cultural engagement through social media, focusing on cultural topics and interaction. Additionally, the third item examines the role of social media in developing cultural awareness, including several issues such as social developments, influences, reliance, and impressions. The last item investigated the reasons that might prevent the benefit of social media, including some critical topics like confidentiality, social media content, confidence, and privacy issues. Therefore, these items will be demonstrated and analysed in-

dividually and in groups in this part of the study. Moreover, this chapter will present more findings based on the interviews with academics and specialists.

4.1.1 The interviews

The current study uses interviews to add credibility and understanding of the findings. The interviews were conducted individually with academics and specialists in various cultural aspects, including communication, art, and social science. The interviewees were 15 academics, chosen from both genders according to many factors, but interacting with university students and working among them was the most important reason. However, other features were considered when choosing the interviewees, such as working in different cultural environments and periods.

The conversations with the participants targeted the motives and need to acquire knowledge and information depending on social media, as well as the role of social media in cultural identity and diversity. The academics' views, evaluations and recommendations were discussed in terms of improving the role of social media in cultural awareness. As well as the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for university students. The interviews contain open-ended questions and sub-questions for further information and clari-

fication. However, each question focuses on a central theme: awareness, interaction, cultural exchanges, and participation. Furthermore, the discussion explains the academics' perspectives regarding social media, and the next section presents more opinions and information.

The study targeted ten main themes while conducting the interviews. The topics discussed were the effect of social media on interaction and cultural exchanges among university students. Accordingly, the dependency on social media and its role in cultural identity, cultural diversity, and awareness were examined by 15 university professors. Moreover, the discussion reviews the cultural engagements on social media and the interferences that affect this process. Finally, some recommendations for improving the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness were reviewed. The subjects discussed with academics are individually illustrated within the four main items that were investigated with the students about the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness, as follows.

4.2 The use of social media platforms

This research section discusses how university students utilise social media platforms and connect with others. The findings illustrate the preferred platforms and goals for using various social media sites. Furthermore, the types of interaction, time spent, and the tools used with these apps or platforms. This section will also illustrate the students' opinions and the frequent social media accounts they follow;

the standard deviation and average will be displayed with each item to improve the accuracy of the findings.

Figure 1 shows the platforms most used for interaction by the study sample. (Own work)

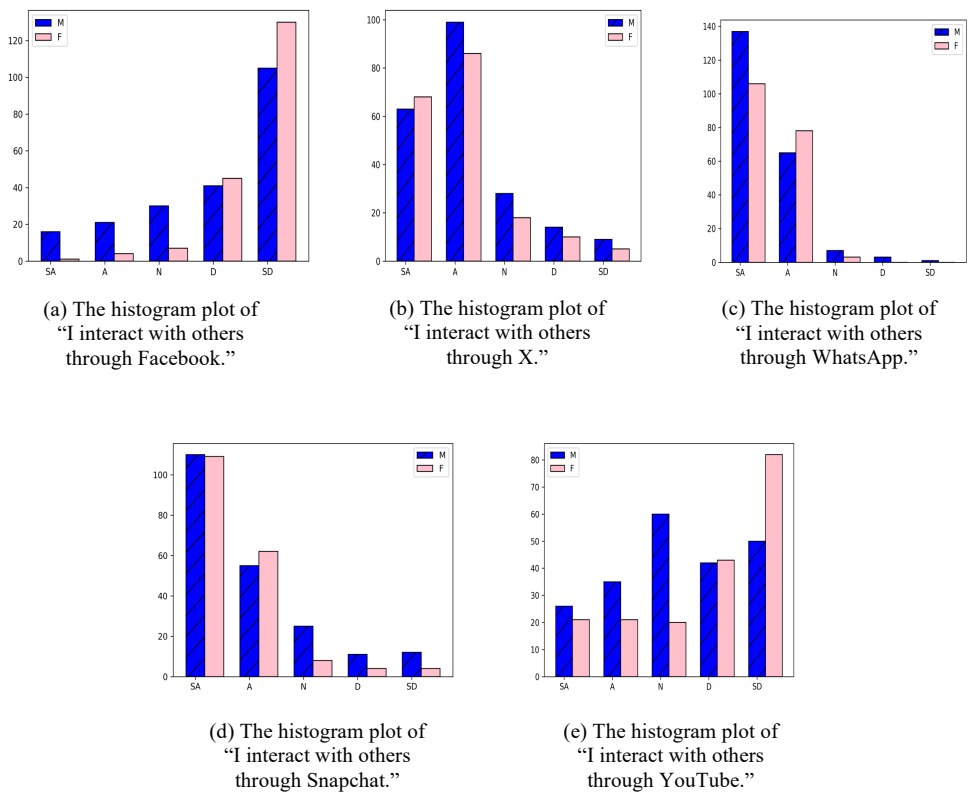


Figure 1 illustrates the ranks of social media used for interactions by the study sample from Facebook, X, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and YouTube. The results above show that the most common platform used for interaction is WhatsApp, which has a standard deviation of 3.55 and an average of 4.04. As 243 university students

strongly agreed to interact with others through WhatsApp. However, according to the findings, the second most popular platform is Snapchat, where almost 220 of both genders strongly agreed. Moreover, nearly 117 students used Snapchat to interact with others, with a standard deviation of 3.17 and an average of 3.54. X comes at the third rank, with around 185 users from both genders agreeing to use it to react with others, and almost 131 students strongly agree, with a standard deviation of 3.11 and an average of 3.53.

Additionally, only 56 students agreed to use YouTube to cooperate with others, making YouTube come fourth on the list with a standard deviation of 2.0 and an average of 2.21. Finally, 25 students agreed to interact through Facebook, one of the oldest social media sites and came fifth with a standard deviation of 1.41 and an average of 1.64. It has been noticed previously in much literature that X, formerly Twitter, is the most used platform in Saudi Arabia. However, social media platforms are numerous and constantly expanding and competing. As a result, the sequence may change depending on the place, time, and user's age; X was the third platform for interactions by the study sample.

Figure 2 shows the most used devices for interaction by Saudi university students. (Own work)

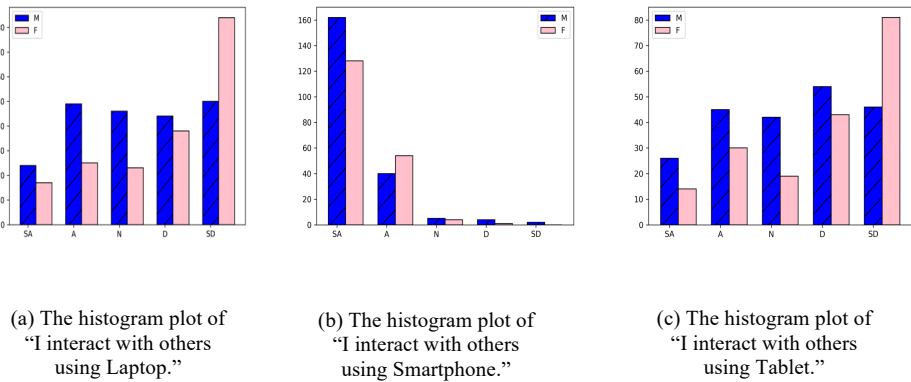


Figure 2 shows that smartphones are the most popular devices Saudi university students use to interact with others. Almost 290 out of 400 students strongly agreed that they use smartphones to react to social media with others, with a standard deviation of 3.58 and an average of 4.04. However, only around 75 students agreed to use another electronic device, such as a laptop or Tablet, for interaction. Thus, the inflexibility of traditional media has helped the rapid spread of social media as an alternative source of information.

Moreover, the prevalence of the Internet and the use of smartphones and social media are increasing (Yunus, 2013). It is expected that the power of social media will increase because of the use of smartphones, which users find very easy to carry. Additionally, many services and new updates are continually added to smart devices to facilitate cooperation and interaction with others.

Figure 3 explains the purposes of using social media by the study sample. (Own work)

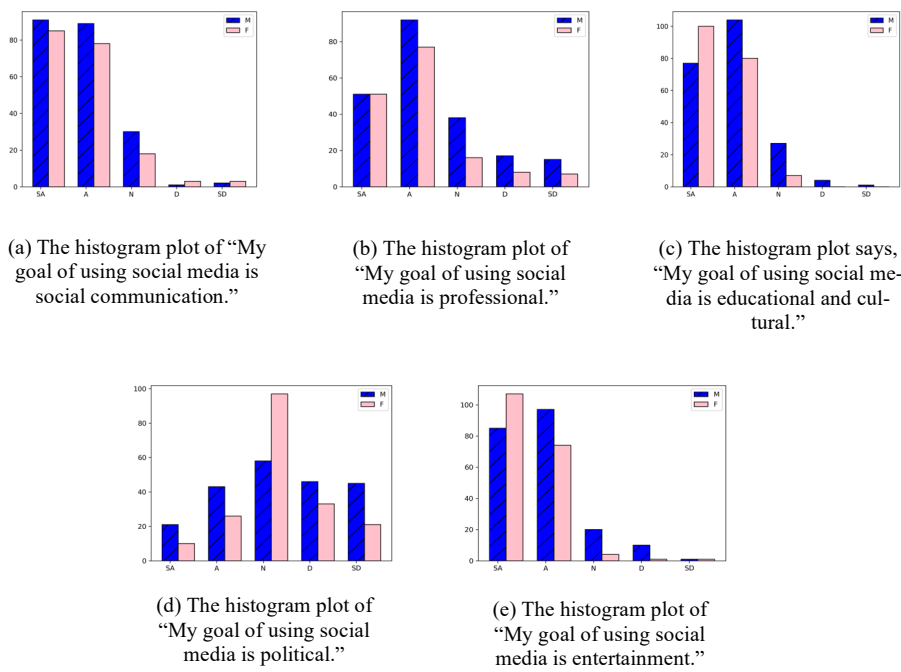


Figure 3 shows the most popular goals of using social media. It shows that around 360 out of 400 students use these platforms to seek knowledge and culture, with a standard deviation of 3.38 and an average of 3.87. Nevertheless, almost the same number of mixed-gender students strongly agreed or simply agreed to use social media for entertainment. The purpose of using social platforms for social communication comes second, with almost 343 students from both genders, at a standard deviation of 3.31 and an average of 3.77.

Social media emerged based on celebration and communication between colleagues, friends, and family. It has also been used for academic communication between teachers and students regardless of the long distance. Accordingly, social media have succeeded in offering users across the globe an excellent opportunity to share knowledge (Froment et al., 2017).

Furthermore, in Figure 3, almost 300 students agreed to use social media platforms for professional purposes. The political purpose was the last one by just 100 students, with a standard deviation of 2.30 and an average of 2.63. Eventually, there is not a remarkable difference when comparing the responses of male and female students. However, using social media for political purposes shows that almost 100 Saudi female students are neutral, which might reflect less political interest by female students.

Figure 4 illustrates names used on social media by the study sample. (Own work)

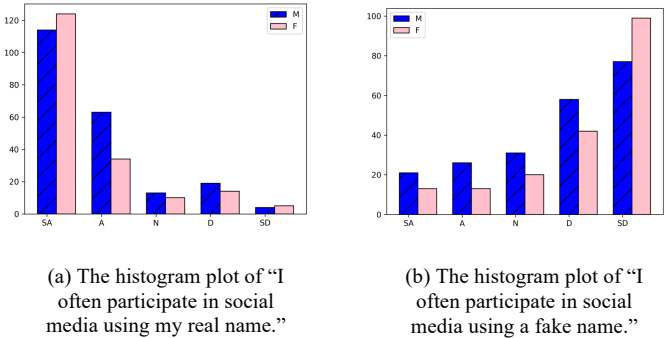


Figure 4 reviews the responses of Saudi university students to the form of participation in social media and whether they use their real names or not. The result illustrates that almost 340 out of 400 students are participating on social media using their real names. However, 34 students agreed they use fake names when participating on social media platforms. On the other hand, the fundamental component of the media reliance hypothesis demonstrates how much people rely on the media (Tao & Isan, 2003). People's motives and desires for knowledge and information may be discovered in the first stage. However, the phenomenon of social change makes it even more important for residents to engage in the new goals of society.

Figure 5 illustrates the time spent on social media by university students. (Own work)

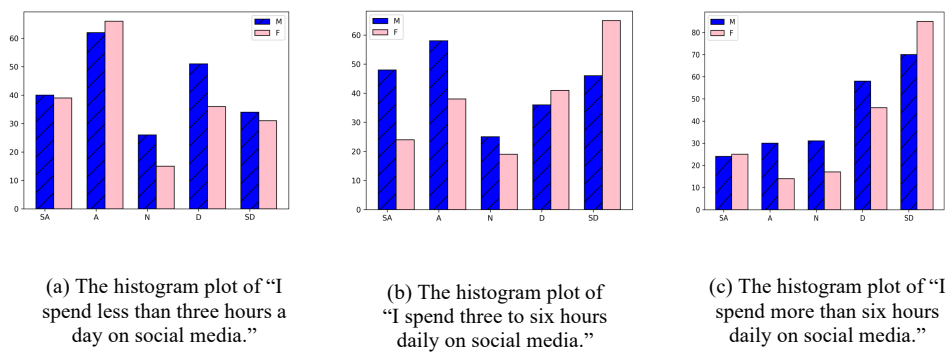
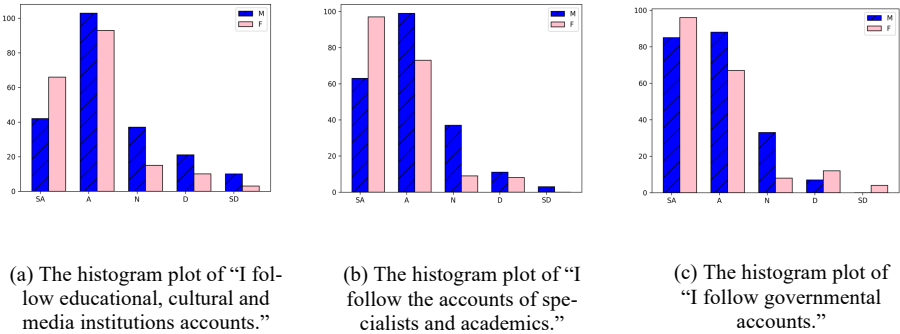


Figure 5 demonstrates that almost 200 students spend less than three hours daily on social media sites, with a standard deviation of 2.27 and an average of 2.44. Moreover, there are around 170 students

who spend approximately three to six hours on social media, with a standard deviation of 1.77 and an average of 1.98. Although the above charts did not represent many differences between genders, male students seem to spend more time on social media. The second chart shows that more male students spend three to six hours on social media, which is higher than female students.

Figure 6 shows the most followed accounts on social media by students. (Own work)



The above charts indicate that almost 336 of the sample follow governmental accounts on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.08 and an average of 3.49. Additionally, around 330 university students follow the accounts of specialists and academics on social media sites, with a standard deviation of 3.21 and an average of 3.66. Furthermore, over 300 students acknowledge that the most followed accounts are educational, cultural and media institutions, with a standard deviation of 3.21 and an average of 3.67. Effectively, the charts did not represent a significant difference when comparing the

responses of the male and female students. The responses were positive about following governmental and cultural accounts, specialists, and academics. Overall, the positive reactions reflect the motivations and needs of individuals to seek knowledge and information.

Figure 7 shows the most common form of interaction on social media by university students. (Own work)

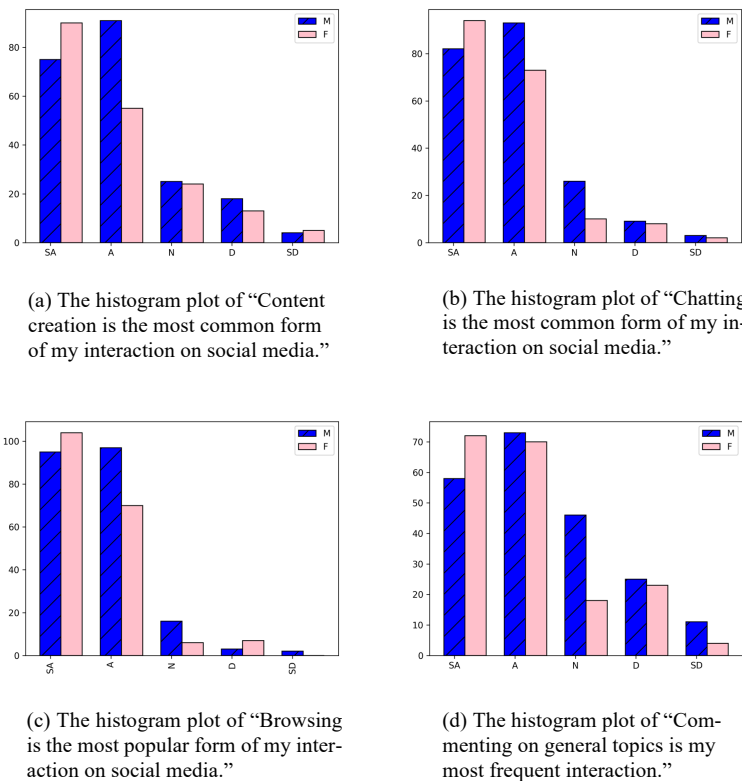


Figure 7 presents the most popular type of student contribution on social media concerning browsing, commenting on general topics,

chatting, and content creation. The findings show that the most common reaction among Saudi university students is browsing. 366 students claimed that browsing is their most common sort of interaction on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.38 and an average of 3.86. Secondly, around 345 respondents agreed that chatting is the most repeated form of interaction, with a standard deviation of 3.27 and an average of 3.71.

Additionally, the charts illustrate that 311 Saudi university students voted for content creation as the most attractive form of interaction, with a standard deviation of 3.08 and an average of 3.49. Moreover, 273 students agree that the most common interaction is commenting on general topics, with a standard deviation of 2.90 and an average of 3.28. However, the findings reflected a slight difference between the responses of female and male students in terms of interaction on social media.

Figure 8 illustrates the participation activities by university students. (Own work)

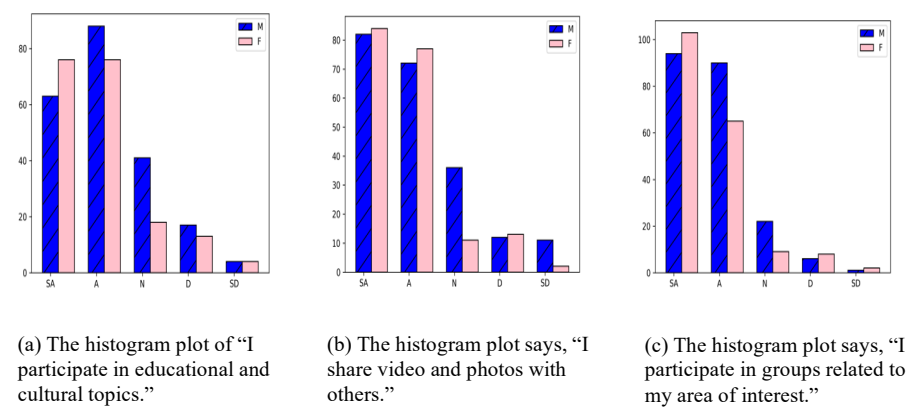


Figure 8 exposes some responses regarding the forms of participation by the study sample on social media, including education, culture, sharing, and grouping. The charts present 352 students participating in groups related to their area of interest on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.31 and an average of 3.77. Meanwhile, there are almost 315 positive answers from students who share videos and photos as a form of participation on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.08 and an average of 3.48. Finally, there are around 303 students who agree to participate in educational and cultural topics through social media sites, with a standard deviation of 3.09 and an average of 3.51.

4.2.1 The influence of social media on interaction for university students

The majority of the interviewees believe that social media has a positive impact on the level of interaction of university students. These platforms help them stay connected and improve relationships and friendships. Accordingly, students can easily make virtual groups to share information, ideas, moments, achievements, cultures, experiments, data, and digital files and support each other. The academics see that being active in these groups creates a feeling of belonging, unity, and satisfaction. Additionally, it increases interaction opportunities and cultural exchange,

which helps organise events and participate in social activities, see [Table 4.2.1].

The interviews emphasised that interaction on social media provides educational and cooperative opportunities. Consequently, students increase learning and self-improvement by exchanging thoughts and feelings. Moreover, university students interact with specialists in different subjects and exchange thoughts and feelings continuously. Therefore, the benefits of this interaction could help students learn new things and increase awareness of cultural and political issues, as illustrated in [Table 4.2.1].

On the other hand, the participants mentioned some harmful sides of social media interaction, such as social isolation, especially with the heavy use of social media. Accordingly, this isolation lowers the quality of social relations and demolishes realistic communication. It could also affect health, focus, and students' academic levels. Useless interaction on social media might spread misinformation, increase divisions, and promote intolerance and discrimination. Therefore, some users might suffer from exposure to cyberbullying, harassment, threats, and abuse; see the negative sides in [Table 4.2.1].

However, the interviewees emphasise that interaction on social media is very effective and has two sides. It is based on the popularity of the platforms used, society, time consumed, and communication

practices. The following table illustrates professors' comments on the influence of social media on the interactions of university students.

TABLE 4.2.1 *Professors' Comments on Social Media's Influence on University Students' Interactions.*

<i>Positive side</i>	<i>Negative side</i>	<i>Others</i>
Staying connected. Making friends. Participating in activities and social events. The feeling of belonging, unity, and satisfaction. Sharing information and ideas. Build and improve relationships. Making virtual groups. Increasing interaction opportunities, and cultural exchange. The continuous dialogue. Providing educational and cooperative opportunities. Increasing learning and self-improvement. Increase awareness of cultural and political issues. Organizing events. Exchanging thoughts and feelings. Sharing moments and achievements. Providing support.	Social isolation. Spreading misinformation. Exposure to cyberbullying. Lowering the quality of social relations. Increase divisions. Promoting intolerance and discrimination. Exposure to harassment and threats. Exposure to abuse. Poor psychological health. Losing of focus and time management. Lowering academic level. Demolish realistic communication.	Very effective. Among the biggest influences. Has two sides. Affects psychological health. Affects the academic level. Huge impact. The predominance of the positive side. Available anytime. Easy access to information. Varies depending on the platform. According to popularity. Depending on the time spent. According to communication practices.

Learning new things. Communicating with specialists. Sharing culture and experiments. Sharing data and E-files.		
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4.2.2 *The impact of social media on cultural exchanges for university students.*

In this section, the study reviews the participants’ comments on the effect of social media on cultural exchanges. Academics see that social media helps university students learn more about other cultures, which increases understanding and respect. Moreover, cultural exchanges on social media work as an open window to know people from different backgrounds. Accordingly, communicating with others from different cultures could create an open and respectful vision of others and promote cultural understanding.

According to the interviewees, cultural exchanges on social media assist university students in many aspects. For example, they make relationships, cooperate in everyday things, share data, photos, videos, ideas, and experiences, and participate in conversations about cultural issues. Consequently, these exchanges increase awareness and understanding between cultures, encouraging cultural awareness and promoting social harmony or closeness [Table 4.2.2].

Although the participants highlighted the advantages of social media in cultural exchanges, they pointed out some disadvantages. For example, stereotypes are spread, and people judge other cultures negatively. Accordingly, this leads to cultural intolerance, discrimination, and cultural divisions. Furthermore, academics mentioned that “ heavy use of social media in cultural exchanges might lead to losing cultural identity”. These exchanges are big and vary depending on the environment. Social media is an effective tool for cultural exchanges and could direct culture toward both sides [Table 4.2.2].

***TABLE 4.2.2** Professors’ comments on the effect of social media on cultural exchanges for university students.*

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>	<i>Others</i>
Learning more about other cultures. Increase the understanding and respect of others. knowing people from different backgrounds. Making relationships and cooperation in common things. Sharing data, photos, videos, ideas, experiences. Participating in conversations about cultural issues. Increasing awareness and understanding between cultures. Promote cultural understanding.	Spreading stereotypes and prejudices. Cultural intolerance. Losing cultural identity. Promoting intolerance and discrimination. Creating cultural divisions. Making negative judgments about other cultures.	Big and varies depending on the environment. Social media is an effective tool for cultural exchanges. It directs social culture. Heavy cultural mixing affects both sides.

Communicating with others from different cultures. Create an open and respectful vision of others. Encourage cultural awareness. Promote social harmony. Cooperation between students and their teachers. Social closeness.		
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4.2.3 The dependence on social media for university students

The current study employed the media dependence theory, which demonstrates how much people rely on the media through the motivations and needs of individuals. Therefore, emotional and knowledge excitation and the need for participation are essential factors in maintaining societal harmony (Tao & Isan, 2003). However, students' dependence on social media was discussed with the participants based on their reasons for reliance, advantages, and disadvantages.

Overall, the interviewees see significant dependence on social media by university students. One of the professors says that “with the new economic strategies and technology development, some universities are working towards providing knowledge online”. Many

factors, such as easy access and providing opportunities, support the reliance on social media. Moreover, the spread of smartphones has made it possible to have entertaining content and communicate with people from different cultures and regions [Table 4.2.3].

The participants' opinions illustrated some advantages of students' dependence on social media. For example, they stay in contact, make friends, share or obtain information, and spend free time based on students' interests. Nevertheless, heavy dependence leads to social isolation and facilitates the targeting of students from different organisations. Furthermore, some professors believe university students spend much time on entertaining content. This agrees with the survey of this study, which shows that around 360 out of 400 students use social media for entertainment and to seek knowledge and culture [Table 4.2.3].

TABLE 4.2.3 *Participants’ comments about the dependence on social media for university students.*

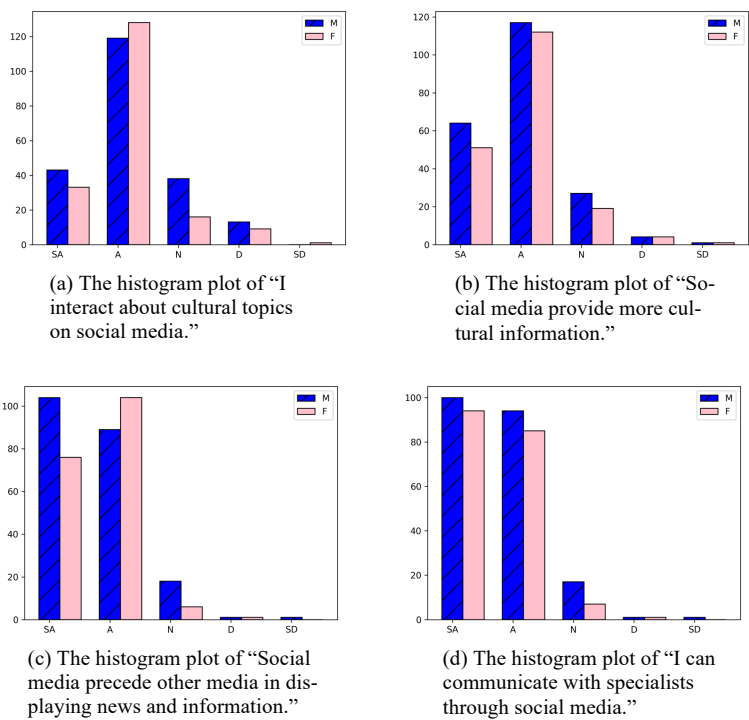
<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>	<i>Dependence factors</i>
Staying in contact. Making new friends. Participating in social activities and events. Sharing information. Obtaining information about their interests. Spending free time.	Heavy dependence leads to social isolation. Increase targeting of students. Spending a lot of time on entertaining content.	Easy access. Offering many opportunities. Communicating with people from different cultures and regions. Spreading of smartphones. Availability of entertaining content.

4.3 CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

This section discusses the students’ perspectives and cultural engagement on social media. The results illustrate cultural topics, news, information, and opinions. Furthermore, the findings include the sample’s points of view regarding opportunities, solutions, education, and interaction on cultural topics. Additionally, the possibility of communication with specialists and the space for freedom and discussion on social media will be reviewed in this section. The standard deviation and the average will be presented

along with each item to add more accuracy to the findings. Consequently, the result will be analysed and compared according to sample responses, the study procedure, and the framework.

Figure 9 reveals cultural activities and opportunities on social media. (Own work)

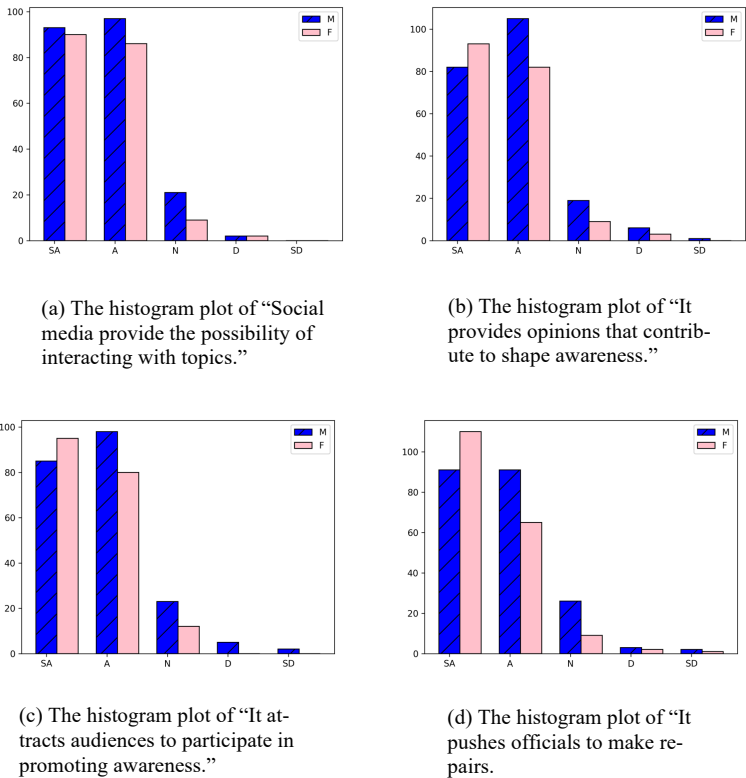


The charts above simply present responses regarding cultural topics, providing information and communication capabilities that social media facilitates for university students. The results show that more than 370 students can communicate with specialists on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.40 and an average of 3.90. This reflects that social media has succeeded in

providing specialists from different areas to whom users can follow and communicate.

Furthermore, 371 students believe that social media precedes other means of communication in displaying news and information, with a standard deviation of 3.44 and an average of 3.94. Moreover, the finding shows that 344 students agree that social media platforms provide cultural details not offered by other platforms or media institutions. The standard deviation for this item was 3.45, and the average was 3.95. Additionally, 323 university students interact with others about cultural topics on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.32 and an average of 3.81. Overall, the charts did not express a significant difference between genders.

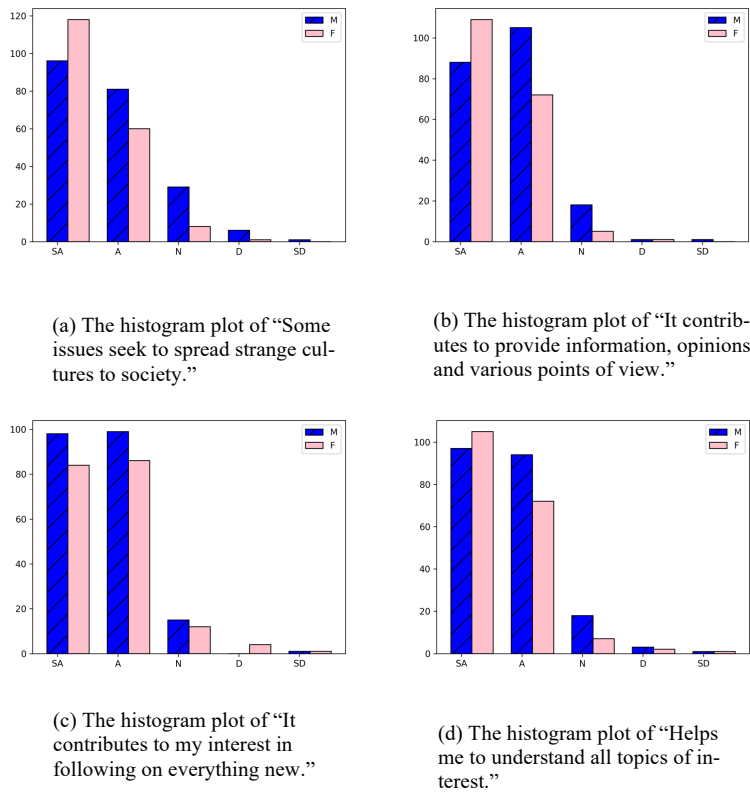
Figure 10 presents views about interaction, awareness and officials’ repairs. (Own work)



The above charts articulate the views regarding interaction with published topics on social media and the contribution of awareness and pushing towards repairing officials. The findings show that 366 believe social media allows interaction with published topics, with a standard deviation of 3.40 and an average of 3.90. Furthermore, 358 students agree that social media attracts audiences to participate in promoting awareness, with a standard deviation of 3.35 and an average of 3.84. Accordingly, 357 students think social media

pushes officials to make repairs, with a standard deviation of 3.34 and an average of 3.81. Finally, almost 362 students agree that social media provides opinions that shape community awareness, with a standard deviation of 3.36 and an average of 3.85.

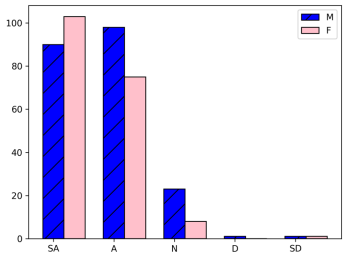
Figure 11 *exposes cultural and educational engagement by the students. (Own work)*



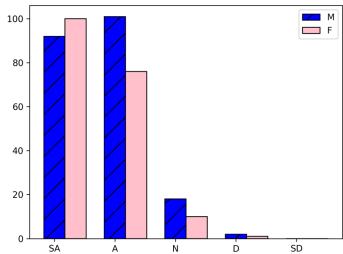
The charts illustrate students' engagement in different topics of interest, such as culture, knowledge, and learning, through social media platforms. 374 university students agree that social media provides information, opinions, and various points of view, with

a standard deviation of 3.44 and an average of 3.94. Furthermore, 368 students believe that social media helps them to understand all topics of their interests, with a standard deviation of 3.39 and an average of 3.88. Almost the same number of students agree that social media contributes to their interest in following up on everything new. However, around 350 students think that some presented issues on social media are seeking to spread strange culture, with a standard deviation of 3.33 and an average of 3.81.

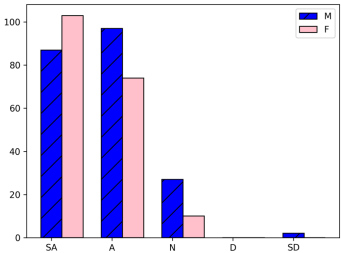
Figure 12 articulates the use of social media in culture and education. (Own work)



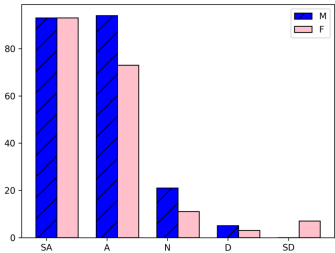
(a) The histogram plot of “Contributes to the success of educational and cultural process by specialists’ participation.”



(b) The histogram plot of “I use social media in teaching and learning.”



(c) The histogram plot of “It pushes me to interact with others and share cultures, experiences, and knowledge.”

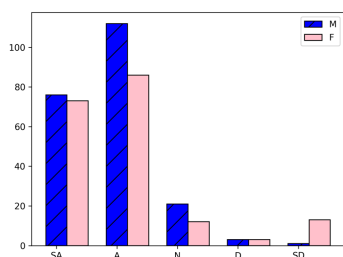


(d) The histogram plot of “The cultural content on social media is new and continuous.”

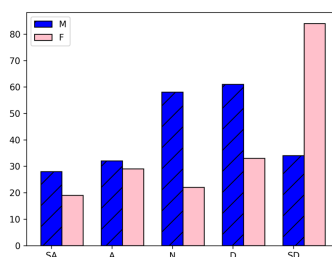
The charts in Figure 12 illustrate Saudi university students' use of social media regarding cultural content, teaching and learning, and sharing experience and knowledge. The findings show that 369 students use social media in teaching and learning, with a standard deviation of 3.41 and an average of 3.92. Moreover, 366 students believe that social media contributes to the success of the educational and cultural process through the participation of many specialists. The standard deviation for this item was 3.39, and the average was 3.89.

Furthermore, 361 students agree that social media pushes them to interact with others to share their culture, experiences, and knowledge, with a standard deviation of 3.37 and an average of 3.86. Additionally, 353 university students find the cultural content new and continuous on social media, with a standard deviation 3.30 and an average of 3.75.

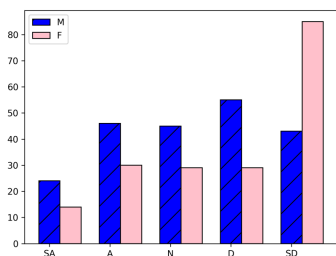
Figure 13 shows neutrality, opinion expression, level of honesty and privacy. (Own work)



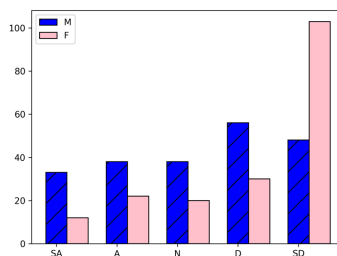
(a) The histogram plot of “It provides the public with the opportunity to participate and express their opinions.”



(b) The histogram plot of “Topics on social media are neutral.”



(c) The histogram plot of “It is characterised by honesty and accuracy in presenting the news.”

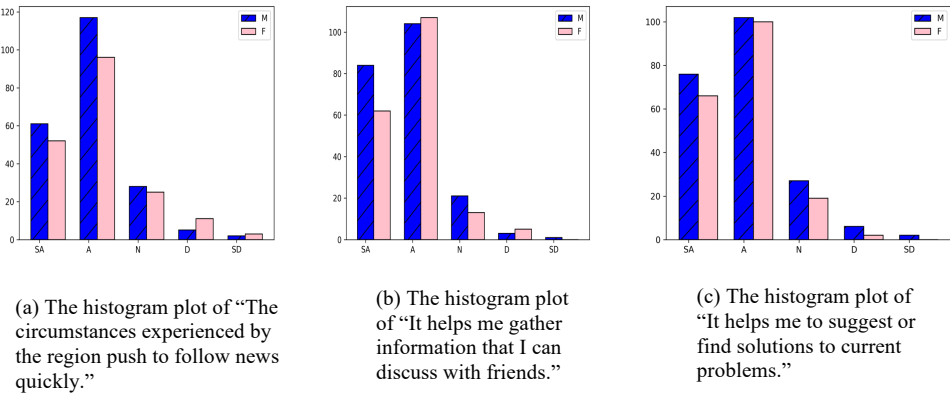


(d) The histogram plot of “It respects the privacy and personal lives of individuals.”

The charts show Saudi university students' impression of neutrality, opinion expression, privacy, and honesty on social media. The finding clarifies that 347 students agree that these platforms allow the public to participate and express their opinions, with a standard deviation of 3.30 and an average of 3.73. However, only 114 students agree that social media is characterised by honesty and accuracy in presenting the news, with a standard deviation of 3.30 and an average of 3.73.

tion of 2.11 and an average of 2.32. Furthermore, only 108 students believe that topics on social media are neutral, while almost 300 students are neutral or disagree, with a standard deviation of 2.07 and an average of 2.29. Moreover, 105 students think social media respects individual privacy and personal lives; meanwhile, almost 300 students disagreed or were neutral about it. The standard deviation for this item was 2.0, and the average was 2.16, reflecting a low level of trust in social media by the majority.

Figure 14 illuminates the informational use of social media by students. (Own work)



The above finding illustrates some motivations that make Saudi university students willing to be updated and how beneficially they use social media. 357 students agree that social media helps them gather the information they can discuss among friends, with a standard deviation of 3.63 and an average of 3.85. Furthermore, 344 students believe that social media helps them suggest

solutions for their problems, with a standard deviation 3.30 and an average of 3.79. Additionally, almost 326 students follow the news on social media because of the nature of circumstances experienced by the region, with a standard deviation of 3.24 and an average of 3.70. Finally, the results did not present significant gender differences in this context.

4.3.1 The improvement of cultural engagement on social media for university students.

The conversations with the participants investigated improving cultural engagement on social media. One of the views mentioned the theory of the collective mind, according to its possibility of happening through virtual groups on social media. The collective mind theory concerns the individual's depiction of a shared mental perspective in which the self and others coincide in their experiences. It is a mental picture of a group's knowledge of a shared environment or psyche. Individual cognition amplifies and prioritises information stored in terms of a collective mind (Shteynberg et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the interviews revealed easy cooperation with the virtual environment and technological determinism. Marshal McLuhan believes that any new form of media is an extension of a person and may influence his behaviour and way of thinking.

One must first grasp how media operates to comprehend cultural and social changes (Gao & Zheng, 2019). Many influential social media factors may improve university students' cultural engagements. Increasing cultural participation and virtual group work encourage cultural interaction. Social media affects social mobilisation, promotes social changes and discusses cultural issues [Table 4.3.1].

Furthermore, the feeling of belonging makes students join virtual groups that match their individual needs. Accordingly, social media facilitates cultural expression in many areas, including politics, arts, religion, history, etc. Moreover, following and watching multiple activists from different cultures gives access to many cultures. Additionally, social media affects participation in cultural events such as concerts, arts, cooking, and dancing festivals. It assists in launching cultural initiatives, such as health, education, and awareness initiatives. It also helps in different projects such as translation, editing, publishing, producing and other projects [Table 4.3.1].

TABLE 4.3.1 *Participants' comments about improving cultural engagement on social media for university students.*

<i>Effective factors</i>	<i>examples</i>
Encouraging cultural interaction.	Increasing cultural participation and virtual group work.
Supporting social mobilization.	Promoting social changes and discussion about cultural issues.
Enhancing the feeling of belonging.	Joining groups that match with the individual needs.
Participating in cultural events.	Concerts, arts, cooking, and dancing festivals.
Accessing different and various cultures.	Following and watching multiple activists from different cultures.
Facilitating cultural expression.	In many areas including politics, arts, religions, history etc.
Lunching cultural initiatives.	For example: awareness initiatives in health, education, and development.
Involving in cultural projects.	Such as translation, editing, publishing, producing and other projects.
Collective mind and technological determinism.	Sharing viewpoints, information, and experiences widely through a virtual environment.

4.3.2. Evaluation of social media's role in shaping cultural awareness for university students.

This section evaluates the interviewees' perspectives regarding the role of social media in cultural awareness for university students. Academics see it as complicated because social media has become essential for shaping cultural awareness. It is possible to read this role through individuals' cultural interaction and exchanges according to some views. Consequently, this deep social media involvement needs educational and monitoring overlaps to reduce the risk.

Most responses consider that social media positively shapes cultural awareness by increasing understanding and respect. Therefore, it supports cultural diversity, fights intolerance, and improves cultural awareness. Regardless of its role in acknowledging other cultures and building relationships with others from different backgrounds. Social media is an effective tool for education and communication that allows users to easily access cultural information such as religion, traditions, values, etc. Overall, it helps to know the intellectual and cultural changes through millions of active accounts and groups. Accordingly, it enhances debate and logic, including interaction and the exchange of cultural dialogue [Table 4.3.2].

Nevertheless, some perspectives were pessimistic about the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students. For example, the possibility of creating intolerance, biases, discrimination, and hatred by spreading misleading information and misunderstanding other cultures. However, addiction to a virtual environment facilitates misleading or causes cultural closure, particularly for some individuals who only interact with others from the same environment. Therefore, social media seems to have the ability to play positive and negative roles in shaping cultural awareness. Ultimately, it depends on the goal of use and the level of awareness among university students [Table 4.3.2].

TABLE 4.3.2 *Participants’ evaluation of the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students.*

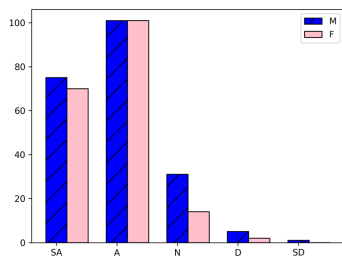
<i>Positive roles</i>	<i>Negative roles</i>
Increase understanding and respect. Support cultural diversity. Fighting intolerance. Acknowledging other cultures. Build relationships with others from different backgrounds. An effective tool of education and communication. Improve cultural awareness.	Spreading of misleading information. Misunderstanding of other cultures. Cultural closure. Creating intolerance. Enhancing biases. Promoting discrimination and hatred. Addiction to a virtual environment facilitates misleading.

Access to cultural information such as religion, traditions, values etc. Knowing the intellectual and cultural changes. Enhancing debate and logic. Promoting cultural dialogue. Increase interaction and exchanges.	
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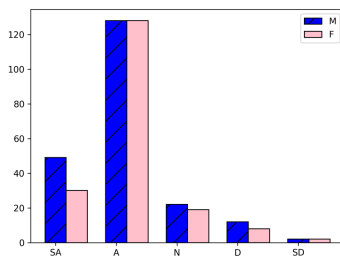
4.4 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DEVELOPING CULTURAL AWARENESS

This section considers the role of social media in increasing the cultural awareness of Saudi university students. The findings demonstrate the task of social media in developing society, participation, presenting public issues and creating events. Furthermore, the section shows the sample’s perspectives regarding information, news, public opinion, and citizen engagement. The results also include the provided services, topics, and reliance on social media. The standard deviation and average will be displayed with each item to improve the accuracy of the findings. Consequently, the data will be examined using sample answers, research techniques, and the study framework.

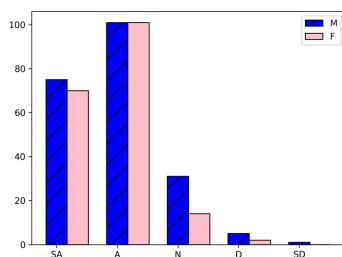
Figure 15 shows the role of social media in public issues and social events. (Own work)



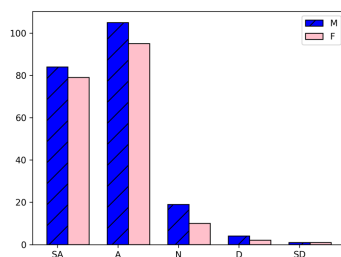
(a) The histogram plot of "It presents all opinions on public issues."



(b) The histogram plot of "It plays a role in creating events."



(c) The histogram plot of "It plays a role in the development of society."

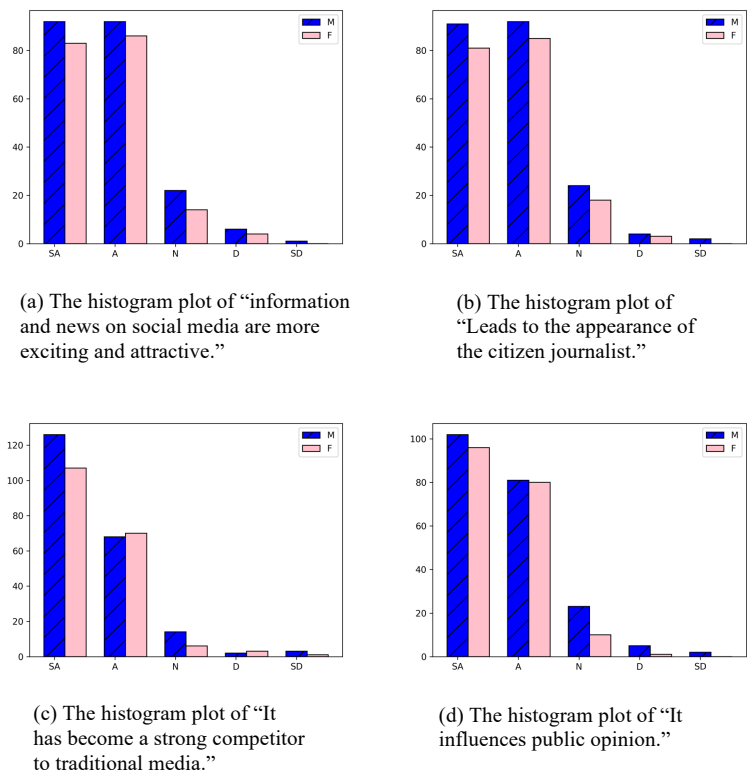


(d) The histogram plot of "It has a role in promoting community participation."

Generally, the above results illustrate the role of social media in developing participation in society and public issues and events. The finding clarifies that almost 363 university students believe that social media plays a role in creating events, with a standard deviation of 3.38 and an average of 3.88. Approximately the same number of students agree that social media promotes community participation, with nearly a similar figure while comparing the responses of both genders. Furthermore, 335 students agree that social media

presents all opinions on public issues, with a standard deviation of 3.29 and an average of 3.76. Finally, 347 students believe that social media plays a role in the development of society, with a standard deviation of 3.31 and an average of 3.80.

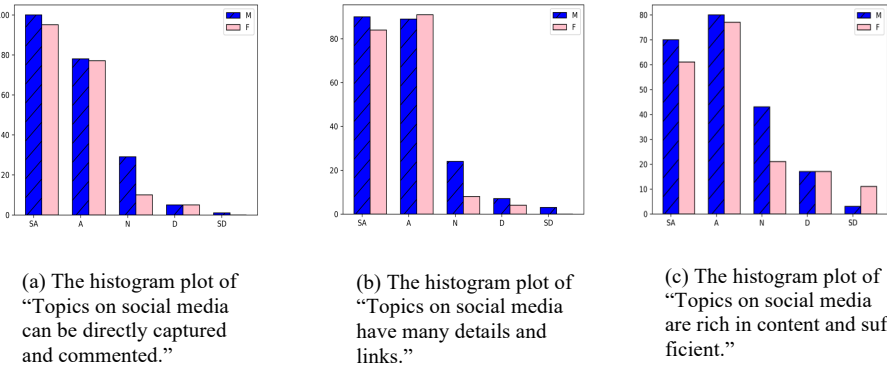
Figure 16 explains social media influences and the sample’s impression. (Own work)



The results simplify Saudi university students' impression of social media and the influences and attractiveness of its news and provided information. 371 out of 400 students agree that social media has become a strong competitor to traditional media, with a standard

deviation of 3.42 and an average of 3.88. Moreover, 359 students believe that social media influences public opinion, with a standard deviation of 3.34 and an average of 3.82. However, almost 353 students agree that the information and news published on social media are more exciting and attractive, with a standard deviation of 3.34 and an average of 3.82. Additionally, around 350 students agree that social media leads to the appearance of citizen journalists, with a standard deviation of 3.31 and an average of 3.79.

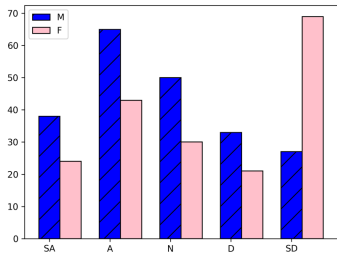
Figure 17 presents the material advantages of topics on social media. (Own work)



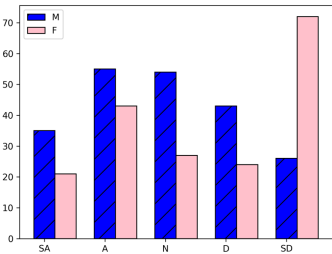
The findings indicate the advantages of topics on social media in terms of digital services and provided options. The charts show that 354 students agree that topics on social media have a lot of details and links related to the subjects, with a standard deviation of 3.33 and an average of 3.80. Furthermore, 350 students agreed that social media allows capturing topics or leaving comments, with a standard deviation of 3.32 and an average of 3.79. Accordingly, they can discuss or make an argument about the presented topics. In addition to the

material advantages, the charts illustrate that 288 students believe that the issues on social media are rich in content and that the information is sufficient. The standard deviation for this item was 3.02, and the average was 3.42. Eventually, there is no notable difference while reviewing male and female students' replies as they appear at approximately the same rates.

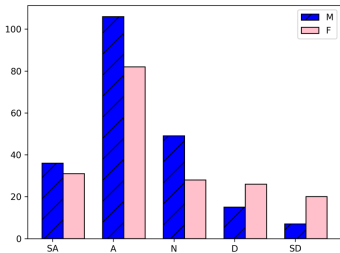
Figure 18 illustrates the substantive advantages of topics on social media. (Own work)



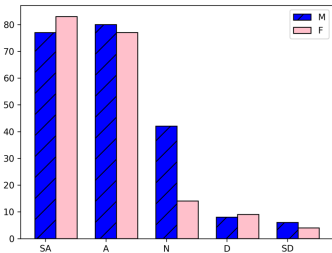
(a) The histogram plot of “Topics on social media are more independent.”



(b) The histogram plot of “Topics on social media separate opinion from fact.”



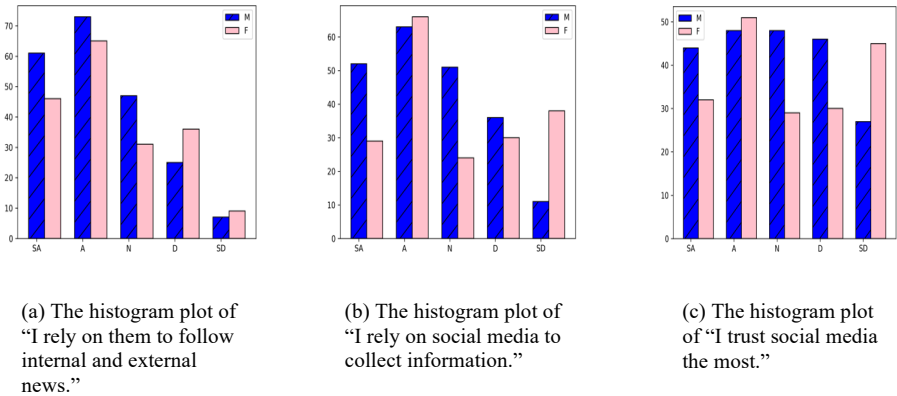
(c) The histogram plot of “Topics on social media reflect many aspects of the issue.”



(d) The histogram plot of “Topics on social media are discussed freely.”

The above charts demonstrate the objective advantages of the content on social media from students' points of view. Almost 317 students think that topics on social media can be discussed freely, with a standard deviation of 3.15 and an average of 3.58. In concur with other items in the current findings, students feel free to interact with others and communicate about different topics. Furthermore, 255 students believe that topics on social media reflect many aspects of the discussed issues, with a standard deviation of 2.96 and an average of 3.33. However, only 170 students agree that topics on social media platforms are independent and not guided, with a standard deviation of 2.43 and an average of 2.65. Finally, 154 students agree that topics on social media differentiate between opinions and facts, with a standard deviation of 2.35 and an average of 2.57.

Figure 19 displays the study sample's reliance on social media. (Own work)



The charts reflect the students' dependency on social media platforms regarding trust and seeking information. The findings indicate that 245 students rely on social media to gather information about internal and external updates and developments. The standard deviation for this item was 2.84, and the average was 3.21. Moreover, 210 students relied on social media to collect information and ensure it was correct, with a standard deviation of 2.65 and an average of 2.95. However, there are only 175 students, less than half of the sample, who mainly trust social media, with a standard deviation of 2.41 and an average of 2.67.

However, the media dependence theory is based on how much individuals rely on the media (Tao & Isan, 2003). The first stage appears from individuals' desire to gain knowledge and information. Without a doubt, social change occurrences boost community members' motives and the need to collaborate with society's new intentions. According to the media dependence theory, emotional and knowledge stimulation is the second step. On the other hand, individual engagement becomes necessary at various stages of social transformation. As a result, in the last step, the level of harmony between the several segments of society should be improved. Social media can increase cultural awareness, but multiple barriers may prevent this. The findings will go into further depth about these limits in the next section.

4.4.1 The role of social media in cultural identity for university students

According to the participants, social media plays an exciting role in shaping cultural identity and can affect many factors. For example, cultural values can be promoted by spreading information about culture, history, language, and traditions. Additionally, social media helps preserve cultural practices, traditions, and heritage by encouraging exchanges and practices in various national and cultural festivals. Furthermore, it might assist in creating awareness of cultural issues by providing information and knowledge to increase understanding and harmony [Table 4.4.1].

The conversations with the academics discussed other factors that social media could influence. For instance, promote the feeling of cultural belonging, dialogue, and cultural expression by creating Hashtags, virtual sessions, and active accounts on social media. However, some interviewees mentioned that “social media pushes towards closeness and understanding others, but it could also lead to what is so-called “globalising identity”. Another opinion was very concerned regarding the enormous amount of information about external cultures on social media. It could lead to integration with other cultures and loss of identity, especially without a strong basis of original culture [Table 4.4.1].

TABLE 4.4.1 *Participants’ comments about the role of social media in cultural identity for university students.*

<i>Effective factors</i>	<i>examples</i>
Promoting cultural values.	Spreading information about culture, history, language, and traditions.
Preserving of cultural practices, and heritage.	Encouraging exchanges and practices in various national, and cultural festivals.
Creating awareness of cultural issues.	Providing information and knowledge to increase understanding and harmony.
Promote the feeling of cultural belonging.	Cultural programs and virtual groups.
Enhance dialogue, and cultural expression.	Hashtags, virtual sessions, and active accounts on social media.

4.4.2 *The role of social media in cultural diversity for university Students.*

The majority of interviewees emphasised the role of social media in cultural diversity. These platforms play a significant role through many factors, such as increasing cultural awareness by presenting other cultures and promoting understanding and respect. En-

hancing cooperation and cultural mergers can support cultural diversity on social media. It encourages cultural exchanges and interaction with others from different cultures by creating virtual groups to present themselves and share cultural interests [Table 4.4.2].

Furthermore, the interviews discussed other factors affecting cultural diversity through social media. For example, combatting intolerance, reaching out for information about other cultures, and communicating and cooperating with people from different backgrounds. Social media could be used to increase awareness of the dangers of intolerance and promote tolerance. Additionally, social media provides cultural information about languages, traditions, arts, music, food, and clothes. It facilitates communication and interaction with authors, artists, scholars, creatives, and fans worldwide [Table 4.4.2].

Nevertheless, some participants described social media as a virtual environment that passes all limits, including geographic, ethnic, religious, and political boundaries. Accordingly, it provides online attendance for events and cultural activities, such as music performances, theatre, movies, cooking, dancing, and other related arts. Moreover, social media affects the appreciation for artistic creativity and encourages cultural works and art presentations. This informational openness could assist in understanding and respecting others. Nonetheless, some academics are worried about unlimited cultural diversity, which could eliminate some cultural items such as language, values, and religion [Table 4.4.2].

TABLE 4.4.2 *Participants' comments about the role of social media in cultural diversity for university students.*

<i>Effective factors</i>	<i>examples</i>
Increasing cultural awareness.	Presenting other cultures, promoting understanding and respect.
Enhancing cultural cooperation.	Through encouraging cultural exchanges and discussion with others.
Promoting cultural merger.	Providing platforms for students to interact with others from different cultures.
Supporting cultural diversity.	Creating virtual groups to present themselves and share cultural interests.
Combatting intolerance.	Increasing awareness of intolerance dangers and promoting tolerance.
Reaching information about other cultures.	Languages, traditions, arts, music, food, clothes.
Communicate and cooperate, with people from other cultures.	Such as authors, artists, scholars, creatives, and fans.
Appreciating cultural creativity.	Presenting cultural works and arts.
Online attendance of events and cultural activities.	Music performance, theatre, movies, cooking, dancing, and other related arts.
Virtual environment passing all limits.	Geographic, ethnic, religious, and political limits.

4.4.3 Contribution of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students

The interviews addressed some of the involvements and benefits of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students. For example, delivering cultural information leads to a deep understanding of manners, traditions, history, and other cultural aspects. Additionally, social media contributes to experimental learning, educational opportunities, cultural interaction, and dialogue. These involvements can increase cultural awareness and improve understanding and cooperation by giving easy access to information and specialists in many areas [Table 4.4.3].

Social media succeeded in providing platforms for cultural expressions that increase cultural production, such as art, knowledge, and other activities. Moreover, these platforms offer various sources, facilitating the discovery and exchange of views about cultural issues. Accordingly, eliminating limits and restrictions makes reaching data globally possible at a meagre cost. Overall, almost 90% of the interviewees believe that social media plays a significant role in shaping cultural awareness for university students. However, it affects awareness and facilitates gathering and targeting many groups and individuals. The influence depends on the sort of knowledge and experiments that have been exchanged on these platforms [Table 4.4.3].

TABLE 4.4.3 *Participants’ comments about the contribution of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students.*

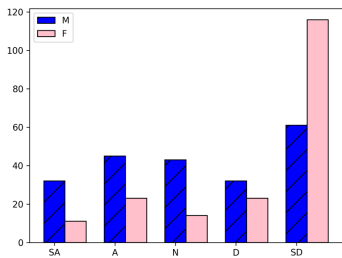
<i>Contribution</i>	<i>Benefits</i>
Delivering information about cultures.	Deep understanding of manners, traditions, history, and other cultural aspects.
Enhancing cultural interaction and dialogue.	Increasing awareness of culture and respect.
Supporting experimental learning.	Increasing understanding and cooperation in society.
Running educational opportunities.	Easy access to information and specialists in many areas.
Providing platforms for cultural expression.	Increasing cultural production such as art, knowledge, and other activities.
Offering various and different sources.	Facilitate discovering and exchanging views about cultural issues.
Eliminating limits and restrictions.	Reaching data around the globe at a very low cost.
Creating cultural harmony.	Increase the level of cooperation and understanding in society.

4.5 REASONS THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE BENEFIT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING CULTURAL AWARENESS AMONG STUDENTS

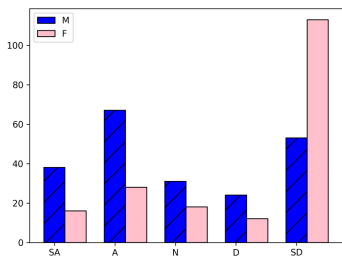
This part of the results reviews the causes that might hinder the advantages of social media in shaping cultural awareness among students. The findings illustrate the sample’s points of view in facing

interferences while using these platforms. The restrictions include technological engagement, experience, information, privacy, and security, as well as the tendency of students to engage in censorship, misguided accounts, and provided content. The standard deviation and average will be provided beside each item to increase the accuracy of the findings.

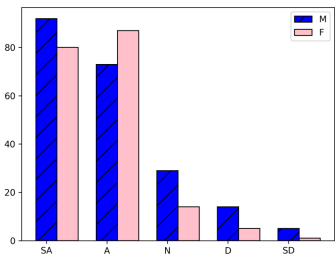
Figure 20 reflects factors which could face social media benefits. (Own work)



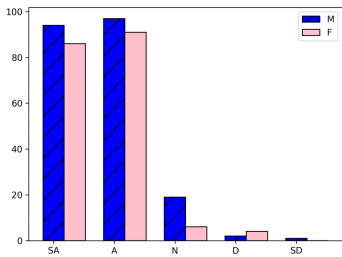
(a) The histogram plot of “poor interaction of students with technology.”



(b) The histogram plot of “Lack of experience some students have.”



(c) The histogram plot of “Weak censorship of communication platforms.”

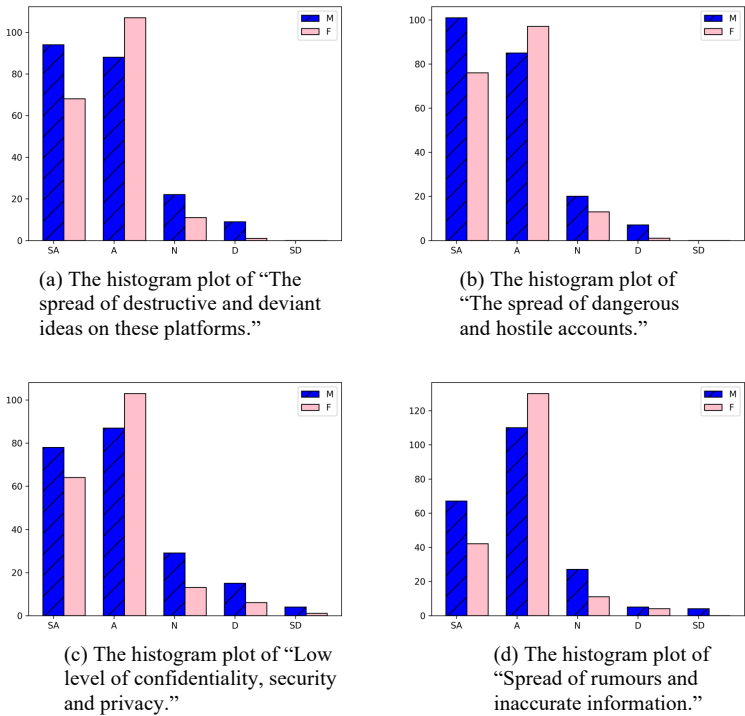


(d) The histogram plot of “The tendency of youth to entertainment content.”

The above results indicate some reasons that might prevent the benefit of social media in cultural awareness among Saudi university

students. 368 students agree that entertainment content attracts their attention on social media, with a standard deviation of 3.39 and an average of 3.88. Moreover, 332 students tend to agree that social media is characterised by weak censorship, with a standard deviation of 3.19 and an average of 3.63. Furthermore, 149 students think the need for more experience is one of the reasons that might prevent the beneficial use of social media. The standard deviation for this item was 2.18, and the average was 2.28. Finally, 111 students see that poor interaction with technological developments might decrease the benefits of social media, with a standard deviation of 1.96 and an average of 2.10.

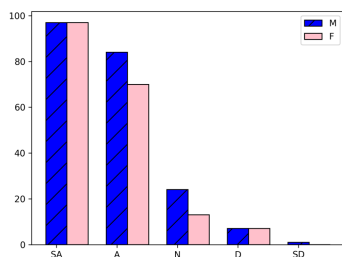
Figure 21 *exposes interferences about content and privacy issues. (Own work)*



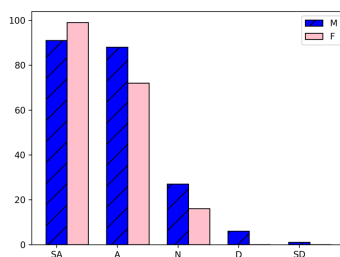
The above charts present some factors that might cause difficulties in the benefits of social media in terms of the spread of content, security, and privacy. Almost 366 students believe that spreading dangerous and hostile accounts is one reason that threatens cultural awareness among students. The standard deviation for this item was 3.38, and the average was 3.87.

Furthermore, 357 students think the spread of destructive and deviant ideas may affect the cultural benefits of social media, with a standard deviation of 3.37 and an average of 3.85. Moreover, 349 students think the spread of rumours and inaccurate information among these interferences, with a standard deviation of 3.32 and an average of 3.81. Finally, around 332 students see a low level of confidentiality, security and privacy related to individual and information security, with a standard deviation of 3.21 and an average of 3.66.

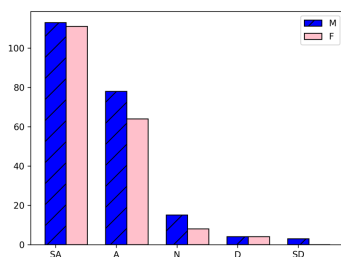
Figure 22 shows restrictions regarding content sorts and information.
(Own work)



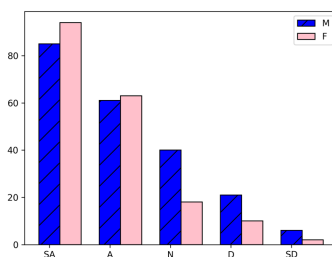
(a) The histogram plot of
“The prevail of entertainment
content over cultural content
within these platforms.”



(b) The histogram plot of
“Many opinions and news are
conflicts on social media.”



(c) The histogram plot of
“The spread of fake ac-
counts and information.”



(d) The histogram plot of
“Poor educational and
cultural content provided
on social media.”

The findings in Figure 22 present more reasons that prevent the cultural benefits of social media in terms of content and information. Consequently, 366 students agree that spreading fake accounts and providing information could confuse cultural awareness, with a standard deviation of 3.36 and an average of 3.83. Additionally, 350 students believe that the conflict of many opinions and news on social media could affect cultural awareness, with a standard deviation of 3.33 and an average of 3.81. Furthermore, 348 students

think that the prevalence of entertainment content over cultural content might decrease the benefits of social media. The standard deviation for this item was 3.27, and the average was 3.74. Finally, 303 students found that poor educational and cultural content on social media impacts students' awareness, with a standard deviation of 2.99 and an average of 3.40.

4.5.1. The interferences that prevent the benefit of social media in shaping cultural awareness.

In this section, the study illustrates the interferences that might reduce the advantages of social media in shaping cultural awareness. One of the participants stated, “There are no actual limits due to alternative technical options.” Meanwhile, the other interviewees discussed many different interventions. Accordingly, the interferences can be divided into three categories: individual or technical, political or economic, and cultural or social restrictions, see [Table 4.5.1].

The first category presents individual interferences, including psychological, emotional, and cognitive factors such as language barriers, cultural closure, awareness, and maturity. The participants mentioned more limits social media could face in shaping cultural awareness, including financial capacity. However, the responses stated some technical interventions, such as digital confusion, which might lead to many issues, including the risk of quickly spreading

misinformation. Moreover, receiving large amounts of information makes it difficult for students to distinguish between beneficial and harmful content, as presented in [Table 4.5.1].

The second category contains political and economic restrictions that governments and organisations might issue. For example, some countries consider censorship and blocking intellectual fortifications according to their cultures and values. However, these interferences might occur during political conflicts, undermining peace and understanding and leading to bias, slander, violence, incitement, misinformation, and distortion of facts on social media. Furthermore, some limits may exist due to economic capability and restrictions against free expression, which produces biased content that extinguishes cultural awareness, as shown in [Table 4.5.1].

The third category includes cultural and social interventions that affect shaping cultural awareness on social media. For example, cultural domination, regardless of its reasons, could be due to economic or historical factors. Nevertheless, a lack of cultural diversity is a common cause of these interferences. Hence, it might increase the spread of stereotypes and prejudices in such environments. Furthermore, exchanging fake news about cultural issues and the need for awareness of the importance of cultural identity. All of these interventions may deactivate the benefit of social media in shaping cultural understanding, as appears below in [Table 4.5.1].

TABLE 4.5.1 shows participants' comments about the interventions shaping cultural awareness on social media.

<i>Individual & technical</i>	<i>Political & economic</i>	<i>Cultural & social</i>
Psychological factors.	Censorship and blocking.	Cultural domination.
Emotional factors.	Undermining peace and understanding.	Lack of cultural diversity.
Cognitive factors.	Bias and slander.	Spread of stereotypes and prejudices.
Language barriers.	Violence and incitement.	Exchanging fake news about cultural issues.
Cultural closure.	Spread misinformation and distortion of facts.	Need for awareness of the importance of cultural identity.
Lack of cultural awareness.	Restricting free expression.	
Lack of cultural maturity.	Economic capability.	
Financial capacity.	Content bias.	
Misinformation spreads easily.	Intellectual fortification.	
Digital confusion.		
Difficulty distinguishing due to a large amount of info.		

4.5.2 Recommendations to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness.

The interviews seek some suggestions and recommendations from the participants to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness. The interviewees suggest educating university

students to be able to evaluate information on social media. Moreover, verifying info sources and seeking different views could help students develop their critical thinking and cooperation with others on social media. Accordingly, it is essential to activate the role of educational institutions and enhance awareness of the importance of cultural identity to correctly shape cultural knowledge, see [Table 4.5.2].

The participants also suggested some pieces of advice on how to improve the content of social media. For example, supporting and increasing diverse cultural content could enhance understanding and respect among cultures. The recommendations also include a comprehensive representation of cultures on social media. The interviewees assume such an action could promote diversity, exchange, and meaningful dialogue. Therefore, it reduces the negative impact on cultural awareness in social media's content through the public's cooperation, as shown in [Table 4.5.2].

Furthermore, the participants recommended improving technological systems to monitor misleading content according to the cultural elements of the society. Consequently, governments should support related cultural projects such as local technological projects, research, and social improvements. According to the interview findings, it is necessary to combat information distortion and extremism on social media. This could be done through international agreements that force social media to protect users' minds, especially the younger

generations. A summary of academics’ recommendations is illustrated below in [Table 4.5.2]

TABLE 4.5.2 *Participants’ recommendations to improve the role of social media in shaping cultural awareness for university students.*

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Through</i>
Educate users.	How to evaluate information.
Support and increase diverse cultural content.	Increasing understanding and respect between cultures.
Critical use and cooperation with others.	Verification of info sources and seeking different views.
Promote diversity, exchange, and meaningful dialogue.	Comprehensive representation of cultures.
Combating information distortion and extremism.	Establish international agreements to protect users’ minds.
Enhance awareness of the importance of cultural identity.	Activating the role of educational institutions.
Improve systems to monitor misleading content.	Support cultural-related projects.

5. *CONCLUSION*

In summary, this study provides compelling evidence to support the hypotheses that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping cultural awareness among Saudi university students and that these platforms can both positively and negatively influence this awareness. Our findings demonstrate that social media has fostered increased cultural interaction, engagement, and the exchange of ideas, contributing to a more dynamic and inclusive cultural landscape.

While social media offers numerous opportunities for positive cultural development, it has challenges. The spread of misinformation, discrimination, and harmful content can undermine cultural understanding and create social divisions. To maximise the positive impact of social media and mitigate its detrimental effects, several recommendations are offered:

- **Strengthening educational initiatives:** Educational institutions should integrate social media literacy into their curricula to equip students with the skills to use these platforms effectively and critically.
- **Enhancing content moderation:** Social media platforms must implement robust content moderation strategies to reduce the

spread of harmful content and promote a more positive online environment.

- Promoting digital citizenship: Initiatives should be fostered to promote digital citizenship among users, encouraging responsible online behaviour, respect for diverse perspectives, and ethical use of social media.
- Government agencies, educational institutions, and social media platforms must join forces to address challenges and maximise the positive impact of social media on cultural awareness.

By addressing these recommendations, Saudi Arabia can harness the potential of social media to promote cultural understanding, dialogue, and positive social change. This study significantly contributes to our knowledge of the intricate relationship between social media and culture, providing invaluable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers.

6 RESUMEN EXTENSO EN ESPAÑOL

6.1. Introducción y Relevancia del Estudio

La presente tesis doctoral, titulada "El papel de las redes sociales en la configuración de la conciencia cultural entre los estudiantes universitarios sauditas", aborda una temática de creciente relevancia en el contexto global contemporáneo. La era actual se caracteriza por una acelerada revolución tecnológica y comunicacional, que ha propiciado transformaciones profundas y vertiginosas tanto a nivel local como global. Estas mutaciones inciden de manera directa en la socialización de los individuos, en la dinámica de las comunidades y, de forma particular, en la construcción y evolución de la conciencia cultural. Arabia Saudita, como nación inmersa en un proceso de modernización y cambio social significativo, representa un caso de estudio paradigmático para comprender el impacto de estas transformaciones.

El estudio se sitúa en un momento crucial para la sociedad saudita, donde la conectividad digital y la omnipresencia de las redes sociales han redefinido las fronteras de la interacción y el acceso a la información. En este escenario, las redes sociales emergen no solo como meras herramientas de comunicación, sino como plataformas multifacéticas que influyen en la percepción del mundo, en la interacción con otras culturas y en la consolidación de la propia identidad cultural. La investigación parte de la premisa de que los

estudiantes universitarios, por su posición en la vanguardia del cambio social y su alta tasa de adopción tecnológica, son un grupo demográfico fundamental para analizar estos fenómenos.

El objetivo central de este estudio ha sido investigar y desentrañar la influencia de las redes sociales en la conformación de la conciencia cultural entre los jóvenes universitarios sauditas. Esto implica explorar tanto las oportunidades que estas plataformas ofrecen para el enriquecimiento cultural y el desarrollo social, como las posibles interferencias o desafíos que plantean. La relevancia de esta investigación trasciende el ámbito académico, ya que sus hallazgos pueden ofrecer orientaciones valiosas para instituciones educativas, formuladores de políticas y la sociedad en general en Arabia Saudita, en su esfuerzo por navegar la compleja interacción entre la tradición y la modernidad en la era digital.

La tesis argumenta que, si bien las redes sociales pueden ser vehículos para la difusión de información errónea o la promoción de extremismos, también poseen un potencial considerable para fomentar la diversidad cultural, el diálogo constructivo y el intercambio de ideas. Es imperativo, por tanto, comprender las dinámicas subyacentes a estos procesos para maximizar los beneficios y mitigar los riesgos. Esta investigación contribuye a un cuerpo de conocimiento en expansión sobre la intersección entre tecnología, cultura y sociedad, con un enfoque específico en un contexto culturalmente rico y en evolución como el saudita.

La introducción de la tesis se desarrolla en profundidad, estableciendo el marco teórico que sustenta la investigación. Se revisan conceptos clave como "conciencia cultural", "identidad cultural", "redes sociales" y su relación con el cambio social. Se contextualiza la investigación dentro del panorama digital de Arabia Saudita, analizando las tasas de penetración de internet y redes sociales, así como las tendencias de uso entre la población joven. Además, se identifican las brechas en la literatura existente que esta tesis busca abordar, destacando la singularidad de su enfoque en el contexto saudita y el uso de una metodología de métodos mixtos. La relevancia del estudio se subraya al considerar las implicaciones de la conciencia cultural en la cohesión social, la innovación y el desarrollo sostenible de la nación.

6.2. Objetivos de la Investigación

El propósito principal de esta investigación doctoral fue analizar y comprender en profundidad la multifacética influencia de las redes sociales en la formación y evolución de la conciencia cultural entre los estudiantes universitarios en Arabia Saudita. Para lograr este objetivo general, se desglosaron una serie de objetivos específicos que guiaron el diseño del estudio, la recolección de datos y el análisis de los resultados. Estos objetivos fueron concebidos para proporcionar una comprensión holística del fenómeno, abordando

tanto los aspectos positivos como los desafíos inherentes al uso de las redes sociales en este contexto particular.

6.2.1. Objetivo General:

- Evaluar el impacto global de las redes sociales en la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes universitarios sauditas, considerando su papel como agentes de cambio cultural.

6.2.2. Objetivos Específicos:

- **Identificar los patrones de uso de las redes sociales por parte de los estudiantes universitarios sauditas:**
 - Determinar la frecuencia de uso de diversas plataformas de redes sociales (X, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Youtube.).
 - Analizar las motivaciones principales detrás del uso de estas plataformas (e.g., entretenimiento, búsqueda de información, interacción social, expresión personal, consumo cultural).
 - Evaluar el tiempo promedio dedicado diariamente a las redes sociales por parte de esta población.
 - Investigar las plataformas preferidas para el consumo de contenido cultural y la interacción sobre temas culturales.

- **Analizar cómo las redes sociales influyen en la interacción y el compromiso cultural de los estudiantes:**
 - Examinar en qué medida las redes sociales facilitan la exposición a diversas culturas (globales y locales).
 - Investigar cómo los estudiantes utilizan las redes sociales para expresar y compartir su propia cultura.
 - Evaluar el rol de las redes sociales en la participación en debates culturales, eventos y movimientos sociales relacionados con la cultura.
 - Determinar si las redes sociales fomentan la curiosidad y el deseo de aprender sobre otras culturas.
- **Evaluar el impacto de las redes sociales en la armonía social y la comunicación con expertos culturales:**
 - Determinar si el uso de redes sociales promueve un mayor entendimiento y tolerancia hacia diferentes perspectivas dentro de la sociedad saudita.
 - Analizar cómo las redes sociales contribuyen a la reducción de barreras de comunicación entre diferentes grupos sociales.
 - Investigar el papel de las redes sociales en la conexión de los estudiantes con académicos, intelectuales y figuras culturales oficiales.

- Explorar si el acceso a especialistas a través de redes sociales afecta la profundidad y calidad de la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes.
- **Identificar y categorizar las interferencias (desafíos y riesgos) que las redes sociales presentan para la conciencia cultural:**
 - **Interferencias Individuales:**
 - Análisis de la desinformación y noticias falsas (fake news) y su impacto en la percepción cultural.
 - Evaluación del riesgo de dependencia o adicción a las redes sociales y su efecto en el tiempo dedicado a actividades culturales fuera de línea.
 - Impacto en la salud mental y la autoimagen, y cómo esto puede afectar la apertura cultural.
 - **Interferencias Políticas:**
 - Análisis de la influencia de agendas políticas en la difusión de narrativas culturales específicas.
 - Estudio de la censura o el control de contenido en redes sociales y su impacto en la libertad de expresión cultural.
 - Investigación sobre el uso de redes sociales para la manipulación de la opinión pública en temas culturales.
 - **Interferencias Económicas:**

- Exploración de la comercialización de la cultura y su impacto en la autenticidad cultural.
- Análisis de la brecha digital y la exclusión de ciertos grupos de la participación cultural en línea.
- Estudio del modelo de negocio de las plataformas y cómo sus algoritmos pueden sesgar el contenido cultural que se muestra a los usuarios.
- **Interferencias Culturales:**
 - Impacto de la globalización cultural y la homogeneización cultural versus la promoción de la diversidad local.
 - Análisis de la superficialidad en la interacción cultural en línea frente a la profundidad del conocimiento cultural.
 - Estudio de la propagación de estereotipos culturales o malentendidos a través de las redes sociales.
 - Influencia de contenidos que promueven extremismo o discursos de odio bajo pretextos culturales.
- **Proponer recomendaciones estratégicas para fomentar un uso crítico y constructivo de las redes sociales para el desarrollo cultural:**
 - Formular directrices para instituciones educativas sobre cómo integrar las redes sociales en la enseñanza de la conciencia cultural y la alfabetización mediática.

- Sugerir mecanismos para que las plataformas de redes sociales y los organismos reguladores mejoren la detección y mitigación de contenido dañino (desinformación, extremismo).
- Recomendar estrategias para promover la creación y difusión de contenido cultural de alta calidad y diverso por parte de entidades oficiales y culturales.
- Proponer iniciativas para fomentar la cooperación entre diferentes actores (gobierno, sociedad civil, sector privado) en la promoción del diálogo cultural y la diversidad.

Cada uno de estos objetivos específicos ha sido abordado con rigor metodológico, buscando no solo describir el fenómeno, sino también comprender las relaciones causales y contextuales que lo definen. La consecución de estos objetivos ha permitido construir un marco integral para entender el papel de las redes sociales en la conciencia cultural de los jóvenes sauditas, sentando las bases para futuras intervenciones y políticas.

6.3 Metodología de la Investigación

La presente tesis doctoral adoptó un enfoque metodológico de métodos mixtos (Mixed Methods Approach), una estrategia de investigación que integra y triangula datos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Esta elección metodológica se fundamentó en la

complejidad del fenómeno estudiado, donde la comprensión de la conciencia cultural y el impacto de las redes sociales requería tanto la amplitud de datos numéricos como la profundidad de las perspectivas subjetivas y contextuales. La combinación de ambos enfoques permitió una visión más completa y robusta de los resultados, minimizando las limitaciones inherentes a un único método.

6.3.1. Diseño Metodológico General:

El diseño específico fue de tipo concurrente (convergent parallel design), donde la recolección de datos cuantitativos y cualitativos se realizó de manera simultánea, y los análisis de ambos conjuntos de datos se llevaron a cabo de forma independiente para luego ser integrados e interpretados en la fase de discusión. Este diseño facilitó la comparación y corroboración de los hallazgos, fortaleciendo la validez interna y externa del estudio.

6.3.2. Población y Muestra:

La población de estudio estuvo compuesta por estudiantes universitarios en Arabia Saudita, un grupo demográfico seleccionado por su alta exposición y participación en las redes sociales, así como por su rol crucial en la configuración de las futuras dinámicas culturales del país.

- **Componente Cuantitativo:**
 - **Muestra:** Se recopilaron respuestas de **400 estudiantes universitarios sauditas**.
 - **Criterios de Inclusión:** Estudiantes de pregrado y posgrado matriculados en universidades públicas y privadas en diversas regiones de Arabia Saudita.
 - **Estrategia de Muestreo:** Se utilizó un muestreo por conveniencia y bola de nieve, dadas las dificultades de acceso a una base de datos exhaustiva de todos los estudiantes universitarios. Sin embargo, se realizaron esfuerzos para asegurar una representación diversa en términos de género, área de estudio (humanidades, ciencias, etc.) y ubicación geográfica (ciudades principales).
 - **Instrumento:** Se diseñó un cuestionario estructurado en línea (online survey) para la recolección de datos. El cuestionario incluyó preguntas sobre:
 - Características demográficas (edad, género, universidad, área de estudio).
 - Patrones de uso de redes sociales (plataformas utilizadas, frecuencia, tiempo diario dedicado).
 - Percepción del impacto de las redes sociales en la interacción cultural, el compromiso educativo y la armonía social.

- Experiencias con la exposición a diferentes culturas a través de las redes sociales.
 - Percepción de los riesgos e interferencias (desinformación, polarización, etc.) asociadas al uso de redes sociales.
 - Actitudes hacia la regulación de contenido y la promoción de contenido cultural.
- **Pilotaje:** El cuestionario fue sometido a una prueba piloto con un pequeño grupo de estudiantes para asegurar su claridad, comprensión y validez interna antes de la distribución a gran escala.
 - **Recolección de Datos:** La distribución se realizó a través de plataformas universitarias, grupos de estudiantes en redes sociales y contactos personales, garantizando la confidencialidad y el anonimato de los participantes.
- **Componente Cualitativo:**
 - **Muestra:** Se realizaron **15 entrevistas semiestructuradas con profesores universitarios** especializados en campos relevantes como las ciencias de la comunicación, la sociología, los estudios culturales y la educación.
 - **Criterios de Selección:** Profesores con experiencia académica y conocimiento profundo sobre el impacto de las redes sociales en la sociedad saudita y la cultura juvenil. Se buscó diversidad en la disciplina y la universidad de origen.

- **Estrategia de Muestreo:** Muestreo intencional o por juicio, buscando expertos en el campo.
- **Instrumento:** Guion de entrevista semiestructurada, permitiendo flexibilidad para explorar temas emergentes mientras se aseguraba la cobertura de las áreas clave del estudio. Las preguntas se centraron en:
 - Sus observaciones sobre cómo los estudiantes utilizan las redes sociales para el consumo cultural.
 - Percepciones sobre el impacto de las redes sociales en la identidad y conciencia cultural de los estudiantes.
 - Análisis de las oportunidades y desafíos de las redes sociales en el contexto cultural saudita.
 - Opiniones sobre las estrategias para fomentar un uso más crítico y constructivo de estas plataformas.
 - Perspectivas sobre el papel de las instituciones educativas y el gobierno en la regulación y promoción de contenido cultural en línea.
- **Procedimiento:** Las entrevistas se realizaron de forma individual, con una duración aproximada de 60-90 minutos cada una. Fueron grabadas en audio (con consentimiento previo) y posteriormente transcritas verbatim para su análisis.

6.3.3. Análisis de Datos:

- **Análisis Cuantitativo:**

- Los datos del cuestionario fueron codificados e introducidos en un software estadístico (e.g., Python V.3).
- Se realizaron análisis estadísticos descriptivos (frecuencias, porcentajes, medias, desviaciones estándar) para caracterizar el uso de las redes sociales y las percepciones generales.
- Se aplicaron análisis inferenciales para examinar las relaciones entre las variables, incluyendo:
 - Correlaciones para identificar asociaciones entre el uso de redes sociales y diferentes aspectos de la conciencia cultural.
 - Análisis de varianza o pruebas t para comparar grupos (e.g., por género) en sus percepciones y comportamientos.
 - Análisis para identificar predictores significativos del nivel de conciencia cultural o del impacto de las redes sociales.
- Se realizaron pruebas de fiabilidad y validez de las escalas utilizadas en el cuestionario.

- **Análisis Cualitativo:**

- Las transcripciones de las entrevistas fueron sometidas a un análisis temático.

- Se utilizó un enfoque inductivo-deductivo para la codificación: se identificaron temas emergentes de los datos (inductivo) y se buscaron confirmaciones o refutaciones de las categorías preestablecidas basadas en los objetivos del estudio (deductivo).
- La triangulación de los datos cualitativos con los objetivos de investigación permitió identificar patrones, narrativas dominantes y perspectivas diversas de los expertos.

6.3.4. Integración de los Datos y Triangulación:

La fase crucial del diseño de métodos mixtos fue la integración de los hallazgos cuantitativos y cualitativos. Esto se realizó mediante:

- **Convergencia:** Comparando los resultados de ambos conjuntos de datos para identificar consistencias, contradicciones o complementariedades. Por ejemplo, si los datos cuantitativos mostraban una correlación positiva entre el uso de redes sociales y la exposición cultural, las entrevistas cualitativas proporcionaban el "porqué" y el "cómo" de esta relación.
- **Elaboración:** Utilizando los datos cualitativos para explicar o enriquecer los hallazgos cuantitativos. Si una encuesta indicaba una baja participación en debates culturales, las entrevistas podrían revelar las razones.

- **Iniciación:** Cuando los datos de un método revelaban contradicciones o resultados inesperados, se utilizaba el otro método para explorar esas discrepancias y generar nuevas preguntas de investigación.

6.3.5. Consideraciones Éticas:

Se obtuvo el consentimiento informado de todos los participantes, tanto para los cuestionarios como para las entrevistas. Se garantizó el anonimato y la confidencialidad de los datos. La participación fue voluntaria y los participantes fueron informados sobre el propósito del estudio y el uso de sus datos. La tesis se adhirió a los principios éticos y las normas de la Asociación Británica de Trabajadores Sociales (BASW).

La rigurosa aplicación de esta metodología de métodos mixtos ha permitido a la tesis generar una comprensión profunda y matizada de la compleja interacción entre las redes sociales y la conciencia cultural en el contexto saudita, asegurando la validez y fiabilidad de los hallazgos.

6. 4. Conclusiones Principales y Discusión de Resultados:

Los hallazgos derivados de esta investigación doctoral, tras un riguroso análisis de los datos cuantitativos y cualitativos, arrojan luz significativa sobre el papel multifacético de las redes sociales en la configuración de la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes universitarios sauditas. Las conclusiones principales de la tesis no solo validan algunas hipótesis iniciales, sino que también revelan complejidades y matices que enriquecen la comprensión del fenómeno.

6.4.1. Impacto Positivo y Oportunidades de las Redes Sociales:

- **Mejora de la Interacción Cultural y el Compromiso Educativo:**

Los datos cuantitativos, corroborados por las narrativas cualitativas de los profesores, demuestran que las redes sociales actúan como un catalizador para la interacción cultural. Los estudiantes reportan una mayor exposición a diversas culturas (tanto locales como globales), lo que se traduce en un aumento de su comprensión y apreciación por la diversidad cultural. Las plataformas facilitan la conexión con individuos de diferentes orígenes y la participación en diálogos interculturales. En el ámbito educativo, las redes

sociales son percibidas como herramientas que complementan el aprendizaje formal, ofreciendo acceso a recursos educativos culturales, debates académicos y la posibilidad de seguir a expertos en el campo. Los estudiantes utilizan estas plataformas para investigar, compartir proyectos relacionados con la cultura y participar en actividades extracurriculares que enriquecen su conocimiento cultural.

- **Aumento del Nivel de Armonía Social:**

Un hallazgo significativo es la contribución de las redes sociales a un mayor nivel de armonía social. Al facilitar la exposición a diferentes puntos de vista y al permitir el diálogo, las redes sociales pueden reducir los malentendidos y fomentar la empatía entre los diversos segmentos de la sociedad saudita. Esto se manifiesta en una mayor tolerancia hacia las diferencias internas y externas, y una comprensión más matizada de las complejidades sociales. Los participantes cualitativos a menudo mencionaron cómo estas plataformas permiten la construcción de puentes entre individuos con diferentes perspectivas, contribuyendo a una sociedad más cohesionada.

- **Facilitación de la Comunicación con Especialistas y Cuentas Culturales Oficiales:**

La investigación evidencia que las redes sociales han democratizado el acceso al conocimiento cultural. Los estudiantes utilizan activamente estas plataformas para seguir a académicos, intelectuales, artistas y cuentas oficiales de instituciones culturales. Esto no solo les proporciona acceso directo a información verificada y a perspectivas expertas, sino que también fomenta una participación más activa en el discurso cultural. La interacción con estas fuentes de conocimiento, a través de preguntas, comentarios o la simple exposición a su contenido, eleva el nivel de la conciencia cultural y promueve un aprendizaje continuo más allá de los entornos educativos tradicionales.

6.4.2. Identificación y Análisis de Interferencias:

La tesis detalló una serie de interferencias que las redes sociales pueden generar, afectando negativamente la conciencia cultural. Estas fueron categorizadas para proporcionar una comprensión estructurada de los desafíos:

- **Interferencias Individuales:**
 - **Desinformación y Noticias Falsas:** La omnipresencia de la desinformación (fake news) fue una preocupación constante. Los estudiantes y profesores reconocieron la dificultad de discernir la verdad de la falsedad, lo que puede llevar a una percepción distorsionada de otras culturas o de la propia. La propagación de rumores y narrativas engañosas, especialmente en temas culturales sensibles, puede erosionar la confianza y generar prejuicios.
 - **Las creencias preexistentes y la autoclausura:** La tendencia de los algoritmos a mostrar contenido que refuerza las creencias preexistentes y la autoclausura de los usuarios en grupos afines limitan la exposición a la diversidad de pensamiento cultural. Esto puede llevar a una visión sesgada y una reducción de la capacidad para el diálogo constructivo con ideas opuestas.
 - **Superficialidad del Contenido:** La naturaleza breve y visual de gran parte del contenido en redes sociales a menudo fomenta una comprensión superficial de temas culturales complejos, en lugar de un análisis profundo y crítico.

- **Interferencias Políticas:**

- **Manipulación de Narrativas Culturales:** Se identificó cómo ciertos actores pueden utilizar las redes sociales para promover narrativas culturales específicas que se alinean con agendas políticas, a menudo con el objetivo de polarizar a la sociedad o suprimir ciertas expresiones culturales.
- **Censura y Control de Contenido:** Aunque necesario para combatir el contenido dañino, un control excesivo o la falta de transparencia en la censura pueden limitar la libertad de expresión cultural y el acceso a perspectivas diversas, afectando la autenticidad del diálogo cultural.

- **Interferencias Económicas:**

- **Comercialización de la Cultura:** La monetización del contenido cultural en redes sociales puede llevar a una mercantilización de la cultura, donde la autenticidad se sacrifica en favor de la popularidad o el beneficio económico. Esto puede diluir el verdadero significado cultural de ciertas expresiones.
- **Sesgos Algorítmicos:** Los algoritmos de las plataformas, impulsados por intereses económicos, pueden priorizar el contenido sensacionalista sobre el contenido cultural de

calidad, limitando la exposición de los usuarios a una cultural equilibrada.

- **Interferencias Culturales y Sociales Amplias:**

- **Extremismo y Odio:** La facilidad con la que se pueden difundir mensajes de odio o ideologías extremistas bajo el pretexto cultural es una amenaza significativa. Estos mensajes pueden distorsionar la conciencia cultural, promoviendo la intolerancia y el rechazo de la diversidad.
- **Estandarización Cultural:** A pesar de la promoción de la diversidad, la globalización a través de las redes sociales puede, paradójicamente, llevar a una cierta homogeneización cultural, donde las normas y valores dominantes (a menudo occidentales) eclipsan las expresiones culturales locales.
- **Brecha Generacional:** Puede surgir una brecha entre las generaciones mayores y más jóvenes en la comprensión y valoración de la cultura, exacerbada por la diferente adopción y uso de las redes sociales.

6.4.3. Recomendaciones Estratégicas Derivadas de los Hallazgos:

Basándose en la identificación de oportunidades y desafíos, la tesis formuló recomendaciones concretas y multifacéticas, dirigidas a diversas partes interesadas:

- **Activación del Rol de las Instituciones Educativas:** Se recomienda que las universidades y escuelas integren activamente la alfabetización mediática y digital en sus currículos. Esto implica enseñar a los estudiantes a evaluar críticamente la información en línea, reconocer la desinformación y participar en debates culturales de manera respetuosa. Las instituciones pueden crear plataformas seguras para el intercambio cultural en línea y fomentar el uso de las redes sociales para proyectos de investigación cultural.
- **Mejora de los Sistemas de Monitoreo de Contenido Engañoso:** Es crucial que las plataformas de redes sociales, en colaboración con las autoridades y organizaciones de la sociedad civil, mejoren sus capacidades para identificar y eliminar contenido engañoso, discursos de odio y mensajes extremistas. Esto incluye el uso de inteligencia artificial, pero también la inversión en moderadores humanos con conocimiento cultural y lingüístico del contexto saudita.
- **Incremento del Contenido Cultural Diverso y de Calidad:** Las entidades gubernamentales, las organizaciones

culturales y los creadores de contenido individuales deben ser incentivados para producir y difundir contenido cultural auténtico, diverso y de alta calidad en las redes sociales. Esto podría incluir documentales, podcasts, campañas interactivas que celebren el patrimonio saudita y presenten otras culturas de manera matizada.

- **Fomento del Uso Crítico y la Cooperación para el Diálogo:** Se debe promover activamente el pensamiento crítico entre los usuarios para que no acepten la información sin cuestionarla. Además, se deben establecer plataformas y campañas que fomenten la cooperación entre individuos y grupos de diferentes orígenes culturales para participar en el diálogo, el intercambio de ideas y la construcción de entendimiento mutuo. Esto podría implicar la creación de foros en línea moderados o la organización de eventos híbridos (presenciales y en línea) que promuevan la interacción cultural.
- **Políticas y Regulaciones Adaptativas:** Se sugiere que los formuladores de políticas desarrollen marcos regulatorios que sean flexibles, que protejan la libertad de expresión cultural mientras combaten el abuso de las plataformas. Esto requiere un equilibrio delicado y una comprensión profunda de las dinámicas culturales y tecnológicas.

6.4.4. Discusión General de los Resultados:

La discusión de los resultados de la tesis se centró en cómo los hallazgos se conectan con el marco teórico y la literatura existente. Se contrastaron los resultados con estudios previos realizados en otros contextos, identificando similitudes y diferencias clave. Por ejemplo, mientras que el impacto positivo de las redes sociales en la interacción cultural es un hallazgo común en la literatura global, la especificidad de las interferencias políticas y culturales en el contexto saudita ofrece una contribución única.

La tesis argumenta que la conciencia cultural en la era digital es un constructo complejo, influenciado por múltiples factores interconectados. Los hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de un enfoque multifacético para aprovechar el potencial de las redes sociales como herramientas de desarrollo cultural, al mismo tiempo que se mitigan sus riesgos. La discusión también abordó las limitaciones del estudio (e.g., la muestra por conveniencia en el componente cuantitativo, la naturaleza transversal de la investigación), y cómo estas limitaciones abren puertas para futuras investigaciones. Se enfatizó que el estudio es un punto de partida para una comprensión más profunda de la dinámica cultural en Arabia Saudita en un mundo cada vez más digitalizado. La discusión se cierra con la afirmación de que los resultados tienen implicaciones prácticas significativas para la educación, la política pública y las estrategias de comunicación cultural en Arabia Saudita.

6.5. Implicaciones y Futuras Líneas de Investigación

Las conclusiones de esta tesis doctoral no solo iluminan el papel multifacético de las redes sociales en la configuración de la conciencia cultural en Arabia Saudita, sino que también sientan una base sólida para futuras investigaciones. Esta Investigación no representa el final de la indagación académica, sino más bien una hoja de ruta para profundizar en los fenómenos explorados y abordar nuevas preguntas que han surgido del propio estudio. La complejidad del paisaje digital y la evolución constante de las redes sociales requieren un compromiso continuo con la investigación para comprender plenamente su impacto en la sociedad y la cultura.

6.5.1. Implicaciones Teóricas y Prácticas:

- **Implicaciones Teóricas:** La investigación contribuye a la teoría de la comunicación y los estudios culturales al proporcionar un análisis empírico detallado del impacto de las redes sociales en la conciencia cultural en un contexto no occidental. Los hallazgos desafían o confirman teorías existentes sobre la aculturación, la difusión cultural y la identidad en la era digital. La categorización de las interferencias (individuales, políticas, económicas, culturales) ofrece un marco conceptual robusto para futuros estudios sobre los desafíos de la mediación digital.

- **Implicaciones Prácticas:** Las recomendaciones estratégicas derivadas de la tesis tienen un valor práctico inmediato para:
 - **Instituciones Educativas:** Pueden utilizar los hallazgos para diseñar programas de alfabetización mediática y digital que preparen a los estudiantes para un uso crítico y consciente de las redes sociales.
 - **Formuladores de Políticas:** Los resultados pueden informar el desarrollo de políticas públicas más efectivas para regular el contenido en línea, combatir la desinformación y el extremismo, y promover la diversidad cultural.
 - **Organizaciones Culturales:** Pueden diseñar estrategias más efectivas para difundir contenido cultural de alta calidad y fomentar el diálogo intercultural a través de las redes sociales.
 - **Desarrolladores de Plataformas:** Aunque no directamente el foco, los hallazgos pueden ofrecer ideas sobre cómo diseñar algoritmos y características que promuevan un ambiente más saludable y culturalmente enriquecedor.

6.5.2. Direcciones para Futuras Líneas de Investigación:

La tesis identifica varias vías prometedoras para futuras investigaciones, que se pueden agrupar en las siguientes áreas:

- **Estudios Longitudinales sobre Conciencia Cultural:**

- **Necesidad:** El estudio actual es de corte transversal, lo que proporciona una instantánea del fenómeno en un momento dado. Sin embargo, la conciencia cultural y el uso de redes sociales son dinámicos.
- **Propuesta:** Realizar estudios longitudinales que sigan a cohortes de estudiantes universitarios a lo largo de varios años. Esto permitiría rastrear la evolución de su conciencia cultural, la adaptación a nuevas plataformas de redes sociales y el impacto a largo plazo de la exposición digital. Se podrían emplear mediciones repetidas del mismo grupo de participantes para observar cambios y tendencias.
- **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Cómo cambian las percepciones de la identidad cultural y la diversidad a lo largo del tiempo con el uso continuado de las redes sociales? ¿Varían los efectos de las interferencias a medida que los estudiantes maduran y desarrollan mayores habilidades de alfabetización digital?
- **Análisis Comparativo de Políticas y Regulaciones:**
 - **Necesidad:** Las recomendaciones políticas de la tesis son específicas para Arabia Saudita, pero el problema de la desinformación y el extremismo en línea es global.
 - **Propuesta:** Investigar comparativamente las políticas y marcos regulatorios implementados en diferentes países (con contextos culturales similares o contrastantes) para gestionar

las redes sociales. Se podría analizar la efectividad de diversas estrategias (e.g., leyes de discurso de odio, políticas de eliminación de contenido, programas de alfabetización mediática a nivel nacional).

- **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Qué modelos de regulación de redes sociales son más efectivos para proteger la conciencia cultural y promover el diálogo en diferentes contextos sociopolíticos? ¿Cómo equilibran las políticas la libertad de expresión con la necesidad de combatir el contenido dañino?
- **Exploración de Metodologías y Herramientas Educativas Innovadoras:**
 - **Necesidad:** La tesis subraya el rol crucial de las instituciones educativas. Se requiere un mayor entendimiento de cómo traducir las recomendaciones en prácticas pedagógicas.
 - **Propuesta:** Diseñar y evaluar programas educativos piloto que integren el uso responsable de las redes sociales para el fomento de la conciencia cultural crítica. Esto podría incluir la creación de módulos curriculares, el desarrollo de herramientas digitales interactivas o la implementación de proyectos colaborativos que involucren a los estudiantes en el análisis de contenido cultural en línea.
 - **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Qué enfoques pedagógicos son más efectivos para desarrollar habilidades de

pensamiento crítico y alfabetización mediática en relación con el contenido cultural en línea? ¿Cómo pueden las universidades fomentar un entorno en línea que promueva el intercambio cultural seguro y significativo?

- **Impacto de Contenido Cultural Específico y su Formato:**

- **Necesidad:** La tesis identificó la importancia del contenido cultural, pero no profundizó en los tipos específicos o formatos.
- **Propuesta:** Realizar estudios cualitativos y cuantitativos centrados en el impacto de formatos específicos de contenido (e.g., videos cortos de TikTok vs. documentales de YouTube, podcasts culturales vs. blogs) en la percepción y comprensión cultural. Esto podría incluir análisis de contenido detallados de plataformas populares.
- **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Qué características del contenido cultural en línea (e.g., autenticidad, calidad de producción, interactividad) lo hacen más influyente en la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes? ¿Cómo se procesa y asimila el contenido cultural en diferentes plataformas de redes sociales?

- **Estudios de Caso sobre Iniciativas Exitosas:**

- **Necesidad:** Aprender de las experiencias de iniciativas que ya están utilizando las redes sociales para promover la diversidad cultural.

- **Propuesta:** Realizar estudios de caso en profundidad de programas o campañas específicas, tanto gubernamentales como de la sociedad civil, en Arabia Saudita o en la región, que hayan logrado utilizar las redes sociales para fomentar la conciencia cultural, el diálogo y la diversidad. Esto implicaría entrevistas con los organizadores, análisis de contenido y evaluación del impacto.
- **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Cuáles son los factores de éxito detrás de las campañas culturales en redes sociales? ¿Cómo se pueden replicar y escalar estas iniciativas en otros contextos?
- **Desarrollo de Métricas para la Conciencia Cultural Digital:**
 - **Necesidad:** La evaluación de la conciencia cultural en el entorno digital presenta desafíos metodológicos.
 - **Propuesta:** Investigar y proponer nuevas métricas o marcos para evaluar la conciencia cultural en el entorno digital que vayan más allá de las medidas de encuesta tradicionales. Esto podría implicar el desarrollo de herramientas basadas en el análisis de datos de redes sociales (e.g., análisis de sentimiento, análisis de redes sociales) o la creación de escalas validadas para medir la competencia cultural digital.
 - **Preguntas de Investigación Potenciales:** ¿Cómo podemos medir de manera efectiva el grado de apertura cultural o la

capacidad de discernimiento de desinformación en el entorno digital? ¿Existen patrones de interacción en línea que indican un mayor nivel de conciencia cultural?

6.5.3. Conclusión Final y Perspectiva de Futuro:

Esta tesis doctoral ha sido una contribución fundamental para comprender la compleja interacción entre las redes sociales y la conciencia cultural de los estudiantes universitarios sauditas. Al iluminar tanto las oportunidades que estas plataformas ofrecen para el enriquecimiento cultural y el desarrollo social, como los desafíos inherentes a la desinformación y el extremismo, ha proporcionado una base sólida para un diálogo informado y para el desarrollo de estrategias proactivas. Este estudio no es un cierre, sino una invitación a la comunidad académica y a los profesionales a continuar explorando estas dinámicas cruciales, reconociendo que el paisaje digital está en constante evolución y presenta nuevas preguntas y retos.

Los hallazgos de esta investigación subrayan la imperiosa necesidad de fomentar una alfabetización mediática robusta entre la juventud. Es vital equipar a los estudiantes con las herramientas críticas necesarias para navegar el vasto y a menudo contradictorio mar de información que las redes sociales presentan. Solo así podrán discernir la verdad de la falsedad, resistir la polarización y participar

en un intercambio cultural que sea verdaderamente enriquecedor y constructivo. La colaboración entre instituciones educativas, gobiernos y las propias plataformas tecnológicas será clave para crear entornos digitales más seguros y propicios para el crecimiento cultural. Al abordar estas líneas de investigación futuras, se puede enriquecer aún más el conocimiento sobre cómo las sociedades pueden aprovechar el vasto potencial de las redes sociales para fomentar una conciencia cultural robusta, crítica y constructiva en la era digital globalizada. El camino hacia una sociedad culturalmente más consciente y resiliente en la era digital es un viaje continuo, y esta tesis representa un paso significativo y una sólida plataforma de lanzamiento en esa dirección. Con una visión proactiva y colaborativa, el futuro de la conciencia cultural en la era de las redes sociales puede ser de crecimiento y entendimiento mutuo.

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