

The Influence of Online Trends on Consumer Psychology and Purchasing

Decisions in Saudi Customers

تأثير اتجاهات التسوق عبر الإنترنت على نفسية المستهلك وقرارات الشراء لدى العملاء

السعوديين

Research Proposal

Prepared by:

Marya Samer Ali Abdullah

Supervised by:

Dr. Mohammed Ewees

2024-2025

Table of Contents

Cover Page

.....	1
INTRODUCTION	5
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 The Psychology of Online Trend Influence.....	7
2. 1.1 Social Proof and Herd Behavior.....	8
2. 1.2 Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Motivational Triggers	9
2. 1.3 Identity Expression and Parasocial Influence	9
2. 2 The Influence of Online Trends and Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Saudi Arabia	10
2.2.1 Impact of social media influencers on Saudi consumers purchase intention.....	11
2.2.2 Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust.....	11
2.2.3 The use of Micro vs. Macro Influencers	12
2.2.4 Impulse Buying and Trend-Based Purchasing Behavior.....	13
2.2.5 Cultural Norms and the Localization of Online Trends	14
2.2.6 Local Influencers and Brand Trust.....	15
2.3 Digital Marketing Strategies Leveraging Online Trends.....	15
2.3.1 Real-Time Marketing and Trendjacking	16
2.3.2 Personalization Based on Trending Interests.....	16

2.3.3 AI and Data Analytics in Trend-Targeted Campaigns	17
2.4. Synthesis and Critical Reflection.....	18
2.5 Problem statement.....	19
2.6 Research objectives.....	20
2.7 Research Questions	21
2.8 Key Concepts of the Study.....	21
2.8.1 Online Trends	21
2.8.2 Consumer Psychology.....	21
2.8.3 Purchasing Decisions	22
2.8.4 Fear of Missing out (FOMO)	22
2.8.5 Real-Time Marketing.....	22
2.8.6 Trend jacking.....	22
2.8.7 Influencer Marketing.....	23
2.9 Theoretical Development.....	23
2.9.1 Independent Variables.....	24
2.9.2 Mediating Variables.....	24
2.9.3 Moderating Variables.....	25
2.9.4 Dependent Variable.....	25
2.10 Hypothesis Development	25
2.10.1 Hypothesis.....	25

2.11 Theoretical Framework.....	26
<i>Research Methodology</i>	28
3.1 Research Design	28
3.2 Population and Sampling	28
3.3 Data collection method	28
3.4 Scope of Study	29
3.5 Instrument development and design	29
3.6 Validity and Reliability	30
3.7 Questionnaire Data Analysis	31
<i>References</i>.....	33

INTRODUCTION

The rise of online trends such as TikTok aesthetics, influencer campaigns, viral challenges, memes etc., has transformed the way consumers choose what to buy and how to connect with brands. Usually coming from sites like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, online trends are fast-moving, culturally popular ways of acting and sharing content. These trends can often mix entertainment with more persuasive communication and are used to grow brand visibility by memes, challenges, and influencer visuals (Wang, 2024).

Globally, online trends have greatly changed marketing plans by increasing user involvement, shared creation, and instant connection. This move has changed how consumers connect because it values being real and including people over standard ads (Diallo et al., 2021). Trust as well as loyalty are powered via digital engagement within a worldwide shift during customer-brand exchanges noted by (Alfalih, 2022). So, marketing changed over time from broadcasting into conversation and went through changes from convincing to joining in (Grewal, 2024).

In this digital age, online trends have not only been a wave of entertainment but also emerged as powerful drivers about consumer behavior particularly using platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, X, also YouTube globally and locally (Wang, 2024).

Khan et al., (2021), in his study stated that one of the highest rates of social media use worldwide is seen in Saudi Arabia, and because its populace is youthful and tech-savvy, online trends are significantly relevant there. Moreover, the Kingdom's Vision 2030 transformed digitally rapidly also opened up to global consumer cultures, which impacted the local market's online trends faster. Increasingly, it has been shown that

the psychological responses and purchasing decisions of Saudi consumers has been shaped by user-generated content, viral marketing, and global influencers lately (Abdulaziz et al., 2023).

Building on previous research, this research aims to explore how online trends affect consumer psychology and influence purchasing decisions with Saudi consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid growth of digital platforms along with social media has greatly transformed consumer behavior because online trends now shape consumer psychology plus purchasing decisions, particularly in the Saudi market. Given that consumers do rely more and more on social media when it comes to information and inspiration, trends can spread with speed and have influence upon perceptions, preferences, and upon buying patterns. Marketers must have a comprehension of all of the psychological mechanisms that are behind this influence. They should also understand the role of various social media platforms and the unique characteristics of Saudi consumers if they seek to leverage these trends effectively. This literature review explores these dynamics via four key themes:

1. The psychology of online trend influence
2. The Influence of Online Trends and Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Saudi Arabia.
3. Real-Time Marketing and Trend jacking
4. Synthesis and Critical Reflection

2.1 The Psychology of Online Trend Influence

This theme examines the psychological mechanisms by which consumer behavior is shaped through online trends, particularly with respect to decision-making, emotional response, motivation, and also perception. These constructs for this discussion include social proof, fear of missing out (FOMO), emotional

triggers, and identity-based engagement, and they are key too. These constructs engage with identity then trigger emotion due to FOMO and social proof. These factors largely influence how consumers especially in digitally active environments respond to rapidly changing trends on social media platforms.

2. 1.1 Social Proof and Herd Behavior

Md Shakir Ali et al., n.d.(2025), "**The Power of Social Influence in Consumer Choices**".

This research provided valuable perceptions into consumer decision-making via focusing on the roles of social proof along with herd behavior in the psychology of online trend influence. Ali et al. stated that social proof operates when people mimic what others do in ambiguous situations by relying on reviews they find online, how customers rate products highly, and what customers say in testimonials, which greatly increase trust to purchase and convert leads while, Herd behavior is something that complements this because it describes just how consumers will follow the majority for the reason that they need social acceptance, or, they fear missing out (FOMO), particularly when it comes to trending products that are in fast-moving sectors such as fashion and also technology. That social proof and herd behavior correlate strongly to purchasing decisions is confirmed by the study and based on this fact, they are very importance in digital marketing strategies. A quantitative method was employed and a survey distributed to the targeted respondents and 150 respondents data was collected in Karnal and Hisar, India, using structured questionnaires. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and Chi-square tests. Md Shakir Ali et al., n.d., (2025) found that Social influence significantly affects purchasing behavior.

2. 1.2 Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Motivational Triggers

Moore & Craciun, (2021), **"Fear of Missing Out and Personality as Predictors of Social Networking Sites Usage: The Instagram Case.**

This study offered key insights into the psychological mechanisms driving online trend influence, particularly through Instagram. Also, the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has also been shown to significantly affect consumer motivation and engagement with trendy online content. This study focused on Instagram users and found that FOMO was a key driver of user interaction with influencer-generated content. Moreover, this psychological state was linked to both increased product engagement and decreased subjective wellbeing. Also, FOMO served as a mediating factor between social media exposure and consumer action, particularly in promoting time sensitive or trend based purchases. (Moore & Craciun, 2021), in this study aimed to gain more accurate and comprehensive insights thus, chose a mixed method approach involving both surveys and behavioral data collection. The main findings of this study showed that FOMO not only encourages consumer activity but also operates as a behavioral accelerator causing faster and less deliberative decision making.

2. 1.3 Identity Expression and Parasocial Influence

Sarkis et al., (2024),**"Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para- social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior"**

Another psychological mechanism influencing consumers' responses to online trends is the role of digital identity and self-expression. Researchers in this study investigated how identity expression and online

consumer behavior are influenced by para-social interactions and relationships, which are one-sided emotional bonds that consumers or audience form with influencers using online media despite having no real social interaction with them as defined by (Donald Horton & R. Richard Wohl, 1956). In the context of Lebanon, Sarkis et al., (2024), found that Lebanese consumers often form close bonds with influencers, gaining inspiration from their lifestyle and adapting their purchases accordingly. This study used a quantitative method with an online questionnaire using 5-point Likert scale and was distributed to 250 Lebanese respondents. Results from this study confirmed the assumption that customers express their identities by following influencers they trust, love and follow showing that these interactions considerably increase trust and purchase intentions. As a result, the study showed that para-social influence is one of the main psychological processes influencing the acceptance of online trends and the development of identities in digital contexts.

2. 2 The Influence of Online Trends and Social Media Influencers on Consumer Purchase Decisions in Saudi Arabia

In the age of digital hyper connectivity, online trends and social media influencers have emerged as powerful forces that shape consumer behavior specifically in Saudi Arabia's increasingly digital marketplace; this is because trend-driven consumption is simultaneously becoming a dominant behavioral pattern among Saudi consumers. Also, influencers on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat are key links between the consumer choice and the fast-moving online trends. Therefore, this theme is structured around six sub-themes to explore how these 2 phenomena co-shape consumer purchase decisions in the Saudi market.

2.2.1 Impact of social media influencers on Saudi consumers purchase intention

Nasser Al et al., (2020), "**Effect of social media influencers on purchase intentions of Saudi Arabia consumers: Instagram as an evaluation tool**".

This study explored the significant influence of social media influencers (SMIs) on the purchase intentions of Saudi Arabian consumers particularly, with a specific focus on Instagram as an evaluation tool. The research highlighted how influencer marketing using credible, persuasive, and professional individuals drives greater consumer engagement, product trust, and as a result, purchase intent. By using Instagram as a case study, the study employed a qualitative literature review method to conceptually explore how social media influencers affect purchase intentions in the Saudi market and the results showed that SMIs impacts Saudi consumers' purchasing decisions significantly through increased trust, credibility and engagement highlighting the role of Instagram in modern digital marketing strategies in the context if Saudi Arabia

2.2.2 Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust

Saad et al., (2025), "**Influencer marketing's impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia**"

This research studied the very influential role that social media influencers play in the shaping of purchasing intentions particularly among young consumers in Saudi Arabia at the University of Bisha. They found out that Influencer credibility defined by content quality, attractiveness and trustworthiness improved consumer trust and purchase intention significantly. Saad et al., (2025), in this study used a descriptive-analytical methodology and examined the effects of influncer marketing on brand credibility and purchase intention among 384 male

and female students at the University of Bisha, in Saudi Arabia using a structured online and in-person survey across various faculties. They found out that influencer credibility not only affects purchase intention directly but it also works as a partial mediator since it increases how influencer traits affect consumer choices. Beside, they found out that what strengthen this trust between influencers and the audience is endorsements transparency and cultural alignment. As a result, ensuring deep resonance within the target audience causing effective purchase behavior and building trust on credible influencers who aligns with their followers values and social norms.

2.2.3 The use of Micro vs. Macro Influencers

Kay et al., (2020), "**When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure**"

Social media influencers are usually categorized into those micro-influencers that typically have fewer than 100,000 followers and also those macro-influencers that often are exceeding one million followers. Therefore, Kay et al., (2020), in this research aimed to find out whether type of influencers—micro or macro—are more convincing and the effectiveness of different influencer types and the impact of sponsorship disclosure on marketing outcomes. Thus, this study examined the way that the type of influencer and the presence of sponsorship disclosure have an effect on consumer responses which included product knowledge, perceived attractiveness, and purchase intention. The research used of a 2x2 experimental design with a total of 334 female Instagram users who were interested in beauty products, and the research varied by influencer popularity plus sponsored content visibility. The results showed that Micro-influencers improved consumers'

product knowledge beyond macro-influencers and consumers' purchase intent was also shown to improve because of the results.

Furthermore, because sponsorships were disclosed, both the perceived attractiveness of the product and purchase likelihood were positively influenced. Purchase intention was at its highest point among micro-influencers who did notably disclose sponsorships. These findings stress the effectiveness of smaller-scale influencers as well as the value of transparency in influencer marketing because they suggest that “less is more” may be a planned approach in digital campaigns.

Online trends are becoming major drivers of consumer behavior due to the quick increase in digital connection and the domination of social media platforms. Trend driven consumption, in which perceptions and purchase decisions are influenced by influencers, visual marketing, and platform-specific features such as Reels, has been adopted by Saudi Arabia's digitally engaged population, particularly the youth. This theme examines the ways in which these internet changes impact Saudi customers' purchase decisions, with a particular emphasis upon cultural influences, psychological triggers, and digital trust mechanisms in three sub-themes.

2.2.4 Impulse Buying and Trend-Based Purchasing Behavior

AL Hilal, (2023), **"The Impact of the Use of Augmented Reality on Online Purchasing Behavior Sustainability: The Saudi Consumer as a Model."**

AL Hilal, (2023), in this study explored how augmented reality (AR) which is a trend driven technology affects online purchasing behavior among Saudi consumers. This study used a descriptive and analytical quantitative methodology and surveyed (812) AR users through a validated questionnaire, focusing on AR factors and

dimensions based on the Technology Acceptance Model and Ihde's theory of intermediate technology. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between AR dimensions such as the purchasing experience, quality, satisfaction, and creativity, with women and married respondents expressing more favorable attitudes. Moreover, this study found that AR's impact was especially notable in the apparel and accessories sectors. The study also revealed that AR-enabled virtual try-ons enhanced the sense of product realism, leading to higher purchase intention, especially among young Saudi women. These findings show that emerging digital experiences increase the impulsive buying behavior by increasing emotional engagement and product confidence.

2.2.5 Cultural Norms and the Localization of Online Trends

Bahaddad, (2021), The Traditional Influence on Increasing Acceptance of Commercial Smartphone Applications in Specific Regions of the Arabic World

This study investigates how cultural norms shape the adoption of commercial smartphone applications in Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar. The researchers employed online questionnaires distributed to 799 participants familiar with e-commerce. Statistical analysis highlighted both widely shared needs and notable differences across the countries. Key findings revealed that while some application features are globally valued, cultural differences such as preferences for color use, language options, content presentation, and feedback channels significantly affect user acceptance. These findings highlights the necessity of localized customization in commercial app design, confirming that successful M-commerce adoption in the Arabic Gulf depends on aligning features with community-specific traditions and expectations.

2.2.6 Local Influencers and Brand Trust

Alanmi & Alharthi, (2023), "**The Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior in Saudi Arabia: Brand Popularity as a Mediator**".

This study investigated how digital marketing, specially via social media channels like Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter, influences consumers' purchase decisions, buying habits, and brand recognition in Saudi Arabia. Using a quantitative method, the researchers collected data from 200 local social media users through online questionnaires and analyzed the results using SPSS. They found that digital marketing has a important and positive influence on both consumers buying behavior and purchasing decisions. Also, brand popularity mediates these relationships. These findings suggested that local influencers and interactive campaigns can promote brand trust by increasing brand popularity and directing consumer decisions as a result. The study highlighted that organizations should prioritize digital marketing strategies to strengthen brand trust and expand their customer base in the local context.

2.3 Digital Marketing Strategies Leveraging Online Trends

This theme explores how companies utilize online trends as part of their digital marketing strategies to influence Saudi consumers and drive purchasing behavior. The studies reviewed examine the integration of AI, real-time analytics, and content personalization to enhance marketing outcomes in trend-sensitive environments.

2.3.1 Real-Time Marketing and Trendjacking

Aalijah, (2025), "**Utilizing Social Media Analytics to Detect Trends in Saudi Arabia's Evolving Market**".

This study investigates how AI-driven social media analytics allow for the real-time tracking of market trends in Saudi Arabia to assist tactics like trend-jacking and real-time marketing. The researcher used a method that combines Natural Language Processing (NLP) models to analyze more than 30 million postings from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. After preprocessing the data, the researchers analyzed sentiment. To cluster trends, they employed advanced topic modeling. Trend trajectories and sentiment with engagement levels, and growth indicators were all predicted by the Prophet forecasting model. Key findings revealed rising trends in digital transformation, economic diversification, and sustainability, while topics like oil dependency declines, showing how real-time analytics can inform personalized business and marketing strategies in dynamic markets.

2.3.2 Personalization Based on Trending Interests

Binlibdah, (2024), "**Investigating the Role of Artificial Intelligence to Measure Consumer Efficiency: The Use of Strategic Communication and Personalized Media Content**".

This research studied how artificial intelligence (AI) improves personalization in digital marketing focusing on trending consumer interests. In the study, quantitative method was followed by distributing survey to Saudi Arabian social media users who were active users and collecting 367 valid replies. The links between strategic communication, tailored media content, and customer service efficiency were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Smart PLS 4 software. This study found that personalized media content by itself

does not immediately increase customer service efficiency, despite the fact that strategic communication promotes both personalized content and service efficiency. Rather, AI completely mediates this relationship, enabling personalized approaches to successfully enhance results by adjusting to changing customer preferences, highlighting AI's critical position in real-time personalization and customer engagement.

2.3.3 AI and Data Analytics in Trend-Targeted Campaigns

Alotaibi et al., n.d., (2025), "**Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Their Impact on Improving Marketing Effectiveness and Customer Experience in the Retail Sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**".

Marketers use AI as well as data analytics to act on also to gather, then to interpret trend and sentiment data's large volumes. This capability let brands anticipate what consumers prefer and design strategies for proactive campaigns accordingly. Therefore, Alotaibi et al., n.d., (2025), wanted to investigate how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data technologies impact the customer experience and marketing performance within the Saudi retail sector. The researchers used a qualitative methodology, and interviewed 20 experts in and semi-structured interviews from the Saudi retail and marketing sectors to investigate the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data in trend-targeted campaigns. Thematic analysis also revealed AI and data analytics greatly improve marketing effectiveness since they allow exact consumer targeting plus campaign personalization. Also, AI and data analytics do predict marketing strategies. Furthermore, participants highlighted return on investment went up, costs were cut, as well as campaign accuracy improved. Moreover, the study showed that both automated and tailored recommendations improved consumer engagement, resulting in higher customer satisfaction and longer client retention.

2.4. Synthesis and Critical Reflection

The reviewed literature highlights how online trends dynamically blend with consumer psychology as well as purchasing behavior, especially within the Saudi digital landscape. Psychological factors such as social proof, fear of missing out (FOMO), and identity expression greatly affect consumer responsiveness to online trends, as the first theme portrayed Md Shakir Ali et al., n.d.; Moore & Craciun, (2021). Cognitive and emotional drivers shape behavioral intentions because influencer marketing reinforces parasocial relationships and perceived authenticity (Kay et al., 2020; Saad et al., 2025).

The second theme stressed upon the critical role that social media platforms have. These platforms act as incubators of trends along with behavior-modifying content. Platform algorithms, engagement features such as Instagram Stories and Reels along with AR filters can mediate consumer attention, shape preferences as revealed through studies such as (AL Hilal, 2023; -Nasser Al et al., 2020)

The third theme addressed people's transition from trend awareness and engagement to real purchasing. Additionally, localized marketing strategies and cultural alignment convert attention into buying action particularly among Saudi Arabia's younger demographics, according to (Alanmi & Alharthi, 2023; Bahaddad, 2021).

Finally, the fourth theme examined how businesses utilize online trends via personalization, real-time data, and AI-powered marketing tools. Marketers can use advanced analytics for prediction of trends then adjust campaigns based on that accordingly and close that gap existing between digital engagement with business performance as noted by (Aalijah, 2025; Alotaibi et al., n.d.; Binlibdah, 2024).

Even with researchers finding richness, gaps still exist there. Few of the studies do integrate the technological, the cultural, and the psychological dimensions. Notably, a uniform model lacks these particular areas. Research remains limited regarding Saudi consumers interpreting trend content and adopting trend content especially in emotionally driven or impulsive contexts for daily decisions. Moreover, with AI and data analytics being cited frequently as tools of influence, their indirect psychological impacts on consumers also remain underexplored.

This thematic review is highlighting a holistic approach with a blending of real-time marketing strategy and cultural specificity and consumer psychology. This study now seeks to fill these gaps since it explores how trend-based marketing shapes consumer perceptions and choices in Saudi Arabia, which provides both theoretical perceptions and practical implications for digital marketing professionals.

2.5 Problem statement

In recent years, Saudi Arabia's younger population has displayed sharp increases in internet usage plus social media activity. Saudi consumers find influencer aesthetics and trend-driven content very effective especially younger ones (ALNefaie, 2019). This shift has led toward increased exposure to online trends including influencer marketing, viral product promotions, also user-generated content. These digital phenomena are reshaping consumer attitudes and also emotions and decision-making processes (Suri, 2023). These effects are occurring in ways still not fully understood. Although, global research has explored the impact of online trends upon consumer behavior. Psychological influences such as fear of missing out (FOMO), social proof, and emotional appeal play a role, but their specific impact remains unclear on Saudi consumers which may be uniquely shaped by cultural elements such as social norms, religious values, and family expectations.

While global studies have already explored the psychological effects of trends and their impact on purchasing decisions, Marketers, retailers, and policymakers risk missing key perceptions into how digital trends influence consumption in the Saudi market if they do not clearly understand these dynamics. Furthermore, the role of AI, trend personalization, and local influencer culture in influencing consumer psychology remains underexplored. This knowledge gap makes it challenging for marketers to design culturally relevant and psychologically effective campaigns targeting Saudi consumers and this study is aiming to fill this gap.

2.6 Research objectives

The objective of this study is to look into the decisions of purchasing as well as the psychology of the consumer among consumers who are Saudi through online trends. Here are the main objectives of this study:

- 1- To examine psychological factors, like, perception, emotion, motivation, influenced by online trends within the Saudi market.
- 2- To analyze how Trends like; influencer marketing, viral content, viral products and user-generated content impact and shape Saudi consumers' purchasing behavior.
- 3- To explore how cultural or demographic variables like age, gender, or religiosity moderates the relationship between online trends with consumer decisions.

2.7 Research Questions

1. How do online trends influence Saudi consumers' psychological processes such as motivation, perception and emotion?
2. What psychological mechanisms (FOMO/emotional appeal/identity expression) are triggered by online trends among Saudi consumers?
3. How does different demographic groups such as age, gender, or education level responses to online trends among Saudi consumers?

2.8 Key Concepts of the Study

2.8.1 Online Trends

According to (Granstedt, 2024), online trends are any viral digital content, topics or even behaviors that spreads quickly over platforms impacting the audience behavior and perception. These trends including memes, challenges, influencer campaigns, trending sounds and hashtags usually starts on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

2.8.2 Consumer Psychology

Consumer psychology is the exploration of consumer's attitudes, perceptions, behavior and motivation in relation to consumption activities (Mandung et al., 2024).

2.8.3 Purchasing Decisions

As per (Antosova et al., 2023), purchasing decision is a result of complex procedure which consumers go through and get influenced by emerging and traditional factors when deciding whether to purchase a product or service.

2.8.4 Fear of Missing out (FOMO)

(Moore & Craciun, 2021), defined the concept of Fear of Missing out (FOMO) as a widespread fear someone would feel that others may be enjoying fulfilling experiences while they are not. In their study, Moore & Craciun, (2021) characterized FOMO by dissatisfaction, anxiety and frustration. Fear of missing out (FOMO) is experienced by individuals who are exposed to social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram as such platforms provides constant chances for social interaction allowing individuals to keep track of others experiences and activities.

2.8.5 Real-Time Marketing

As per Duarte & Paulo (2023), Real-Time Marketing is how brands rapidly respond to current trends, events or cultural occasions with relevant content. Real-Time marketing as a strategy seeks to actively engage the audience through connecting a brand's message to the current and trending happenings to seem more relevant, relatable and up to date.

2.8.6 Trend jacking

Farys, Harrison (2025), referred to Trend jacking as the practice of influencers or brands of using current trends to increase the audience engagement and brand recognition frequently in real-time on social media. This happens because influencers use trending and viral products to grab attention, Trend jacking has the ability to boost consumers interest and encourage them towards making purchases

2.8.7 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a very important component of digital marketing (Saad et al., 2025). This marketing strategy uses social media influencers to endorse and promote products, services and brands. Influencer marketing serves as an expansion to the traditional word-of-mouth marketing strategy, it connects and influences consumers using the wide reach of digital platforms.

2.9 Theoretical Development

In theoretical research frameworks, independent and dependent variables are often used to explore relationships between influencing factors and behavioral outcomes. In this study, the independent variables are online trends and their components (such as FOMO, influencer marketing, personalization, and trend jacking). These influence the dependent variable, which is in this research the Purchasing decisions of Saudi consumers.

According to (Saunders et al., 2020), the independent variable is the factor that can be manipulated or observed as the cause, while the dependent variable is the response or outcome that is influenced. Mediating variables serve to clarify the mechanism through which the independent variables exert influence on the dependent variable, which in this case is the consumer psychological processes which acts as mediating variables, helping explain how online trends affect final purchasing behavior. Moreover, demographic variables like age, gender, and level of education serve as moderating factors, affecting the path and strength of the correlation between online trends and behavioral or psychological outcomes.

2.9.1 Independent Variables

Independent variables in this research are core elements of online trends, they show how Saudi digital consumer environments apply online trends:

- **FOMO (Fear of Missing Out):** The pressure created by temporary digital trends drives impulsive purchasing.
- **Trend-based Personalization:** Customized marketing content based on new digital interests.
- **Social Media Influencers:** Influence brand trust and trend-following behavior.
- **Real-time Marketing and Trend jacking:** Brands aligning with current events or viral content to engage audiences.

2.9.2 Mediating Variables

The impact of online trends on buying decisions is mediated by consumer psychological processes. These mediators are essential for understanding the psychological processes that link trend stimuli to consumer behavior and they consist of:

- **Motivation:** Online trends drive aspirational and pleasure-seeking motives.
- **Perception:** Trend relevance and social validation are the two main lenses through which consumers interpret marketing messaging.
- **Emotion:** Decisions are greatly influenced by emotional reactions like belonging, excitement, and anxiety.

2.9.3 Moderating Variables

- **Demographic Factors (Age, Gender, Education):** These factors affect the degree to which people are affected by online trends. For instance, women may interact with influencer content differently than males, and Gen Z customers may be more trend-sensitive than older consumers.

2.9.4 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is:

- **Consumer Purchasing Decision:** This is a reflection of how exposure to trend-driven content influences behavioral outcomes including brand choice, intention to buy, and actual purchasing.

2.10 Hypothesis Development

In light of the increasing influence of online trends and personalized content on consumer behavior, digital marketing is rapidly changing in the Saudi context (Aalijah, 2025). According to the literature, exposure to digital trends has a positive and strong impact on consumer psychology, which in turn influences purchasing behavior. Numerous academics have shown how online trends work as triggers for behavior, stimulating psychological processes like social proof and FOMO, especially in younger Saudi consumers who are accustomed to using technology (Binlibdah, 2024; Faqihi et al., 2024; Saad et al., 2025). Based from the literature on consumer behavior and psychology, the following hypotheses are proposed:

2.10.1 Hypothesis

H1: Online trends have a strong and positive effect on Saudi consumers' psychological processes.

H2: Consumer psychological processes mediate the relationship between online trends and consumer purchasing decisions.

H3: Online trends have a significant and positive direct effect on consumer purchasing decisions.

H5: Demographic factors including age, gender, and level of education have significant effects on how online trends affect consumer psychology.

H6: Demographic characteristics moderates the influence of psychological processes on purchasing decisions.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

This study will adopt the Stimulus—Organism—Response (S-O-R) model which was firstly presented by Mehrabian, (1974) who is an environmental psychologist. This model explains how a person's internal behavior and emotions are influenced by external environmental stimuli which as a result leads to behavioral responses. This model consists of three main components which are:

- **Stimuli (S):** Refers to the environmental external factors that grabs the consumer attention such as Online Trends including influencer content.
- **Organism (O):** Is where a consumer interprets and react psychologically to the Stimuli. It refers to consumer's internal behavioral and emotional processes such as Consumer Psychological processes like social proof, and FOMO.
- **Response (R):** Indicates the Result, the behavior that results. Like a purchase decision or a shift in perception of a brand. This could be both conscious like a thoughtful decision or unconscious like impulsive action.

Therefore, to understand how online trends influence consumer psychology and purchasing behavior in the Saudi context, this research will employ Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model as a guiding theoretical lens. According to this model, Stimuli (S) is represented as Online trends, Organism (O) is the Consumer psychological processes like social proof and FOMO, and Response (R) serves as Purchasing decisions among Saudi consumers. Moreover, in accordance to the literature review and the proposed theoretical framework, figure 10.1 illustrates the proposed conceptual model.

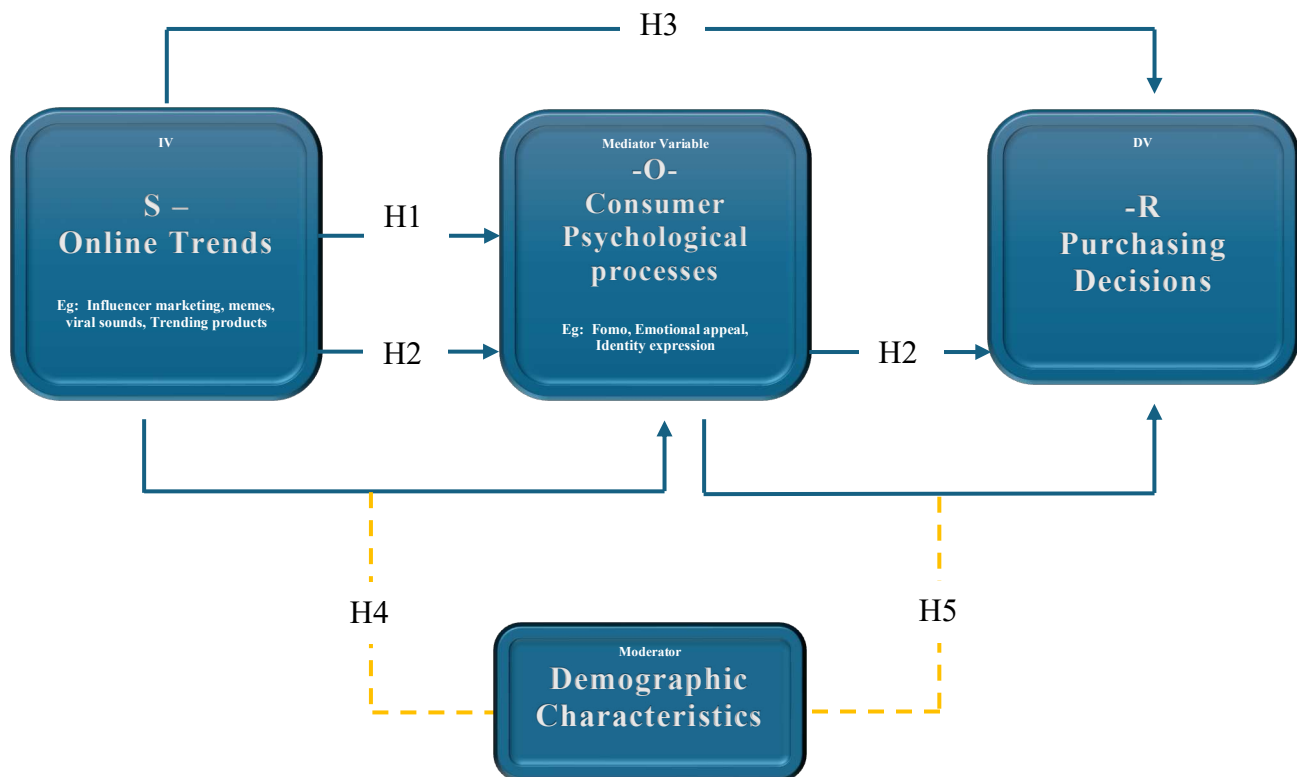


Figure 10.1: Proposed Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study will employ a quantitative method using a cross-sectional survey to test how Online trends influence consumer psychology and purchasing decisions among Saudi consumers. This research design is appropriate for testing the proposed hypothesis and identifying relationships between variables at a specific time.

3.2 Population and Sampling

Saudi consumers who actively use social media and engage with online content will be part of the target demographic. Participants who fit the inclusion requirements, which include being at least eighteen years old, living in Saudi Arabia, and having experience with social media, will be selected using a non-probability purposive sampling technique.

- **Sample size:** To guarantee statistical power and generalizability for SEM analysis, this survey will seek a minimum of 150 participants.
- **Sampling method:** The survey will be distributed via different online channels.

3.3 Data collection method

A structured online questionnaire will be used to gather primary data. The targeted participants will receive the survey via different online channels through a platform like Google Forms along with clear instructions and consent.

3.4 Scope of Study

While focusing on digital behavior influenced by digital platforms where viral trends, personalized content and influencer marketing are present, this study is aiming to understand how online trends affects Saudi consumer's purchase decisions and their psychology.

The scope of this study includes:

- **Geographic Scope:** Limited to Saudi Arabia with a focus on areas where social media usage in highest.
- **Demographic Scope:** To explore differences based on demographic factors, this studying will focus on Consumers residing in Saudi Arabia aged between 18-50, with a range of professional and educational backgrounds.

3.5 Instrument development and design

The survey will involve 2 main sections. Section A will about the demographic information of the targeted respondents like; Age, Gender, level of education and more. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study will adopt the Stimulus—Organism—Response (S-O-R) model with a mediator and moderator variables. While Demographic Factors being the moderator variable in this study, the collection of this information is very crucial as it serves as a very important part of the proposed hypothesis. It will help understand the demographic differences among the participants and how each group will react differently in relation to certain attributes. Section B will be designed to test the proposed research model through constructs and variables that were developed. This part will focus on the variables that are likely to influence the consumer psychology and purchasing decisions among Saudi consumers in relation to online trends based of the theoretical framework

that has been proposed in the previous chapter. As for the measurement scales, all the items in the questionnaire will be measured using the 5-point Likert scale except for the participant's personal information and the demographic related questions. 5-point Likert scale that was first developed by (Likert, 1932), is a widely psychometric scale used to measure attitudes. Thus, respondents will be asked to identify to what extent do they agree or disagree with each statement using the 5-point Likert scale going from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" as shown in Table 3.5.1:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Table 3.5.: 5-point Likert Scale Format

3.6 Validity and Reliability

There are various types of validation techniques. Content and Face Validation method will be utilized to validate this testing tool because it eliminates the requirement for a more intricate quantitative approach. The questionnaire content must be thoroughly examined by the researcher and academic experts to ensure that the items and questions are comprehensive and measures what is intended and that both the researchers and the respondents find it appropriate and also will accept and value the questionnaire's contents (Saffi, 2013). Thus, with the supervisor's guidance as an academic expert, the researcher will test both Validity and Reliability on the constructs to measure the instrument quality using Face and Content Validity.

Moreover, a pilot test is a technique used with a smaller sample size to test the reliability of a questionnaire content. According to some authors, a sample size between 25-75 respondents is enough to

conduct a pilot test (Jacoby, 1987). Also, a pilot study is necessary to be conducted after the instrument validation to identify any shortcoming and determine if the questionnaire needs any refinement or enhancement. This study will employ Pilot test as a reliability technique with a sample size of (n=30) to evaluate the questionnaire reliability before distributing it to a larger sample size of targeted participants and will be validated using Smart PLS. Lastly, after the data collection, Construct Reliability and Validity will be measured using the following:

- **Cronbach's Alpha (α):** To measure the internal consistency. Values above (0.7) indicate acceptable reliability. Table 3.5 shows the Cronbach's Alpha (α) values and what each value indicates.
- **Composite Reliability (CR):** Will be used to assess the reliability of each construct.
- **Average Variance Extracted (AVE):** Will be used to test the convergent validity. values above (0.5) indicate necessary construct validity.

Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Value
Cronbach's Alpha > 0.90	Excellent
Cronbach's Alpha > 0.8 to 0.9	Good
Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 to 0.8	Acceptable
Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6 to 0.7	Questionable
Cronbach's Alpha < 0.6	Poor

Table 3.5.: Cronbach's Alpha (α) values

3.7 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The data collected from the Questionnaire will be analyzed employing a Structural Equation Model (SEM) using SmartPLS. As stated by (Hair et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2015) Smart PLS software uses a Partial Least

Squares (PLS) which is an element-based SEM method normally used for examining the correlation between variables and helps in building theoretical concepts in IS and technology research. This analysis will include the following:

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Frequency distribution

Path Analysis: To test relationships between the following variables:

- IV
- DV
- Mediating
- Moderating

Reliability and Validity: will test the following:

- Cronbach's Alpha
- Composite Reliability (CR)
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Multi group analysis: Will test the Moderation effects of the Demographic factors

References

- Aalijah, K. (2025). Utilizing Social Media Analytics to Detect Trends in Saudi Arabia's Evolving Market. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)*, 13(02), 1936–1943.
<https://doi.org/10.18535/ijssrm/v13i02.ec01>
- Abdulaziz, A. A., Algosaibi, A. M., Alquhaibi, A. S., Alali, F. N., Almutawaa, M. S., Roomi, M. A., & Bhatti, Y. A. (2023). Digital Healthcare Innovation and Development in Saudi Arabia During and Beyond COVID-19. *Science, Technology and Society*, 28(3), 370–386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09717218231178229>
- AL Hilal, N. S. H. (2023). The Impact of the Use of Augmented Reality on Online Purchasing Behavior Sustainability: The Saudi Consumer as a Model. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15065448>
- Alanmi, M., & Alharthi, S. (2023). The Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior in Saudi Arabia: Brand Popularity as a Mediator. *Journal of Business and Management Review*, 4(6), 412–438.
<https://doi.org/10.47153/jbmr46.6552023>
- Alfalih, A. A. (2022). Customer engagement design during the COVID 19 pandemic, mutual trust and intelligent automation: a conceptual perspective. . *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 11(1).
- Alnefaie, M. , K. S. , and M. S. (2019). Consumers' electronic word of mouth-seeking intentions on social media sites concerning Saudi bloggers' youtube fashion channels: an eclectic approach. *International Journal of Business Forecasting and Marketing Intelligence*, 5(1), 1.
- Alotaibi, I., Mubarak Alhumaid, M., & Saleem Alotaibi, I. (n.d.). *Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Their Impact on Improving Marketing Effectiveness and Customer Experience in the Retail Sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* المملكة التسويق وتجربة العمالء في قطاع مة وتأثيرها على تحسين فعالية خ الذكاء الاصطناعي و البيانات الض
Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Their Impact on Improving Marketing التجزئة العربية السعودية

. *Effectiveness and Customer Experience in the Retail Sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

<https://doi.org/10.37575/h/edu/22002>

Antosova, I., Psurny, M., & Stavkova, J. (2023). Changes in Consumer Purchasing Decisions: Traditional and Emerging Factors in the Dynamic Marketing Landscape Over 15 Years. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 14(3), 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.21272/mmi.2023.3-08>

Bahaddad, A. A. (2021). The Traditional Influence on Increasing Acceptance of Commercial Smartphone Applications in Specific Regions of the Arabic World. *Complexity*, 2021.

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/4336772>

Binlibdah, S. (2024). Investigating the Role of Artificial Intelligence to Measure Consumer Efficiency: The Use of Strategic Communication and Personalized Media Content. *Journalism and Media*, 5(3), 1142–1161.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia5030073>

Diallo, M. F., Djelassi, S., & Kumar, V. (2021). Marketing and globalization: Relevance, trends and future research. *Recherche et Applications En Marketing (English Edition)*, 36(3), 2–7.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/20515707211027326>

Donald Horton & R. Richard Wohl. (1956). *Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction*.

Duarte, A., & Paulo, R. (2023). *The Impact of Real-Time Marketing in the Engagement of the Brand “Control” on Instagram* (pp. 182–202). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-9146-1.ch010>

Faqihi, F. A., Qutob, R. A., Subh, R. H. M., Aljathalin, L. A. M., Alshalan, L. Z., Yati, S. M. A., Alaryni, A., Alghamdi, A., Alsolamy, E., Bukhari, A., Alanazi, A., Hazazi, B. H. A., Abuhemid, H. A., Alassaf, R. A., & Alzahrani, S. S. M.

(2024). Examining the Effects of Social Media on Mental Health Among Adolescents in Saudi Arabia. *Cureus*.

<https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.53261>

- Farys, H. (2025). *The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Brand Equity and Generation Z Consumer Behavior in the Fast Fashion Industry The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Brand Equity and Generation Z Consumer Behavior in the Fast Fashion Industry*.
- Granstedt, A. (2024). The past, present, and future of social media marketing ethics. *AMS Review*, 14(3), 278–296.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-024-00294-6>
- Grewal, D. Et al. (2024). The Future of Marketing and Marketing Education. . *Journal of Marketing Education*, 47(1), 61-77. .
- Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Mena, J. A. (2012). An assessment of the use of partial least squares structural equation modeling in marketing research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40(3), 414–433. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-011-0261-6>
- Jacoby, J. , C. J. M. , & P. S. (1987). *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*.
- Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: the impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(3–4), 248–278.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1718740>
- Khan, M. M., Sohail, S. S., & Ishrat, D. (2021). *How They Tweet? An Insightful Analysis of Twitter Handles of Saudi Arabia*. <http://arxiv.org/abs/2105.10736>
- Likert, R. (1932). *A technique for the measurement of attitudes*. .
- Mandung, F., Sahari, S., & Razak, S. R. (2024). Exploring Consumer Psychology in Marketing Management: A Strategic Perspective through Descriptive Inquiry and Literature Review. *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business*, 4(1), 01–10. <https://doi.org/10.52970/grmapb.v4i1.401>

- Md Shakir Ali, S., Arun Goyal, A., Abhiman Ramteke, N., Gopal Rao Chowdary, V., Goyal, A. A., Goyal, S. A., & Ramteke, N. (n.d.). The Power of Social Influence in Consumer Choices and Marketing Management. In *Journal of Marketing & Social Research ISSN* (Vol. 2, Issue 1). <https://jmsr-online.com/pg.319>
- Mehrabian, A. , & R. J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. American Psychological Association. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1974-22049-000>
- Moore, K., & Craciun, G. (2021). Fear of Missing Out and Personality as Predictors of Social Networking Sites Usage: The Instagram Case. *Psychological Reports*, 124(4), 1761–1787. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294120936184>
- Nasser Al, A., Al-Nasser, A., & Shah Bali Mahomed, A. (2020). Anuar Shah Bali Mahomed, Effect of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intentions of Saudi Arabia Consumers: Instagram as an Evaluation Tool. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 11(7), 1186–1196. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.11.7.2020.105>
- Saad, M., Awad, A., Aziz, A. F., & Shma, T. R. (2025). Influencer marketing's impact on credibility and purchase intention: A study on University of Bisha students in Saudi Arabia. *Innovative Marketing*, 21(1), 326–337. [https://doi.org/10.21511/im.21\(1\).2025.26](https://doi.org/10.21511/im.21(1).2025.26)
- Saffi, M. A. L. , de M. J. L. J. , T. M. M. , P. C. A. , & R.-S. E. R. (2013). *Validity and reliability of a questionnaire on knowledge of cardiovascular risk factors for use in Brazil*.
- Sarkis, N., Jabbour Al Maalouf, N., & El Lakiss, R. (2024). Examining influencer marketing: the roles of para-social relationships, unpaid collaborations, and trustworthiness in shaping consumer buying behavior. *Cogent Business and Management*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2419501>
- Saunders, M. N. K. , Lewis, Philip., & Thornhill, Adrian. (2020). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson.
- Suri, A. , H. B. , and S. S. (2023). This Product Seems Better Now: How Social Media Influencers' Opinions Impact Consumers' Post-Failure Responses. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 27(3), 297-323. .

Wang, X. (2024). *Collision Of Beauty: Exploring Users' Perceptions Of Beauty Trends Generated By TikTok Influencers Versus Douyin Influencers*. <https://surface.syr.edu/thesis>

Yang, Z., Sun, J., Zhang, Y., & Wang, Y. (2015). Understanding SaaS adoption from the perspective of organizational users: A tripod readiness model. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 45, 254–264.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.12.022>