

***S-Commerce Design _ A Framework
for S-Commerce Design and
Development***

By

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Declaration

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Glossary of Abbreviations

B2B	Business to Business
B2C	Business to Customer
CB	Celebrity Branding
C2C	Customer to Customer
EOU	Ease of Use
GOI	Goodness of Fit
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
MLF	Multi-Language Feature
NFI	Normed Fit Index
OLT	Observational Learning Theory
PLS	Partial Least Squares
PV	Photos and Videos
PC	Price Comparison
PD/PI	Purchase Decision/Purchase Intention
S-Commerce	Social Commerce
SAM	Social Commerce adoption Model
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
UCSCF	User-Centric Social Commerce Framework
UCSCP	User-Centric Social Commerce Platform
WOM	Word of Mouth
E-Commerce	Electronic Commerce

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Abstract

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Title: S-Commerce Design _ A Framework for S-Commerce Design and Development

Rapid developments in social networking technologies have led to the increased integration of social media elements in various business operations. Accordingly, online commerce operations have been integrated with social media elements such as ratings, reviews, feedback, and referrals for improving online shoppers' experience and engagement. This approach of supporting online selling and purchasing activities with the support of social media elements is referred to as social commerce (S-Commerce). The increasing number of internet users, social networking users, and mobile phone users has further contributed to the rise in S-Commerce operations. The rapid developments in S-Commerce have led to a related increase in research related to S-Commerce, especially its adoption, the impact of social media elements, and other aspects. However, the impact of culture on S-Commerce operations and users remains largely under-researched. In addition, previous studies have focused on the impact of social constructs such as ratings, reviews, referrals, recommendations etc. Other important factors such as users' behavioural and psychological constructs, for example motivation, satisfaction etc.; design factors; and the relationship between these factors, remain largely unaddressed. Considering these limitations, this study focuses on identifying the various factors that influence S-Commerce operations and users' behaviour, the relationship between these factors, and their impact on decision making and purchase intentions on User-Centric S-Commerce Platforms (UCSCPs) in two culturally different countries: Ireland and Saudi Arabia. A User-Centric S-Commerce Framework is derived from the literature, and this is used to develop the platforms for Ireland and Saudi Arabia.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews (Phase II), focus groups (Phase I) and quantitative surveys were used to collect the data in two phases (Phase I: gathering user requirements for developing UCSCPs; and Phase II for evaluating the theoretical framework and UCSCPs) from users in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data, and statistical techniques including PLS-SEM and Pearson correlational tests were used for the quantitative data analysis. The findings revealed that social constructs, such as reviews, ratings, and referrals; behavioural and psychological constructs including motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability; cultural factors including language, celebrity branding, price consciousness, images and videos, and themes can impact users' trust, and in turn affect the purchase intentions of the users on UCSCPs. In addition, it was identified that culture can impact the relationship between the various factors that influence users on S-Commerce platforms.

The study findings contribute to the S-Commerce literature. Firstly, the findings contribute to the understanding of critical factors that influence users on S-Commerce platforms. They also identify the relationship between the various factors in S-Commerce that influence decision making and purchase intentions. Lastly, the theoretical contributions of this research are related to the technical, social, cultural, behavioural, and psychological fields, based on the review of SAM, TPB, OLT, UTAUT, and the diffusion of cultural aspects. Similarly, various practical implications can be identified from this study. Firstly, the User-Centric S-Commerce Framework proposed in this study can be used for designing and developing various S-Commerce platforms. Secondly, the theoretical model proposed can help industry practitioners to understand the influence of culture and the relationship between various other factors that influence purchase intentions, enabling them to develop more user-centric platform designs.

1.1. Introduction

Rapid developments in the internet and communication technologies have transformed online commerce operations, as can be identified from the emergence of E-Commerce, Social Commerce, Sharing Commerce etc. Rapid growth in the number of worldwide internet users (4.6 billion in 2021), social media users (4.2 billion in 2021), and mobile phone users (5.2 billion in 2021) is a contributing factor to the increase in online commerce operations (Hootsuite, 2021). Three popular social networking platforms were being used by more than 2 billion individuals across the globe (Statista, 2021) as of January 2021, as shown in Figure 1.1. In addition, the use of social media in commerce operations has been increasing over the past decade. Over three-quarters (87%) of online shoppers in the US believe that social media helps them in decision making, 25% of business owners rely on Facebook sales, and 40% of them use social media to generate online sales (Absolunet, 2019). These statistics clearly reflect the growth in the use of social media elements in online commerce activities. This use of social media elements in online commerce (social commerce) is referred to as S-Commerce.

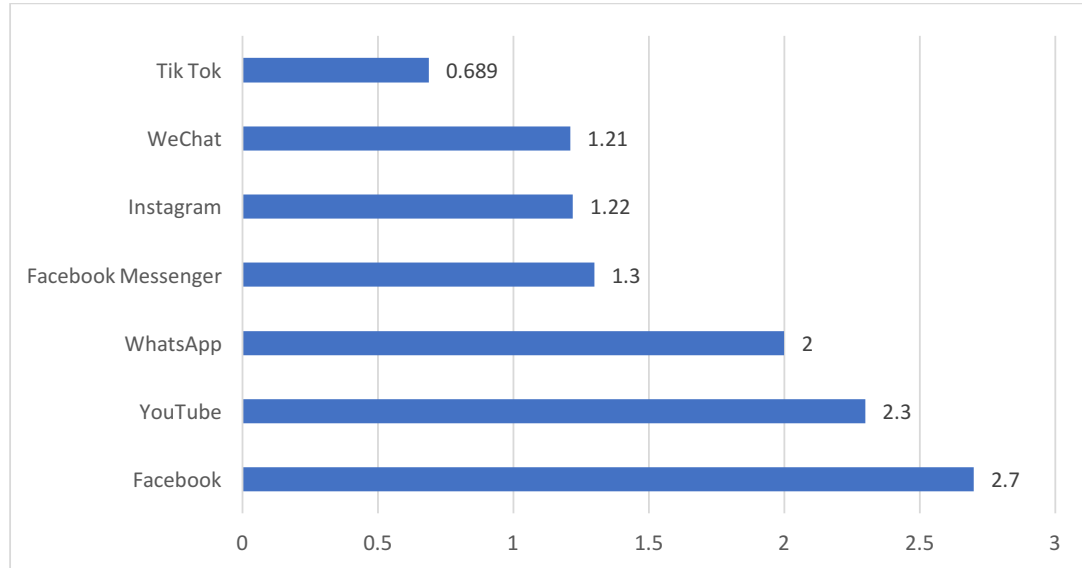


Fig 1.1. Worldwide Social Media Users in January 2021 (in billions) (Statista, 2021)

It is clear that different researchers have varying definitions for S-Commerce, but they all share the common aspect of using social media in commerce. They differ in the attributes

(communication, interactivity, information, purchase decision etc.) used to explain the concept. In relation to the influencing factors of S-Commerce, they largely differ from those of E-Commerce and are used in different contexts. For example, E-Commerce is mostly concerned with using internet technology to facilitate the commercial activities between sellers and buyers, where the sellers have most control. On the other hand, in S-Commerce, buyers are interconnected with more freedom to share information such as reviews and ratings, which increases the power of buyers on online commerce platforms. In addition, buyers are actively involved in some of the other business operations of sellers, such as marketing (referral, word-of-mouth (WOM) etc.). One of the important aspects to be considered is the active involvement of buyers/shoppers on S-Commerce platforms compared to E-Commerce platforms. However, these activities on S-Commerce platforms are influenced by consumer behaviour, which is one of the under-researched areas of influence on S-Commerce platforms.

As S-Commerce is a relatively new concept which has gained importance in recent years, the amount of research on the topic has been limited as it is spread across various interlinking fields. However, this could be one of the leading areas of research in the coming decade (Liang & Turban, 2014). Wang and Zhang (2012) also highlighted that social commerce has achieved little attention among researchers and in order to capture their attention, the authors put forth the characteristics of social commerce and its potential future directions for research.

However, while focusing on consumer behaviour, there are many orientations from which a researcher can conduct a research study. It is essential that the orientation is suitable and linked to the area of research. This research study is particularly focused on the decision making process and the purchase intentions of consumers, and the various factors influencing these two aspects. Accordingly, various factors of influence were identified and considered for the study. Firstly, it is essential to identify the psychological trends that affect behaviour and experience, and the attributes that affect psychological trends. Schiffman et al. (2010) explained the consumer decision-making process using a model as shown in Figure 1.2.

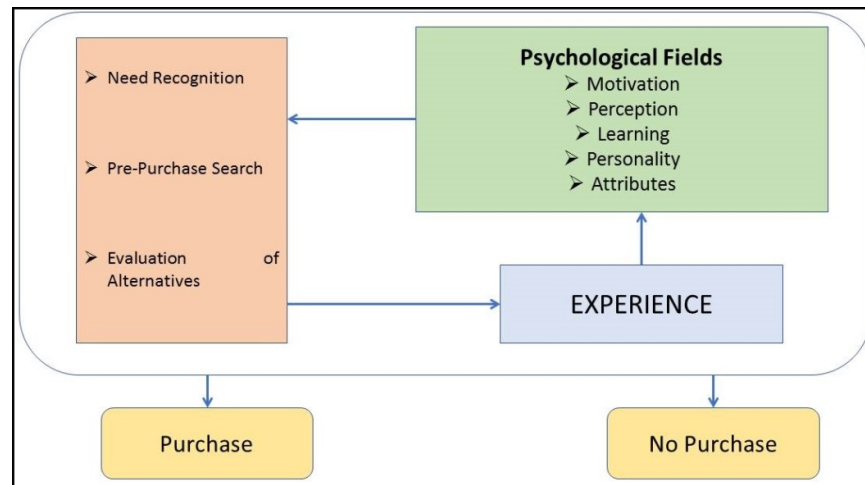


Fig 1.2. Consumer Decision-making Process (adapted from Schiffman et al., 2010)

Psychological fields are the main attributes that affect consumer behaviour, and with regard to online commerce, these attributes are mainly influenced by the presentation of products and services. These may influence all the psychological attributes including motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes. Zhang and Benyoucef (2013) stated that for any social commerce model, it is critical to achieve a minimum set of social commerce design features. These design features must cover all the layers of the proposed model, including the individual, conversational, community and commerce levels, that might have an impact on consumer behaviour. In addition to these, Ng (2013) has identified the following important aspects that can affect the ‘intention to purchase’ on social commerce platforms.

- Culture plays a moderating role in predicting purchase intentions in the social commerce context.
- Trust in a social network community mediates the relationship between social interactions and intention to purchase.
- The mediating role of trust in a social network community is conditional on culture.

The importance of culture is highlighted in S-Commerce models by Ng (2013). Therefore, the culture and lifestyles of people are also important factors that can impact on consumer behaviour on S-Commerce platform. Similarly, studies (Kuan et al., 2008; Madu & Madu, 2002; Ilbahar & Cebi, 2017; Noh et al., 2013) have identified that user-centric aspects such as learnability and usability influence trust and purchase intentions in S-Commerce. Accordingly, trust is one of the major factors considered in S-Commerce research for

evaluating the influence of various S-Commerce factors on the purchase intentions of users (Hajli, 2014; Hajli, 2015; Hammouri & Abu-Shanab, 2017; Noor et al., 2014; Gibreel et al., 2018). It is used as a mediating factor between various constructs and purchase intentions. In addition, social media elements such as reviews, ratings, referral, and recommendations have been one of the major focus areas of S-Commerce research in the past few years (Hajli et al., 2017; Hajli et al., 2013; Pothong & Sathitwiriawong, 2016; Shanmugam et al., 2016), with scholars evaluating their impact on purchase intentions.

The intention to buy is defined by Wang and Yu (2015) as the “probability of an eventual sale (p.14)”. Ng (2013) defines the intention to buy as “the perceptions and intentions to accept a friend’s product recommendation or review when purchasing a product on a social commerce site”. Hajli (2014) writes that the intention to buy is a “construct of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one of the most successful theories in predicting an individual’s intention to use a system”. This study adopts Hajli’s definition of intention to buy which, although similar to that of Wang and Yu, offers a consumer-oriented definition of intention to buy as “a customer’s intention to engage in online buying in social networking sites” (Hajli, 2014). Additionally, Hajli’s definition offers a broader interpretation of potential influences on the intention to buy than Ng’s definition, which is limited to friends’ recommendations and reviews. Because this study intends to investigate a variety of information attributes and types as they impact consumers across demographic and social media platforms, Hajli’s broader, consumer-centred definition is more appropriate. Additionally, the relationship between the constructs that can impact consumer behaviour can be understood from the following points:

- The manner in which the constructs are represented (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Wang & Yu, 2015)
- The quality of the information presented using the constructs (Hasan & Abuelrub 2011; Susser & Ariga, 2006; Liu & Arnett, 2000)
- The information types considered in representing the relationships between constructs (i.e., hedonic or utilitarian) (Babin et al., 1994)

There is a lack of literature describing why information attributes result in certain consumer behaviours for either value types within S-Commerce product listings (Harris et al., 2015; Kietzmann et al., 2018). Furthermore, several studies have suggested future directions for S-Commerce research. This study focuses on two areas requiring attention in S-commerce

research offered by Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) and Plaza-Lora and Villarejo-Ramos (2016). Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) observe that the majority of social commerce research applies the survey method and they suggest that diversifying research methods may lead to more and different types of evidence, offering greater insights into consumer behaviour in social commerce. They further state that qualitative methods that generate exploratory insights are well suited to emerging and quickly changing research fields such as social commerce. Plaza-Lora and Villarejo-Ramos (2016) suggest that further research is required to uncover the impact of demographic data, particularly gender, on hedonic and utilitarian influences on the intention to buy. Considering these aspects, the factors of influence may differ from region to region or they may be based on users' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand and investigate the relationship between various factors of influence such as social commerce elements, cultural factors, behavioural and user-centric factors on purchase intentions. Psychological aspects such as motivation, satisfaction, experience etc. can be used to assess the impact of elements (Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Sirgy, 1982; Maferima & Ayelet, 2014) such as social commerce (for example, reviews, ratings) (Hajli, 2014); design features (for example, interactivity, content, localisation etc.) (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Ganguly et al., 2010); technology features (for example, ubiquity, privacy, security) (Chang et al., 2017; Abed, 2018); and cultural features (ideas, language, customs etc.) (Sheik et al., 2017; Alcantara et al., 2017; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2017) on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process (Schiffman et al., 2010), and purchase intentions.

1.2. Problem Statement

The aforementioned studies have identified various constructs in relation to online commerce using different relationship models, creating an ambiguity in identifying the relationships between various constructs, and how they influence the decision making or purchase intentions of the consumers, which is the main research gap identified in this study. Understanding the relationships between these different elements and underlying theories can contribute valuable findings to the S-Commerce research and S-Commerce industry and to developing user-centric platforms. In addressing the research gap identified, the purpose of this study is to analyse the relationship between various constructs including social (reviews, ratings, referrals); psychological and behavioural (motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, ease of use), and cultural constructs and their impact on purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. Trust is considered as a mediating factor in

evaluating the impact of all the above-mentioned influencing factors on purchase intentions; it has also been considered when evaluating the relationships between the constructs in various studies (Hajli, 2013; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018; Matute et al., 2016; Mikalef et al., 2017; Ramli et al., 2016).

1.3. Research Questions

As the purpose of this study is to identify the relationships between various constructs, there is a need for extensive review and critical analysis of the literature, focusing on the areas included in this study, which are the social, psychological and behavioural, cultural, trust, and decision-making aspects of S-Commerce platforms. Considering this purpose of this research, the following research questions were identified:

1. What impact do S-Commerce constructs have on consumer behaviour, decision-making (whether or not to buy), and purchase intentions?
2. How do the design aspects in S-Commerce influence consumer behaviour in the decision-making process (whether or not to buy) and purchase intentions?
3. How important are the behavioural and psychological fields in influencing consumer behaviour (decision making) and purchase intentions?
4. How do various S-Commerce constructs impact these behavioural and psychological fields?
5. Do consumers' culture and lifestyle influence their decision making and their purchase intentions?

Research question evolution - framework

Based on the gaps identified, the research questions centre on identifying the collective impact of different user-centric constructs on individual behaviour, and how this influences the decision of whether or not to buy. Trust is considered to be playing a mediating role between the user-centred aspects and decision making, as shown in Figure 1.3.

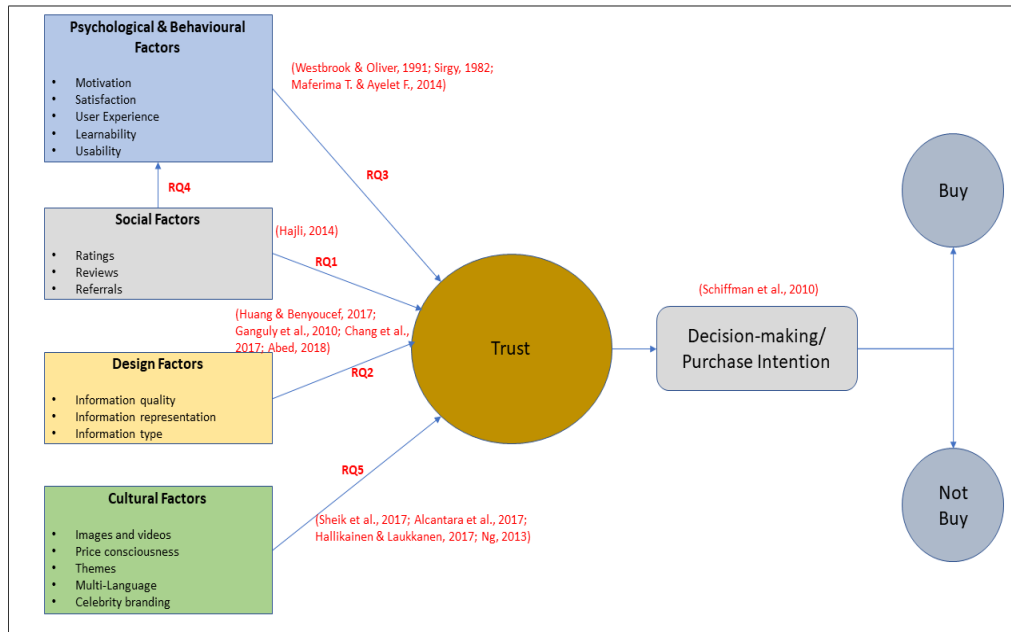


Fig 1.3. Evolution of Research Questions (developed by researcher)

The identification of various constructs and the relationships between them, and the derivation of the theoretical framework are explained in detail in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively.

1.4. Aim & Objectives

The main aim of this study is to develop an integrated model or framework that would consider the various aspects of S-Commerce, including design aspects, cultural aspects, social constructs, relationships etc. and how these influence consumer behaviour. The model is then used to study the impact of these factors in two culturally different regions (Saudi Arabia and Ireland) using a User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (UCSCP) developed for both countries.

The objectives of the research are:

1. To understand the various concepts of S-Commerce using a systematic review of the literature.
2. To investigate the various definitions and perspectives of understanding S-Commerce.
3. To investigate the recent changes and techniques that have been implemented on social commerce platforms.

4. To investigate and understand the social commerce constructs and their design features, using extensive literature research.
5. To investigate the role of consumer behavioural and psychological fields in the consumer decision-making process.
6. To investigate the role of these constructs and their impact on the psychological fields that impact the decision-making process and purchase intentions.
7. To investigate the role and impact of cultures and lifestyles on S-Commerce platforms.
8. To develop a User-Centric framework and platform based on the outcomes of the aforementioned (Objectives 2–7) investigations.
9. To analyse and evaluate the impact by referring to the developed platforms in two culturally different regions: Saudi Arabia and Ireland.
10. To discuss the model and the results and investigate the scope for further research.

1.5. Research Context

The research undertaken in this thesis operates primarily within the bounds of three different research fields, as shown in Figure 1.4. The research context draws together the three fields for a clear contribution to understanding.

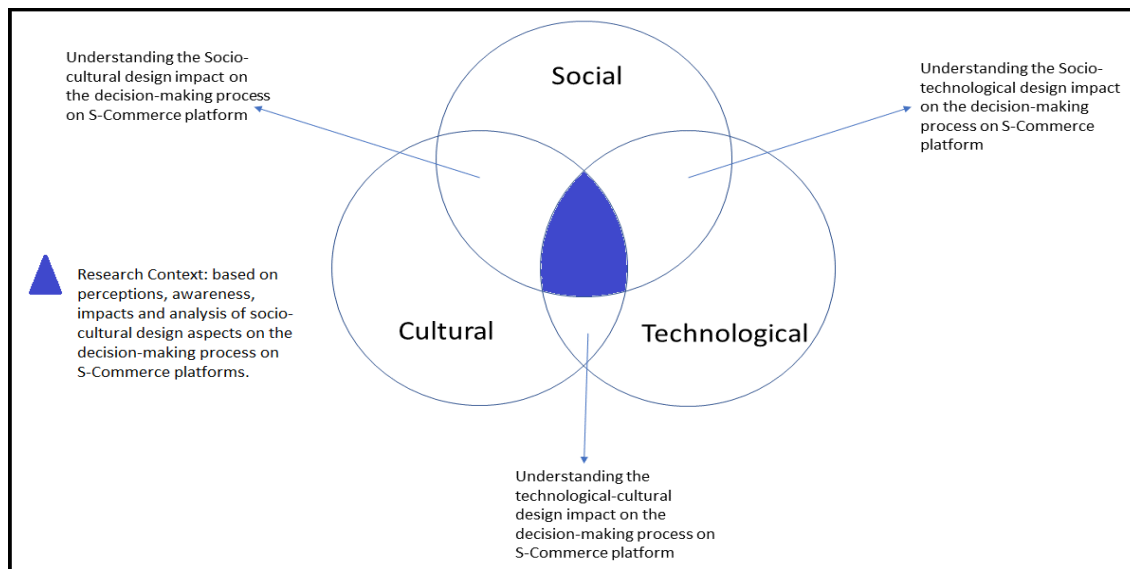


Fig 1.4. Research Context (developed by researcher)

This research context is based on the perceptions, awareness, impacts and analysis of socio-cultural design aspects in relation to the decision-making process and purchase intentions

on S-Commerce platforms. The primary context in this research is the user-centric design of S-Commerce platforms, which can be related their socio-cultural and technological aspects and their impact on the decision-making process and purchase intentions. Therefore, theories related to the socio-cultural, technological and behavioural aspects of the design and development of S-Commerce platforms are reviewed and justified in Chapter 3.

The assumed model for the research study is shown in Figure 1.3. The study focuses on analysing how these social constructs are used in the development of various methods or techniques (e.g., reviews, ratings, referrals etc.) on social platforms, the relationships between the constructs and methods, and their impact on the consumer decision-making process. In addition, these factors are integrated with culture and lifestyles in order to assess whether culture has any impact on the consumer decision-making process and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. To assess the cultural impact, semi-structured interviews and surveys were conducted in two culturally different regions, Ireland and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The description and measurement tools for the components in the assumed model, with their related references, are presented in Table 1.1. The preliminary literature review revealed that there is a lack of research investigating the impact of the social constructs and related factors shown in Figure 1.3 (collectively on a single platform) on the consumer decision-making process and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. This lack of research is one of the major motivations behind this research study. Additionally, there are only a few studies that focus on the cultural aspects. For example, the study conducted by Alcántara et al. (2017) focused on language as a cultural vessel and it analysed its impact on consumer behaviour and intentions. Another study conducted by Hallikainen and Laukkanen (2017) used Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to explain variance in consumer trust in e-commerce, and a study by Sheik et al. (2017) only focused on the acceptance of the social commerce framework in Saudi Arabia. Considering these research gaps, the model shown in Figure 1.3 was outlined for the research study.

Two culturally different countries were selected for the study, Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Differences between the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of the people in each country can be observed, and this may influence their behaviour towards various aspects of life such as purchasing behaviour (Hanel et al., 2018). In addition, differences between

individuals can also be identified in terms of attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions etc. (Hanel et al., 2018). Therefore, the impact of various influencing factors can be analysed at two levels: individual and group/country.

Cultural variability is one of the major factors affecting the design of commerce platforms (Refaat & Galal- Edeen, 2009; Efendioglu & Yip, 2009). For example, the Saudi culture differs from western cultures with regard to styles of dress. Similarly, differences can be observed in preferences for shopping, consumers' needs and expectations, shopping behaviour etc. (Kraidy, 2018). As this study focuses on the cultural aspects that influence decision making and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platform, selecting two samples from a single country may lead to bias in the data collection and analysis. Therefore, two culturally different countries were selected for the study. However, the study's objectives also include developing the user-centric design framework and platform. Accordingly, two different UCSCPs were developed for the users in Ireland and Saudi Arabia, according to their culture and preferences. The design constructs are categorised into three different aspects: the information type (the types of information used on S-Commerce platforms); information quality (the quality of information used on S-Commerce platforms); and information representation (the way information is presented on social platforms). In order to measure the influence of the cultural factors on the consumers' behaviour, a new concept called 'themes' is used in this study. The themes factor focuses on changing the look and feel of the platform according to the consumers' preferences. The participants from both countries used the platform designed for their country and their experiences, opinions, and perceptions were collected, compared and analysed in order to reflect on the impact of culture on the users' decision making and purchase intentions on the S-Commerce platforms. The details of the types of constructs used and the relationships considered for investigation are clearly explained in Chapter 3.

Table 1.1. Various constructs considered in this study for evaluating their impact on decision making and purchase intentions on UCSCP

Components	Principles/methods/techniques	Definition	Measurable component	References
S-Commerce	Reviews	Product listing contains reviews	A review component is present	Hajli (2014)
	Ratings	Product listing contains ratings	Product ratings are present	Hajli (2014)
	Referrals	Products are referred to by buyers	Product referrals are present	Hajli (2014)
Behavioural Aspects	Usability	Usability of the platform	Potential consumers' ease of using the platform	Susser & Ariga (2006), Liu & Arnett (2000)
	Learnability	What consumer learns from the information provided	The learnability can be measured by measuring the knowledge gained	Schiffman et al. (2010)
Psychological Fields	Motivation	The information presented motivates the consumer to make a decision	The potential impact on the consumer can be assessed through 'Experience (positive/negative)'	Westbrook & Oliver (1991), Sirgy (1982), Maferima & Ayelet (2014)
	Satisfaction	Satisfaction levels of consumers with using the platform	The satisfaction can be measured from experiences and ratings on a Likert scale	Alshiby (2014)
	Experience	The impression created in the consumer's mind after observing the facts or events	Can be measured using a rating scale, or optional selection like positive (buy)/negative (no buy)	Schiffman et al. (2010)
Culture & Lifestyles	Ideas, customs, language, price consciousness, celebrity branding	The ideas, customs, and social behaviours of a particular people or society, and the way they integrate these into their lives	By observing the changes in the behaviour or reactions to a particular product/service presentation	Sheik et al. (2017), Alcantara et al. (2017), Hallikainen & Laukkanen (2017)

1.6. Methodology

As was observed from the literature, there are many perspectives from which there is a need for extensive research relating to S-Commerce. This study is explorative in nature with the purpose of identifying the underlying relationships between socio-cultural constructs, behavioural and psychological fields, and their impact on the decision making and purchase intentions of the users. In addition, the impact of culture and lifestyles on the S-Commerce platform and the intended changes in consumer behaviour are assessed in two culturally different regions. Considering the complex nature of this research, both primary (data collected from the online consumers) and secondary data (data collected from the literature review) were utilised in addressing the research questions and achieving the specified objectives.

In the initial phases of the study, the research focused on collecting the secondary data, which included an investigation of extant academic literature, other relevant sources relating to S-Commerce and its attributes, various components presented in the assumed model, and a multi case study of different S-Commerce models in different businesses. Epistemological stances including positivism and interpretivism are considered to be most appropriate in this study, reflecting both the inductive and deductive research approaches. An extensive literature review was conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the academic discourse and theoretical underpinnings of the research topic. This and the review of the existing S-Commerce models deployed in organizations, will contribute to the understanding of existing models and their deployment, working, and impact on consumer behaviour. Based on the outcome of the literature review, qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted to design and formulate an integrated User-Centric S-Commerce Design framework. Using the developed framework, a theoretical framework illustrating various socio-cultural, behavioural and psychological constructs supported by relevant theories is developed by the researcher, which is used for designing the S-Commerce platform for both Ireland and Saudi Arabian users. Additionally, the developed platform was used to analyse the impact of culture and lifestyles on S-Commerce platforms and how this affected consumer behaviour (decision-making process and purchase intentions). Both qualitative and quantitative methods (for collecting primary data) were deployed in this process as the study considered a large population in two culturally different countries: Saudi Arabia and Ireland.

1.7. Contribution to Knowledge

As the constructs relating to S-Commerce and their influence on decision making and purchase intentions are evolving, there is a need for extensive research in this area. This study will identify various aspects relating to S-Commerce, its constructs and attributes and how they impact consumer behaviour etc. This will help to increase our understanding of S-Commerce and its implications from a different perspective. Additionally, the literature on the relationships between S-Commerce attributes, cultural factors, behavioural factors, and the psychological fields in the consumer decision-making process helps to add a new dimensional analysis to the body of knowledge. The cross-cultural study of the proposed framework also allows this research to analyse the importance of culture and lifestyles to the development of an S-Commerce framework. The cross-cultural findings can thus provide theoretical contributions to the literature by addressing the research gaps in S-Commerce, and they also have practical implications for industry practitioners who wish to modify their platforms according to the culture and behaviours of the people in different regions.

The study findings contribute to the S-Commerce literature. Firstly, the findings contribute to the understanding of critical factors that influence users on S-Commerce platforms and the research also identified the relationships between the various that influence decision making and purchase intentions in S-Commerce. Secondly, the theoretical contributions of this research are related to the technical, social, cultural, behavioural, and psychological fields based on the review of SAM, TPB, OLT, UTAUT, and the diffusion of cultural aspects. Thirdly, the User-Centric S-Commerce Framework proposed in this study can be used for designing and developing various S-Commerce platforms. Fourthly, the theoretic model proposed can help industry practitioners to understand the influence of culture and the relationships between various other factors that influence purchase intentions, enabling them to develop more user-centric platform designs. In addition, the outcome of the various studies examined in this research will help us to understand existing S-Commerce practices and the need to include and integrate various attributes in the S-Commerce framework in the future.

1.8. Thesis Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction: Explains the need for the research and details the study's objectives, research scope, and research questions

Chapter 2: Literature Review: Various concepts related to S-Commerce are reviewed in this chapter. S-Commerce features, elements, and types are reviewed, followed by the research trends in the past decade. Different types of S-Commerce constructs, and their influence on the decision making and purchase intentions of users, are discussed. In addition, the design characteristics of S-Commerce, the relationships between social media elements, culture, behavioural and psychological aspects, and their influence on consumers' trust and purchase intentions are reviewed. Considering the various aspects reviewed, a User-Centric S-Commerce Framework (UCSCF) for the design and development of S-Commerce platforms was derived from the literature and used to design and develop UCSCPs for Saudi Arabia and Ireland.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: The theoretical framework designed for this study is explained in this chapter. The framework considers the Social Commerce Adoption Model, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Observational Learning Theory, and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. In addition, cultural constructs are included along with the various attributed identified from the included theories for developing a theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology: The research design, philosophical assumptions, approaches, strategies, and choice of methods adopted in this study are explained in this chapter. The qualitative and quantitative approaches adopted in the study are explained and justified.

Chapter 5: Design & Development of UCSCP: The design and development of the UCSCP for Ireland and Saudi Arabia are explained in this chapter. The two platforms were developed using the UCSCF derived in Chapter 2. These two platforms were used by the participants from Ireland and Saudi Arabia, and their experiences and perceptions were collected using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Data Analysis: The quantitative data collected from the participants using questionnaire-based surveys in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia with regard to their specific UCSCPs were analysed and the results are presented and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Data Analysis: The qualitative data collected from the participants using semi-structured interviews in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia with students and experts with regard to their specific UCSCPs were analysed and the results are presented and discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 8: Discussion: The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative chapters are discussed in relation to the literature in this chapter.

Chapter 9: Conclusion: This chapter concludes the findings and explains the research contributions and implications. In addition, the scope for future research is presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on reviewing the relevant literature on S-Commerce, the decision-making process, the design characteristics of S-Commerce platforms, culture and lifestyles, and the relationship between them. Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the chapter.

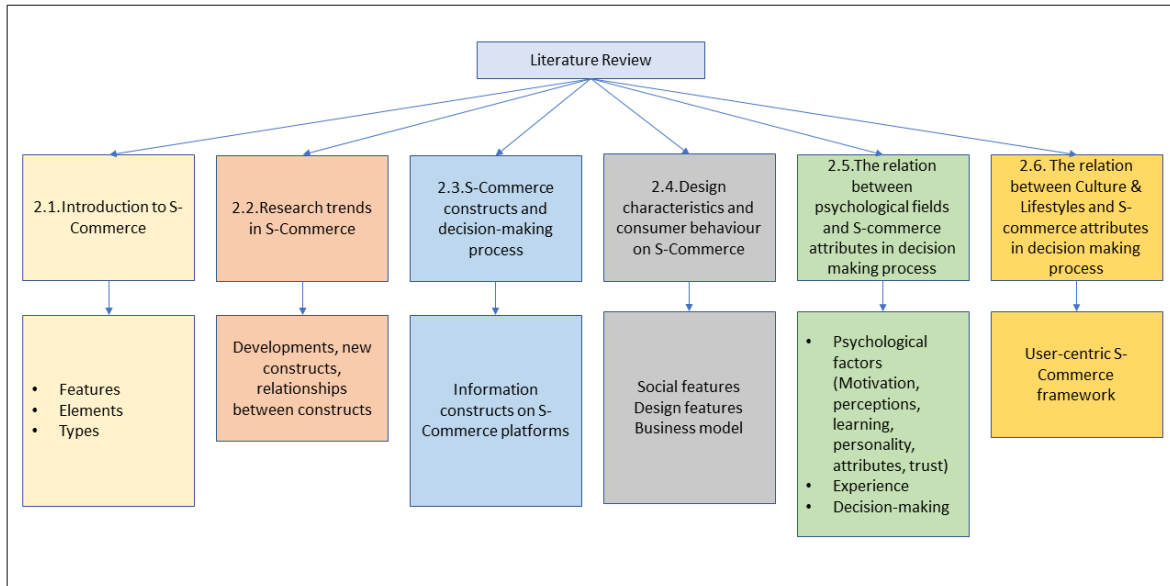


Fig 2.1. Organisation of literature review

2.1. Introduction to S-Commerce

Social commerce (S-Commerce) is an online commerce model resulting from the influence of social networking sites on e-commerce (Liang et al., 2011). Liang et al. (2011) opined that s-commerce is characterised by leveraging social capital to promote commercial activities on social networking sites. Curty and Zhang (2011) stated that in S-Commerce, people engage in commerce or intentionally explore commerce opportunities by participating and/or engaging in a collaborative online environment. Liang et al.'s (2011) definition considers the social networking activities on e-commerce platforms, thus considering social networking and e-commerce as different entities. Mohd and Rosli (2015) explained it as a platform where both the seller and buyer are connected through online social media networking.

Similarly, Wang and Yu (2015) stated that S-Commerce is a divergence from e-commerce's unidirectional browsing and buying activity to a bidirectional "purchase decision journey" that allows for "two-way communications and sound collaborative

relationships with other consumers”. The two definitions highlight the transaction attributes, including buying and selling on online social media platforms. Hajli (2015) stated that S-Commerce offers an opportunity for interactivity whereby consumers produce content, explaining the importance of the role of consumers in S-Commerce. Hajli (2015) further added that the interactivity between consumers allows vendors to access diverse markets. The definition given by Hajli (2015) has more dimensions than that by Liang et al. (2011) as it explains that consumers not only interact but also produce content on e-commerce platforms or social media platforms. Vishwakarma (2015) identified S-Commerce as a new dimension of E-Commerce that included additional aspects and explained that S-Commerce is a new era of electronic commerce that involves using social media to support social interaction and user contributions, to assist with the online buying and selling of products and services. It is more of an integrated definition that included the concepts of Liang et al. (2011), Mohd and Rosli (2015), and Hajli (2015). However, it must be understood that the definition of S-Commerce is evolving with new concepts and attributes being added in accordance with time and research.

Mohd and Rosli (2015) analysed S-Commerce from the perspectives of content, community, commerce, context, connection, and conversation. Mostefaoui et al. (2011) explained that S-Commerce comprises building blocks (consumers, providers, and brokers) and analysed their functioning through relationships such as competition, referral, and loyalty. Kim and Park (2013) identified the key factors of S-Commerce as reputation, size, information quality, transaction safety, communication, economic feasibility, and WOM referrals. Through an empirical study they found that all the S-Commerce characteristics except economic feasibility have significant effects on the development of trust, and trust in turn has a significant impact on purchases and WOM intentions. Hajli (2013) developed a theoretical framework for the adoption of the S-Commerce model, and found that forums and communities, ratings, reviews, referrals, and recommendations help e-vendors to introduce new business plans. It was also identified that the model shows that trust is an on- going issue in E- Commerce and can be built through S-Commerce constructs. Users’ participation is one of the core concepts of S-Commerce, without which the idea of S-Commerce does not work. Identifying its importance, Sharma and Crossler (2014) suggested an integrated view of S-Commerce using four key elements – business, people, information, and technology – for assessing the development of S-Commerce research. Zhou et al. (2013) conducted a study to identify the intention to disclose information on S-

Commerce platforms, which is an important aspect. Hajli et al. (2014) investigated the idea of social support by assessing the role of social factors that impact on relationship quality and social commerce intention. Similarly, Ko (2018) studied the drivers of engaging in S-Commerce, and identified that individuals have a weaker desire to engage in commercial activities than in social activities; however, the social desire is more influential for social sharing and social shopping intentions on Social Networking Sites (SNSs), compared to social desire.

Considering S-Commerce from the psychological and behavioural perspectives of its users, Bianchi et al. (2016) conducted a cross-national study to identify the influencing factors for people's engagement in S-Commerce and found that message credibility, trust in the brands like Facebook, involvement, peer communication and online social interaction propensity are the main driving factors. Similarly, different business models were integrated into S-Commerce with its evolution, such as C2C (Customer to Customer), B2C (Business to Customer), and C2B (Customer to Business) models (Leeraphong & Papasratorn, 2018), reflecting the influence of business processes models on the functioning of S-Commerce. As S-Commerce is a relatively new concept that has gained importance in recent years, the amount of research on the topic has been limited as it is spread across various interlinking attributes. It could be one of the dominant research areas in the coming decade (Liang & Turban, 2014). Wang and Zhang (2012) also highlighted that S-Commerce has achieved little attention from researchers and in order to capture their attention, the authors put forth the characteristics of social commerce and its potential future directions, which could be topics for future research. The studies identified in this section reflect the fact that there are various dimensions and influencing factors related to S-Commerce, based on which the research on S-Commerce and its related aspects has been progressing in recent years. As there is an increase in the available technology and adoption of S-Commerce, new concepts are being added and investigated through research studies. It is also clear that various authors have various definitions for S-Commerce; these have the common aspect of using social media in commerce, and differ through the attributes (communication, interactivity, information, purchase decision etc.) used to explain the concept. Therefore, before studying in detail the changing research trends relating to S-Commerce, the basic features that define the design of the platform, the elements (influencing factors), and types of S-Commerce are reviewed in the following sections.

2.1.1. Features of S-Commerce

S-Commerce, like E-commerce, has various features that are different from traditional commerce platforms. These features are explained in the following sections.

Content: The information that is published on the S-Commerce platform can be regarded as the content. Value on social platforms can be created by producing and sharing valuable content, with a periodic update of fresh content, which would engage consumers with the brand or social platform (Hopkins, 2017).

Community: Building a network or community is one of the important aspects of S-Commerce. The process of building a community should be adopted by engaging the audiences and letting them interact effectively, which would help to build strong relationships that are sustainable (Hopkins, 2017).

Commerce: This is the ultimate goal, which needs to be achieved by using social media as an effective platform to interact with consumers and fulfil their needs and expectations. However, the process in S-Commerce differs slightly from that in E-Commerce. High-quality content is created as an initial step on both platforms, but in the second step, S-Commerce engages consumers through direct interaction, unlike E-Commerce, which offers only unidirectional interaction (Hopkins, 2017).

Context: Another important feature of S-Commerce. It is the instance in which a particular transaction or communication is made. For example, placing a desire to buy, or liking a product, or adding it to a wish list are a few contexts that enable businesses to provide the services and products required by consumers on social media platforms (Lai, 2010).

Connection: A social connection is another important feature of S-Commerce. The advantage of S-Commerce is that people can connect with their friends and family and can interact in the process of making a decision to buying a product or service. The connections or relationships between people have now moved onto online platforms, where they can interact in real time, enabling them to making quick decisions (Lal, 2017; Huang, 2018).

Conversation: Conversations play an important role in S-Commerce. Whether it is between the business and consumer or between the consumers on the S-Commerce platform, they need to be effective and easy to use. Effective conversation between the users and business can help to build strong and sustainable relationships, which is an important objective of S-Commerce (Lal, 2017).

Usability: This is one of the important features of any system or application. The ubiquity and adaptability of S-Commerce on different web- and mobile-based platforms have led to the use of effective technologies in their design, which in turn has resulted in improved features and functionalities, and a high usability factor (Huang, 2018).

Security & Privacy: Similar to the usability feature, any application has to provide effective security and enable privacy features. These features have more impact on S-Commerce, where individual share their personal data, as more privacy features have to be enabled (Wang & Herrando, 2019). The recent issues about privacy affecting the leading SNS, Facebook, have highlighted the importance of security and privacy surrounding S-Commerce platforms (Ho, 2018).

2.1.2. Elements of S-Commerce

There are various factors that can have impact on S-Commerce operations. In this section, the various influencing factors or elements of S-Commerce are identified and explained in the following points.

Community: A community comprises various people, and can be defined by using various attributes like members of a group, or a religion, or people sharing the same set of values and beliefs etc. It is common that when a person is committed to a community, he/she tends to follow the community. As a result, if a new product or service is referred by a community member, then it may be accepted widely among the community members. So, communities can be a major aspect for businesses and can benefit them if they could engage these communities with their products and services using social media platforms (Anderson et al., 2011).

Reciprocity: This is based on the idea of action and reaction. If something good is done by one person to another, the other person would try to repay by doing something good; the same applies for doing something bad. Similarly, the interactions on S-Commerce between businesses and consumers could follow the same principle. A satisfied customer would not only refer a product or service but also would look forward to buying other products and services from the same company. On an S-Commerce platform, where the users can share their opinions freely, it is necessary for the companies to maintain good relationships with the consumers to increase their value (Pienaar, 2015).

Authenticity: This is one of the most complex aspects of online commerce. Trusting a brand, product or service on an online platform is a complex task. S-Commerce, on the other hand, simplifies the process by sharing reviews, likes and ratings about a product or service, which would instil a feeling of trust and authenticity in the consumers, based on which they make a decision to purchase or not (Pienaar, 2015).

Social Proof: The companies must be open to the consumers and ready to accept their feedback on social platforms. Rather than just accepting the consumers' feedback, the companies should provide social proofs by presenting the likes, feedback and reviews made by consumers who have already bought a product or service. Presenting social proof is one of the important aspects of S-Commerce functioning (Amblee et al., 2011).

Guanxi: This is a Chinese term that refers to the networks which open doors for new business models. The guanxi elements including ganqing (feelings), renqing (personal relationship), and xinren (trust), along with behavioural psychology such as decision making, user behaviour and attitudes etc. These are important elements of S-Commerce (Yang, 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018).

2.1.3. Types of S-Commerce

By considering different platforms and the types of interactions, S-Commerce can be categorised into various types.

Onsite: In this type, all the social activities like sharing, liking, reviews, ratings, feedback, chat rooms etc. are provided on the company's website or application. In this process, an S-Commerce layer is added to the existing E-Commerce structure in order to enable S-Commerce operations (Clancy, 2013). For example, Amazon and eBay offer social commerce features like reviews, feedback, referrals, sharing, ratings etc. on their website.

Offsite: In this type, all the S-Commerce activities happen outside the company's website. For example, the Facebook products page of a company or their Pinterest boards would enable users to perform all S-Commerce activities on their website or application, which are third-party social networking platforms (Lutz, 2012).

In addition to these, Hossain (2016) identified other types, which include the following:

Group buying: This is a social platform where the products are offered at very low prices if there are enough buyers who agree to make a purchase (e.g., Groupon, Living Social).

User-curated shopping: This is a process where the users create and share different products and services for others on shopping-focused sites like The Fancy, Lyst etc. so that others can shop from those sites.

Participatory commerce: This is a process where consumers are directly involved in the production process through techniques like voting, funding, and collaboratively designing products (e.g., Threadless, Kickstarter).

Social shopping: This is a process where efforts are made to recreate the traditional in-person shopping experience with friends on an online platform through live chats and forums for suggestions and ideas from friends (e.g., Motilo, Fashism).

2.2. The Research Trends in S-Commerce

In order to gain insights into current research in S-Commerce, it is essential to understand the changing research trends over time, and to analyse the evolution of S-Commerce, which is now a popular application across most businesses. Various journals, articles, and conference papers were found relating to S-Commerce. The findings are discussed in three sections. The first section reviews the research studies conducted from 2010 to 2012; the second from 2013 to 2014; and the third from 2015 to 2020. Using chronological order helps to assess how S-Commerce-related studies and concepts have evolved over time, along with the fast-changing technologies and consumer expectations.

Wang and Zhang (2012) analysed the evolutionary patterns of S-Commerce from 2005 to 2011 using a framework that combines people, management, technology, and information dimensions. It was observed that people's understanding of S-Commerce since its inception in 2005 has moved from a simple and generic description of human social nature to a multi-dimensional exploration including the concepts of social psychology, social heuristics, national culture, and economic situations. Considering the management dimension, short-term strategies were replaced by long-term strategies by including the concept of social communities. The technology dimension has observed an evolution from blogs to social networking sites, and Facebook has been popular in creating the notion of F-Commerce, with other major players including Twitter and Google. Information attributes have evolved from being peer generated to community generated, involving the participation of all stakeholders (Wang & Zhang, 2012). The study identified major changes in the S-Commerce arena that have revolutionised the use of social networking in commerce. The

idea of participation, in other terms collectivism, is an important factor to be considered in S-Commerce. The antecedents of collectivism, including consumers' preferences, reliance, concerns and norm acceptance were investigated by Kim et al. (2012) and it was found that they had a significant effect on the perceived usefulness of S-Commerce.

The majority of the studies published between 2010 and 2012 focused on investigating the aspect of trust among users on S-Commerce platforms. Cecere (2010) identified technology and management strategies as the main barriers for achieving trust and made recommendations to adopt S-Commerce in order to increase business value and presence. As S-Commerce was a relatively new concept then, the trust factor was an important subject for researchers. Bansal and Chen (2011) tried to differentiate the trust in E-commerce and S-Commerce and found that users trust E-Commerce sites more than S-Commerce sites because of issues like improper access and errors on S-Commerce platforms. Similarly, Hajli (2012a) found that trust influences consumers' intention to buy, and it plays an important role in S-Commerce. In another study in the same year, Hajli (2012b) identified that the social relationships between customers on social platforms create value, which drives S-Commerce and supports the role of trust in influencing consumer behaviour with regard to S-Commerce adoption. Supporting this idea, the study conducted by Yang et al. (2012) found that implicit (strong) relationships help to improve the capability of social networking and commerce activities more effectively than explicit (sparse) relationships. Similar results were found by Stephen and Toubia (2010) as they identified that social interaction could generate considerable economic value; however, it was also found that the network's value lies primarily in enhancing customers' access to the marketplace.

Sundage and Lee (2011), on the other hand, focused on the S-Commerce activities that would help to create value and they found that businesses use S-Commerce for pre- and post- transactional type activities like marketing and customer support. They also identified that opportunities exist for S-Commerce transactional activities like purchase, payment, and order-fulfilment, and that there is a need for businesses to reformulate their strategies according to the user's behaviour on the S-Commerce platforms. According to a research study conducted by IBM, there is a large perception gap between what customers seek via social media and what companies offer. Consumers are far more interested in obtaining tangible value, suggesting that businesses may be confusing their own desire for customer intimacy with consumers' motivations for engaging (Heller Baird and Parasnis, 2011). This

reflects the irregularities and poor strategies for meeting customer expectations at that time. However, Kwahk and Ge (2012) observed that social media interaction ties and social media commitment positively affect normative social influence and informational social influence through which the businesses can effectively interact with consumers and can change their strategies to meet the rising expectations. Rad and Benyoucef (2012) studied one of the important aspects of S-Commerce, which is the influence of the social web on the stages of the decision-making process, and they found that S-Commerce elements can have a positive impact on the decision-making process.

Trust remained one of the major areas of research during 2013/2014. However, there were other new dimensions in S-Commerce on which the research studies focused during the period. Kim and Park (2013) found that economic feasibility did not have any significant influence on consumers' trust in S-Commerce, and that trust directly affects two major variables of S-Commerce: purchase and WOM intentions. Noor et al. (2013), on the other hand, investigated the factors that would influence online trust in S-Commerce and found six different factors: usefulness, ease of use, security, privacy, website design, and electronic WOM. The role of individual factors was also used as a research subject in other studies. Hajli et al. (2013), for example, focused on identifying the role of online social WOM in building trust in S-Commerce through a survey and they found that social WOM had a positive impact on building trust. Hajli et al. (2014) identified three dimensions (recommendations and referrals, ratings and reviews, and forums and communities) for measuring S-Commerce constructs, and these constructs can build trust in products and services on social platforms. Shin (2013) focused on psychological aspects like consumer behaviour and user experiences in S-Commerce. It was found that social support (friends) could positively impact consumer behaviour in terms of building trust and changing attitudes, and also purchase intention. Another study by Smith et al. (2013) focused on the analysis of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and intentions. Their study revealed that subjective norm had the greatest influence on purchase intention.

Technology was another important area of focus among the research studies on S-Commerce during the period. Zhang et al. (2014a) investigated the impact of technological environments on motivating users to participate in S-Commerce, and they found that virtual experiences like social support, social presence, and information flow can have a major impact on motivation. Gonçalves Curty and Zhang (2013) investigated various website

features that gave rise to S-Commerce and they found that 174 technical features focused on strengthening the relationship between customers and merchants, information flow, user experience etc. A customer satisfaction experiment using a simulated model by Alshibly (2014) showed that satisfaction levels are correlated with the quality of S-Commerce sites and customer psychological empowerment. Baghdadi (2013) stated that technologies like Web 2.0 and cloud computing enable collaborative and participative ways of allowing B2B and B2C entities to interact in S-Commerce and they can effectively improve the operational processes. The increase in the use of smartphones also led to researchers focusing on integrating S-Commerce and M-Commerce. Kucukcay and Benyoucef (2014) proposed a new concept – mobile social commerce (ms-commerce) – on mobile platforms including iOS and Android and they found that S-Commerce operations can greatly be improved and offered across a wide range of users through ms-commerce.

Along with the technology and online trust factors, there are other issues that have attracted researchers' attention; these include relationships quality, privacy and security, and frameworks for S-Commerce adoption. Wang and Hajli (2014) found that S-Commerce constructs positively affect social support and they identified the moderating effect of privacy concerns between social commerce constructs and co-branding. Sharma and Crossler (2014) found that perceived enjoyment, perceived apathy and perceived usefulness positively affect the intention to disclose personal information, and that perceived privacy risk negatively affects the intention to disclose personal information in social commerce transactions. Hajli (2013) proposed a framework for S-Commerce adoption and evaluated the model. The study identified that forums and communities, ratings, reviews, referrals and recommendations help e-vendors to introduce new business plans. Trust is an on- going issue in E- Commerce and it can be built through S-Commerce constructs. Zhou et al. (2013) suggested an integrated view of S-Commerce, using four key elements (business, people, information, and technology) to assess the development of S-Commerce research, highlighting the major elements and factors that play an important role in S-Commerce functioning.

Trust remained as one of the major areas of research relating to S-Commerce during the period 2015 to 2017. However, the dimensions of measuring trust have changed in relation to social constructs and other influencing factors. Farivar et al. (2017) used the biased role of the habits of the users to assess trust and risk from the perspective of S-Commerce use.

The findings revealed that commerce risk deters purchasing intentions; trust in S-Commerce sites increases purchasing intentions; trust in network members reduces the perceived risk; and habit moderates trust and risk effects on S-Commerce use. In a broader analysis, Pothong and Sathitwiriya Wong (2016) considered the factors influencing trust, including security concerns, communication, and WOM, in addition to previously considered factors in research studies such as recommendations and referrals, ratings and reviews, forums and communities. The study revealed that recommendation and referrals, ratings and reviews, communication, and WOM have positive effects on both trust and purchase intention, while the rest of the investigated factors (forums and communities, and security concerns) have positive effects specific to trust. The authors also found that increase in trust would lead to an increase in purchasing intention. Lu et al. (2016) using a multi-dimensional model and found that the social presence factors had a positive impact on users' trust in sellers. Esmaeili et al. (2015) reviewed seven papers focusing on the influencing factors of trust in S-Commerce and identified 19 influencing factors, out of which firm size, trust disposition, information quality, and familiarity with other members were identified as major influencing factors. In an empirical analysis study, Wang et al. (2016) investigated evidence from 43 studies published from 2006 to 2014 and concluded that both trust and risk had significant effects on individual behaviour with regard to S-Commerce; however trust was found to have a stronger effect. Shanmugam et al. (2016), on the other hand, investigated the role of S-Commerce constructs and social support constructs (emotional and informational support) in establishing trust and they found that social constructs had a significant effect on emotional and informational support. This in turn resulted in trust building. Hajli (2015) also found that social constructs, along with the use of technologies like Web 2.0. applications, enable an increasing social presence by using social constructs. They also found that this approach increased not only trust but also the intention to buy. Wang and Yu (2017), on the other hand, used a social interaction-based consumer decision-making model and found that the decision to make a purchase (intention) was greatly influenced by WOM and the nature of users in observing and learning from other consumers.

Trust and satisfaction levels help with building loyalty towards a brand. Zhang et al. (2016) found that brand loyalty is primarily determined by relationship quality, which is further influenced by self-congruence (i.e., the self-factor), social norms (i.e., the social factor), information quality and interactivity (i.e., characteristics of brand pages). The self-factor was found to have the strongest impact compared to other factors. Huang and Benyoucef

(2015) stated that S-Commerce can be implemented in two ways: by bringing E-Commerce to social networking platforms and by bringing social networking features to E-Commerce platforms. The study found an interesting aspect that users visit social networks mainly to socialise and E-Commerce websites mainly to shop, signifying that commerce on social networking platforms as a not preferred option. As retailers started focusing on using consumer trust and online sales, research studies started focusing on C2C S-Commerce models, which mostly examine how consumers can leverage the features and functionalities of social networking websites to their benefit. A four-phased model (ad-hoc, empowered, organised, integrated) was suggested by Sukrat et al. (2016) for this purpose; the model focuses on studying the evolution of C2C interactions in S-Commerce. Other studies focused on the influencing factors for consumer engagement and the adoption of S-Commerce. Busalim et al. (2017) conducted a systematic literature review to investigate the theoretical foundation of consumer engagement in S-Commerce. The study stated that the theories which constitute the foundation of customer engagement studies can be classified into social-related theories, technological-related theories, behavioural theories and motivational theories. The authors identified that most of the well- utilised factors fall under these classifications. Hashim et al. (2015) reported that the intention to adopt S-Commerce is influenced by adventure, ideas, gratification, sociality, and value, whereas Akman and Mishra (2017) identified that the user intention to adopt S-Commerce is significantly and positively related to perceived trust, enjoyment/easiness, social pressure, satisfaction and awareness.

It has been observed that there has been a sudden rise in the number of studies investigating S-Commerce activities and concepts specific to a region, or a collection of regions. In these studies, culture and lifestyle took a prominent role; researchers used them to identify the suitability of S-Commerce in a region bounded by similar cultures and lifestyles. Bianchi et al. (2017) studied the consumer intention to engage in S-Commerce in Chile, Spain, South Africa, and Australia. The study identified message credibility, trust in a brand's Facebook page, involvement, peer communication, and online social interaction propensity as the main drivers of consumer engagement. Abed et al. (2016), in a study focused on adopting S-Commerce as a business tool in Saudi Arabia among 60 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), found that businesses build online trust using social media and they reformulate their online business strategies to change the consumers' perception of uncertainty. A similar study by Rouibah and Al-Qirim (2017) in Kuwait focusing on the

factors affecting S-Commerce adoption found that habit, privacy, culture, perceived risk, and trust were the major issues affecting this adoption. A similar study in Jordan by Al-Dwairi (2017) found that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, information quality, social support, and trust significantly impacted Jordanian citizens' intention to adopt S-Commerce. Another study in Thailand identified that personality and motivation, user-generated content, ICT, and virtual community management are the main drivers that are empowering Thailand users to conduct online businesses on Facebook and other social networking websites (Sukrat et al., 2017). A similar study focusing on S-Commerce transactions in Thailand by Leeraphong and Papasratorn (2017) found that the typical process of purchasing on C2C-SC consists of five basic steps: advertising/marketing, searching, negotiation and ordering, payment, and delivery. Five C2C-SC models have been developed (s-retailing, s-specific market, s-preorder, s-auction and s-reverse auction) for S-Commerce, and it was identified that each of the models displayed significant differences in user interaction patterns and business arrangements. A study focusing on the attitude towards S-Commerce from businesses or sellers' point of view in Jordan found that sellers were shifting towards S-Commerce (Shdaifat et al., 2016). A similar study conducted with Malaysian entrepreneurs found that most of the entrepreneurs believed that S-Commerce was the future way of doing business and that it possessed great potential for developing businesses (Hashim et al., 2016). Two other region-specific studies were identified relating to service quality in S-Commerce. Sura and Ahn (2017) found that assurance, responsiveness, and reliability have a significant effect on perceived usefulness and that empathy and responsiveness have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Another study developed the 'Thai scale measure' using five service quality dimensions which can be used for measuring and evaluating the electronic service quality of C2C S-Commerce (Leeraphong et al., 2016).

2.3. S-Commerce Constructs and Decision-making Process

Information attributes are one of the important aspects that need to be considered when constructing an S-Commerce platform. Three major information attributes, information type, information quality, and information representation are considered and their impact on the decision-making process is reviewed in this section. One of the main objectives of marketers, as analysed by Ariely (2000), is to present appropriate information in an effective way to the consumers so that they can base their decisions on this information. The level of consumer control over the information can affect the decision quality, and

consumers' memory, knowledge, and confidence, which would hinder their judgement (Ariely, 2000). The study highlighted the important aspect that the decision-making process can be influenced by the information available and the way it is presented, and the control that consumers have over the information. Vessey (1994) analysed the effect of information presentation on decision making using a cost benefit analysis and stated that different information display formats must be explored as some aid with the process of decision making. Similarly, information-rich environments must focus on structural dimensions that would facilitate consumers' access to information (Lurie, 2004).

In a study conducted by Chengalur-Smith et al. (1999) it was found that the quality of information impacted the selection of preferred alternatives. Similarly, Chen et al. (2016) investigated the impact of information quality on the Facebook C2C (buy and sell) platform and found that the number of likes received depended on the quality of the information in advertisements, which in turn increased users' urge to buy the products. Both studies demonstrate the significant impact of information quality on the decision-making process. The rapid development in technology has identified various ways of presenting information on S-Commerce platforms. Maity and Dass (2014) found that media-rich channels or platforms are preferred by consumers in terms of completing the decision-making process on online platforms.

Babin et al.'s (1994) seminal work on hedonic and utilitarian value was key to introducing the information type concept. The authors define two main types of shopping value: hedonic and utilitarian. The authors distinguish the terms by the underlying motivations; hedonic motivations occur because "you love it" and utilitarian motivations occur because "you get something". Although these value types are related to the shopping experience, Babin et al. (1994) stated that fulfilling value attainment is not dependent on an actual purchase. Hedonic value "is more subjective and personal than its utilitarian counterpart and results more from fun and playfulness than from task completion" (Babin et al., 1994, p.11). As previously mentioned, Babin et al. (1994) stated that deriving hedonic value from a shopping experience does not require a product purchase. The authors offer vicarious shopping experiences and the enjoyment of a product without a subsequent purchase as two examples of non-purchase-driven shopping experiences. Utilitarian consumer behaviour has been described as ergic, task related, and rational. This type of shopping value is based

on the notion of work completion. Similar to the hedonic value type, a product purchase is not required to fulfil value attainment (Babin et al., 1994).

The decision-making process can be closely associated with the intention to buy. The intention to buy is defined by Wang and Yu (2015) as the “probability of an eventual sale”. Ng (2013) defines the intention to buy as “the perceptions and intentions to accept a friend’s product recommendation or review when purchasing a product on a social commerce site”. Hajli (2014) writes that the intention to buy is a “construct of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), one of the most successful theories in predicting an individual’s intention to use a system”. Hajli’s definition of intention to buy, although similar to that of Wang and Yu, offers a consumer-oriented definition of intention to buy as “a customer’s intention to engage in online buying in social networking sites” (Hajli, 2014). Additionally, Hajli’s definition offers a broader interpretation of potential influences on the intention to buy than Ng’s definition, which is limited to friends’ recommendations and reviews. Because this study intends to investigate a variety of information attributes and types as they impact consumers across demographic characteristics and social media platforms, Hajli’s broader, consumer-centred definition is more appropriate. Additionally, the relationships between the constructs that can impact consumer behaviour can be understood from the following points:

- The manner in which relationships are represented (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016; Wang & Yu, 2015a)
- The quality of the information presented (Hasan & Abuelrub, 2011; Susser & Ariga, 2006; Liu & Arnett, 2000)
- The information type (i.e., hedonic or utilitarian) (Babin et al., 1994)

Considering information representation, information type and information quality as the major S-Commerce constructs, the methods, definition, and measurable components relating to each construct are presented in Table 2.1, as identified by Zhang and Benyoucef (2016), Wang and Yu (2015a), Hasan and Abuelrub (2011), Susser and Ariga (2006), Liu and Arnett (2000), and Babin et al. (1994).

Recent studies relating to the evaluation of the methods/techniques relating to each S-Commerce construct, including information representation such as ratings, reviews, videos, interactivity, and price comparison (Wang & Yu, 2017; Hajli, 2013; Lee et al., 2017);

information types, i.e. hedonic and utilitarian (Plaza-Lora & Villarejo-Ramos, 2017; Babin et al., 1994); and information quality, comprising relevance, accuracy, completeness, timeliness, authoritativeness, objective, usefulness, and sufficiency (Kim & Park, 2013; Hasan & Abuelrub, 2011), have found that these techniques have significant impact on trust and the decision-making process on S-Commerce platforms. Among these constructs, price comparison can be relevant in psychological constructs, and also in the informational context as it can be related to information presentation and perception by the users. However, these studies considered limited techniques related to construct evaluation, while the impact of an integrated platform with various techniques relating to S-Commerce was not considered. Nonetheless, these evaluation techniques can help to guide organisations on the use of an integrated platform with various constructs if they are found to have a significant impact on the decision-making process.

Table 2.1. Information Constructs on S-Commerce Platforms

Components	Principles/Methods/techniques	Definition	Measurable component	Reference
Information representation	Reviews	product listing contains reviews	a review component is present	Hajli (2014)
	Ratings	product listing contains rating	product ratings are present	Hajli (2014)
	Video	product listing contains video	product listing contains video media	Zhang and Benyoucef (2016)
	Interactivity	product listing contains options to leave comments and/or ask questions	perceived interactivity	Wang and Yu (2015)
	Price comparison	product listing highlights pricing	price savings	Zhang and Benyoucef (2016)
Information types	Hedonic	subjective value with results related to fun and playfulness rather than task completions	perceived level of fun associated with purchase	Babin et al. (1994)
	Utilitarian	task related and rational; was the need for shopping accomplished	perceived goal-oriented value	Babin et al. (1994)
Information quality	Relevance	to provide relevant information	information is interesting to the intended customer	Susser and Ariga (2006); Liu and Arnett (2000)
	Accuracy	to provide accurate information	information claims are verifiable	Susser and Ariga (2006); Liu and Arnett (2000)
	Completeness	to provide complete information	describes product, contains pricing information	Liu and Arnett (2000)
	Timely (updated)	to provide updated information	the information is up to date	Liu and Arnett (2000); Hasan and Abuelrub (2011)
	Authority	to ensure user confidence in information	information contains reference to an authority in the product area	Hasan and Abuelrub (2011)
	Objective	to provide objective and unbiased information	information from a source outside of the product vendor	Hasan and Abuelrub (2011)
	Usefulness	to provide useful information	potential consumers perceive information as useful	Susser and Ariga (2006); Liu and Arnett (2000)
	Sufficiency	to provide sufficient information	potential consumers perceive information as thorough and do not require more details to inform their purchase	Hasan and Abuelrub (2011)

2.4. Design Characteristics and Consumer Behaviour in S-Commerce

The design of an S-Commerce platform can be one of the major factors influencing consumer behaviour, which in turn impacts the decision over whether to purchase or not. There are various design features that can be related to S-Commerce platforms, and some of these features are presented in section 2.1. The design characteristics of S-Commerce should allow the businesses to provide efficient services through an enhanced interactive media-rich platform with various features and functionalities. These features and characteristics represent the differences between S-Commerce and other commerce platforms. Mobility is one of the important characteristics of S-Commerce; it allows users to access the platforms from various sources such as mobiles, PCs, and any other digital devices such as iPads or tablets. It is one of the core value-creating characteristics of S-Commerce (Hwang et al., 2014). Similarly, ubiquity relates to the availability of devices to receive services from anywhere on a real-time basis (Pousttchi et al., 2003). According to Pousttchi et al. (2003), mobility and ubiquity are the two features that reflect the efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility of S-Commerce platforms. These two aspects highlight the infrastructural aspects of S-Commerce.

There are other characteristics that may have a significant impact on consumer behaviour. The personalisation feature, which is defined as the ability to customise each individual consumer's experience, can enhance the value of an S-Commerce platform by providing personalised products and services to the consumers (Tiwari et al., 2011). Another important feature of S-Commerce design is location-based services, which are identified as services that have the content related to the location of an individual. This is often referred as 'localisation' or 'location sensitivity' or 'location awareness' in S-Commerce (Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002). Different kinds of services can be provided to the consumers based on their location, which simplifies the product/service search and identification. Interactivity is another important feature that reflects the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time. According to Lai (2010), mobile features like personalisation, localisation and interactivity can be grouped under the term Context-Sensitivity.

The type of platform or business model is another important aspect of design in S-Commerce that can have an impact on the consumer decision-making process. Various

types of S-Commerce platforms are discussed in section 2.1. Additionally, the business models in S-Commerce can be characterised into the following types.

E-tailor Business Model: This is an online platform, where a retailer displays the products and services, and users access these listings and place an order for a desired product or service (Laudon & Traver, 2014). This model helps to reduce users' efforts to buy an item, thereby saving time, and it reduces the operational costs for businesses of distributing the products to retail stores, thereby saving time. This model can assume four forms on the basis of the approach of businesses on S-Commerce platforms. A 'virtual merchant' form like Amazon is a platform where the retailer has an online presence and various businesses sell their products or services (Rasheed & Geiger, 2004). 'Bricks & Clicks' is another form, where the businesses sell both online and also in physical stores – examples are Walmart, Tesco, IKEA etc. 'Catalogue Merchant' is another form, where online catalogues are provided for the users to review products/services and select them to buy (e.g., ShopRite, Trip Advisor). 'Manufacturer-direct' is another form where the manufacturers use an online platform to directly reach their customers and avoid intermediaries (Rappa, 2010).

Portal Business Model: Portals are online spaces where the users can access various services like news, emails, instant messaging, shopping, downloads etc. They can be important sources of information for consumers. Portals can collect referral fees for redirecting consumers to the business websites (Laudon & Traver, 2014). Google search, Yahoo, AOL etc. are some major examples that embed this feature.

Content Provider Business Model: The users can access various contents, including music, videos, text, and any digital products, from content providers. This saves users time searching for products (Laudon & Traver, 2014). Netflix is a popular example, where the users can access videos for an annual fee.

Service Provider Business Model: This is an online platform that provides various services such as insurance, gigs (small jobs), data entry, consultation etc. to the users. Unlike an Amazon-type platform, this model does not take up transactions, but rather provides an online platform where a buyer and a seller can meet and perform a transaction as per their agreement (Shynajain, 2011). For example, OLX, Wallapop and 5miles are a few online platforms using this model.

Community Provider Business Model: These are online platforms which are usually used as social platforms for interaction by the users. Users can share messages, photos, videos,

and any digital content on this platform, and it can be seen by the public or their group of friends. These platforms are either used for sharing information like reviews or ratings about a product or service, or for buying and selling using a separate business social page on this platform (Laudon & Traver, 2014). Facebook and Pinterest are two examples that adopt this model.

These are the major design models for S-Commerce platforms. Various studies have reported that the design of an S-Commerce platform can have a significant impact on the decision-making process.

From the literature reviewed to this extent, it can be identified that the components of the S-Commerce model used for designing and developing, and for research studies, cover the three major areas of observation, analysis, and evaluation. These components of an integrated layer model are presented in Figure 2.2.

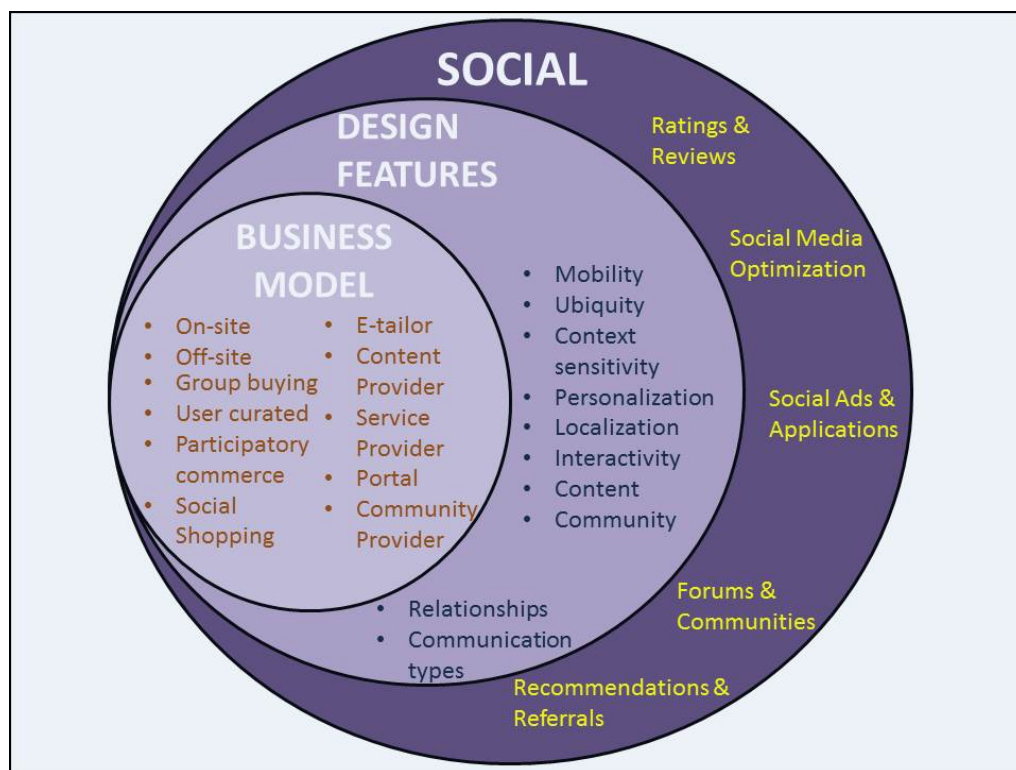


Fig 2.2. Layers of S-Commerce (developed by researcher)

The research studies that have been investigated in this study focused on the three layers, evaluating the social constructs, business model, and design features, mostly focusing on one user-centric feature: trust. However, in order to effectively design and develop an S-

Commerce framework, other factors may need to be considered, such as psychological factors, culture, and lifestyles.

2.5. The Relation Between Psychological Fields and S-Commerce Attributes in the Decision-making Process

While focusing on consumer behaviour and decision making, there are many orientations from which a researcher can conduct a research study. It is essential that the orientation is suitable and linked to the area of research. There is a need to investigate the decision-making process in relation to consumer behaviour and S-Commerce constructs on an S-Commerce platform. Therefore, it is essential to identify the psychological trends that affect the behaviour, the experience, and the attributes that affect psychological trends. Schiffman et al. (2010) explained the consumer decision-making process using a model as shown in Figure 2.3.

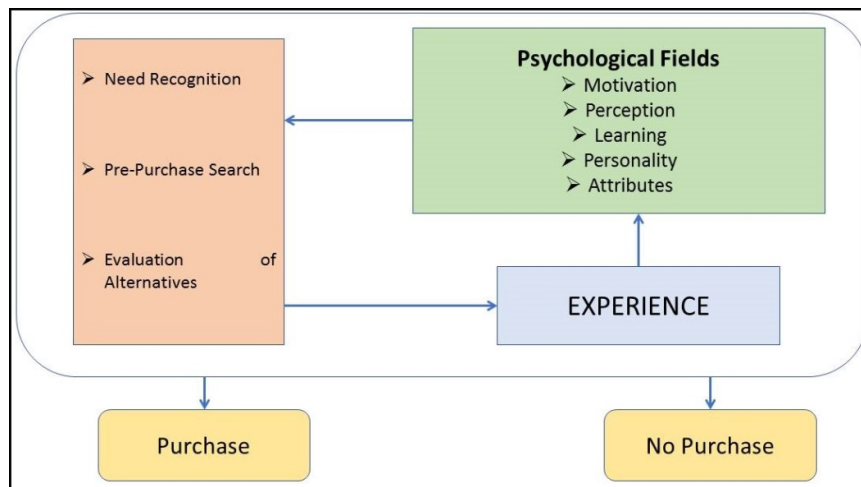


Fig 2.3 Consumer decision-making process (adapred from Schiffman et al., 2010)

Psychological fields are the main attributes that affect consumer behaviour, and in relation to e-commerce, these attributes are mainly influenced by the presentation of products and services. This may influence all the psychological attributes, including motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes. Zhang and Benyoucef (2013) stated that for any S-Commerce model, it is critical to achieve a minimum set of S-Commerce design features. These design features must cover all the layers of the proposed model, including the individual, conversation, community, and commerce levels, which might have an impact on the consumer behaviour. Various studies have revealed that S-Commerce attributes, especially those related to information quality, representation, and types have

significant impact on the various psychological aspects relating to consumer behaviour (Hajli, 2015). A recent study has found that S-Commerce constructs have a significant effect on emotional and informational support (Shanmugam et al., 2016). Another similar study investigating the effect of the WOM social construct found that it can significantly increase the likelihood of actually buying and sharing product information (Wang & Yu, 2015a; Wang & Yu, 2015b). Another S-Commerce construct, 'reviews', was found to have an impact on trust, which in turn affects purchasing behaviour (Zhang et al., 2014b).

Design attributes, which are one of the important aspects of social constructs, have been found to have a significant effect on consumer behavioural intentions in terms of whether or not to buy. Baghdadi (2016) stressed the need for a user-centred approach in S-Commerce by differentiating S-Commerce platforms from e-commerce in terms of three aspects: business models, architectures, principles, and theories; complex constructs, interactivity, content, and communities; and social features, control, security, and privacy issues. The approach was further supported by Huang and Benyoucef (2017), who identified three important design factors – usability, functionality, and sociability – that would impact consumer behaviour and their decision-making approach. The importance and impact of high and low end technology were also identified as an important factor influencing the decision-making process (Kim et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2014a).

The detailed focus on psychological fields and the impact of social constructs on these fields have also been investigated by a few studies, which assists the in-depth analysis of the relationship between psychological fields and social constructs. The importance of social constructs can be assessed from the impact they have on psychological aspects such as motivation, learning, attitudes, perception, and personality; these contribute to building trust and decision making. A recent study by Chen et al. (2017a) revealed that consumers' learning from the S-Commerce components can greatly influence the quality of decisions and that uncertainty is one of the important factors that reduces decision quality. A more recent study by Aladwani (2018), linking social components and consumers' personality attributes and attitudes, identified interesting results. Firstly, the quality of social support was found to significantly influence consumers' initial attention, intuitive evaluation, and intention to buy. Secondly, the quality of S-Commerce (both unperceptive and perceptive)

was found to significantly influence consumers' interaction experience and intention to buy.

Linking the cognitive appraisal abilities of consumers with learning, Chen et al. (2017b) reported that learning from reviews, ratings, forums, and communities formulated more affective appraisal than cognitive appraisal, reflecting the impact of social constructs on enhancing and supporting the psychological fields. Similarly, Shin (2013) developed a model to validate the relationship between the subjective norm and trust, social support, attitude, and intention. The study identified that the subjective norm is a key behavioural antecedent to using S-Commerce, and the moderating and mediating effects of the subjective norm on relationships between variables were found to be significant. Similarly, studies have revealed that various social components such as information attributes and design features, and other components such as technology and business models can motivate consumers to adopt S-Commerce (Zhang et al., 2014a; Hashim et al., 2015; Akman & Mishra, 2017).

The components relating to psychological factors, the decision-making process, and consumers' experience, with their definitions and measurable components, are presented by the researcher in Table 2.2. Trust is one the important psychological aspects that can influence purchase decisions on S-Commerce platforms. Shanmugam et al. (2016) investigated the role of S-Commerce constructs and social support constructs (emotional and informational support) in establishing trust; and it was found that social constructs had a significant effect on emotional and informational support, which in turn resulted in trust building. Similarly, Hajli (2015) also found that social constructs, along with the use of technologies like Web 2.0. applications, are increasing social presence by using social constructs. They found that this approach increased not only trust but also the intention to buy. In a similar context, Yahia et al. (2018) found that the reputation of the platform and price advantage have the strongest influence on trust. Similarly, Gibreel et al. (2018) identified that both social and technical factors need to be considered for the growth of S-Commerce in emerging markets. They also reported that WOM plays a significant role in building trust and purchase intention. Wang and Yu (2017) also found that the decision to make a purchase (intention) is greatly influenced by WOM and by observing and learning from other consumers on the platform. Cultural implications have become one of the important areas of research related to S-Commerce. Various studies (Bianchi et al., 2017;

Abed et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2019) focused on the adoption of S-Commerce in different cultural contexts and found various constructs had differentiating effects on building trust and purchasing intention.

Table 2.2. Psychological Fields and Decision-Making Components in S-Commerce

Components	Methods/Techniques	Definition	Measurable Component	Reference
Psychological Fields	Motivation	The information presented motivates the consumer in making a decision	The potential impact on the consumer can be assessed through experience (positive/negative)	Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Sirgy, (1982); Maferima and Ayelet (2014)
	Perception	How the consumers perceive the information presented	Perception can be measured from experiences and ratings on a Likert scale	Schiffman et al. (2010)
	Learning	What consumer learns from the information provided	Learnability can be measured by measuring the knowledge gained	Schiffman et al. (2010)
	Personality	A person's unique psychological make-up and how it consistently influences the way a person responds to the environment.	Personality is assessed by analysing the behavioural patterns and reactions	Schiffman et al. (2010)
	Attributes	A person's characteristics, which reflect their personality	Communication skills, honesty, education, shopping/technical knowledge etc.	Schiffman et al. (2010)
	Trust	A person's firm belief in the platform with respect to all its features and functionalities	Beliefs, behaviour, and decisions	Bianchi et al. (2017); Abed et al. (2016); Lin et al. (2019)
	Satisfaction	A feeling gained by a person on fulfilling an act	Can be measured from experiences and ratings on a Likert scale	Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Sirgy (1982); Maferima and Ayelet (2014)
Experience	Observation	The impression created in the consumer's mind after observing facts or events	Can be measured using a rating scale, or optional selection like positive (buy)/negative (no buy)	Schiffman et al. (2010)
Decision Making Stages	Needs Recognition, Pre-purchase search, alternatives evaluation, and product selection	The stages involved in the decision-making process of the consumer	Measured by how the needs are recognised and how the purchase search is conducted, along with alternative considerations.	Schiffman et al. (2010)

2.6. The Relation Between Culture and Lifestyles and S-Commerce Attributes in the Decision-making Process

The culture and lifestyles of the people might have a serious impact on the process of identifying needs and the decision-making process, which needs to be assessed through various observations. Ng (2013) has identified the following important aspects that can affect the ‘intention to purchase’ on S-Commerce platforms.

- Culture plays a moderating role in predicting purchase intentions in the social commerce context.
- Trust in a social network community mediates the relationship between social interactions and intention to purchase.
- The mediating role of trust in a social network community is conditional on culture.

The importance of culture is highlighted in S-Commerce models by Ng (2013). However, studies focusing on the cultural impact in S-Commerce are limited. Wang et al. (2016), in a meta-analysis of empirical evidence that aimed to understand individuals’ behaviour towards S-Commerce platforms, identified the lack of evidence/studies to identify the impact of culture in S-Commerce. Culture and lifestyles have become points of research interest in recent years and there has been an increase in the number of studies focusing on them in S-Commerce (Sunhee Seo, 2016; Ng, 2013; Oleynikova and Zorkin, 2016). The recent studies identified in section 2.2, including Bianchi et al. (2017); Abed et al. (2016); Rouibah and Al-Qirim (2017); Dwairi (2017); Sukrat et al. (2017); Leeraphong and Papasratom (2017); Shdaifat et al. (2016), considered the cultural and lifestyle aspects by relating their studies on S-Commerce to cultural attributes and by focusing on consumer behaviours and decision-making approaches specific to a community/region/country.

Culture and lifestyles can be related to the ideas, customs, language, and social behaviour of a particular people, community or society, and the way that these aspects are integrated into their lives (Sheik et al., 2017). Cultural aspects can be measured by observing changes in the behaviour or reactions to a particular product/service presentation (Sheik et al., 2017; Alcantara et al., 2017; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2017). This can be observed in the discussion on research trends in section 2.2, which presented a number of studies investigating the impact of various elements on S-Commerce and purchase intentions, in specific regions. This aspect highlights the need to understand the implications of culture

and lifestyles for S-Commerce operations. It is possible that consumers may react differently to the same content delivered by retailers on social media, and so a type of behaviour observed in one country or region may not be generalisable to others (Yao et al., 2019).

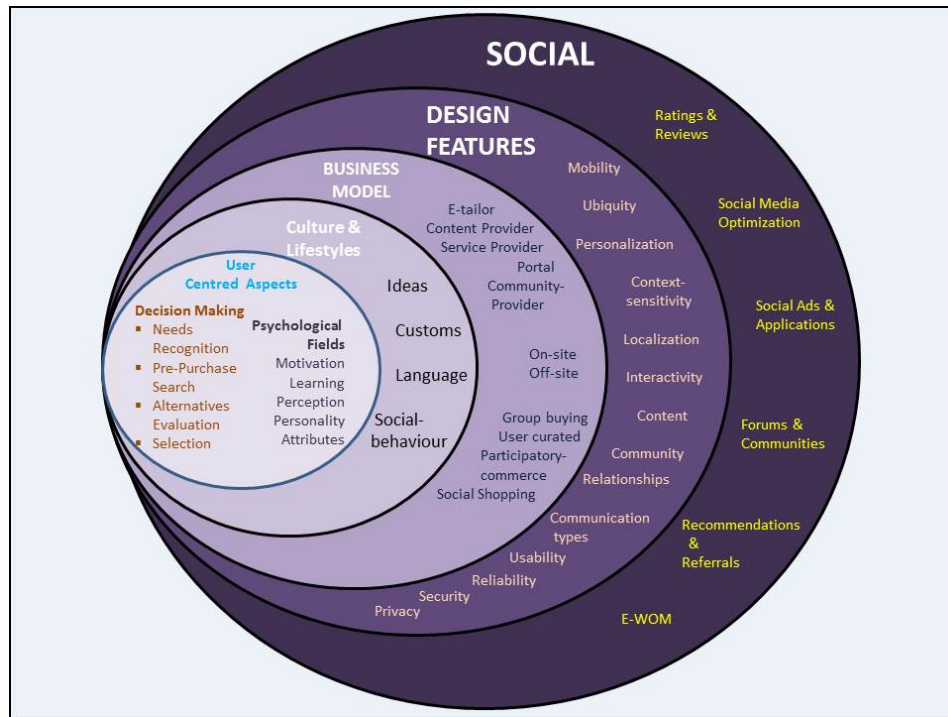


Fig 2.4. User-centric S-Commerce framework (developed by researcher)

Similarly, from the cultural perspective, Hallikainen and Laukkanen (2018) identified that the mediating role of disposition to trust in relation to national culture and trustworthiness depends greatly on the individual cultural dimension. Particularly in S-Commerce, the issue of cultural integration can be analysed from two perspectives. Firstly, the S-Commerce model forces consumers to change their behaviours and secondly, integrating the S-Commerce model with the people's culture, values, attitudes, needs and lifestyles, can be easily adopted without/slightly changing the behaviour. However, both perspectives have to be assessed and evaluated for their effect on consumers' decision-making processes and purchase intentions. Accordingly, the framework presented in Figure 2.2 is further integrated with cultural and lifestyles constructs, and user-centric aspects including behavioural and psychological fields. This resulted in a User-Centric S-Commerce Framework (UCSCF), as shown in Figure 2.4. The framework can be used for identifying

various constructs according to the users, and it can be used in the design and development of S-Commerce platforms.

2.7. Chapter Summary

The initial stage of the literature review focused on two aspects: researchers' definitions of S-Commerce by researchers and the current studies focusing on S-Commerce and related concepts that would help us to understand the evolution of S-Commerce over time. It was observed that the definition of S-Commerce often differs in relation to the perceptions and views of the researchers and the dimensions they use to explain S-Commerce. It was also observed that the definition has evolved over time with the introduction of new technologies like Web 2.0, and other social constructs like relationships, trust, risk etc. The second part focused on the literature review of S-Commerce research studies through the time period from 2010 to 2020 in three stages. It was observed that trust in S-Commerce has been a major area of research since its introduction in 2005.

Various studies have evaluated the trust factor in different dimensions and almost all the studies found that social constructs, social support, and relationship quality can increase users' trust in S-Commerce. Other major areas of research focus included the participatory approach in S-Commerce, purchase intention, changes in technology, and adoption of the S-Commerce model. Only one study (Rad & Benyoucef, 2012) was found to investigate the impact of social constructs in decision making, while two other studies (Wang & Yu, 2015; Wang & Yu, 2017) focused on the impact of WOM on the decision-making process. The systematic review of the literature has found very few research works relating to the decision-making process in S-Commerce. In the past few years (2015–2020), it was observed that there has been an increase in the number of research studies focusing on the study of adoption of S-Commerce in specific regions which are bounded by unique culture and lifestyles such as Thailand, Malaysia, Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait), China, Jordan etc. A change in the inclination towards the adaptability of S-Commerce specific to culture has been observed in recent years.

The decision-making process and the psychological aspects are the two main attributes of commerce. Whether it is E-commerce or S-Commerce, it is ultimately the users' psychological aspects that enable them to make the decision to buy or not. Though the decision-making process, the stages involved in making decisions and the psychological

fields play an important role. However, few research studies focused on investigating the impact of social constructs and the related attributes of the decision-making stages, psychological fields, culture and lifestyles. Considering the global scope of S-Commerce, a need for further research studies focusing on cultural aspects is identified from the literature review.

The relationship between the social aspects, including S-Commerce constructs, design aspects, culture and lifestyles, the decision-making process, and intention to buy have been clearly analysed by reviewing relevant studies. It was found that social aspects can have a significant impact on consumer behaviour and the psychological fields, which in turn have a significant effect on the decision-making process. The review has also identified that the existing practices and research works focus on three main layers of S-Commerce – the social, design, and business models – as presented in Figure 2.2. However, in the last two years researchers have focused on the psychological aspects of S-Commerce such as consumer behaviour and related attributes such as learning, motivation, usability, perception, attitudes etc. This reflects a major trend in shifting towards a UCSCF, outlining the new emerging fields that are used to define S-Commerce and formulate the S-Commerce development framework. Considering the findings from the review, user-centric design framework are proposed, and these are explained in the following chapter. In addition, the major research gaps analysed from the literature review can be summarised in the following points.

- S-Commerce is a relatively new concept that can be defined and understood by relating it to various influencing attributes.
- There is a need for extensive research on S-Commerce to explore its various aspects and to analyse the impact of interrelated attributes.
- There is a need for research to uncover the impact of demographic data, particularly gender, on hedonic and utilitarian influences on the intention to buy in S-Commerce.
- There is a need to consider psychological fields as these play an important role in shaping consumer behaviour, while also studying the impact of S-Commerce on consumer buying/selling behaviour.
- Culture and lifestyles affect consumer behaviour (intention to buy) and there is a need for extensive research in this area.

- Design constructs such as information presentation, quality and type available on S-Commerce platforms can impact consumer behaviour and there is a need for extensive research in this area.

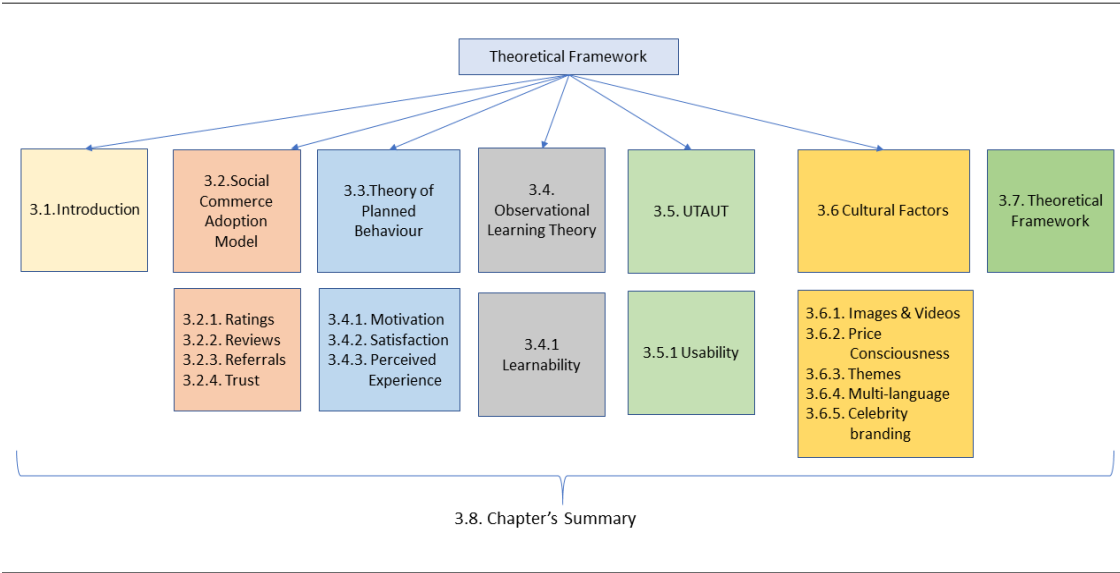


Fig 3.1. Chapter outline

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework designed to answer the research questions and address the limitations (research gaps) identified from the literature review. The UCSC (User-Centric S-Commerce) design framework proposed in this study addresses the lack of a systematic framework for designing effective and efficient S-Commerce platforms. It embodies various layers with different constructs that can be used for developing the S-Commerce platform. In order to address the gaps relating to research on the impact of socio-cultural constructs on the decision-making process, a new UCSCP was developed in this study. The theoretical justifications for using the different constructs are explained in this chapter. This study is supported by four main theories: the S-Commerce Adoption Model (SAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Observational Learning Theory (OLT), and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which are explained in the following sections.

3.2. SAM

SAM was proposed by Hajli (2013). It uses the concepts of social presence and social shopping to understand their influence on the purchase intention in S-Commerce platforms.

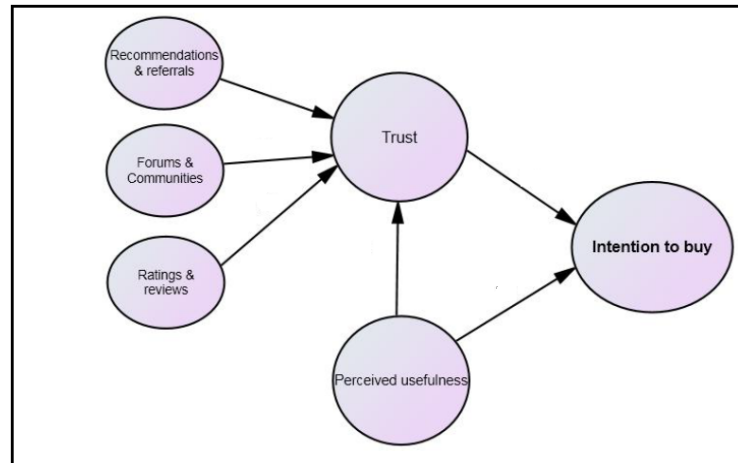


Fig 3.2. Social Commerce Adoption Model (adapted from Hajli, 2013)

It includes five social constructs: recommendations and referrals; forums and communities; ratings and reviews; trust; and perceived usefulness. These are considered to be effective in understanding the intention to buy. These components are shown in Figure 3.2. With the rapid developments in technology, the traditional marketing process has been replaced by online marketing channels, with various techniques enabling companies to interact directly with customers (Afrasiabi Rad & Benyoucef, 2011). In addition, the offline process where customers recommend a product or brand to their friends has been replaced by online referrals, and consumer interactions have been enhanced through reviews, forums, communities, and ratings (Hajli, 2013). This process can be considered as social shopping. However, social shopping is different from S-Commerce, as social shopping is a collaborative network for online consumers while S-Commerce is a collaborative platform supporting social shopping and enabling social presence (Stephen & Toubia, 2010).

The SAM has been evaluated by Hajli (2013), and a positive relationship has been identified between social constructs and purchase intention, with trust being considered as a mediating factor between both. Similarly, a positive relationship was identified between perceived usefulness and trust, and between perceived usefulness and intention to buy. In social shopping, the consumers can interact in many ways, for example by leaving comments about a product, rating a product or vendor, recommending a product or vendor, etc. Recommendations and referrals are similar in different contexts, with the only difference being that the former have a stronger impact as they contain a strong message from the sender that the product/service should be bought, whereas the latter is only the user asking his friends to consider the product or vendor for shopping (Hajli, 2013).

Considering these aspects, the following constructs from SAM were considered and integrated with other theoretical constructs to develop the integrated model.

3.2.1. Ratings

Ratings are used to rate a product or service on an S-Commerce platform, and they are part of the collaborative approach adopted by online shoppers. Based on the experience of using a product, online consumers usually rate a product, and this rating can be used as a social shopping factor to influence the purchase intentions of other online shoppers on a platform. Various studies have highlighted the positive relationship between ratings and trust, and trust and purchase intention (Hajli et al., 2017; Hajli et al., 2013; Pothong & Sathitwiriawong, 2016; Shanmugam et al., 2016). These studies indicated that ratings can be useful in building online trust among consumers (acting as a mediating factor), which positively impacts their purchase intention.

3.2.2. Reviews

Reviews, similar to ratings, are an element used to review a product or vendor. However, ratings are simple compared to reviews as they usually include a scale of one (very poor) to five (excellent), whereas reviews contain the more detailed experiences of users with a product or service. These can guide online shoppers during their online shopping and may influence their purchase intention. Various studies have shown a positive relationship between reviews and purchase intention, with trust acting as a mediating factor (Matute et al., 2016; Mikalef et al., 2017; Ramli et al., 2016). Reviews are also considered to be part of the electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) process, whose quantity, credibility, and quality are areas of research focus, as they can mislead online shoppers. In such situations, trust in an online seller and the perceived usefulness of the platform influence purchase intentions (Matute et al., 2016).

3.2.3. Referrals

Referrals are another social construct reflecting the process of referring an online product or vendor to colleagues, friends, or relatives. While most of the studies consider them as an antecedent to establishing trust (Kong et al., 2019; Mikalef et al., 2017; Hajli et al., 2017), it has also been argued that online users generally refer after establishing trust in a particular product or vendor (Li, 2019). Referrals are also associated with brand identity, which is another aspect of online trust in a brand. Referrals are often considered to be a good aspect

of marketing strategy as they promote a product and increase consumer advertising, which is very reliable.

3.2.4. Trust

As identified from the systematic review, trust remains one of the common aspects in the evolution of S-Commerce. Since 2015, trust, the supporting constructs for building trust, and their impact on purchasing intention have formed the major areas of investigation. Shanmugam et al. (2016) investigated the role of S-Commerce constructs and social support constructs (emotional and informational support) in establishing trust and reported that social constructs had a significant effect on emotional and informational support, which in turn resulted in trust building. Similarly, Hajli (2015) also found that social constructs, along with the use of technologies like Web 2.0 applications, are enabling an increasing social presence. Furthermore, they found that this approach increased not only trust but also the intention to buy. In a similar context, Yahia et al. (2018) found that the reputation of the platform and price advantage had the strongest influence on trust. Similarly, Gibreel et al. (2018) identified that both social and technical factors have to be considered for the growth of S-Commerce in emerging markets, and they reported that WOM plays a significant role in building trust and purchase intention.

In a similar vein, Hammouri and Abu-Shanab (2017) identified various factors influencing trust on S-Commerce platforms. These were: social presence on the web, the perceptions of others, interaction with sellers, emotional social support, informational support, positive reviews, WOM, affective influence, brand influence, advertising value, and viral reach prospects. In addition, Noor et al. (2014) identified six influencing factors of trust relating to the social and technical aspects of S-Commerce platforms: usefulness, ease of use, security, privacy, website design, and e-WOM. Thus, it can be identified that trust remains one of the common factors for assessing purchase intention, on which the impact of various constructs is evaluated.

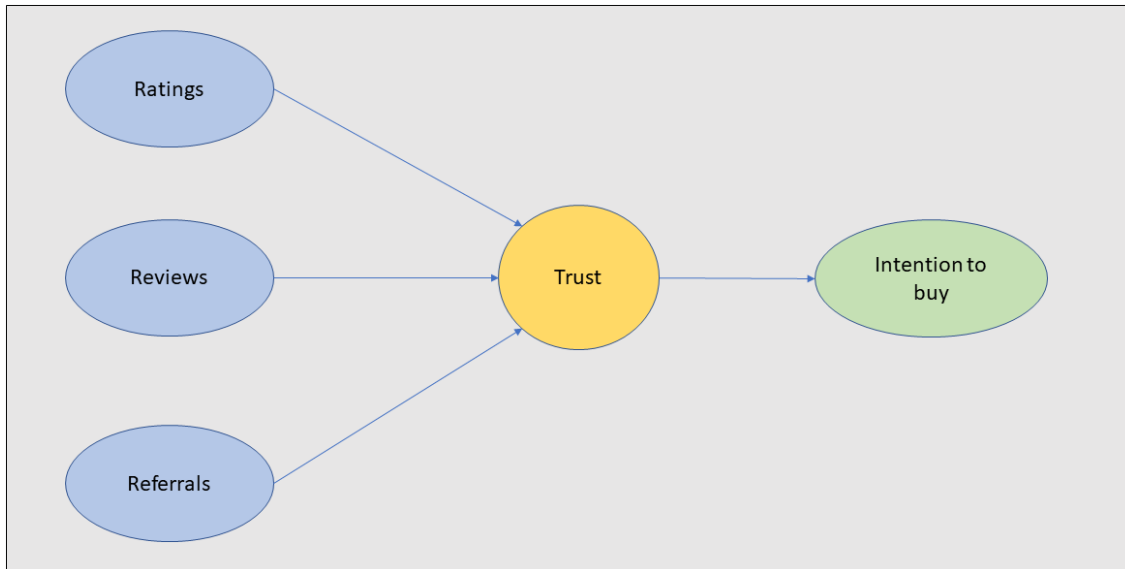


*Fig 3.3. Model representing the social constructs relation with purchase intention
(developed by researcher)*

Considering the aspects discussed in the previous sections, the initial development of the theoretical model considering the social constructs is presented in Figure 3.3.

3.3. TPB

Actual interactions (social) with other users with regard to the advancement of new e-commerce and S-Commerce technologies, such as reviews, ratings, referrals etc., can influence consumer behaviour in online markets (Hajli, 2013). A few studies (Glover & Benbasat, 2006; Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2000) have identified that companies are using the new technologies to increase social trust on online platforms in order to decrease the risk perceptions in online behaviour.

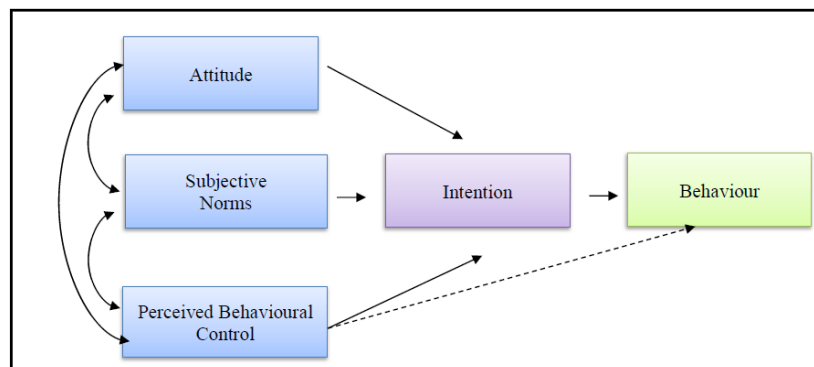


Fig 3.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour (adapted from Ajzen, 1991)

Hajli et al. (2017) highlighted the significant relationship between online consumer behaviour and trust, which influences purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms. Therefore, it is essential to understand the behavioural impact of these constructs on online consumers. The TPB, as shown in Figure 3.4, considers the central determinant of behaviour to be one's intention to perform the particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It seeks to predict original intentions, based on a combination of three influencing factors: individuals' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The TPB derives suppositions from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which reflects the idea that the intentions of individuals largely reflect their personal attitudes, their perceptions of the extent of favorability of an act, and their perceived beliefs about the act. The concept of perceived behavioural control, which originates from self-efficacy theory, states that expectations such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience can determine behavioural reactions (Bandura, 1977). Accordingly, the following factors are used in this study for perceived behaviour as they are believed to affect the purchase intention of online consumers on S-Commerce platforms.

3.3.1. Motivation

Online users are motivated to use S-Commerce platforms through various techniques such as ratings, reviews, referrals etc. However, motivation is one of the behavioural aspects that can be directly related to trust and purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms. Various studies (Bianchi et al., 2017; Akman & Mishra, 2017; Gvili & Levy, 2019) have identified the positive impact of motivation on consumer engagement, information sharing, purchase intentions etc. on S-Commerce platforms. Motivation can increase loyalty, which further increases intention to purchase (Anderson et al., 2014). Similarly, Sinaga et al. (2017) identified self-worth, enjoying helping, reciprocity and social support from social exchange as a few of the factors that increase motivation for online shopping and knowledge sharing on platforms. Thus, it can be understood that motivation not only increases social support through knowledge and information sharing on S-Commerce platforms, but also purchase intentions. In addition, motivation has a positive influence on repurchase intention through satisfaction (Kang & Moon, 2017), which is considered to be another behavioural construct.

3.3.2. Satisfaction

Satisfaction among online users can result from various aspects such as reviews, ratings, referrals, ease of use, ease of access (information and technical support), branding and other

service-related support (Akman & Mishra, 2017). Various studies (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Beyari & Abareshi, 2016) have identified a positive relationship between satisfaction, trust, and purchase intention. Similarly, satisfaction was found to be significant in building customer loyalty towards brands and it explains the variance in trust (Alhulail et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2016). Furthermore, social and informational value positively influence trust and have a significant effect on customer satisfaction on online platforms (Alshibly, 2014). As identified from the studies reviewed, satisfaction can be related to both trust and purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms.

3.3.3. Perceived experience

The perceived experience on S-Commerce platforms may be influenced by various factors such as information, social and technical support, privacy, security, reliability aspects, trust, brand identity, and user attitudes (Moreno et al., 2019). For example, Chang et al. (2017) identified varying impacts of trust, attitudes, and experiences (platform dependent) among Facebook and LinkedIn users. Similarly, Fedorko et al. (2018) identified the quality, accuracy, and up-to-datedness of the information, and the quality of service provided as the antecedents of satisfaction, which can influence purchase intention. As the experience of S-Commerce is collaborative in nature (interacting with the vendor and other consumers), it varies between the various platforms and also with respect to the various dimensions of measuring experiences (Ye et al., 2016). Therefore, there is a need to consider a number of factors for analysing the experience, supported by various theories. Accordingly, these factors are supported by observing real-time user experiences, which is explained in the next section.

3.4. Observational Learning Theory

Bandura (1992) defined observational learning as a four-step process: attention, retention, production process, and motivation. This can be used to analyse the behaviour of a person, as illustrated in Figure 3.5.

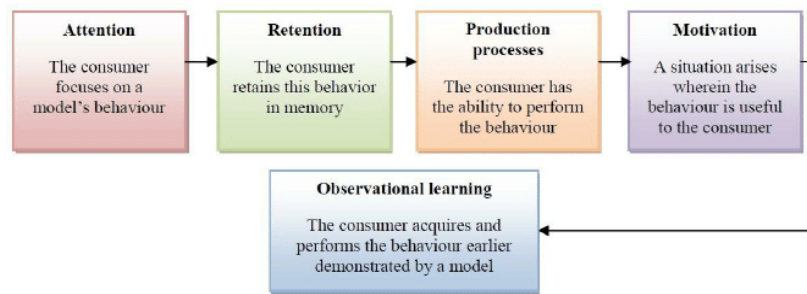


Fig 3.5. Observational Learning (adapted from Bandura, 1992)

The OLT suggests that a tremendous amount of learning can happen through the process of observation. S-Commerce platforms provide various modes of observational learning. Online users learn about products from reviews and ratings. In addition, they observe the online behaviours of other users and may imitate them. Therefore, by paying attention, online users can learn and remember various aspects of S-Commerce platforms, which they retain and copy (writing reviews, making a purchase, rating products etc.). This can impact their decision making, social presence, social shopping, and social support. Based on these theoretical assumptions, the learnability factor is considered in this study for analysing the experiences that can result in motivation and satisfaction, and influence trust and purchase intention.

3.4.1. Learnability

Learnability refers to the ability of users to effectively learn on S-Commerce platforms. It can be related to the usability, functionality, and sociability factors of the platform (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Huang, 2018). Learnability mostly relates to the design aspects, which promote users' interactions, observation and engagement, thus increasing their awareness and resulting in particular behaviour (intention to buy). Only a few studies (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Huang, 2018) have highlighted the positive impact of learnability on purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms. However, others (Kuan et al., 2008; Madu & Madu, 2002; Ilbahar & Cebi, 2017) have identified a positive relationship between learnability and purchase intentions on E-Commerce platforms.

In addition, learnability and experience are two factors that can be analysed by observing user behaviour, and accordingly they can be employed to develop and maintain an S-Commerce platform for engaging online consumers and increasing sales. The use of big

data and other analytic techniques has been increasingly adopted on E-Commerce platforms (Hasan et al., 2009; Akter & Wamba, 2016).

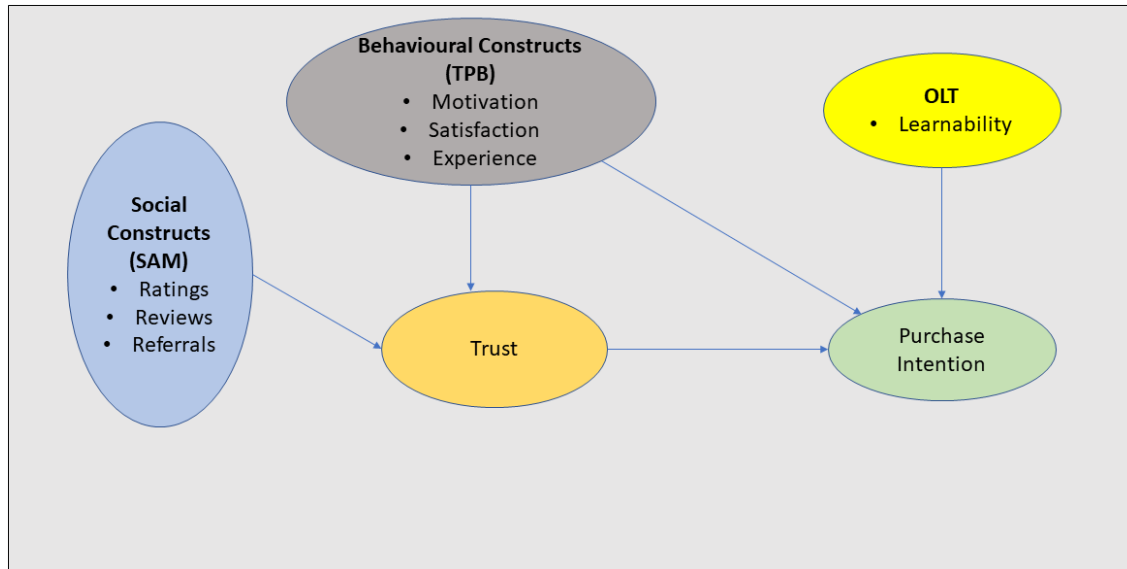


*Fig 3.6. Integrated Model with Social and Behavioural Constructs in S-Commerce
(developed by researcher)*

The systematic review has not identified any studies relating to the use of analytic systems for analysing user behaviour on S-Commerce platforms. However, some metrics were identified in Hasan et al. (2009) that can be used for analysing user behaviour in real time using different applications:

- Sessions/user
- Session duration
- Pages browsed
- Demographics
- Engagement
- Technology (mobile/PC access), etc.

These factors would further enhance the understandability of the influence of user experiences and behavioural factors on trust and purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms. Thus, by integrating the OLT and TPB constructs (perceived experiences, motivation, satisfaction, learnability etc.) that reflect user behavioural attitudes and experiences, the model from Figure 3.3 is further developed as shown in Figure 3.6. This

model is further integrated with cultural and technological constructs, which are explained in the following sections.

3.5. UTAUT

The UTAUT, as illustrated in Figure 3.7, indicates that the behavioural intention aspect of influences four main factors: performance expectancy (PE), effort expectancy (EE), social influence (SI), and facilitating conditions (FC). There are also other aspects that merge with the previous elements and increase the effect, such as gender, age, experiences, and voluntariness of use (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

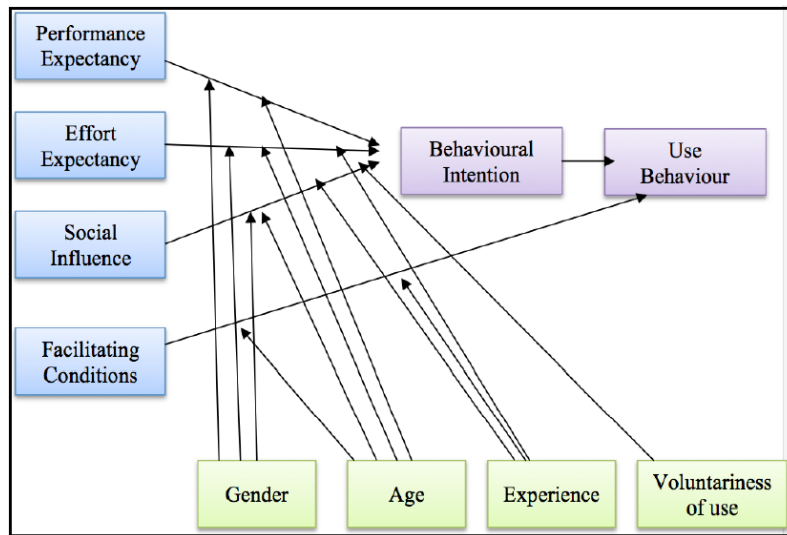


Fig 3.7. UTAUT Model (adapted from Venkatesh et al., 2003)

The model is mainly used to evaluate the adoption of technology. Accordingly, various studies (Chang et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2015; Abed, 2018) have used UTAUT to evaluate the adoption of S-Commerce platforms. Out of the four factors, EE is associated with the degree of ease associated with the use of a system (Moore & Benbasat, 1991). Focusing on the usability aspect, ease of use (EOU) is considered in this model to evaluate the usability aspect of the UCSCP.

3.5.1. Usability (EOU)

S-Commerce platforms integrate social support (support received online through social media), social shopping features (online shopping using social media; for example, online collaborative shopping), and social networking features (online interaction among groups of people using social networking applications) by using advanced Web 2.0 technologies

(Hajli, 2013). As the social features are supported by advanced technologies, it is essential to understand the acceptance, adoption, and usability factors of S-Commerce platforms. The EOU (Moore & Benbasat, 1991) in this context refers to the degree of ease with which the S-Commerce platform can be used. As the focus of the study is evaluating the impact of socio-cultural factors on the decision-making (purchase intention) process, it is more important to focus on the usability aspects of the developed platform than on the technical aspects in detail. Hajli (2013) similarly developed the SAM, which considered perceived usefulness from the TAM for analysing the impact of social constructs on purchase intention. Similarly, Noh et al. (2013) used the TAM to analyse perceived ease of use (PEOU) and to determine its relationship with the intention to use S-Commerce platforms.

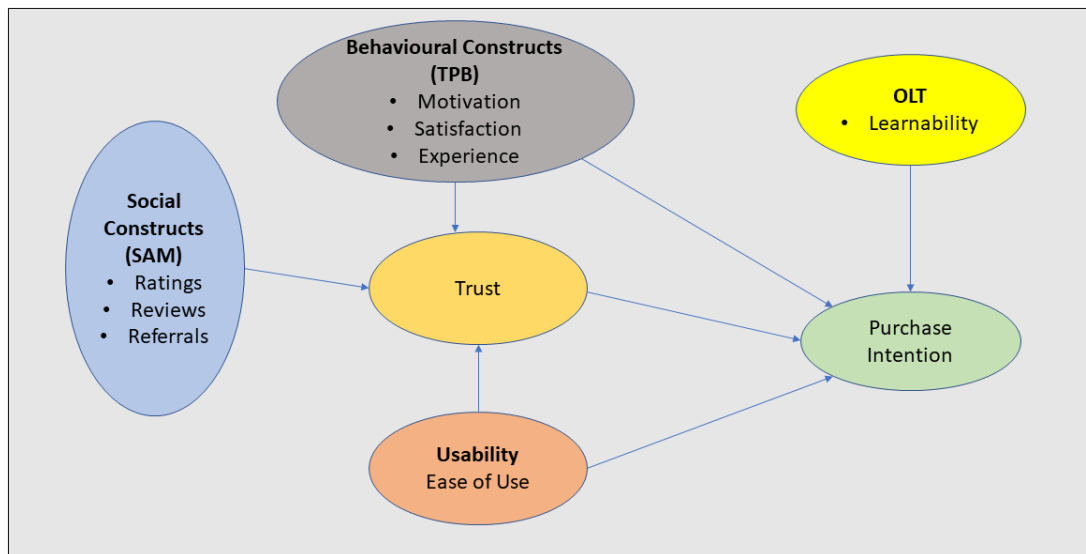


Fig 3.8. Integrated Model with Social, Behavioural, and Usability Constructs (developed by researcher)

The usability aspects can be analysed through the variables of age, gender, and experience, which may lead to effective analysis and evaluation. Considering the relevance of evaluating the usability of the UCSCP, the model in Figure 3.5 is further integrated with the usability (EOU) element, as shown in Figure 3.8.

3.6. Cultural Factors

As analysed from the systematic review, most studies on S-Commerce have relied on existing platform users from Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for the sample in the data collection and analysis. This could potentially affect the results as the aspects they are investigating may not be part of existing platforms (for example, price consciousness or

celebrity branding). Similarly, most studies have focused on just a few constructs such as trust, satisfaction, purchase intention etc. However, there is a lack of research that develops and evaluates an integrated model that considers the psychological, social, behavioural, and cultural aspects of S-Commerce from a user-centric point of view. Only a few studies have investigated cultural influence (Ng, 2013; Yao et al., 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). Focusing on these aspects, this study developed an integrated model that considers the psychological, social, behavioural and cultural aspects of S-Commerce and their impact on decision making (purchase intention) on S-Commerce platforms. Accordingly, the model from Figure 3.8 is integrated with the cultural constructs, which are explained in the following sections.

3.6.1. Images & videos

With the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies, the design features of S-Commerce have been transformed in order to attract consumers' attention. By using social media techniques such as images and videos (culturally designed), companies are targeting specific customers in order to increase their reachability at minimal cost (Hashim et al., 2016). Similarly, Goel and Prokopec (2009) stated that using rich media such as videos and images can attract users in the virtual world, and in relation to S-Commerce this can attract and engage consumers. In addition, user-generated content such as text, videos and images can increase the reliability and social support mechanism of S-Commerce platforms (Sukrat et al., 2018). Similarly, Curty and Zhang (2011) reported that product visualisation with pictures and videos can influence the purchase intention of consumers. Therefore, images and videos may provide social support, enhance social shopping by engaging consumers and also influence purchase intentions.

3.6.2. Price consciousness

Price consciousness reflects the savings perceived by users if they buy a product or service; awareness of this can be enhanced by providing comparisons with prices for the same product on other platforms. Different users react to the price savings in different ways: while some users are extremely concerned about price savings or discounts, others are not very influenced by price as they prefer certain brands or trust the vendor (Farivar & Yuan, 2014). This approach increases reliability and trust among users (Fang et al., 2013). In a different context, Noh et al. (2013) identified that price consciousness had significant and moderating effects on the relationships between perceived usefulness/perceived ease of use

and individuals' intention to use S-Commerce. Therefore, price consciousness is an important cultural construct that needs to be understood when evaluating the impact of cultural constructs on purchase intention.

3.6.3. Themes

This is one of the new features integrated with the design of UCSCP and it changes the look and feel of the web pages. The users can select any theme that they like for a better experience while using the platform. Using the themes, users can personalise the look and feel of the platform according to their interests. These themes are designed by considering various cultural aspects, including colours, images, and videos, reflecting the cultural considerations of the target users. This is explained in detail in the UCSCP design chapter. It is particularly used to evaluate the impact of cultural aspects on the intention to buy on S-Commerce platforms.

3.6.4. Multi-language

Focusing on cultural integration, localisation is an important aspect of S-Commerce platform design and development, as it influences the various social support, behavioural, and psychological aspects such as engagement, satisfaction, usability, and learnability. Various studies (Alhorr et al., 2010; Hall, 2002) have identified a positive correlation between the localisation and success of E-Commerce platforms. However, no such study was identified in the systematic review that considered this aspect in relation to S-Commerce platforms. Hin (2017) has identified that product localisation errors could affect company sales and consumer relations, and therefore have a serious impact on the functioning of the company. Therefore, it is essential to understand the concept of localisation in order to analyse the social support and shopping features from a user-centred view. One of the aspects of localisation is using local language as a communication medium on S-Commerce platforms. This not only increases ease of use, but also learnability and engagement. In addition, it may increase trust, as the users are more familiar with and attracted to their native language. Therefore, multi-languages, which include the local language and English (a common language) are used as one of the cultural constructs in the framework.

3.6.5. Celebrity branding

Celebrities may impact individuals' behaviours in various ways. Realising this aspect, companies often employ celebrities to promote their products and brands. Celebrity marketing is a very effective marketing strategy for attracting customers (Patel & Basil, 2017). However, the concept of celebrity endorsement and its power to attract consumers (physical attraction) are an area of research that has not been explored to a great extent in marketing and commerce research (Hackey & Hackey, 2015; Erdogan, 1999). Focusing on these aspects, celebrity branding is used as one of the constructs in the theoretical framework.

3.7. Theoretical Framework

As socio-cultural aspects are integrated into the design of the UCSCP, this study proposes a new model that integrates the cultural constructs along with SAM, TPB, UTAUT, and OLT into the proposed theoretical framework. It does so by integrating the constructs of images and videos, price consciousness, themes, local language, and celebrity branding into the design of the UCSCP. These cultural elements are introduced to modify the design layout of the S-Commerce platform according to the cultural preferences of the users. This approach allows the researchers to investigate the impact of integrating behavioural, cultural, and social constructs on users' trust (mediating factor) and purchase intention. Accordingly, the various theories that are used to support this study are summarised in Table 3.1 and illustrated in Figure 3.9, designed by the researcher.

Three constructs including ratings, reviews, and referrals are adapted from SAM developed by Hajli (2013). These three factors are considered to be important social elements, which can significantly influence users trust and purchase intentions on S-Commers platform (Hajli, 2013; Zhang & Benyoucef 2016; Hajli, 2014; Wang & Yu, 2015). The social constructs including ratings, reviews, and referrals were considered as independent variables, whereas trust is considered as dependent variables. According to TPB, the behavioral achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral control). The relationship between behaviour and attitudes have been studied by various researchers in different contexts. For instance, positive relationship between experiences and attitude was studied in human relations (Hammock & Richardson, 2011) and also in online learning adoption (Zhu et al., 2020). Similarly, positive relationship between satisfaction and attitudes was studied in mobile application services (Lee et al., 2015) and

pro-environmental behaviour (Ertz & Sarigollu, 2018). Therefore, it can be assessed that both satisfaction and experience can influence attitudes of users, which can motivate them to reflect certain behaviour (purchase intention).

Table 3.1. Socio-cultural constructs and their relevant theories

Theory	Purpose	Constructs	UCSC design framework layer	Relevance	References
SAM	To evaluate the impact of social constructs on decision making	Ratings	Social layer	Product listing contains ratings, which are considered as an influencing factor in the decision-making process on S-Commerce platforms.	Hajli (2013); Zhang and Benyoucef (2016); Hajli (2014); Wang and Yu (2015)
		Reviews	Social layer	Product listing contains reviews, which are considered as an influencing factor in the decision-making process on S-Commerce platforms.	
		Referrals	Social layer	Platform contains referral options using Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Pinterest links for sharing.	
TPB	To evaluate the behavioural intention in decision making	Attitudes	User-Centric	The degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour of interest. Measurable components include motivation, satisfaction, trust, and learnability.	Ajzen (1991); Westbrook and Oliver (1991); Sirgy (1982); Maferima and Ayelet (2014); Schiffman et al. (2010)
		Subjective norms	User-Centric	Refers to the belief about whether most people approve or disapprove (engage or not engage) of a behaviour on S-Commerce platforms.	
		Behavioural control	User-Centric	Refers to a person's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest on S-Commerce platforms.	

Table 3.1. Socio-cultural constructs and their relevant theories (Continued)

Theory	Purpose	Constructs	UCSC design framework layer	Relevance	References
OLT	To examine user behaviour	Usage behavior	User-Centric	Refers to the process where the consumer observes and learns from experiences, which would result in exhibiting a particular behaviour. Usage behaviour on S-Commerce platforms can be monitored by using Google Analytics.	Bandura (1992)
UTAUT	To evaluate the acceptance of S-Commerce platforms (system)	Social influence	Design Layer	The degree to which an individual perceives that important others believe that he or she should use the new system (S-Commerce platform).	Venkatesh et al. (2003)
		Facilitating conditions	Design Layer	The degree to which an individual believes that an organisational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system.	
		Performance expectancy	Design Layer	The degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain gains in job performance.	
		Effort Expectancy	Design Layer	The degree of ease associated with the use of the system. Used to moderate the influence of behavioural intention by age, gender, and experience.	
Cultural	To evaluate the impact of cultural constructs on the decision-making process	Images & videos	Cultural layer	Using images and videos for product listing in the socio-cultural context, which can influence individual behaviour and the decision-making process.	Ng (2013); Wang et al. (2016); Bianchi et al. (2017); Abed et al. (2016); Rouibah and Al-Qirim (2017); Dwairi (2017); Sukrat et al. (2017); Leeraphong and Papasratom (2017); Shdaifat et al. (2016)
		Price consciousness	Cultural layer	Using price consciousness (price comparison) for product listings in the socio-cultural context, which can influence individual behaviour and the decision-making process.	
		Multi-language	Cultural layer	Using multi-language option on S-Commerce platforms, which can influence the decision-making process.	
		Celebrity branding	Cultural layer	Using celebrity branding for product listings on S-Commerce platforms, which can influence the decision-making process.	
		Themes	Cultural layer	Using Themes (look and feel personalization feature) on S-Commerce platforms, which can influence the decision-making process.	

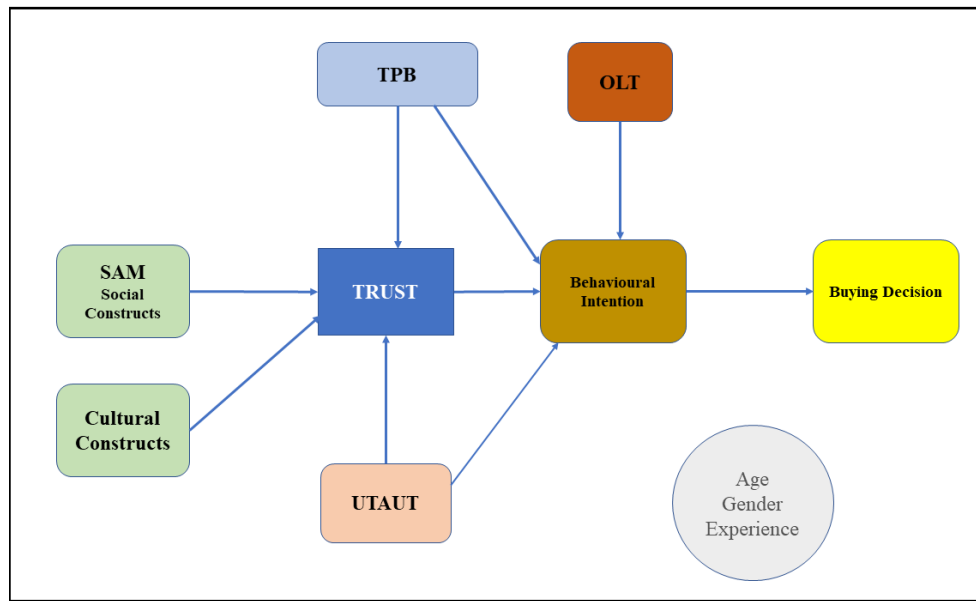


Fig 3.9. Theories used in this study (developed by researcher)

Therefore, motivation, satisfaction, and experience were considered as the behavioural and psychological constructs (independent variables), which can influence trust (mediating factor) and purchase intentions (dependent variable) on S-Commerce platforms. The learnability of the users on S-Commerce platforms may be influenced by the design factors of S-Commerce platform, which attracts their attention. Attitudes change over time as individuals learn new concepts about the idea or object they are evaluating (Shaouf et al., 2016). According to Allport (1935), attitude is an important determinant of the predisposition of an individual and has a positive relationship with behavior. Therefore, depending on the level of learnability, the behavioural outcome (purchase intention) of the users may vary, and accordingly the relationship between learnability construct (independent variable) supported by OLT and purchase intentions (dependent variable) construct was formulated in the proposed theoretical framework. Focusing on the perceived ease of use construct from UTAUT, studies (Kim, 2020; Zulseptia et al., 2018) have identified positive relations between ease of use, and online trust and purchase intentions. Accordingly, ease of use construct (independent variable) is related with trust and purchase intentions (dependent variables) in the proposed study model by the researcher. In addition, gender, age, and experience are posited to moderate the impact of the key constructs on purchase intention and behavior.

Cultural constructs are integrated with other theories presented in Table 3.1, in order to develop an integrated and comprehensive theoretical framework that addresses various dimensions in the process of decision making (purchase intention). Trust is considered as a mediating factor, to which the constructs relevant to TPB, SAM, and cultural aspects are considered as antecedents. Trust can affect behavioural intention or decision making, i.e., either to buy or not to buy. Accordingly, the theoretical framework is developed and presented in Figure 3.10.

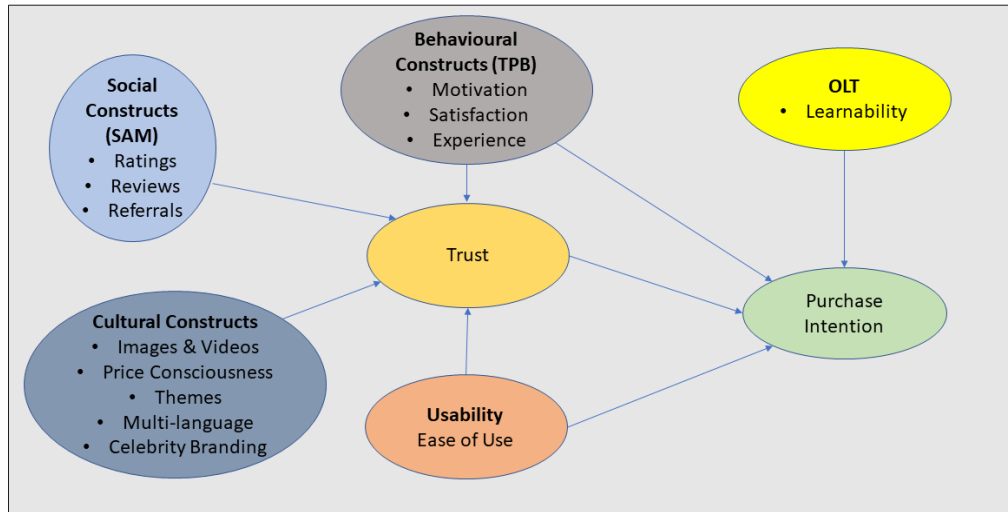


Fig 3.10. Theoretical framework (developed by researcher)

In addition, the behavioural and usability constructs are considered as antecedents to purchase intention, as identified from various studies (Hajli, 2013; Noh et al., 2013; Kang & Moon, 2017; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Beyari & Abareshi, 2016; Fedorko et al., 2018). The proposed theoretical framework in Figure 3.10 includes different constructs and the relationships are designed in a way such that the model can be used to address the research questions outlined in chapter 1. In order to evaluate the theoretical framework, there is a need for S-Commerce platform, which need to have all the features considered in this study. In order to integrate the features, the researcher developed a user-centric S-Commerce platform for Saudi Arabian and Ireland users who are considered as the main participants in the study from whom relevant data would be collected. The process of collecting data and methods is discussed in the next chapter; while the design of UCSCP by researcher is discussed in chapter 5.

3.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the relevance of various theories that support this study. Based on the UCSCF designed for developing S-Commerce platforms, various constructs and the relevant supporting theories are discussed in this chapter. Accordingly, the social constructs (ratings, reviews, and referrals) are supported by SAM, the behavioural constructs (motivation, satisfaction, experience, and learnability) are supported by TPB and OLT, and the usability constructs are supported by UTAUT. Cultural constructs (images and videos, price consciousness, themes, multi-language, and celebrity branding) are integrated with these constructs to develop a theoretical framework that evaluates the impact of socio-cultural and behavioural constructs on decision making (purchase intention) on S-Commerce platforms. The theoretical framework (Figure 3.10) provided in this study contributes to the social commerce research in identifying the relationship between various factors on influence on decision-making process and purchase intentions. Based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2, and section 3.7, it was assessed that the previous research studies considered very few constructs in developing the framework, such as identifying social constructs relationship with trust (Hajli, 2013); relation between ease of use and trust (Kim, 2020; Zuelseptia et al., 2018) etc., which has limited the identifying the relationship between the various factors (using an integrated and complex framework) of influence on purchase intentions on S-Commerce platform. Integrating different factors from different theories may lead to complex models such as the one designed in this chapter; and may contribute to the academia in identifying new theoretical developments, which may conflict with the existing theories.

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research philosophy adopted by the qualitative and quantitative schools of thought, and to introduce the approaches and instruments used in the process of achieving the research objectives. Accordingly, this chapter presents the research paradigm and methodologies used to address the research questions, followed by the design of the surveys and interviews. Considering the gaps identified in the literature review (lack of research focusing on user-centric aspects and cultural aspects of S-Commerce design, development, and adoption), a theoretical framework was proposed in the previous chapter, where the relationships between various constructs were investigated and evaluated. This framework will be used to evaluate two culturally different countries, Ireland and Saudi Arabia, and to compare the findings in both countries. Focusing on this aim, the strategy, approaches, and methods adopted are discussed in this chapter, and the chapter outline is presented in Figure 4.1.

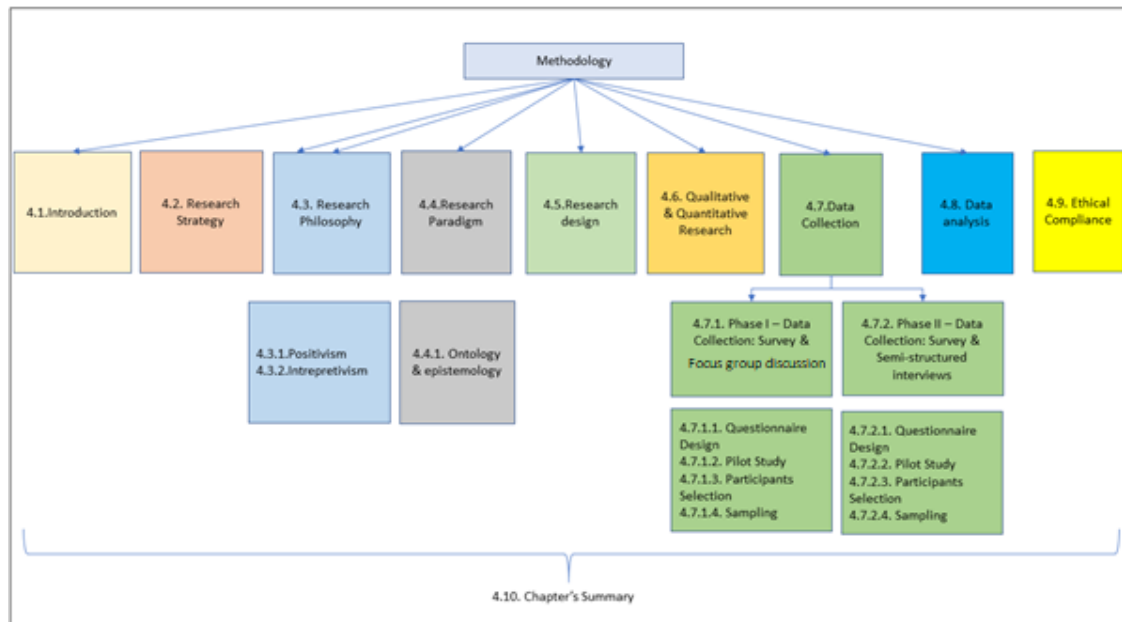


Fig 4.1. Chapter outline

4.2. Research Strategy

The main purpose of this study is to identify the impact of socio-cultural factors on the decision-making process and purchase intentions of consumers on a UCSCP. For this purpose, two countries significantly different in culture (Ireland and Saudi Arabia) were selected for the study. Significant cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and Ireland can be observed from Figure 4.2.

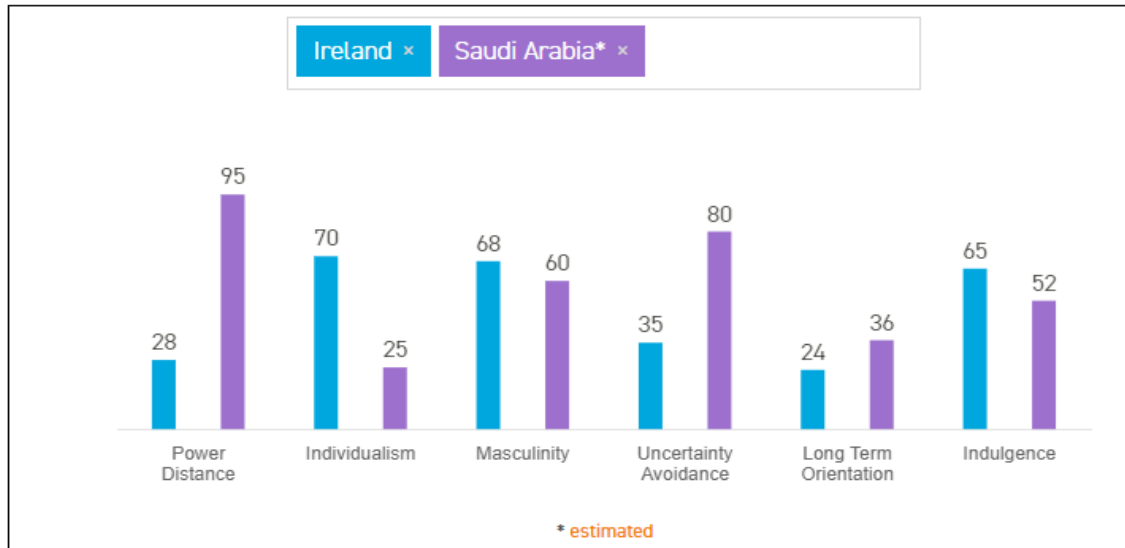


Fig 4.2. Cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and Ireland according to Hofstede's Insights (2021)

Significant differences were identified in factors including individualism (preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families); uncertainty avoidance (the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity); long-term orientation (pragmatism); and indulgence (a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun). These factors are known to affect consumer behaviour. As this study is focused on identifying the influence of culture on purchase intentions, it was essential to select two culturally different countries for cross-cultural comparisons. Moreover, as Saudi Arabia is the researcher's home country and Ireland is the study location, it was assessed that data collection could be effectively managed in both locations.

An extensive literature review was conducted to identify various constructs influencing S-Commerce adoption (decision making and purchase intentions). In addition, based on the literature reviewed, a UCSCF was proposed for designing and developing the UCSCP. In addition, a traditional commerce platform, which did not embed socio-cultural aspects, was also developed for the study. For the evaluation of the UCSCP and the validation of the theoretical framework, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were adopted. Accordingly, the research framework adopted in this study was as shown in Figure 4.3.

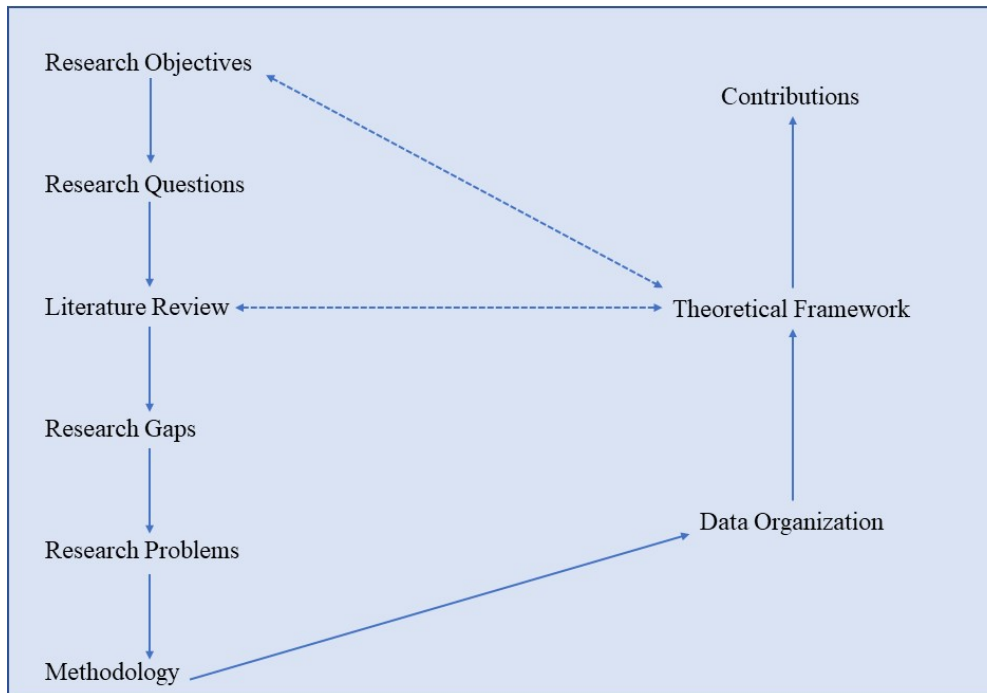


Fig 4.3. Research framework

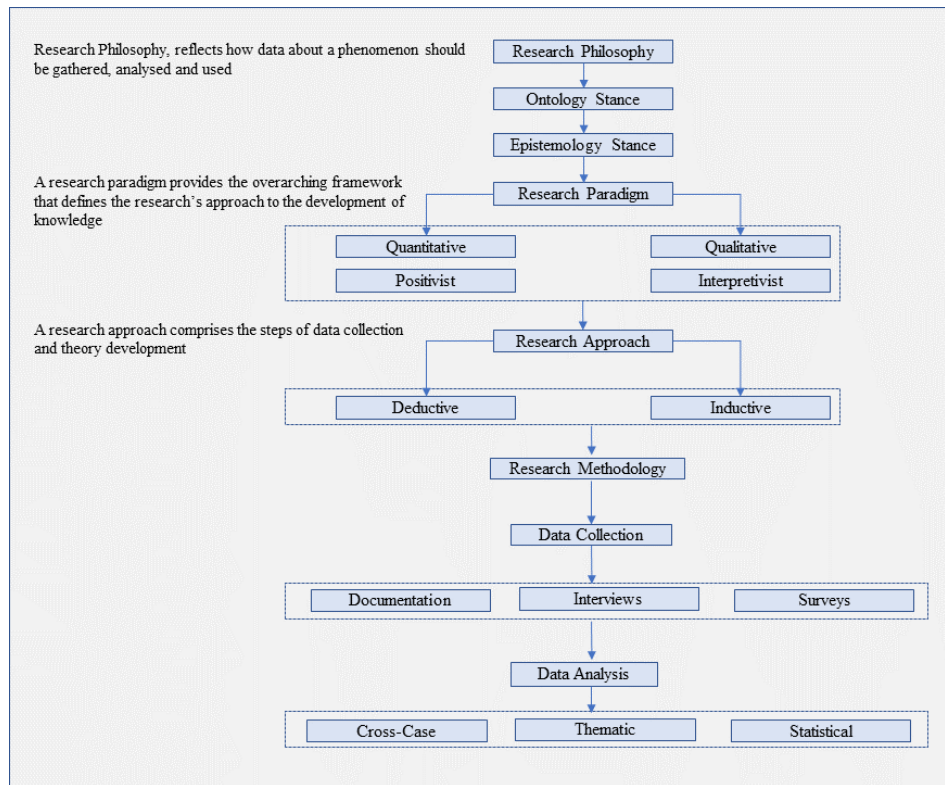


Fig 4.4. Research strategy

Considering the research framework, Figure 4.4 reflects the research strategy adopted in this study, which is discussed in the following sections.

4.3. Research Philosophy

A research philosophy is a belief carried by the researcher about the development of knowledge, in relation to the collection and analysis of data related to a particular phenomenon (Coolican, 2009). Two beliefs can be primarily identified with respect to research: positivist and interpretivist. The purpose of the research philosophy is to identify the knowledge related to the research problems, and the approaches that can be used to collect, analyse and interpret the data (Depoy & Gitlin, 2015). Accordingly, Saunders et al. (2011) stated that a research philosophy defines the ways a researcher views the world. It can guide researchers in identifying the research strategy, approaches, and methods to be used for studying a phenomenon or research topic. In this case, the topic is the impact of socio-cultural, behavioural and psychological constructs on the decision-making process and purchase intentions of consumers in Ireland and Saudi Arabia on UCSCPs.

4.3.1. Positivism

The positivist research paradigm refers to the belief that phenomena can be measured by analytical and scientific methods (Blaxter et al., 2010; Levin, 1998). Positivists believe that the social world is independent of human actions and beliefs, and that this can be illustrated using scientific and analytical methods. They argue that science is objective and that exact measurements are needed for analysis (Halaweh et al., 2008; Bharadwaj, 2000). Therefore, this epistemology mostly relies on quantitative data collected through various methods (Bernard & Bernard, 2012).

4.3.2. Interpretivism

The interpretivist research paradigm focuses on understanding social reality rather than the generalisable truth (Given, 2008). In contrast to positivists, interpretivists argue that no reality exists outside people's perceptions about an event or a phenomenon (Veal, 2005). In addition, they believe that phenomena involving social entities cannot be analysed using scientific methods; instead, the issues related to the phenomenon have to be decomposed, and the researcher is an essential part of the study (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). By being involved in the study, it is possible that the results of the study are influenced by the researcher's background and purpose (Neuman, 2000).

Considering the nature of the study, research questions, and objectives, the approaches and methods required to achieve the objectives were identified as being closely associated with both positivism and interpretivism epistemologies. As the research intends to explore impacts of factors based on the participants' perspectives, there are instances in the study where specific conclusions are required (for example, assessing the impact of social constructs on purchase intentions); and there are instances where detailed interpretations are required (for example, understanding the impact of design constructs on consumer behaviour, with respect to experience, motivation etc.). Therefore, considering the nature of the study, both positivism and interpretivism were deemed to be appropriate epistemologies in this study.

4.4. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is used to describe the way researchers perceive the world they live in, in relation to phenomena. It reflects the process by which a research inquiry should be conducted in order to establish the reality. The two research beliefs, positivism and

interpretivism, explained in the previous section can be clarified through ontological, epistemological and methodological positions in the design and context of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Accordingly, paradigms can be characterised by their ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), and methodology (Guba, 1990).

4.4.1. Ontology and epistemology

Ontology can be used to explain the nature of existence or reality. Reality can be linked to two philosophical attitudes, objectivism and subjectivism (Hornby & Wehmeier, 1995). Both objectivism and subjectivism can be integrated, and this results in another philosophical perspective called realism (Avison & Fitzgerald, 2003). Objective ontology considers that reality has an independent existence, whereas subjective ontology considers that reality exists in people's perceptions and opinions of reality. Both assume that reality can be interpreted and analysed. Considering the nature of the research, this study incorporates both subjective ontology (i.e., standards of rational belief are those of the individual believer or those of the believer's community) and objective ontology (i.e., objects exist independently of human perception and are not ontologically exhausted by their relations with humans or other objects). The study analysis is based on the perceptions and opinions of the participants, and the data are collected through quantitative methods (to measure the reality based on quantitative analysis) and qualitative methods (to interpret the reality based on qualitative analysis). Similarly, epistemology is described as the assumptions concerned with the nature of knowledge and the methods of actions used to acquire such knowledge (Iivari et al., 1998). The two main epistemological stances, positivism and interpretivism, are considered to be the most appropriate for this study, as explained in the previous section.

4.5. Research Design

A research design defines the procedures and methods adopted in a research study (Bryman, 2015). The selection of methods, as identified by Yin (2003), depends on the question being investigated, the control an agent has over behavioural situations, and whether the attention is on contemporary or historical phenomena. Saunders et al.'s (2011) research onion illustrates various research methodologies that can be employed based on the nature of the research, which may include grounded theory, case study, surveys etc. This study focuses on constructing theory, by integrating four major theories (SAM, UTAUT, OLT, and TPB) and integrating them with socio-cultural elements in the context

of S-Commerce adoption and use. These can be related to inductive reasoning (derivation of general principles from specific observations) (Faggiolani, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 2011). In addition, this study also focuses on investigating the impact of various constructs on consumers' decision-making processes and purchase intentions, which have to be deduced from the data collected and analysed, reflecting deductive reasoning (derivation of specific conclusion from general principles) (Bryman, 2015).

4.6. Qualitative and Quantitative Research

This research study adopts mixed methods including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the underlying reasons and motivations in relation to a phenomenon. This approach focuses on describing the meaning, and discovering the various aspects related to a phenomenon using communicative approaches and observations (Anderson, 2009). As this study focuses on investigating the relationship between various constructs including social, cultural, design, behavioural and psychological aspects, there is a need for detailed analysis in order to understand what type of relationship exists between the constructs, why this relationship exists, and how these constructs would impact the decision making and purchasing intentions of consumers on UCSCPs. Qualitative methods are therefore considered to be appropriate in this context. However, there are a few aspects that need to be considered in qualitative research. Although sample size is not a concern, it is essential that an informal and rich sample is recruited to the study (Cresswell, 2013). Techniques such as focus groups, and unstructured/structured/semi-structured interviews can be used for collecting the data. In addition, non-statistical methods are used for analysing the data.

Quantitative research, in contrast, focuses on generalising the results from a sample to the population of interest by using quantitative data analysis. This method is used for measuring the incidence of various perceptions and opinions of a chosen sample and it establishes relationships and causation by using statistical techniques (Anderson, 2009). The questions in quantitative research focuses on questions of 'how many?' or it reflects the strength of the association between variables. As this research study focuses on examining the relationship between various constructs on S-Commerce platforms, and their impact on decision making and purchase intentions (analysed by statistical techniques), adopting quantitative methods is considered to be appropriate. However, there are a few aspects that need to be considered in quantitative research, such as having a large sample

(>100) in the data collection; adopting structured techniques such as questionnaires, on-street or telephone interviews; and using statistical techniques for data analysis (Cresswell, 2013).

Quantitative findings are typically conclusive and they focus on generalisation, leading to prediction, explanation, and understanding. On the other hand, qualitative findings are exploratory and investigative, leading to uniqueness, patterns, and theories (Anderson, 2009). While both methods can achieve results related to the research questions, it is also important to identify how these two methods are integrated in to the research study. A mixed-methods approach presupposes that both qualitative and quantitative methods are combined or exist separately as design factors (Sandelowski, 2000). Each method may be employed consecutively, concomitantly, continuously, or fit together (Sandelowski 2000; Cresswell 2013). Furthermore, Sandelowski (2000) posits that several mixed-method design models combine timing, significance, and data mingling. Contingent upon an underlying reasoning, there may be evident standards that are most suitable for a particular study design.

One such technique refers to the idea of using multiple sources of data or multiple triangulation approaches to analysing the data, in order to enhance the credibility of a research study. This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of interest, provides multiple lines of sight and multiple contexts to enrich the understanding of the research questions (Salkind, 2010). This is one of the techniques that affords qualitative and quantitative methods an equal weight in a study. Considering its relevance to the nature of this research, which employs both quantitative and qualitative methods with equal emphasis, the triangulation approach is deemed to be appropriate for combining the qualitative and quantitative results at the analysis and discussion stage in this study. The qualitative research in this study focuses on understanding the relationship and patterns between the constructs, including the social, cultural, behavioural, and psychological aspects, and the quantitative results are used for measuring the impact of various constructs on decision making and purchase intentions on UCSCPs. The study employs statistical and scientific techniques for analyzing the data collected from Ireland and Saudi Arabia.

4.7. Data Collection

An online questionnaire-based survey and focus group discussions are used for collecting the data. Survey questionnaires are used in this study for collecting the users' perceptions about the influence of various constructs on their decision-making process, trust establishment, and purchase intentions on UCSCPs. The purpose of the surveys is to collect quantitative data, which can be analysed to derive concluding remarks about the relationships between the constructs and to analyse their impact. In addition, the survey method has benefits and relevance to the nature of this research. It is a cost-effective method and has the ability to reach a greater number of respondents (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002). In addition, it ensures the scalability and comparability of the results, using quantitative data to analyse the differences between two groups (in this research context: Ireland and Saudi Arabia), and provides practical and justifiable results (Lefever et al., 2007). By ensuring the respondents' anonymity, ethical practices can be adopted in the survey instrument. Considering these features, the online survey questionnaire was considered to be the most appropriate instrument for collecting quantitative data in this research study.

Qualitative interviews, on the other hand, collect qualitative data, which can be used to interpret the participants' perceptions and opinions in detail. They can take various forms: structured (fixed set of questions: formal), semi-structured (a few predefined questions, with an option to formulate instant questions based on the discussion during the interviews: semi-formal), and unstructured interviews (no previously defined questions: informal) (Blee & Taylor, 2002). Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were considered to be an effective and appropriate approach in this study, as they can incorporate predefined questions, which are essential for collecting the critical data related to the study, and questions formulated during the interviews, which can allow researchers to collect other relevant data for a more detailed analysis of the phenomenon (Segal et al., 2006). For instance, in the analysis of the impact of the multi-language feature on users' decision making, quantitative data may only reveal whether it has any impact or not, whereas qualitative data can be used to identify the impact in detail, such as why it has a positive/negative impact, thus providing detailed analysis.

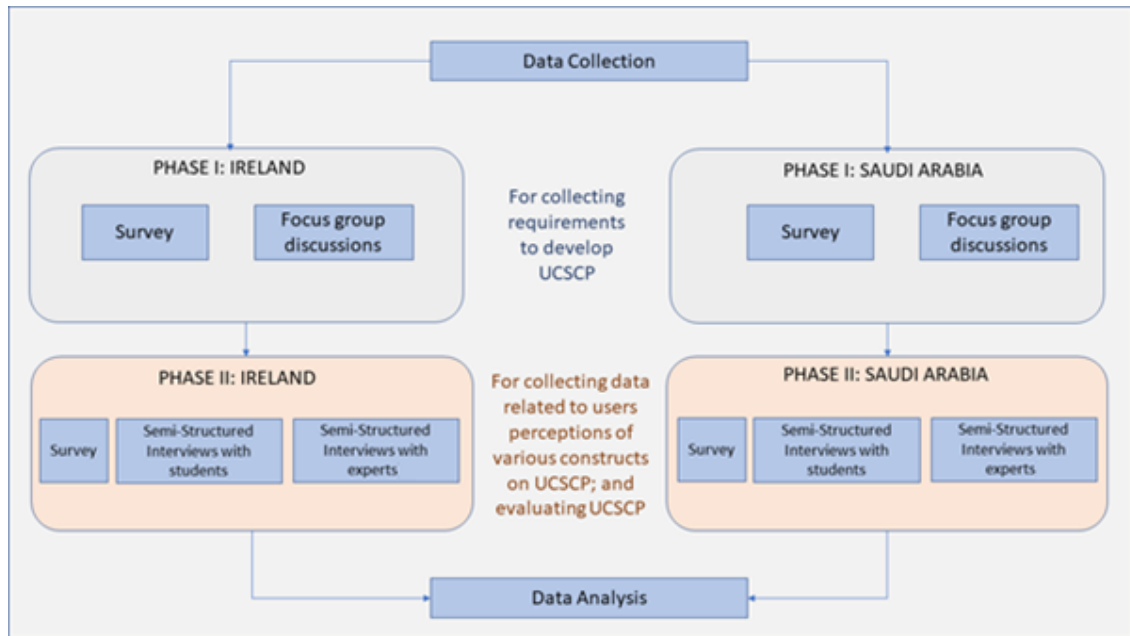


Fig 4.5. Data collection process

Considering their benefits and relevance to the nature of this study, the online survey questionnaire, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews were adopted in this study. These instruments were used in two phases in this study, as shown in Figure 4.5. In the first phase, the online survey-based questionnaire and focus group discussions were used to identify the relevant elements in each layer of the UCSCF (Chapter 2, Figure 2.4), and to collect the requirements according to the interests and needs of Irish and Saudi Arabian users. The requirements for developing a UCSCP (for Ireland and Saudi Arabia) were analysed from the first-phase surveys and focus group discussions conducted in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Accordingly, based on the requirements gathered, two UCSCPs were developed separately, one for Irish and one for Saudi Arabian users. In the second phase, an online survey-based questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used for collecting the data related to the socio-cultural, design, behavioural, and psychological constructs, the relationship between these constructs, and their impact on the trust establishment, decision making, and purchase intentions of Irish and Saudi Arabian users on their respective UCSCP.

4.7.1. Phase I – Data Collection: Survey and Focus group discussions

The online questionnaire-based survey and focus group discussions in phase I were used for collecting users' perceptions about various elements of UCSCP in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. In addition, two rounds of discussions were conducted in Ireland, because the findings from the first round were inconclusive. The timeline for conducting the surveys and focus group discussions is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Timeline of Phase I data collection

Instruments	Time Period
Online Survey in Saudi Arabia	1-9-2018 to 29-9-2018
Focus group discussions in Saudi Arabia	1-9-2018 to 14-10-2018
Online Survey in Ireland	1-10-2018 to 29-10-2018
Focus group discussionsin Ireland	1-10-2018 to 14-10-2018

4.7.1.1. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for collecting the users' perceptions about elements to be embedded in the UCSCP was based on the UCSCF, developed in this study. The questionnaire contained 29 items, which were divided into user-centric, design, social, and cultural elements (Appendix A). The user-centric aspects used multiple-choice options for measuring user behaviour such as internet usage and online purchase behaviour. Nine items were included in this section. Similarly, nine design factors were included and these were measured using Likert scale ratings (on a scale of 5) in relation to their importance on S-Commerce platforms. These nine factors were mobility, ubiquity, personalisation, localisation, interactivity, content, security and privacy, reliability, and usability, derived from various studies (Hwang et al., 2014; Pousttchi et al., 2003; Tiwari et al., 2011; Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002; Lai, 2010). Similarly, six social elements were included in the questionnaire – reviews, ratings, referrals, feedback, support using third-party applications, and in-built support on the S-Commerce platform, identified from various studies (Hajli, 2013; Hajli et al., 2013; Hajli, 2014; Hajli et al., 2014; Al-Dwairi, 2017). In addition, five items related to cultural aspects were included in the questionnaire – images, videos, price consciousness, multi-language support, and product localisation – derived from various studies (Wang & Yu, 2017; Hajli, 2013; Lee et al., 2017; Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002). The item 'themes', reflecting the visual appeal of S-Commerce platforms through elements such as text formats, and design aspects like colour, symbols etc.

according to the local culture were added to the cultural aspects for evaluation. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic using two professional translators and it was assessed using a pilot study (section 4.7.1.2) in Saudi Arabia.

The focus group discussion questions, as shown in Appendix A, contained 20 items (nine items related to design elements; six items related to social elements; and five items related to cultural elements) and the participants were asked about the relevance and importance of these elements in the UCSCP and whether they identified any relationships between these elements. The focus group discussion in Saudi Arabia were conducted in Arabic and they were voice recorded. The recordings were later transcribed into English using two professional translators.

4.7.1.2. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with Commerce and Marketing students at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, UBT University Saudi Arabia, and with students at DCU, Ireland.

The students in Saudi Arabia are divided in to two groups of undergraduate and graduates (five students in each group) for conducting a pilot study to determine if they were able to understand the concepts presented in the survey (printed on paper). In addition, a separate session was conducted to educate the students about the purpose of the study along with the research aim and objectives. The students in each group were asked to study and answer the questions. Later, students from two groups were interviewed about the understandability of the questionnaire. The responses from the students in two groups were analyzed in order to determine how they perceived the quality of questions and how they understood them. The students were asked to explain each construct and what they understood by it in reflection to S-Commerce platform.

The responses for different elements expressed by the students in the pilot groups mostly matched with the meaning of elements. However, there are few instances where the meaning to the elements was not known. In order to overcome this drawback, the meanings of each element and their role in social networking is explained in final questionnaire in a separate sheet (Appendix A). In addition, all the participants stated that these elements are interrelated and can be linked to the consumers in decision making process. The final

survey questionnaire was then loaded to Google survey platform, and a survey link was generated and forwarded to the participants through email.

Similarly, pilot study for interviews in Ireland was conducted with two groups of undergraduate and graduates (four students in each group) at DCU university, Ireland, where most of the responses were identified to satisfactory and reflected good understanding levels of the interviewees.

4.7.1.3. Participant Selection

Previous studies (Che et al., 2017; Sharma & Crossler, 2014; Han & Kim, 2016) have identified that social networking, E-Commerce, and S-Commerce are mostly accessed by young individuals. Accordingly, various studies (Esmaeli et al., 2015; Hajli, 2012a; Noh et al., 2013) have used students as the participants in their studies. In addition, the researcher had to be able to contact the participants after a long gap (> 6 months/ 1 year), in order to include them in the survey on the developed UCSCP in the phase II survey. Furthermore, in Europe, 78% of the internet users aged 16-24 years, shopped online in 2020, compared to 57% of internet users aged above 55 years (Eurostat, 2020). Moreover, about 60% of the online buyers in the in 2020 are aged less than 44 years (Coppola, 2020). Furthermore, studies (Comegys and Brennan, 2003; Gupta et al., 2008; Ahmed and Aguilar, 2013; Singh et al., 2017); and university students represent a significant part of the online buying consumers and a long-term potential market (Delafronz et al., 2009). Considering these aspects, students from the Commerce and Marketing group of students at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University and UBT University, Saudi Arabia, and DCU University, Ireland, were selected for the study.

4.7.1.4. Sampling

Convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which people are sampled simply because they are "convenient" sources of data for researchers (Lavrakas, 2008). A convenience sampling with a reasonable split between male and female was adopted, and those students with a level of education, who can understand the concepts of S-Commerce and identify the differences between platforms in this study were selected. Therefore, convenience sampling was identified to be most appropriate for the study. Accordingly, 33 students from Commerce and Marketing group at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman and UBT University, Saudi Arabia participated in the survey; and five students were included

in the focus group discussion in Saudi Arabia. In addition, 30 students from Business and Marketing group at DCU participated in survey; and six students from Business and Marketing group at DCU university, Ireland were included in two rounds of focus group discussions in Ireland, where first discussions focused on identifying the importance of psychological fields, culture and lifestyle elements, information quality and representation on UCSCP; and second round of discussions focused on importance of design, social, and cultural elements on UCSCP.

4.7.2. Phase II - Data Collection: Survey & Semi-structured interviews

The online questionnaire-based survey and semi-structured interviews in phase II were used for collecting the data related to the impact of the social, design, cultural, behavioural and psychological factors on the trust, decision making, and purchase intentions of participants in Ireland and Saudi Arabia in relation to their UCSCPs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and experts in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. The details of the students and experts are provided in Table 7.2 and 7.3 respectively. Interviews with experts were included in order to evaluate the platform and assess the relationships between the constructs for a more detailed and reliable analysis. The timeline for conducting the surveys and semi-structured interviews is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Timeline of Phase II data collection

Instruments	Time Period
Online survey in Saudi Arabia	1-9-2019 to 29-9-2019
Semi-structured interviews with students in Saudi Arabia	1-9-2019 to 14-10-2019
Semi-structured interviews with experts in Saudi Arabia	10-9-2019 to 29-9-2019
Online survey in Ireland	1-11-2019 to 29-11-2019
Semi-structured interviews with students in Ireland	1-11-2019 to 29-11-2019
Semi-structured interviews with experts in Ireland	1-11-2019 to 15-11-2019

4.7.2.1. Questionnaire Design

The survey questionnaire for phase II contained 15 items that were related to the various constructs considered in this study and their impact. The questionnaire included multiple-choice and rating-scale-related questions as shown in Appendix B (Saudi Arabia and Ireland). Ten factors were considered: ratings, reviews, referrals, photos and videos, cultural integration, themes, multi-language feature, price consciousness, localization, and celebrity branding, in order to measure their impact on consumer behaviour, the psychological fields (motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability), trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. In addition, the impact of celebrity branding on decision making and purchase intentions was assessed. The Irish and Saudi Arabian questionnaires were similar, except for one item: celebrity branding. The examples used in the questions differed for Ireland and Saudi Arabia, so that they were relevant to participants in the respective countries.

Similarly, the semi-structured interview questions for the students and experts included 15 items. The interviewees were asked to provide their opinions about ratings, reviews, referrals, photos and videos, cultural integration, the multi-language feature, price consciousness, and themes, and their impact on consumer behaviour, the psychological fields (motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability), trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. A copy of the interview questionnaire is presented in Appendix B. The interviews in Saudi Arabia were conducted in Arabic and they were voice recorded. The recordings were later transcribed into English using two professional translators.

4.7.2.2. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with twelve Commerce and Marketing students at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Saudi Arabia; ; and twelve Commerce and Marketing group students at DCU, Ireland. The results reflected good reliability and internal consistency as the Cronbach alpha was measured to be >0.70 (0.81 in Ireland; 0.83 in Saudi Arabia) (Bolarinwa, 2016). Face validity is established when a researcher or an expert in the area of the research concludes that the questionnaire (instrument) measures the characteristic or trait of interest (De Lange et al., 2020; Namdar Khatibani et al., 2020). As the researcher derived the items in the questionnaire from an extensive literature review, which was systematically organised under various categories, the participants' opinions in

relation to the questionnaire items reflected good face validity. In addition, two experts from Ireland and Saudi Arabia (E-Marketing manager: SA1 and Commerce lecturer: SA2, E-Marketing manager: IR2 and E-sales manager: IR5, in Chapter 7, Table 7.2) measured the readability, clarity and comprehensiveness of the interview questionnaire and reported good scale-level content validity indices (S-CVI) (0.83 in Ireland and 0.81 in Saudi Arabia). Values greater than 0.78 reflect a significant level of inclusion of the items in the questionnaire (Beyera et al., 2020). In addition, construct validity can be identified from the factorial validity of all the constructs, which was satisfactory (>0.5) for all items. Thus, the final questionnaire was uploaded on the Google Surveys platform, and the survey link was generated for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia.

4.7.2.3. Participant Selection

As explained in section 4.7.1.3, young students were the main participants, as they are mostly associated with the use of social networking and S-Commerce platforms. However, for the phase II surveys, a greater number of student participants were targeted and therefore a sampling technique was applied.

4.7.2.4. Sampling

As mentioned in section 4.7.1.4, convenience sampling was adopted in this study. In addition, for the Phase II surveys, random sampling was utilised, where each participant has an equal probability of being chosen; this provides an unbiased representation of the total population (Saunders et al., 2011). Accordingly, 56 undergraduates, 45 graduates, and one PhD student were randomly selected at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, and UBT University, Saudi Arabia. The survey link was forwarded to them through email and SMSs. Similarly, 39 undergraduate and 57 graduate students were randomly selected at DCU University, Ireland, and the survey link was emailed to them. In addition, the snowball sampling technique was adopted, and the emails and SMSs sent to the participants contained a note requesting them to forward the email or SMS to their colleagues (Saunders et al., 2011). As a result of using this technique, the total number of participants in the survey increased. Accordingly, a total sample size of 348 and 334 participants was achieved in Saudi Arabia and Ireland, respectively. After removing the incomplete responses, final samples of 332 and 301 were achieved for Saudi Arabia and Ireland, respectively.

In the next step, eight students in Saudi Arabia (four males and four females) were randomly selected from the commerce and marketing stream at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, and UBT University. Similarly, ten students in Ireland (five males and five females) were selected at DCU University, Ireland. In addition, experts related to the marketing and commerce streams working in different institutions were included – five from Ireland and four from Saudi Arabia (as shown in Chapter 7, Table 7.3).

4.8. Data Analysis

As there were very few participants in the Phase I survey and interviews, descriptive analysis was used as this can be effective for grouping the data into various sets of requirements for developing the UCSCP. However, for the analysis of the data collected in the Phase II surveys and interviews, various data analysis techniques were used.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data (semi-structured interviews) using NVivo, version 12. NVivo supports the analysis of qualitative data by effectively mapping the pattern of key words and ideas, classifying key words and ideas, grouping key words, themes and sub themes, and organising the thematic representation of the data (Dollah et al., 2017). It was therefore considered to be appropriate for qualitative data analysis in this study. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews in Ireland were conducted in English and the in Saudi Arabia they were conducted in Arabic. The focus group and semi-structured interview recordings in Saudi Arabia were initially transcribed into English using two professional translators, and the transcripts were later reviewed by the researcher. Slight changes in text were made by the researcher to best reflect the interviewees' opinions in English. The translated transcripts were used along with the transcripts from the Irish interviewees. The transcripts for the focus group and semi-structured interviews were separately reviewed in order to identify the relevant and important information related to UCSCP features and to assess the impact of the variables on trust, decision making, purchase intentions etc. using the colour-coding option on NVivo. Based on the coding, nine themes were identified: engagement, motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability, experience, trust, decision making, and purchase intention. The data were analysed and discussed in relevance to these themes.

This study used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for data analysis (Phase II survey data) as it has many advantages over other methods (Gefen & Straub, 2005). For example,

SEM supports multiple regression, path analysis, and factor analysis for analysing the reliability and validity of a research outcome from different perspectives. Partial Least Squares (PLS) methods were selected in this approach, as they have advantages over other methods such as LISREL. In addition, PLS is considered to be a good method for studies with a small sample size (Gefen & Straub, 2000). As this study had 332 Saudi Arabian participants and 301 Irish participants in Phase II survey, it was considered to be a suitable method. The minimum sample size in PLS-SEM should be 10 times the number of items or constructs in the research model (Gefen & Straub, 2000; Chin, 1998). In the proposed model, there are 23 constructs, and therefore a sample size of 301–332 is more than adequate for validating the model for the Saudi Arabian and Irish platforms, using a proper PLS process. The PLS method is also considered to be a good method for exploratory study, testing a new model or theory (Gefen & Straub, 2000; Chin, 1998). As this study considers the confirmation of a new theoretical model, it is exploratory work and PLS-SEM is appropriate for testing the proposed model. The parameters of the model (item loading on constructs) are estimated by combining factor analysis with multiple linear regressions, together with the structural model (regression paths) by minimising residual variance (Gefen & Straub, 2000). It is important to test discriminant validity and convergent scales when testing a new model, which can also be achieved by PLS. "Convergent validity is adequate when constructs have an Average Variance Extracted of at least 0.5" (Wixom & Watson, 2001, p.28). Accordingly, the theoretical framework is validated and updated in Chapter 6.

4.9. Ethical Compliance

The researcher gained approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (REC) before the research was conducted. According to Neuman (2000), data from other sources are often confidential, therefore their use can give rise to certain legal and ethical issues. Ethical approval was granted by DCU University, Ireland, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, and UBT University, Saudi Arabia, as shown in Appendix C. In addition, all of the following ethical guidelines were adhered to in the process of conducting the research study:

- All external sources of information were referenced and cited, without allowing scope for plagiarism.
- All of the participants in the survey and interviews were informed about the purpose of the study, and their informed consent to participate was received before starting

the survey (using a checkbox for their acceptance), and interviews (signed informed consent form).

- All of the participants were assured of their anonymity status and privacy, and the security of their personal data.

4.10. Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the methodological stances adopted in this research to address the research questions outlined in Chapter One. The research strategy (Figure 4.2) and framework (Figure 4.1) were discussed, reflecting the philosophical paradigm considered in this study, which used both positivist and interpretivist epistemologies. In addition, the research design, which adopted both inductive and deductive reasoning by employing a mixed-methods approach, was discussed and justified in relation to the nature of the research conducted in this study. Accordingly, the qualitative and quantitative research techniques adopted in this study were justified in accordance with the research instruments used in this study. The data collection procedures using surveys, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were discussed in section 4.7. The various techniques used for analysing the quantitative and qualitative data were presented and their relevance to this study was demonstrated

Chapter 5: Design and development of UCSCP

This chapter discusses the survey and focus group discussions (conducted for gathering requirements) results for analyzing the requirements for design of UCSCP and explains the process of development and the technologies used in the process of development. Figure 5.1. presents an overview of the chapter outline.

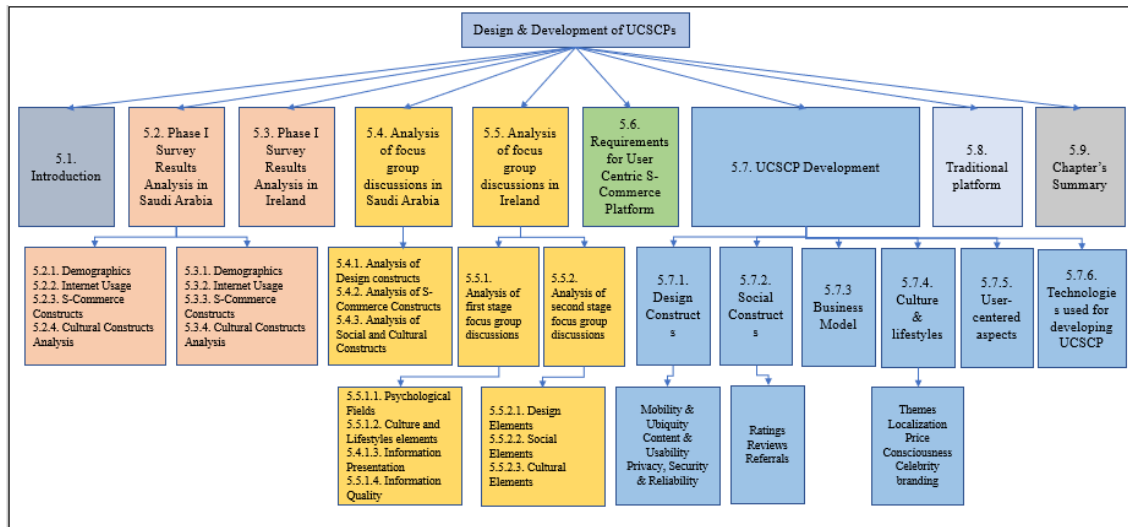


Fig 5.1. Chapter outline

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the Phase I survey and focus group discussions (conducted to gather requirements) in order to determine the requirements for the design of the UCSCP. It explains the process of the platform development and the technologies used in the process of development.

5.2. Phase I Survey Results Analysis in Saudi Arabia

5.2.1. Demographics

Thirty-three students participated in the survey, 18 females and 15 males. All of the participants were students from the Commerce and Marketing group at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University and UBT University, Saudi Arabia. Twenty-six participants belonged to the age group 20–30 years and seven belonged to the age group 31–40 years. Twenty-two out of the 33 participants were completed master's level education, five students completed diploma; and another six completed undergraduate education.

5.2.2. Internet usage

Twenty-nine participants used internet for more than 6 hours a day, and other four participants used internet for four to six hours a day. The internet usage among the participants was relatively high, and the internet was mostly used by the participants for emails, social networking, online shopping and entertainment purposes, as shown in Figure 5.2.

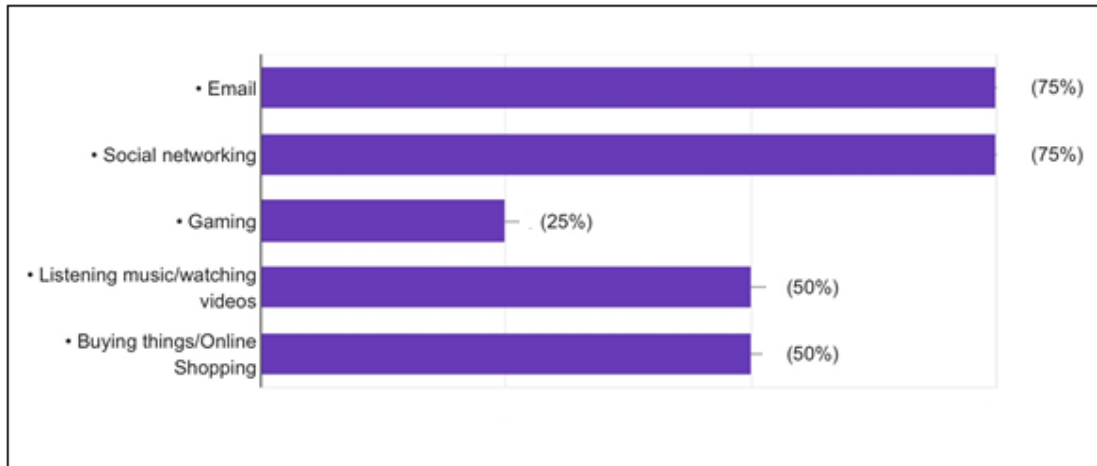


Fig 5.2. Internet usage among survey participants

5.2.3. Design constructs

The perceived importance of different S-Commerce constructs was indicated by the participants on a five-point scale rating (1 = Not Very Important; 2 = Important; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Very Important; 5 = Extremely Important). The combined ratings of 4 and 5 for various design constructs are shown in Figure 5.3.

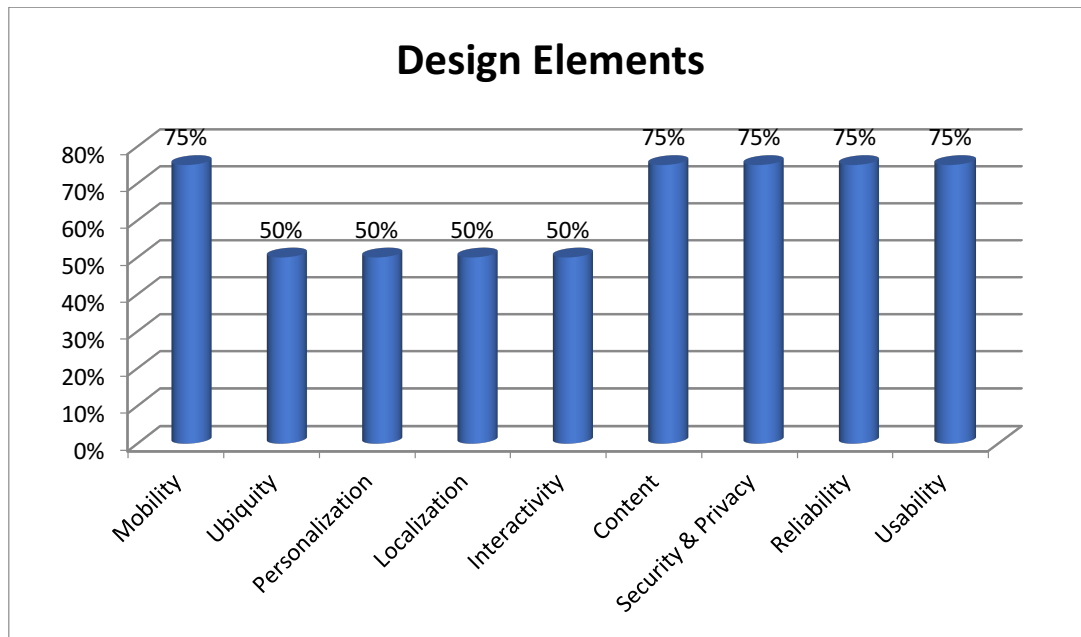


Fig 5.3. Importance of design elements in S-Commerce platform

All of the design elements were considered to be very important or extremely important by the majority of the participants. Greater importance was given to mobility, content, security and privacy, reliability, and usability. The importance of these design elements on S-Commerce platforms has been highlighted in various studies. Mobility and ubiquity are important factors that reflect the flexibility and efficiency of platforms (Hwang et al., 2014; Pousttchi et al., 2003), as are personalisation, localisation, and interactivity (Tiwari et al., 2011; Lai, 2010; Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Lu et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2002). They all enhance the functionality and usability of S-Commerce platforms. Personalisation allows users to customise a platform according to their preferences, while localisation incorporates customised products and services based on the users' location. Similarly, interactivity allows users to update or modify the content and appearance in real time. Content is one of the major elements of S-Commerce platforms (Liang et al., 2011; Hajli, 2015; Hopkins, 2017) as it reflects the ability and efficiency of the platform and builds trust among users. Similarly, security and privacy (Hajli, 2013b; Huang & Benyoucef, 2017), reliability (Sura & Ahn, 2017), and usability (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017) have been identified as important design elements by various studies.

5.2.4. S-Commerce Constructs

Similarly, the S-Commerce features such as ratings, reviews etc. were analyzed on the five-point rating scale (1: Not Very Important; 2: Important; 3: Neutral; 4: Very Important; 5: Extremely Important). The combined ratings of (4 & 5) for various S-Commerce constructs are shown in the Figure 5.4.

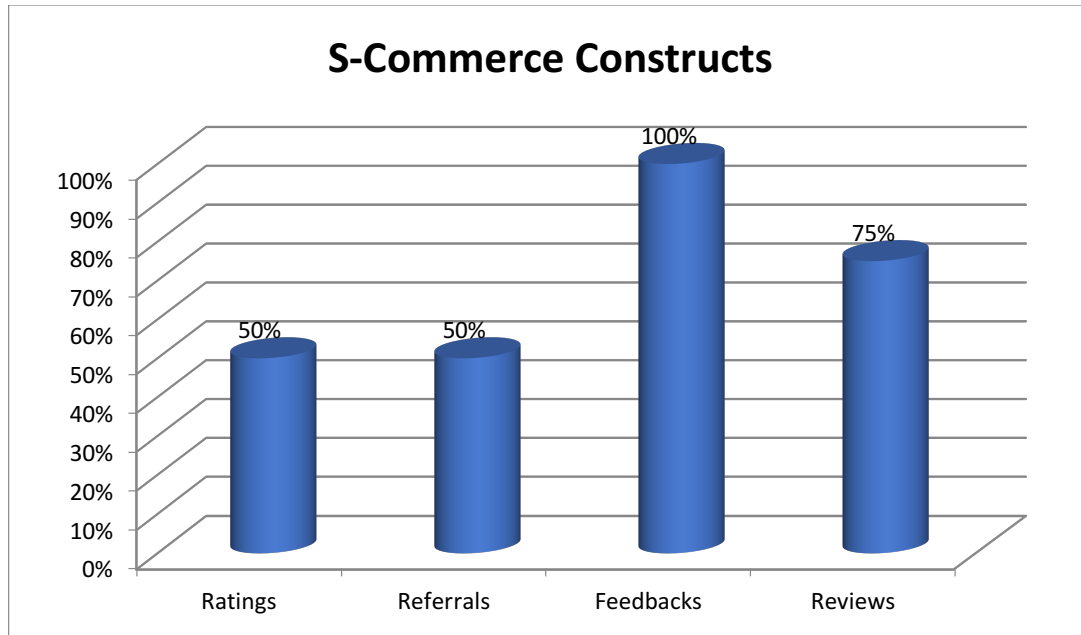


Fig 5.4. Importance of S-Commerce Constructs in S-Commerce platform

All the constructs were given a rating of very or extremely important; however, feedbacks and reviews are the two constructs which are highly rated. These constructs were analyzed in various studies and were found to be very useful in increasing the participants engagement on S-Commerce platforms. Ratings on the S-Commerce platform were found to be effective in improving the reliability and trust on the platform in various studies (Hajli, 2013a; Chen et al., 2017b; Hajli, 2014). Similarly, referrals (Kim & Park, 2013; Clancy, 2013) were found to be associated with trust; feedbacks and reviews improves the users understanding of various products and services and free content addition from the users. This would help in decision making process (Ambler et al., 2011; Clancy, 2013; Wang & Yu, 2017; Hajli, 2013a; Lee et al, 2017). Use of S-Commerce constructs was preferred to be used on the platform (On Site: all the social activities like sharing, liking, reviews, rating, feedback, chat rooms etc. are provided on the company's website or application) by 50%;

and only 25% preferred third party platform (Off Site: all the S-Commerce activities happen outside the company's website).

5.2.5. Cultural Constructs Analysis

The constructs related to cultural aspects were carefully identified from the literature review which includes multi language support, product localization, and themes (newly proposed feature). The themes would be designed in specific to the culture and lifestyles of the people in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. All the constructs were rated as very and extremely important by majority of the participants as shown in the following figure. Among the cultural aspects, multi-language support and product localization are the two important constructs identified in various studies (Sheik et al., 2017; Alcantara et al., 2017; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2017) which have investigated their impact on the various fields such as trust, decision making etc. A new concept, **Themes** are being introduced on to the platform, which is used for presenting various cultural and regional themes such as Christmas, New Year, or National colors etc. All the participants (100%) liked the idea of introducing themes of increasing the consumer participation and decision making on the S-Commerce platform.

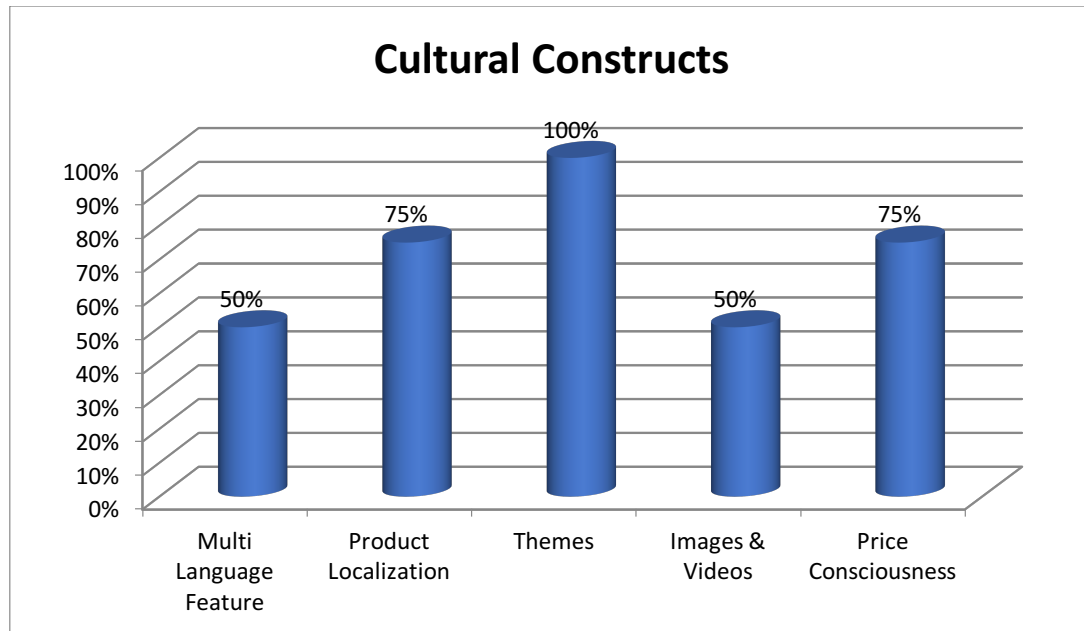


Fig 5.5. Importance of social and cultural Constructs in S-Commerce platform

Survey results have identified all the selected cultural constructs from the S-Commerce platform are effective and efficient for using on the S-Commerce platform as shown in

Figure 5.5. In similar to identified results, images and videos were found to be having normal effect (Laudon & Traver, 2014) on users; however, price consciousness was identified to be an important aspect on S-Commerce platform (Noh et al., 2013; Zhang & Benyoucef 2016). In addition, high-low end technology features which improve experience, interactivity, and engagement of the users on S-Commerce platforms were also identified as an important factor influencing the decision-making process (Kim et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2014a).

5.3. Phase I Survey Results Analysis in Ireland

5.3.1. Demographics

Thirty students participated in the survey, which included seventeen females and thirteen males. All the participants were students from Commerce and Marketing group at DCU University, Ireland. Twenty-six participants belonged to the age group 20 to 30 years; two participants belonged to the age group 31 to 40; and another one is less than 20 years. Twenty-two participants were in their post-graduate education, six students completed diploma; and two students were in their undergraduate education.

5.3.2. Internet Usage

Five students used the internet for two to four hours; another five four to six hours; and another twenty for more than six hours a day. The internet usage among the participants is relatively high. Internet was mostly used by the participants for Emails, social networking, online shopping and entertainment purpose, and least used for gaming purpose as shown in the Figure 5.6.

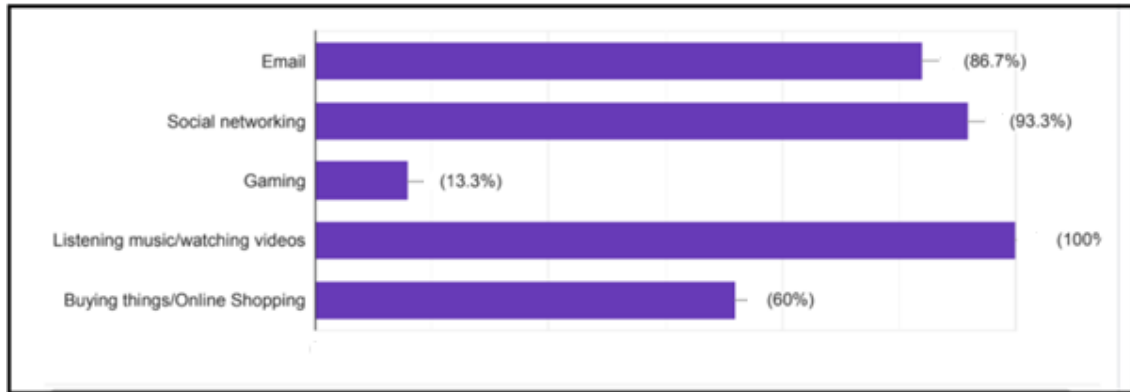


Fig 5.6. Internet usage among survey participants

5.3.3. Design Constructs

The important S-Commerce were identified based on the five-point scale rating (1: Not Very Important; 2: Important; 3: Neutral; 4: Very Important; 5: Extremely Important). The combined ratings of (4 & 5) for various design constructs are shown in Figure 5.7.

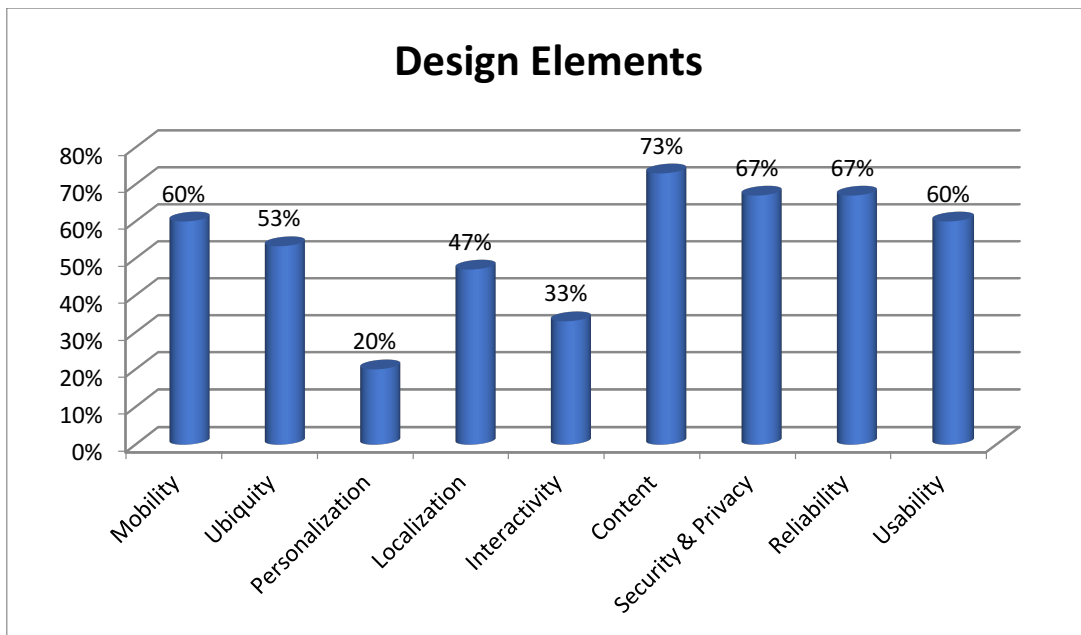


Fig 5.7. Importance of Design elements in S-Commerce platform

All the design elements were considered to be very important or extremely important by the majority of the participants, except personalization, which was considered to be important by only 20%. However, 47% of the participants were neutral about

personalization feature. Greater importance was given to mobility, content, security & privacy, reliability, and usability.

The preferences of design features of Ireland were in similar to Saudi Arabian participants, except the personalization feature, which Saudi Arabian participants preferred more than Ireland participants.

5.3.4. S-Commerce Constructs

Similarly, the S-Commerce features such as ratings, reviews etc. were analyzed on the five-point rating scale (1: Not Very Important; 2: Important; 3: Neutral; 4: Very Important; 5: Extremely Important). The combined ratings of (4 & 5) for various S-Commerce constructs are shown in Figure 5.8.

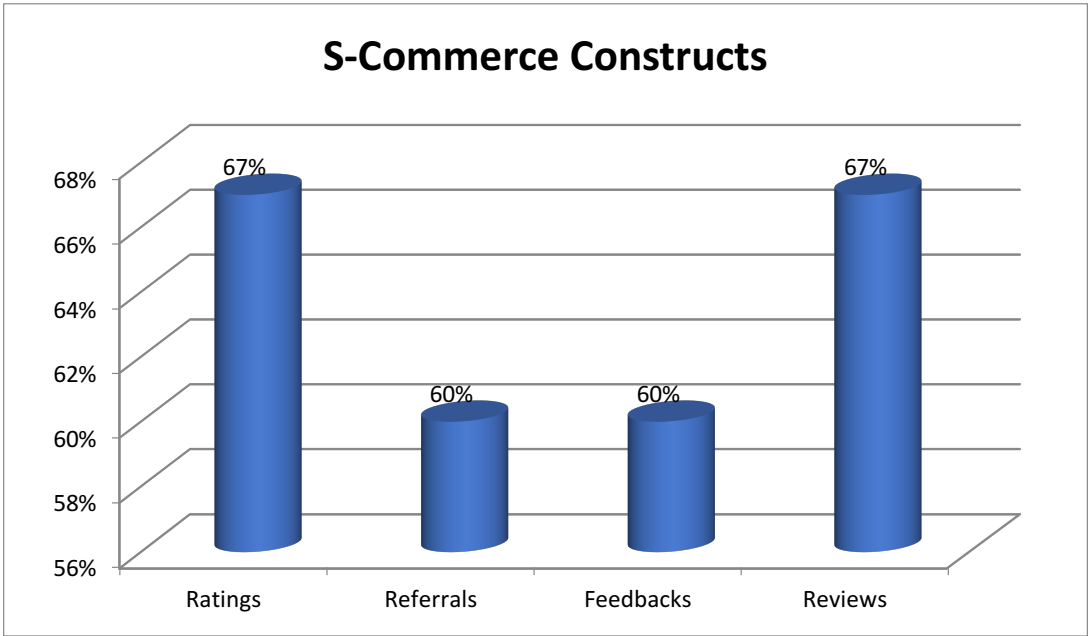


Fig 5.8. Importance of S-Commerce Constructs in S-Commerce platform

Almost all the constructs were rated to be important or extremely important by Ireland participants in similar to Saudi Arabian participants. Feedbacks were preferred by 60% of Ireland participants in contrast to 100% Saudi Arabian participants. In addition, ratings and reviews were the most preferred S-Commerce constructs by Ireland participants.

The constructs related to cultural aspects were carefully identified from the literature review which includes multi language support, product localization, images and videos, price consciousness, and themes (newly proposed feature). The themes would be designed in specific to the culture and lifestyles of the people in Ireland. All the constructs, except

images and videos were rated as very and extremely important by majority if the participants as shown in Figure 5.9.

5.3.5. Cultural Constructs Analysis

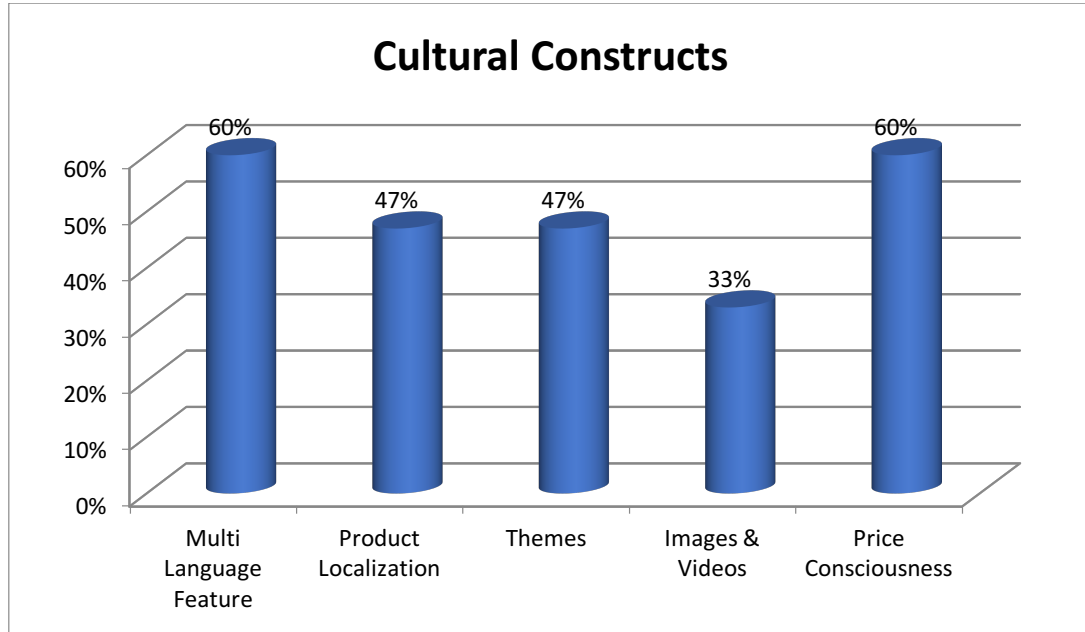


Fig 5.9. Importance of social and cultural Constructs in S-Commerce platform

Price consciousness was preferred by more Saudi Arabian participants (75%) compared to Ireland participants (60%); while images and videos were more preferred by more Saudi Arabian participants (50%) compared to Ireland participants (33%). All Saudi Arabian participants preferred themes while only 47% Ireland preferred themes. Local products were more preferred by Saudi Arabian participants (75%) compared to Ireland participants (47%).

5.4. Analysis of Focus group discussions in Saudi Arabia

Five students from the Commerce and Marketing groups at UBT University, Saudi Arabia, participated in focus group discussions. Their responses are analysed descriptively, as this helps to understand the perceptions and requirements of the users in an effective way. The responses are discussed under the following sections.

5.4.1. Analysis of Design constructs

The participants were asked about the importance of each design element to be included in the S-Commerce platform development (see Figure 5.3). The responses are analysed individually for each element.

With regard to mobility, Participant 5 stated that:

“Mobility enables the use of S-Commerce anywhere on any kind of gadget easily. I feel it is one of the very important elements to be considered in the development of S-Commerce websites or applications”.

Similarly, Participant 1 stated:

“Ubiquity, the ability of the platform to appear everywhere and accessible from wide range of devices...this defines the ability of the application to expand easily”.

These statements reflect the fact that mobility is an important element that defines the flexibility and ease of use of an S-Commerce platform. In reference to personalisation, Participant 2 stated that:

“It is respective to her and who she is and not just to her demographic or age group. It should be what she likes to click and her ability to change the looks and personalise them as she likes”.

Similarly, Participant 3 stated that

“It’s great because users can personalise their demands and companies can predict customers’ future purchases”.

Participant 1’s response focuses on the ability of users to customise the application according to their needs and likes, while Participant 3’s response also reflects the ability of companies to monitor user preferences and predict future purchases by consumers.

With reference to localisation, Participant 4 described it as:

“The ability to identify user’s current location and locate things in their proximity like deals and free deliveries in the area”.

Similarly, in reference to interactivity, Participant 2 stated that:

“It should be on a high standard. Interactivity boosts customers’ awareness and interest in the product or service”.

These statements reflect the importance of localisation as an aspect that customises the deals according to the user’s location, and of interactivity as the means to boost user awareness and their assessment of a product or service. All Participants agreed that localisation and interactivity were important features.

With reference to content, Participant 1 stated that:

“It should be up to date and reliable ... It not only helps the consumers in increasing awareness about new products and services but also enhances the application engagement and trust”.

Similarly, regarding reliability, Participant 3 stated that:

“Services and content should be reliable, the platform shouldn’t crash, searching and making transactions should be reliable”.

The responses from participants 1 and 3 clearly indicate that content and reliability are interrelated as content can impact a user’s perception about the reliability of an application. In addition, the services offered (content processing) must be effective without failures, as this would increase reliability and trust in the application.

Referring to usability, Participant 2 stated that:

“S-Commerce is very easy to use. Mobility and usability are similar ... It is the platform’s accessibility and ease of use by all demographics”.

Usability can be related to mobility, and it is regarded as one of the most important elements of S-Commerce platforms. Regarding the relationships between these elements, Participant 1 stated that:

“They are all interconnected. If one is affected or has a low rating, it affects the overall experience of the service as well”.

All of the design elements were considered to be important by the Participants and all of them are interrelated as one element may affect the other elements in different ways.

5.4.2. Analysis of s-commerce constructs

The elements in this section relate to social presence and networking on S-Commerce platforms. With reference to ratings, Participant 4 stated that:

“User experience should be good. The platform should be easy to use. Customers look at ratings and carefully decide if they should buy the product or service. Ratings should be on a high standard and it’s connected with content”.

The statement reflects the relationship between the ratings factor and the consumer decision-making process. Ratings were considered to be an important element by all the Participants. Regarding referrals, Participant 1 stated that:

“They are a major influencer. Customers trust a product or service if they get good reviews from trustworthy people”.

A customer may refer a platform, product or service if he or she feels satisfied and good about it. Accordingly, referrals are an important way of increasing the customer base as they provide evidence of good services or products. In reference to feedback and reviews, Participant 3 stated that:

“Customers see feedback and want feedback to be good to consider buying a product or service. Customers see reviews and go for the products with positive reviews from trustworthy people and leave products with negative reviews”.

This statement shows that reviews and feedback help consumers to make the decision of whether to buy a product/service or not.

Regarding videos, Participant 2 stated that:

“Videos are very good because the customers can see the product therein and have a better idea. They are very important. Videos are easy way of delivering information and promoting understanding”.

Videos can help to present information more effectively, which leads to better understanding among consumers and may motivate them to buy a product. Therefore, all Participants referred to them as an important element.

Regarding price consciousness, Participant 1 stated that:

“It is demonstration of same product over different companies. Customers can see the discount. It's like Amazon”.

Participant 2 stated:

“Customers are motivated when they have a chance to save. It's a psychological thing”.

The glimpse of savings by consumers is a psychological aspect that can motivate users to purchase a product or service.

Onsite support for social networking was preferred by all Participants. Participant 4 stated that:

“Having products in the feed could be intrusive, though she doesn't mind it as it gives her an opportunity to finish looking at the product she is considering purchasing in depth. Also, Twitter is the quickest way of reaching a company; and yeah, it's good for interaction”.

Participant 2 was asked about integrating social networking applications like Facebook and Twitter into onsite platforms and stated that:

“It depends on their use. There are issues of privacy, but it's a great way to increase awareness”.

Regarding the relationship between the elements, Participant 3 opined that:

“Ratings, referrals and feedback are strongly related. Reviews and videos are reassurance. Customers can reach the companies for additional questions on the social networking sites. But price consciousness is not strongly related to the rest of the elements”.

5.4.3. Analysis of social and cultural constructs

Regarding multi-language support, Participant 1 believed:

“That’s hugely important because of the distant users speaking different languages”. Participant 5 stated that:

“That is very good thing because things are more understandable for customers in their local languages, although it’s difficult to achieve technically”.

All Participants perceived this feature as important for better understanding by users of the products and services. Regarding product localisation, Participant 2 stated that:

“I don’t believe in localisation because it’s impossible in the present age because of globalisation and multiculturalism”.

This opinion reflects the idea that product localisation may not be effective in the current globalised market.

All Participants positively responded to the introduction of themes on S-Commerce platforms. Participant 3 stated that:

“Basic themes should be incorporated culture wise, so customers are conscious of them. Companies should be conscious of users’ cultures”.

Participant 2 stated that:

“I will purchase predominantly when the product or service looks unique from its competitors and this can be made by careful selection of features and colours”.

All Participants therefore agreed that it was worthwhile introducing the concept of themes in S-Commerce platforms.

The findings from the focus group discussion can be compared with the survey results, which reflected the same opinions, as did the studies identified in the analysis of the survey results.

5.5. Analysis of Focus group discussions in Ireland

Focus group discussions were conducted with the students of Business Administration course at the DCU university, Ireland. The discussions were conducted in two stages in which six students participated and the results are analyzed in the following sections.

5.5.1. Analysis of first-stage focus group discussions

The first phase of the focus group discussion focused on the research model, which reflects the different constructs of S-Commerce platforms, and their impact on the decision-making process of the consumers. The results are analysed in the following sections.

5.5.1.1. Psychological Fields

The participants named motivation, perception, learning, and personality as important factors. Participant 6 stated that:

“I think, motivation is the most important aspect that needs to be focused on... for example, why particular platform or website? Why online? Why people want to buy? And how these questions are answered by a company would reflect the approach.

Learning depends, for example, on if it's a new online website, or new products. Whether it is legitimate”.

“Personality... yeah. how people perceive a brand (good or bad), and also how people perceive about a platform”.

Individuals' motivation to use S-Commerce platforms for online purchases, the need for learning in assessing new products or new websites, and personality aspects such as individuals' perception of brands and their interests in particular brands are a few aspects that may influence decision making.

Similarly, in relation to perception and learning, Participant 2 stated that

“For me. Perception. Yeah. There is a risk factor. How we perceive information. We have to be cautious. and yeah ... learning is another factor that can help in trustworthy direction”.

Accordingly, Participant 3 identified learning, motivation and personality as important factors, as they guide buyers. The trustworthiness of products and the website/company etc. were just a few important aspects identified.

5.5.1.2. Culture and lifestyle elements

The participants supported the inclusion of multi-language support, product localisation, and cultural reflection on products and the website. Celebrity endorsement is one new aspect identified during the discussions. The selection of products and the intention to buy them can be influenced by the celebrities promoting them. For example, Participant 2 stated:

“Yeah... people who like to follow her... may be influenced by her clothing and this can become the part of their culture”.

It can be noted here that, apart from the existing cultural norms or trends, new lifestyles can be imposed indirectly on to people through the medium of celebrity endorsement. This reflects the fact that cultural aspects can be altered using proper mechanisms for promoting the brand. Similarly, Participant 4 stated that

“a brand has to know the customers, who are they targeting...?”

Apart from cultural imposition, it is necessary to analyse the local customers or targeted audience for promoting a brand, product or service. In addition, the lifestyles of these local celebrities reflect the culture or trends and this can influence individuals' perceptions of brand, influence the decision-making process, and also inspire them. Female participants were most influenced by local cultures and brands, and especially celebrity lifestyles; however, all of the participants supported the idea of reflecting cultural aspects on the platform.

5.5.1.3. Information Presentation

The presentation of information (hedonic and utilitarian) was found to be influenced by the type of products and the design of the platform. For example, Participant 5 stated that:

“It's kind of depends on what you are buying. Because the phone elements may need to explain aspects such as why...curve...kind of utilitarian. but clothing may don't need”.

While a few products required detailed information, others did not. Therefore, both utilitarian and hedonic types of information were identified as important elements to be considered in developing an S-Commerce platform.

Price consciousness, reviews and ratings were a few of the information constructs preferred by the participants. Participant 1 stated:

“Yeah ... obviously price. It's really important. Obviously, we may not opt if the price is high ... instead prefer to buy outside shop”.

Participant 2 stated:

“Reviews. More important than ratings because they provide more information I would make a decision based on the reviews”.

Videos were not considered to be appealing by most of the participants, while pictures were found to be important.

5.5.1.4. Information Quality

Accuracy in product information, delivery time, and relevance of products to the individuals/ local culture were some of the aspects identified for assessing the quality of the products/website. In this respect, Participant 3 said:

“Accuracy ... for example. clothing, you need to have measurement guide ... Similarly a laptop, should have accurate description of features”.

Participant 1 stated

“Yeah ... in relevance to the product, accurate information is needed”.

5.5.2. Analysis of Second stage of focus group discussions

The second phase of the focus group discussion focused on the importance of different constructs that can be used for developing an effective and efficient S-Commerce platform. The results are analysed in the following sections.

5.5.2.1. Design Elements

Mobility, content, reliability, usability and localisation were found to be the most important elements to be considered when developing the S-Commerce platform. For example, Participant 4 stated that:

“Content should be relevant to consumer and product... if not, consumer may get distracted”.

Similarly, Participant 2 stated that:

“For me its localisation ... because Social Commerce should be classier to local areas, and interactivity ... promotes local products and shops”.

Participant 5 stated:

“For me usability. It’s an experience that drives. So, a good personal experience is important...when using an application”.

The importance of content is analysed with its relevance to the consumers. Personalisation, the ability to personalise products, and its relevance to consumers were highlighted by many participants. The trust factor is related to the platform (website), reliability, ubiquity,

interactivity, and localisation. Reliability was associated with products and information. Localisation and personalisation are interrelated with brand. In addition, localisation was preferred by all the participants for promoting Irish brands.

5.5.2.2. Social Elements

Ratings, reviews, and feedback were the most important constructs identified by the participants. Participant 1 stated that:

“I might not trust a product with bad ratings. Nowadays ... it’s important to get proper feedback before buying”.

Similarly, Participant 3 said:

“Yeah, I kind of believe the product based on the feedback and ratings ... they are helpful. And yeah, feedback, ratings, reviews are important too”.

Elements such as ratings, reviews, and feedback were found to be useful for assessing product features and reliability, and these factors are related with reputation and developing trust.

5.5.2.3. Cultural Elements

Regarding the cultural and lifestyles aspects, a multi-language feature, product localisation, and local customs were confirmed to be important elements. However, there are a few things that need to be considered. For example, Participant 5 stated that:

“Multi-language...yeah, it’s important, but need to consider if it’s durable and at right cost to be included in S-Commerce platform development”.

Participant 3 stated:

“It depends on the country or what market the application is being used”.

Product localisation was also considered to be important by all the participants. Participant 1 stated that:

"Yeah ... well I suppose, I would prefer local products ... try and support them. Where I could”.

The male participant stated that he was not influenced by themes and he focused on the product, its use and trust in the platform. However, all of the female participants stated that they would be influenced by themes on the platforms such as the use of red graphics or chocolates during the Christmas season on the platform. In addition, Participant 1 stated that images and videos are more effective methods for presenting the information, which can send the message clearly about the products and services.

5.6. Requirements for User-Centric S-Commerce Platform

The survey and focus groups analysis have identified some important elements. All the elements that we had considered using in the user-centric framework were thought to be important by all of the participants in both the focus group discussions and survey. Based on the survey and focus group analysis, the elements to be used for the development of the S-Commerce platform were chosen and these are presented in Figure 5.10. The social elements considered for the development of the S-Commerce platform included ratings, reviews, and referrals, the cultural elements included images and videos, and price consciousness, and a new element, celebrity endorsement, was added from the analysis of the focus group discussion and survey results. Similarly, mobility, ubiquity, personalisation, localisation, interactivity, content, privacy, security, reliability, and usability were included in the design constructs. Localisation is considered to be a design construct but it is viewed as a cultural construct in the theoretical model as local products can be related to culture and consumers may be emotionally attached to them. The onsite business model will be considered as the majority of the participants preferred it and rated it for ease of use. A new element, themes, is added, along with other cultural aspects including multi-language support, price consciousness, images and videos, and product localisation.

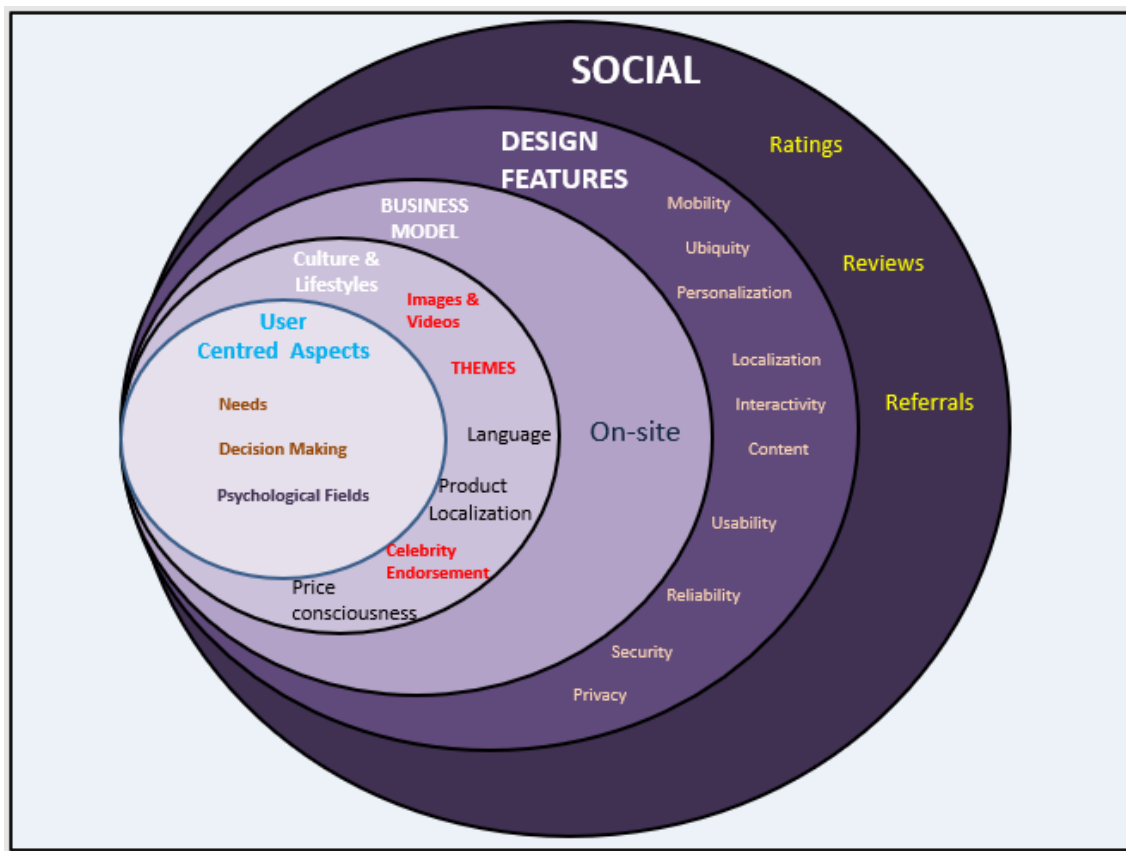


Fig 5.10. Elements in the user-centric framework selected for the design and development

These requirements were chosen as the constructs to be used when constructing the S-Commerce platform (web-based application), accessible on multiple devices. A second S-Commerce platform, without these features, was also developed. Both models were used with the participants in phase 2 interviews and surveys, to allow them to differentiate between the two. The differences in the users' behavioural aspects, such as perceptions, ease of use, attitudes, and most importantly decision making (whether to buy or not), on each platform were then analysed. After the development of the platform, it was evaluated by domain (S-Commerce/E-Commerce) experts and their opinions sought in semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 7) and by S-Commerce users (mostly students), whose opinions were gathered through a survey (see Chapter 6).

5.7. UCSCP Development

As this is a cross-cultural study, two platforms were developed specific to Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The features and specifications of each platform were developed by considering

the feedback from the participants in the phase I focus group discussions and survey. The various aspects considered in the design and development of the UCSCP are explained in the following sections.

5.7.1. Design constructs

The basic design of the UCSCP is inspired by the usability aspects, which integrated cultural and social constructs with the platform. Several features – mobility, ubiquity, personalisation, localisation, interactivity, content, privacy, security, reliability, and usability – were used to design the platform. In order to attract the users' attention, the platform was designed with some interesting features, as explained below.

5.7.1.1. Mobility and ubiquity

The UCSCP has been designed in a way that makes it accessible on mobile devices and also on personal computers using browsers, thus reflecting the mobility features of the platform.

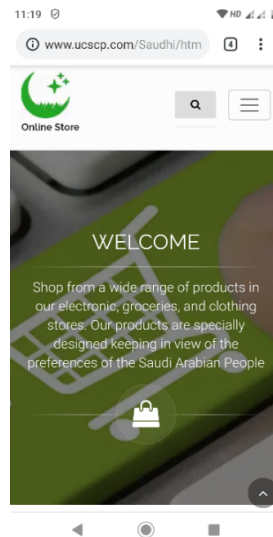


Fig 5.11. Mobile user interface of the UCSCP

The website is hosted on internet servers that can be accessed from anywhere 24/7 in real time, reflecting the ubiquity feature of the platform. In addition, the interface of the platform will automatically change according to the device used. For example, the interface of the platform when accessed on a mobile is shown in Figure 5.11.

5.7.1.2. Content and usability

Content relates to complete and accurate information about a product or service displayed on the platform, which would increase the knowledge of the users about the product or service. The UCSCP has provided detailed, complete and accurate information about each product in order to aid users' decision-making process. For example, the listing for the Apple MacBook, a product featured on the UCSCP, gives complete details about the product, enabling users to decide whether the product meets their requirements (see Figure 5.12).



Fig 5.12. An example of product information on the UCSCP

Information availability is an important aspect that helps users to make a purchase decision. To increase the usability aspect, photos and videos of the products are presented on the platform. Users can easily browse and observe the images of the products, while the videos give additional and complete information. As was observed in the first phase of the requirement-gathering focus group discussion, most of the participants stated that photos and videos would help their decision-making process. These features are incorporated into the UCSCP and for ease of use, users can zoom in on the images, and get a clear picture about the products.

5.7.1.3. Privacy, security and reliability

Privacy and security were given utmost importance in the development of the UCSCP. The information of the users is not disclosed anywhere on the website. For example, in reviews on the platform, neither the participants name nor their photos are displayed, making them

anonymous in order to protect their privacy. Similarly, the UCSCP was developed using trusted technologies and coding, with care being taken to ensure that there were no errors in coding, or viruses or malware. In addition, the servers on which the platform is hosted were confirmed to be providing good security for the website, preventing any misuse. All these features were used to increase the reliability of the platform.

5.7.2. Social constructs

All the constructs that involve social elements or interaction are considered under this construct. These constructs help users in the decision-making process; using various pieces of information they can decide whether to buy a certain product or not. These constructs are explained in the following sections.

5.7.2.1. Ratings

Ratings give information about a product or service, reflecting the overall quality of a product. They are usually scored on a scale of one to five, where a one-star rating indicates very poor, and a five-star rating indicates the very good aspects of a product or service (Aronson et al., 2005). These ratings are given by the consumers who have actually used a certain product or service, based on their experiences with it. By identifying the rating for a particular product or service, the consumers can decide whether or not to buy it (Aronson et al., 2005). Accordingly, all the products on the UCSCP were given ratings, in order to help its users make a decision, as shown in the example (flash drive), in Figure 5.13.

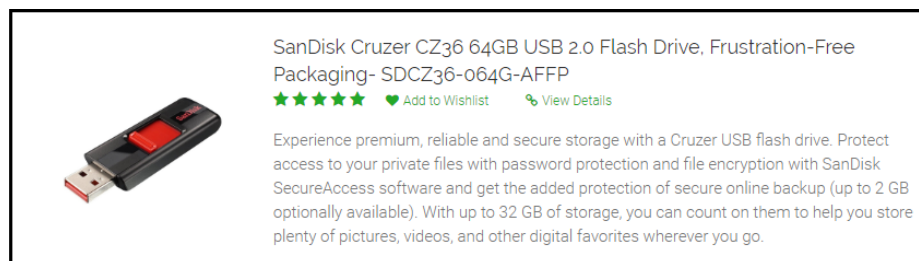


Fig 5.13. Ratings for products on the UCSCP

5.7.2.2. Reviews

Similar to ratings, reviews give detailed information about a product or service, provided by consumers who have already bought and experienced the related product or service. Therefore, using the rating number and the reviews for a product/service can help consumers to achieve Social Proof, which is a psychological phenomenon where people

assume that the actions of others are the right behaviour for a given situation (Aronson et al., 2005). Accordingly, all the products on UCSCP are given reviews. For example, Figure 5.14 shows the reviews for the product ‘spring fever scarf’ displayed on the Irish UCSCP.

The screenshot displays a user interface for product reviews. On the left, three reviews are listed:

- Amazing!** (5 stars, Today, 12:31): "The seller needs to have better check on the product before they ship it out to customers I love the fabric excellent" with a "Reply" button.
- Really Nice!** (5 stars, Today, 10:31): "Great product. I love it" with a "Reply" button.
- Worth to Buy!** (5 stars, Today, 09:31): "Good quality. Fits as expected." with a "Reply" button.

On the right, the "Add your Review" form includes the following fields:

- Name:** A text input field with a user icon on the right.
- Subject:** A text input field with an edit icon on the right.
- Rating:** A dropdown menu currently set to "5".
- Message:** A large text area with an envelope icon on the right.
- Submit:** A purple button at the bottom of the form.

Fig 5.14. Display of reviews on the UCSCP

In addition, the other users can reply to the review placed by a user, and they can also add a new review to the product by entering the fields shown in Figure 5.14. This feature increases the social interaction on the UCSCP.

5.7.2.3. Referrals

Referrals are used for referring a product or platform to other users who may be friends, relatives or colleagues (Hajli, 2013). If a user is happy with the platform or a product, then they can share it with others.

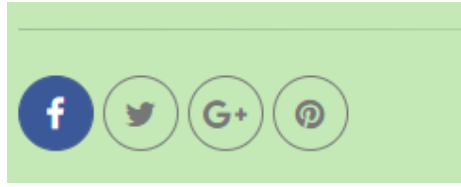


Fig 5.15. Links for referrals on the UCSCP

This approach can be used on S-Commerce platforms to increase the number of consumers who may purchase products/services (Hajli, 2013). Accordingly, the platforms offer options for sharing products or the platform by providing links to Facebook, Twitter, Google +, and Pinterest, as shown in Figure 5.15.

5.7.3. Business Model

In this model, all of the social activities like sharing, liking, reviews, ratings, feedback, chat rooms etc. are provided on the company's website or application. In this process, an S-Commerce layer is added to the existing E-Commerce structure in order to enable S-Commerce operations (Clancy, 2013). If an offsite model was used, such as Facebook or Pinterest, it would not be possible to change the look or feel of the platform. Therefore, the onsite model was selected for developing the UCSCP.

5.7.4. Culture and lifestyles

One of the main objectives of developing the UCSCP was to integrate the cultural and social aspects of the S-Commerce platform with its design. Accordingly, the cultural aspects are reflected across the various design constructs on the platform. For the Saudi Arabian UCSCP and the Irish UCSCP, the design of the themes and the selection of the colours were done by considering the cultural, religious and social conditions of the people in Saudi Arabia and Ireland respectively. Accordingly, the localisation features are reflected in product localisation, and user preferences and personalisation aspects are featured in themes.

5.7.4.1. Themes

This is one of the new features included on the platform, and it changes the look and feel of the web pages. The users can select a number of themes for a better experience while using the platform. Using the themes, users can personalise the look and feel of the platform

according to their interests. These themes were designed by considering various cultural aspects, as detailed below:

- Theory of Colours: As reflected in Goethe's Theory of Colours, colours are considered to be one of the important factors that influence the mind and psychology of a person; they can change the mood or alter the person's experiences and emotions (Goethe & Eastlake, 1982; Birren, 2016). Although various researchers have identified positive relationships between the ambient colours and purchase variables in marketing, research in this area is not extensive, especially with regard to the impact of colours on a website and how they influence purchasing decisions (Lee & Rao, 2010). In addition, a significant positive correlation was identified between the level of trust, colour, and store choice by consumers in the study conducted by Lee and Rao (2010). Therefore, colours can have an impact on the mood of the consumers while they are accessing an S-Commerce platform.

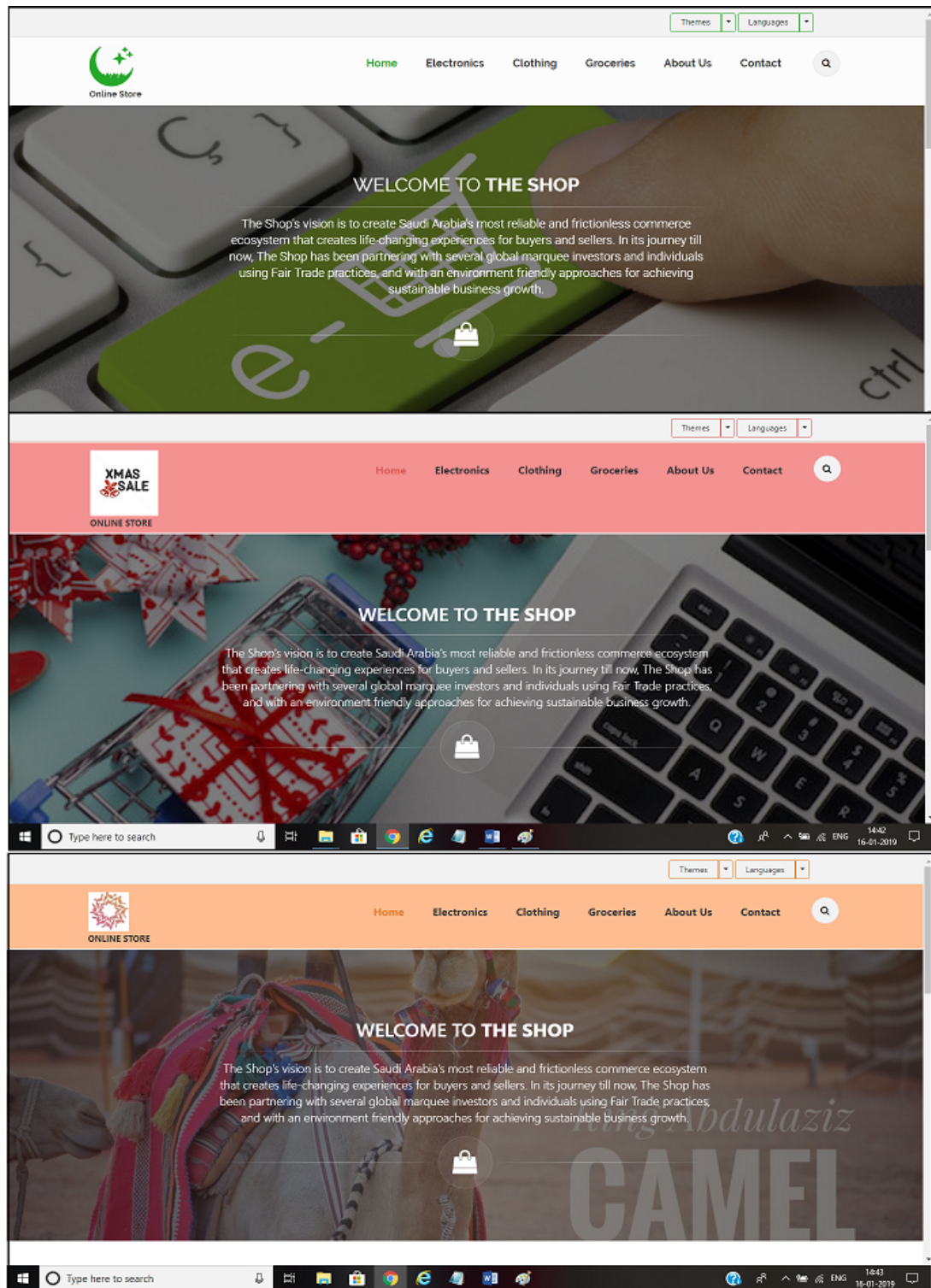


Fig 5.16. Themes for the Saudi Arabian UCSCP

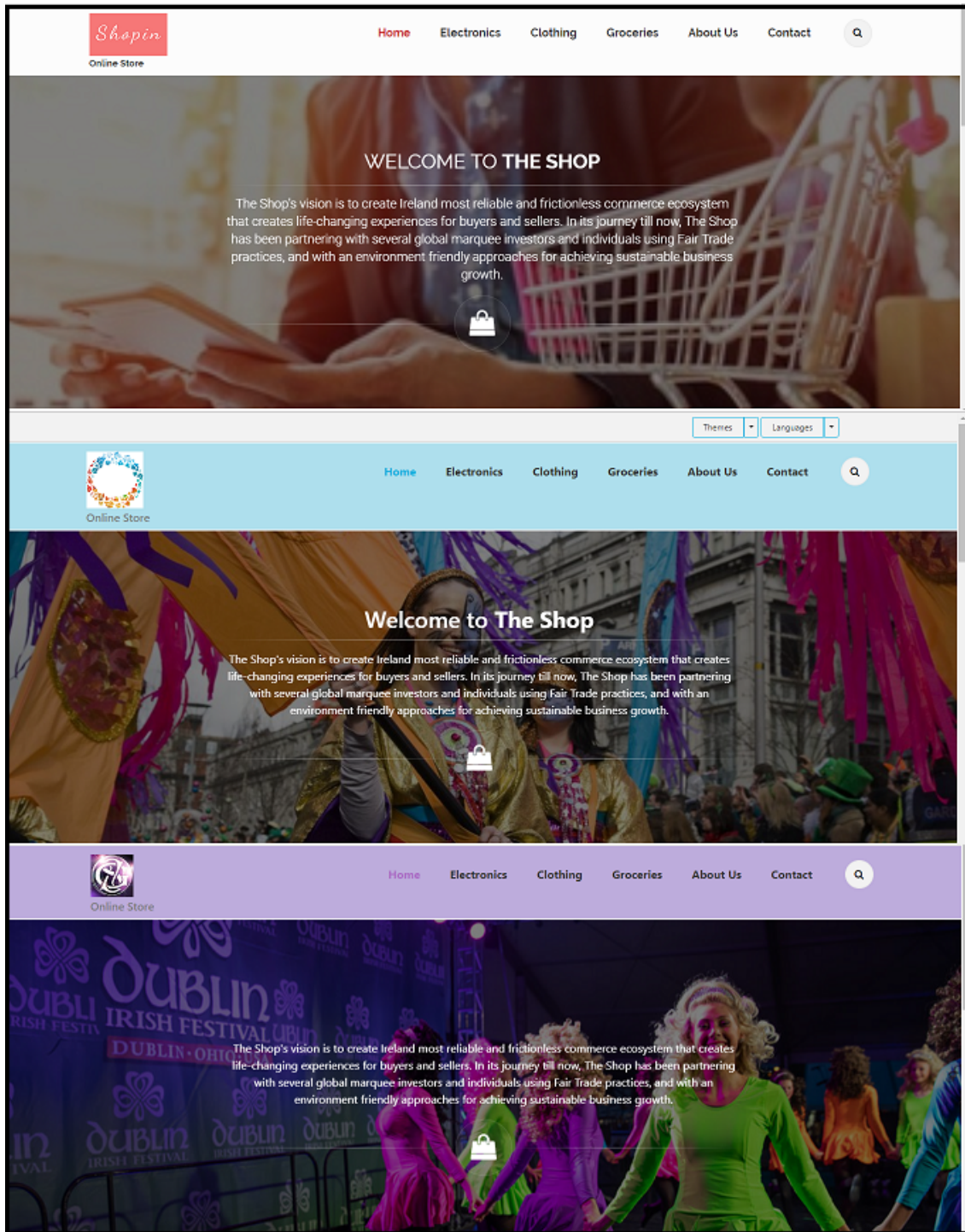


Fig 5.17. Themes for the Irish UCSCP

Colours such as green (desire to quality), pink (kindness), orange (enthusiasm and attention), white (purity, innocence), blue (trust, loyalty, faith), and purple (stability and excitement) are a few of the colours that can be used for gathering attention

(Elliot & Maier, 2013) and altering the mood of the users on S-Commerce platforms. In addition, some colours are rooted in regional cultures; for example, green is favoured in Islam, and therefore also by Saudi Arabian people, who mostly follow Islam (Alkhamisi et al., 2013). Moreover, it can also inspire nationalist feelings, as the country's flag is green in colour. Similarly, colours such as white, blue, and purple are mostly preferred in western countries, and green, pink, white, orange are mostly preferred in Saudi Arabia (Alkhamisi et al., 2013). Accordingly, these colours were incorporated into the platforms for each country – see Figures 5.16 and 5.17.

Appearance and images: Similar to the colours, the images and appearance of the platforms designed for Saudi Arabia and Ireland were selected based on the cultural and social aspects, as shown in Figures 5.16 and 5.17.

5.7.4.2. Localisation

The interface, look and feel of the platform were modified according to the local preferences in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. This approach can be understood from the design of the themes discussed in section 3.6.3 (Chapter 3). In addition, the product localisation feature of the platform reflects the desire to present local products alongside general products. For example, on the Saudi Arabian UCSCP, dates are available in the groceries section, as these are a key product in Saudi Arabia, and they sit alongside other general products such as milk, as shown in Figure 5.18.

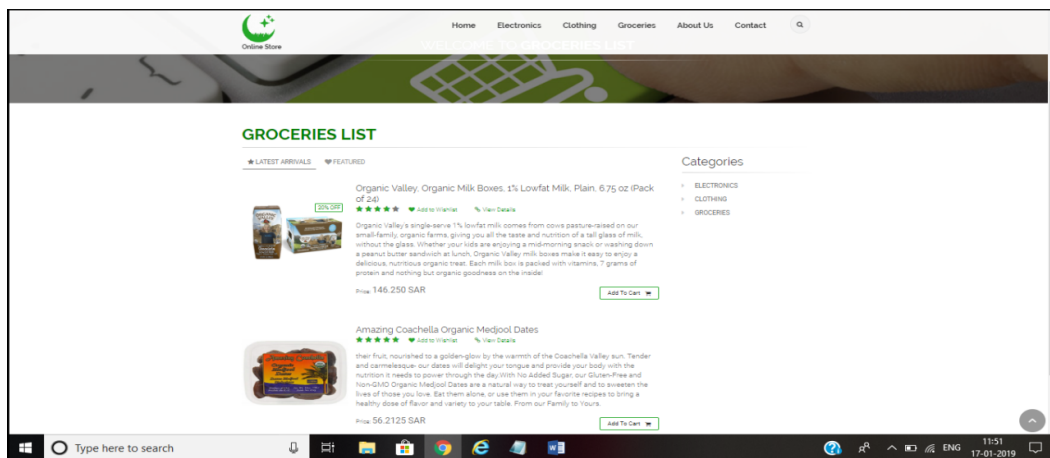


Fig 5.18. List of products under groceries on the Saudi Arabian UCSCP

Similarly, products such as an Irish over dress are presented alongside a general product, scarf, in the clothing section of the Irish UCSCP, as shown in Figure 5.19.

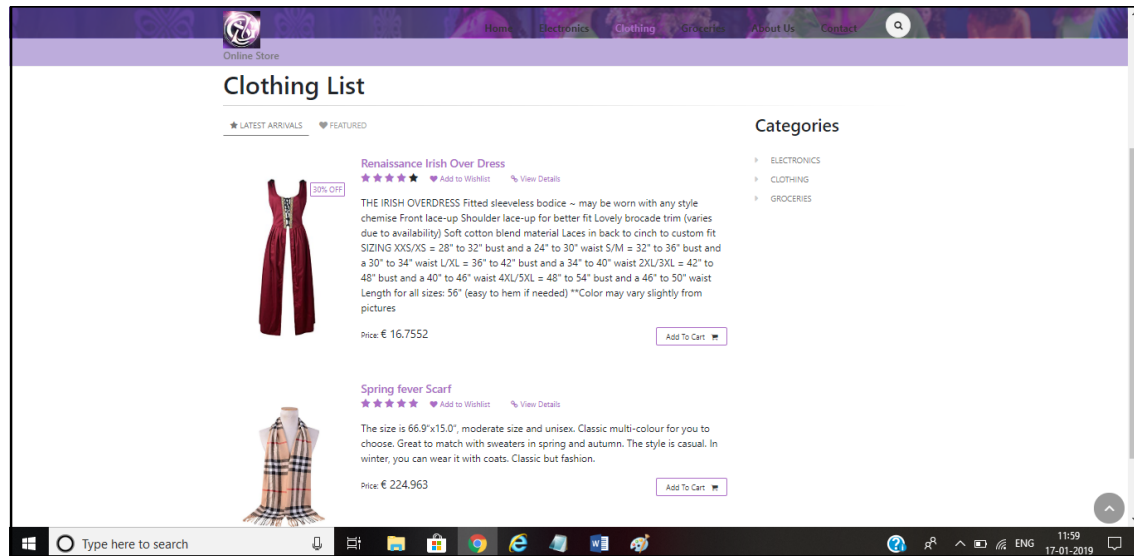


Fig 5.19. List of products under clothing on the Irish UCSCP

The importance of localisation has been reported in various studies (Alhorr et al., 2010; Hall, 2002), which have confirmed a positive correlation between localisation and the success of E-Commerce platforms. Hin (2017) identified that localisation errors could affect a company's sales and consumer relations, which can have a serious impact on the functioning of the company. Therefore, the UCSCP included the localisation feature in order to increase the users' experience and connectivity.

5.7.4.3. Price Consciousness

Price consciousness reflects the potential savings that a user can make if they purchase a product or service on the platform. It also increases the awareness of the users by providing price comparisons, showing prices for the same product on other platforms. This approach increases reliability and trust among the users (Fang et al., 2013). Accordingly, the price for each product is presented along with the price for the same product on other platforms, thus enabling the user to analyse the savings that would be gained by buying the product on the UCSCP. An example of price consciousness is given in Figure 5.20, which shows the price comparison for the 'Apple MacBook' displayed on the UCSCP.

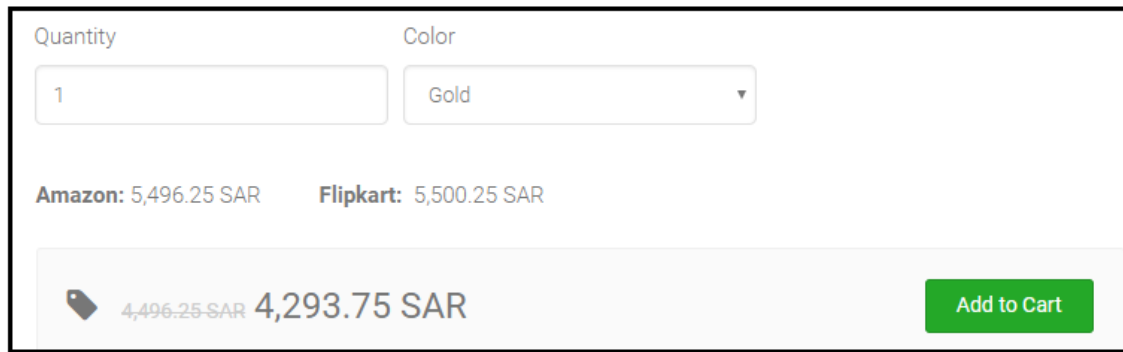


Fig 5.20. Price consciousness feature on the UCSCP

5.7.4.4. Celebrity branding

In addition, one of the important findings from the requirement-gathering focus group discussionss was the suggestion that celebrity-endorsed products might attract users. Celebrity marketing has been found to be an effective marketing strategy for attracting customers (Patel & Basil, 2017). However, it was identified that the concept of celebrity endorsement and its impact on consumers (physical attraction) is an area of research that has not been explored to a great extent in marketing and commerce research (Hackey & Hackey, 2015; Erdogan, 1999). Accordingly, two products were selected to be endorsed by celebrities. For the Irish UCSCP, the Huawei P20 Smartphone was selected as it is endorsed by the Hollywood actors Scarlet Johnson and Henry Cavill. A video featuring the actors was included in the product page, as shown in Figure 5.21.

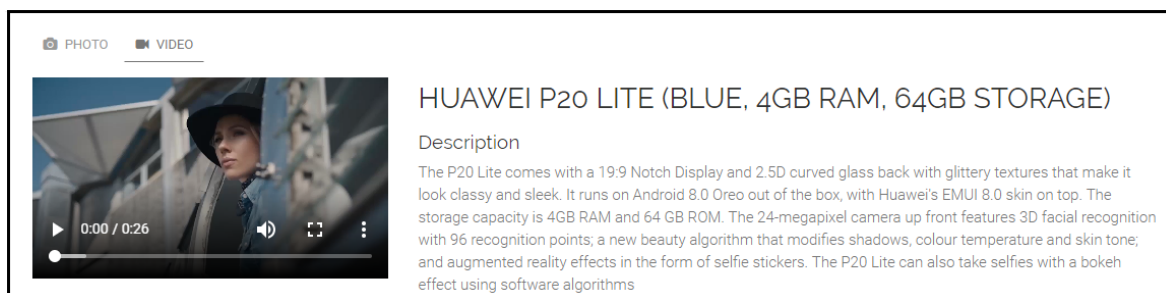


Fig 5.21. Celebrity-endorsed product (Phone) for Irish UCSCP

Similarly, for the Saudi Arabian UCSCP, a product called ‘Candy Slick Glowly Lipstick’ (brand: NYX), endorsed by the Saudi Arabian female model Roz, was included on the platform. Culturally, it may create an impact, as the product is related to women, and it is endorsed by the first Saudi model. A video featuring the model promoting the brand was included on the product page, as shown in Figure 5.22.

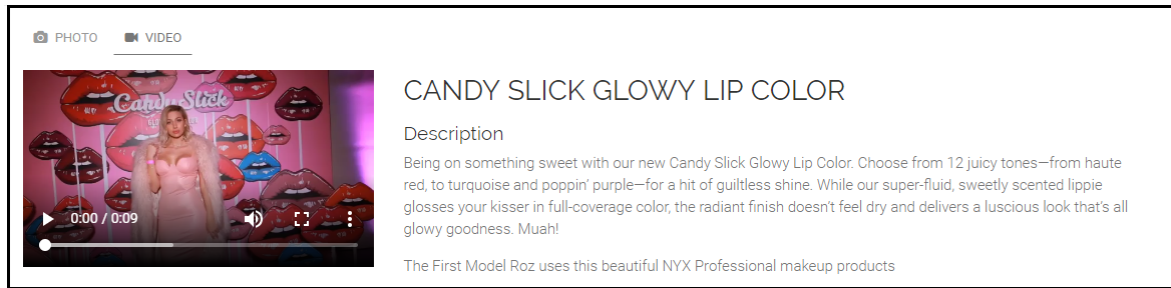


Fig 5.22. Celebrity-endorsed product (Lip color) for the Saudi Arabian UCSCP

Similarly, a video of male celebrity, fayez al malki, promoting golden cookies was included under groceries product in Saudi Arabian version of UCSCP, as shown in Figure 5.23.

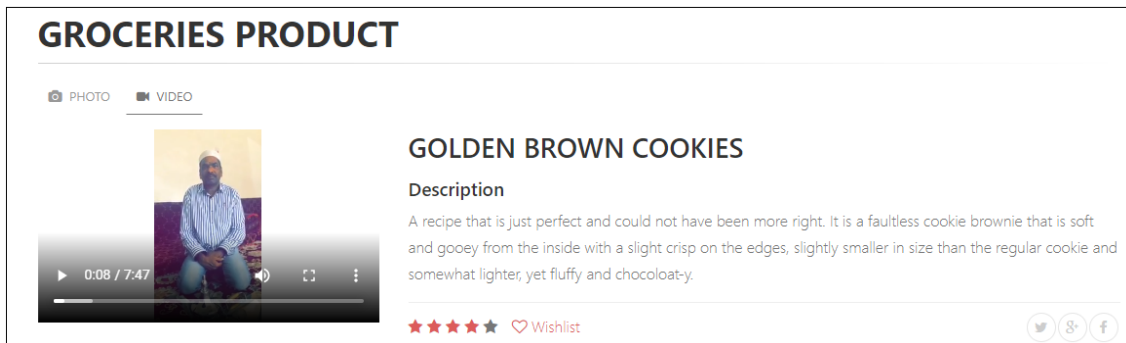


Fig 5.23. Celebrity-Endorsed Product (cookies) for Saudi Arabian UCSCP

5.7.5. User-centred aspects

The user-centred aspects focus on using certain features and functionalities on the platform, according to the needs and preferences of the consumers in a region. This is done in order to help them in their decision making. Accordingly, the features used must have a psychological impact on the users of the platform. Therefore, the design and look of the platform, along with the features and functionalities, were selected according to the preferences stated by the participants in the first stage of the surveys and focus group discussions, which were conducted to determine the requirements of the users in Ireland and Saudi Arabia. In addition, in order to increase usability according to user preferences, the platform provides a multi-language feature, where users can browse the platform in English and also in their local language (Arabic or Irish).

5.7.6. Technologies used for developing the UCSCP

The platform was developed using the Microsoft Visual Studio 2019. It is excellent software for developing various commercial and other types of webpages, which can integrate various features and functionalities. The software supports multiple technologies, which can add additional features and functionalities. The major technologies used to develop the UCSCP were as follows.

- **HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language):** This is a language used for developing various webpages and web applications. It was developed by Tim Berners-Lee, Robert Cailliau, and others in 1989; since then, various versions have been launched (Quality Nonsense Ltd., 2018). The latest version, HTML 5, was used for developing the UCSCP. It provides a systematic approach for representing various types of information through tables, and different fonts and styles to change the appearance of the platform. It is also used to present images, videos, and other rich graphic content in order to improve the user's experience.
- **Java Script:** JavaScript was originally developed at Netscape, for use in their browser Netscape Navigator, in 1990. It is a programming language used for designing webpages, and it can increase the support for various function on the HTML pages (Flanagan, 2011). It has various functionalities and can be used in various instances such as data storing, server-side processing etc. It was used in the designing of the UCSCP, mostly for improving the design features and functionalities.
- **CSS (Cascading Style Sheets):** This is a language used for designing the presentation of content on web pages. It is one of the major technologies used, along with HTML and Java Script, to develop web pages. It is basically used for separating the content from the presentation, which includes elements such as colours, layers, fonts, layout etc. (Flanagan, 2011). This technology was used for designing the layouts and fonts on the UCSCP.

5.8. Traditional Platform

In addition to the UCSCPs for Ireland and Saudi Arabia, a traditional platform with none of the above constructs was developed as part of the study. The layout of the traditional platforms without the 'themes' feature or the multi-language option is shown in Figure 5.24.

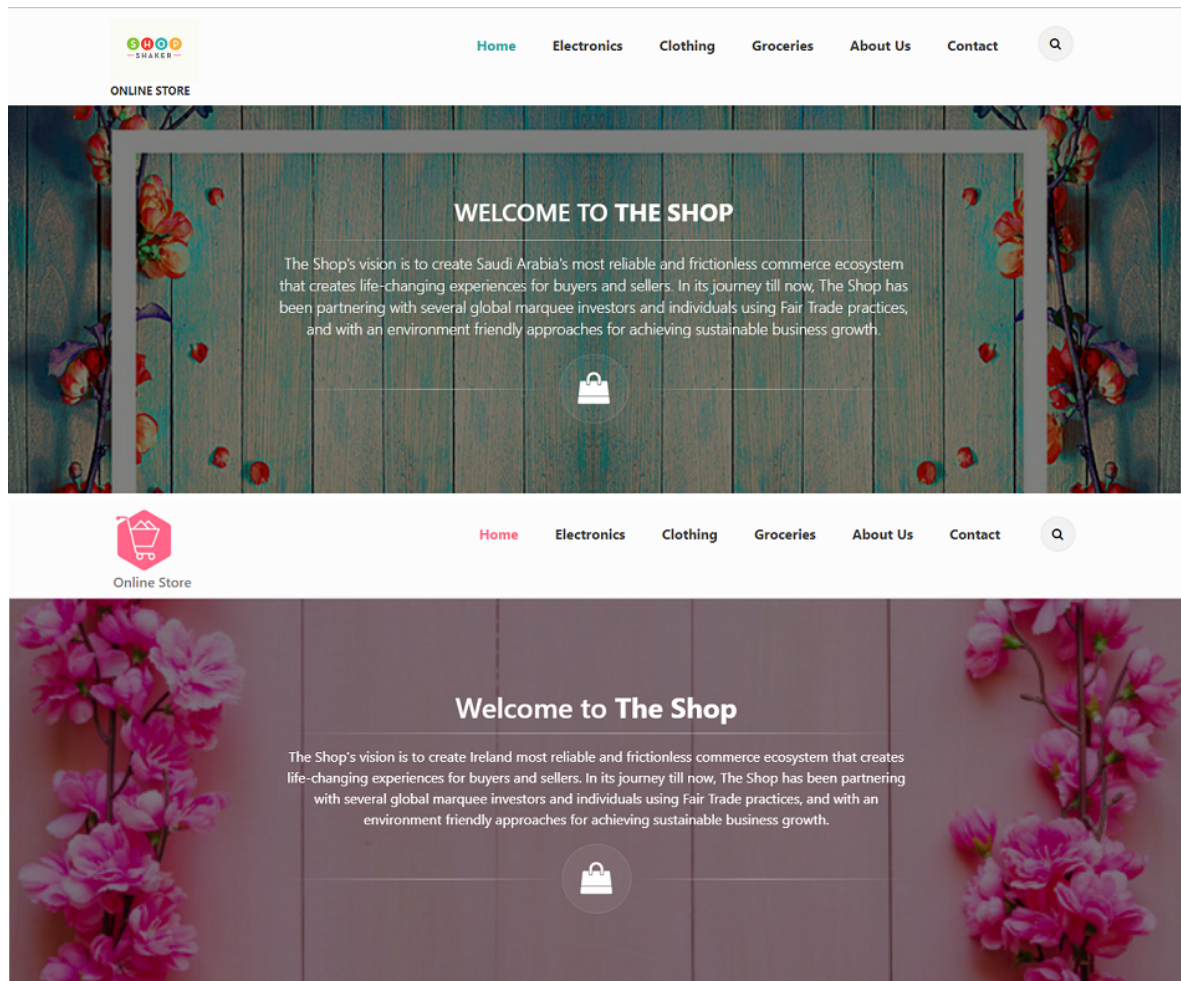


Fig 5.24. Traditional platforms for Ireland and Saudi Arabia

Similarly, none of the S-Commerce constructs such as reviews, ratings, videos, and price consciousness were used on the traditional platforms, as shown in Figure 5.25. Only the general product description, its photo and its specifications are provided on the platform; there are no social influence elements. This platform was used for a comparative analysis of the features and functionalities provided by the S-Commerce constructs on the UCSCP.

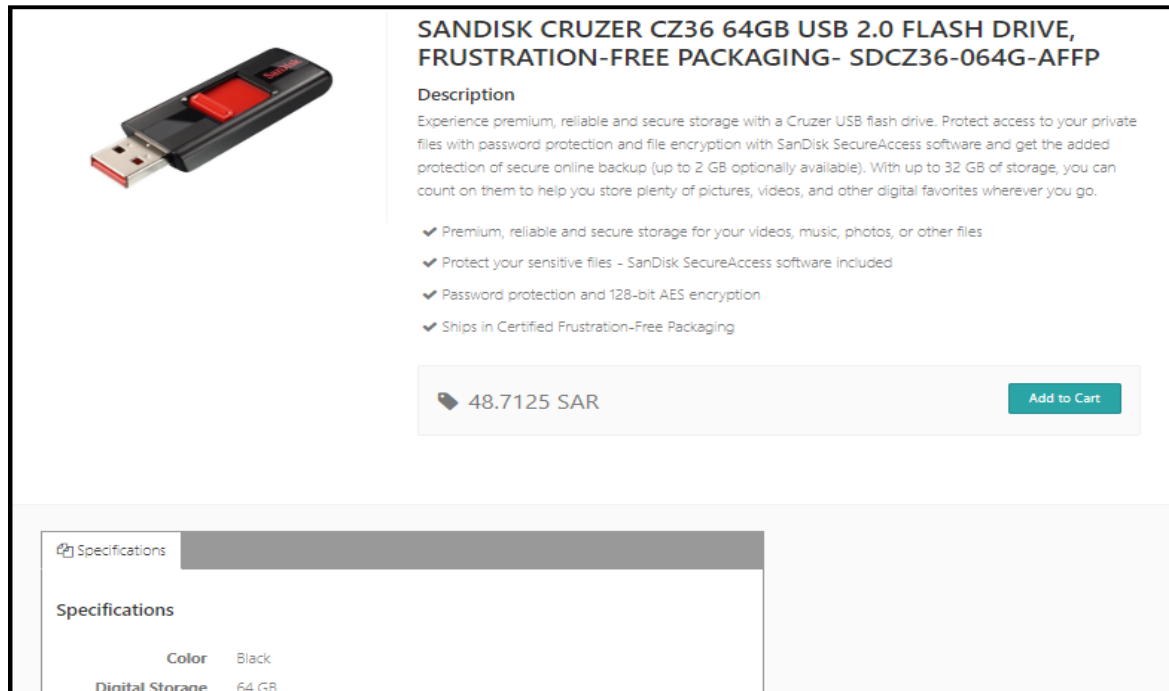


Fig 5.25. Product representation on the traditional platform

5.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the process of requirement gathering, and the design and development of the UCSCP and the traditional platform. The UCSCPs for Saudi Arabia and Ireland have been developed and they can be accessed at <http://www.ucscp.com/Saudi/html/index.html> and <http://www.ucscp.com/Ireland/html/index.html> respectively. The traditional platforms for Saudi Arabia and Ireland can be accessed at http://ucscp.com/traditional/saudi/html/electronics_simple.html and at http://ucscp.com/traditional/ireland/html/index_simple.html respectively. The next chapter explains the findings from the quantitative survey and it analyses the impact of the socio-culturally integrated UCSCP on the decision-making process (to buy or not to buy) and the behavioural and psychological aspects (trust, motivation, satisfaction, learnability, experience etc.).

6.1. Introduction

The User-Centric S-Commerce platform is used for evaluating the impact of socio-cultural aspects on the decision-making process and purchase intention along with other major factors. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted for the process of evaluation which was administered in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. The results of the survey are discussed in the following sections using descriptive analysis and chi-square tests. Accordingly, Figure 6.1. illustrates the outline of the chapter.

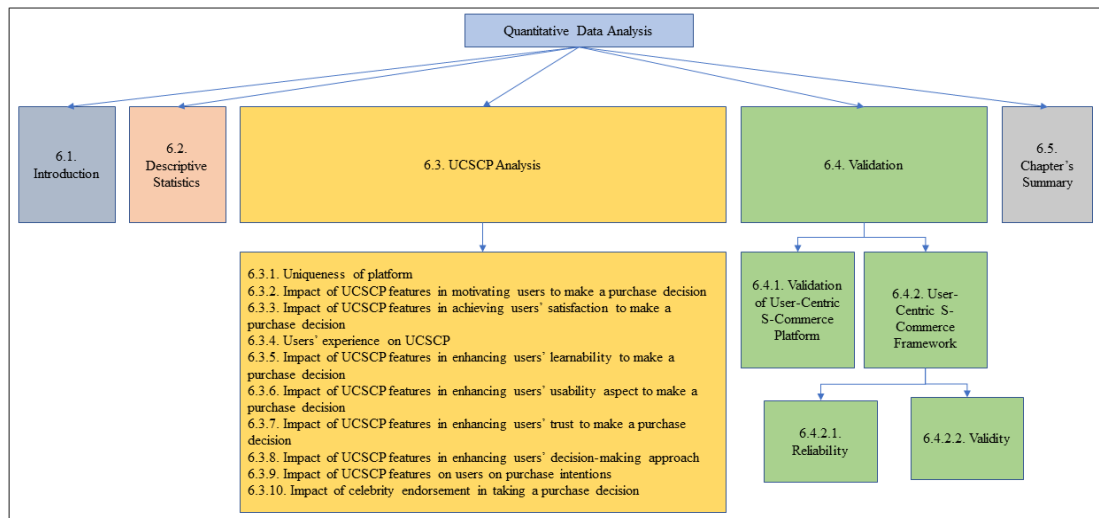


Fig 6.1. Chapter outline

6.2. Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the survey participants from Saudi Arabia were female students ($n = 220$), and 112 were male students. In Ireland the participants ($n = 301$) were almost equally distributed across both genders, including 146 male students and 155 female participants, as shown in Figure 6.2.

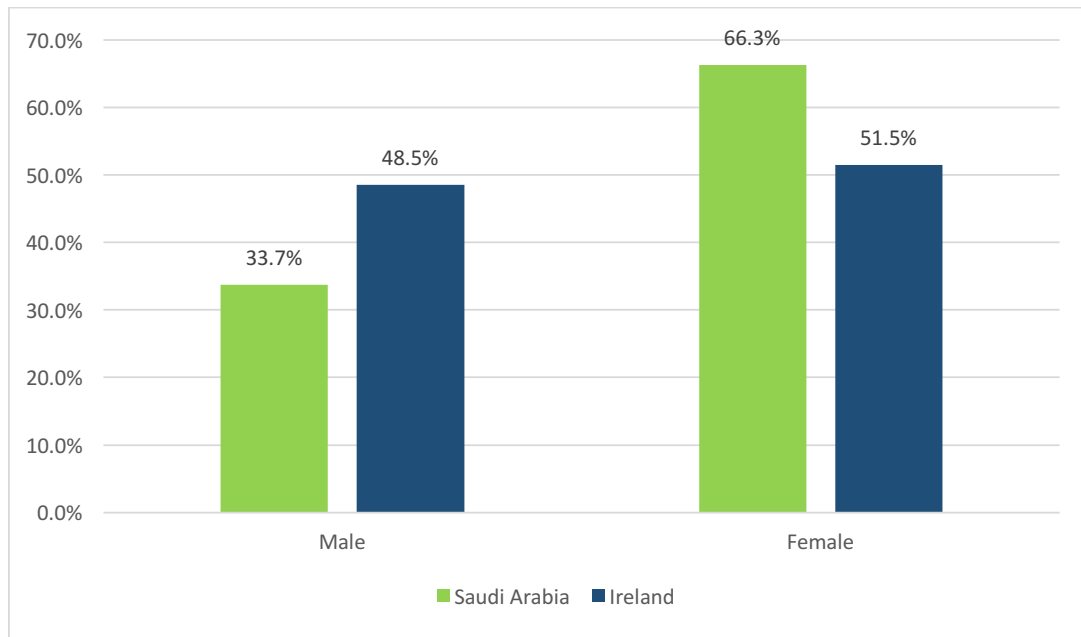


Fig 6.2. Gender distribution of the survey participants

The majority of the participants in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland belonged to the age group 20–30 years old, as shown in Figure 6.3. As the participants were all students, most of them were less than 30 years old. Social media and S-Commerce applications attract young individuals to a great extent, as a result of which students were invited to take part in the survey.

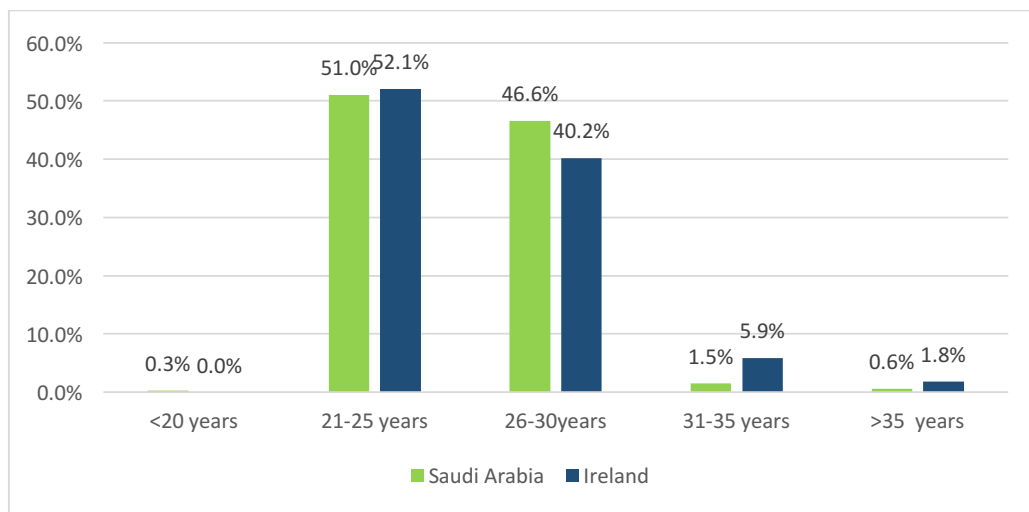


Fig 6.3. Distribution of participants' age groups

Similarly, the educational backgrounds of the participants are presented in Figure 6.4. Among the participants from Saudi Arabia (n = 332), the majority of them were graduates (n = 183), followed by college/undergraduates (n = 119), and those with a high school education (n = 30). There were no participants with a PhD from Saudi Arabia. Similarly, among the participants from Ireland (n = 301), the majority were graduates (n = 177), followed by college/ undergraduates (n = 104), and those with a high school education (n = 14). There were six participants with a PhD from Ireland. The educational qualifications of the participants from Ireland and Saudi Arabia are mostly identical in nature, ensuring a reduction in the bias in the sample population. The participants were similar in terms of education, awareness, and age.

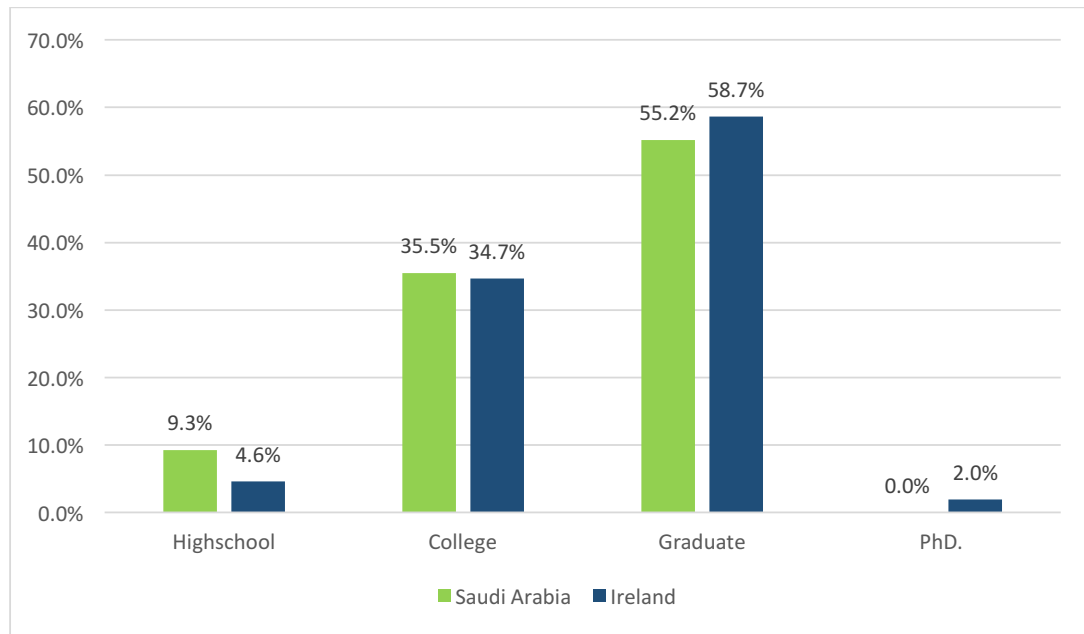


Fig 6.4. Educational qualifications of the participants

The next section focuses on the evaluation of various constructs using the UCSCP developed for evaluation.

6.3. UCSCP Analysis

In this study, the UCSCP is used for evaluating the relationship between various constructs. As explained in the previous chapter, the UCSCP was designed by integrating socio-cultural and technological aspects into the S-Commerce platform, using constructs related to culture, social media, technology etc. In addition, the traditional platform, which does

not integrate socio-cultural and technological features is used for evaluation, as the participants compared both platforms to understand the differences. Accordingly, the various constructs and features are evaluated in the following sections.

6.3.1. Uniqueness of platform

S-Commerce platforms are different from traditional E-commerce platforms in various aspects, including content, community, context, usability, and conversation (Hopkins, 2017; Lai, 2010; Lal, 2018; Huang, 2018; Yang, 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). They integrate social media and networking elements with a traditional platform, actively involving the users in promotion and marketing (reviews, referrals, recommendations, ratings etc.), and thus enhancing their decision-making skills for purchasing a product or service. The UCSCP developed in the current study integrates both S-Commerce elements and cultural elements (themes, multi-language feature, product localisation, price consciousness etc.), which are unlikely to be identified on traditional platforms.

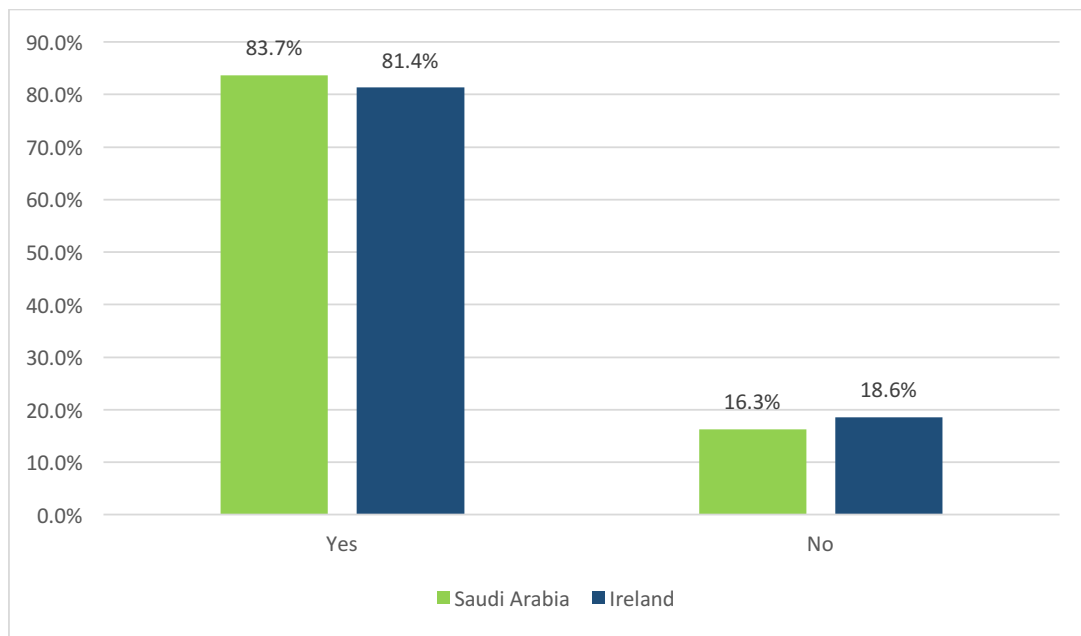


Fig 6.5. Observability of unique features on the UCSCP

With regard to these unique features, the study assessed whether users recognised them. In this context, it was identified that the majority of the participants from Ireland ($n = 245$) and Saudi Arabia ($n = 277$) were able to identify the unique features on the UCSCP. Comparing the results of the participants from both countries, the participants from Saudi

Arabia were slightly better at recognising the uniqueness of the platform compared to those from Ireland, as shown in Figure 6.5.

Accordingly, the participants' opinions in relation to the overall design were gathered, and the results are presented in Figure 6.6. The majority of the participants from Ireland (n = 187) and Saudi Arabia (n = 169) rated the overall design of the UCSCP as good and very good. Comparing the opinions of participants from both countries, the participants from Ireland rated the overall design slightly higher than the participants from Saudi Arabia. A considerable number of participants from Ireland (n = 99) and Saudi Arabia (n = 121) rated the overall design as average. Slightly more Saudi participants considered it to be average than Irish participants. These findings reflect the similarities and close observations made by the participants from both countries.

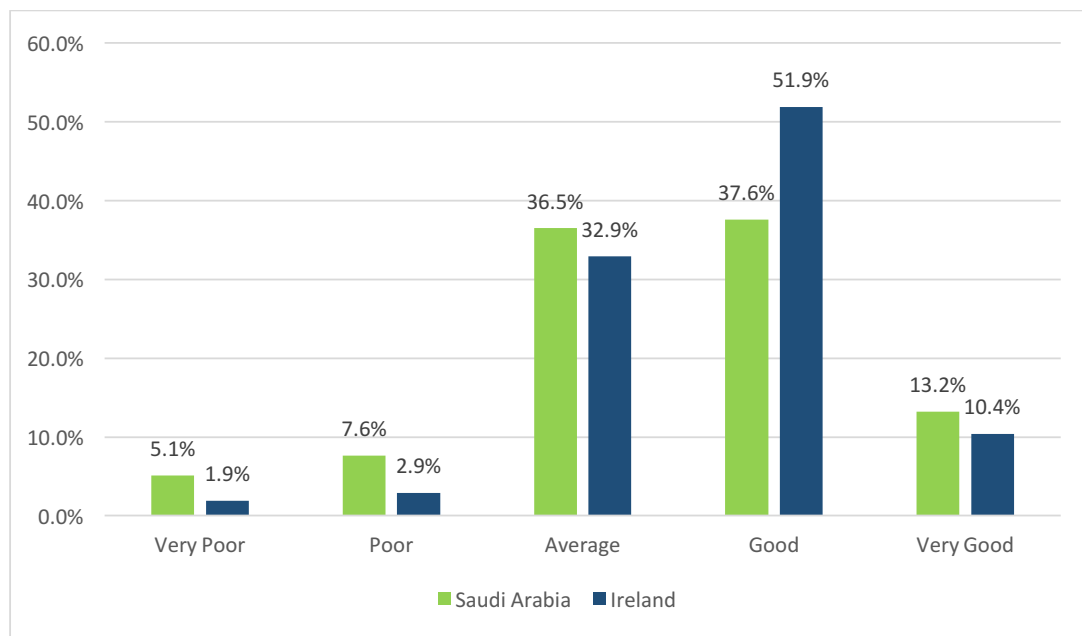


Fig 6.6. Responses for overall design of the UCSCP

In addition, the use of the 'Themes' feature, which changes the look and feel of the website by changing the design according to the cultural and social aspects of Saudi Arabian users, was evaluated using the responses as shown in Figure 6.7.

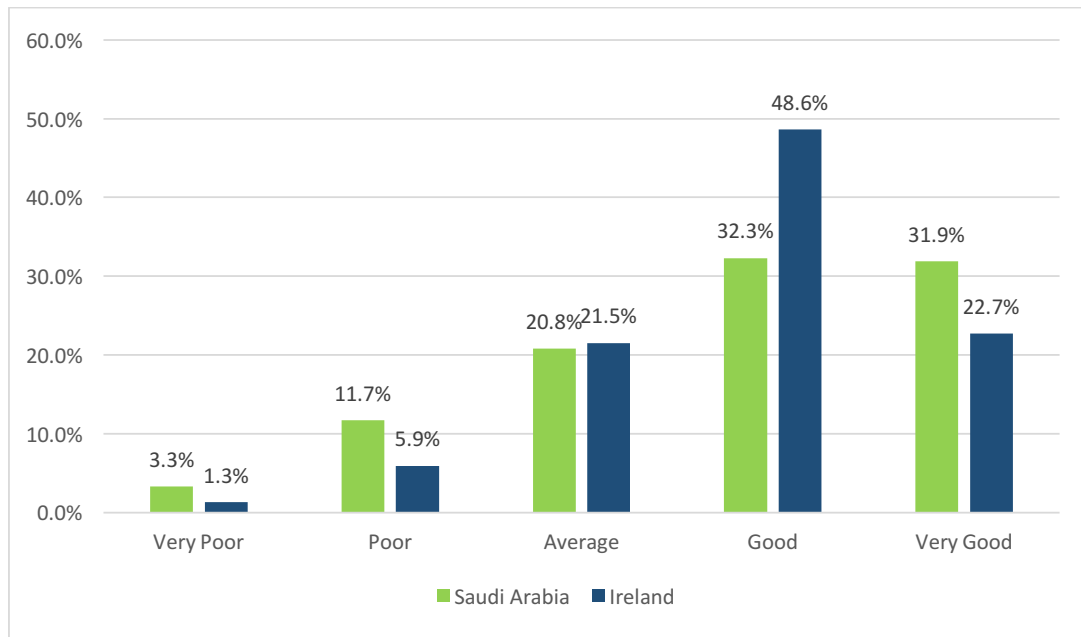


Fig 6.7. Responses for 'Themes' feature on the UCSCP

The majority of the participants from both Ireland (n = 215) and Saudi Arabia (n = 210) rated the themes feature as good and very good, while only a few participants from both Ireland (n = 65) and Saudi Arabia (n = 69) rated it as average. Similarities can be identified in the perceptions and observations of the participants from both countries. The results are categorised by participants' age group in Ireland and Saudi Arabia, as shown in Figure 6.8.

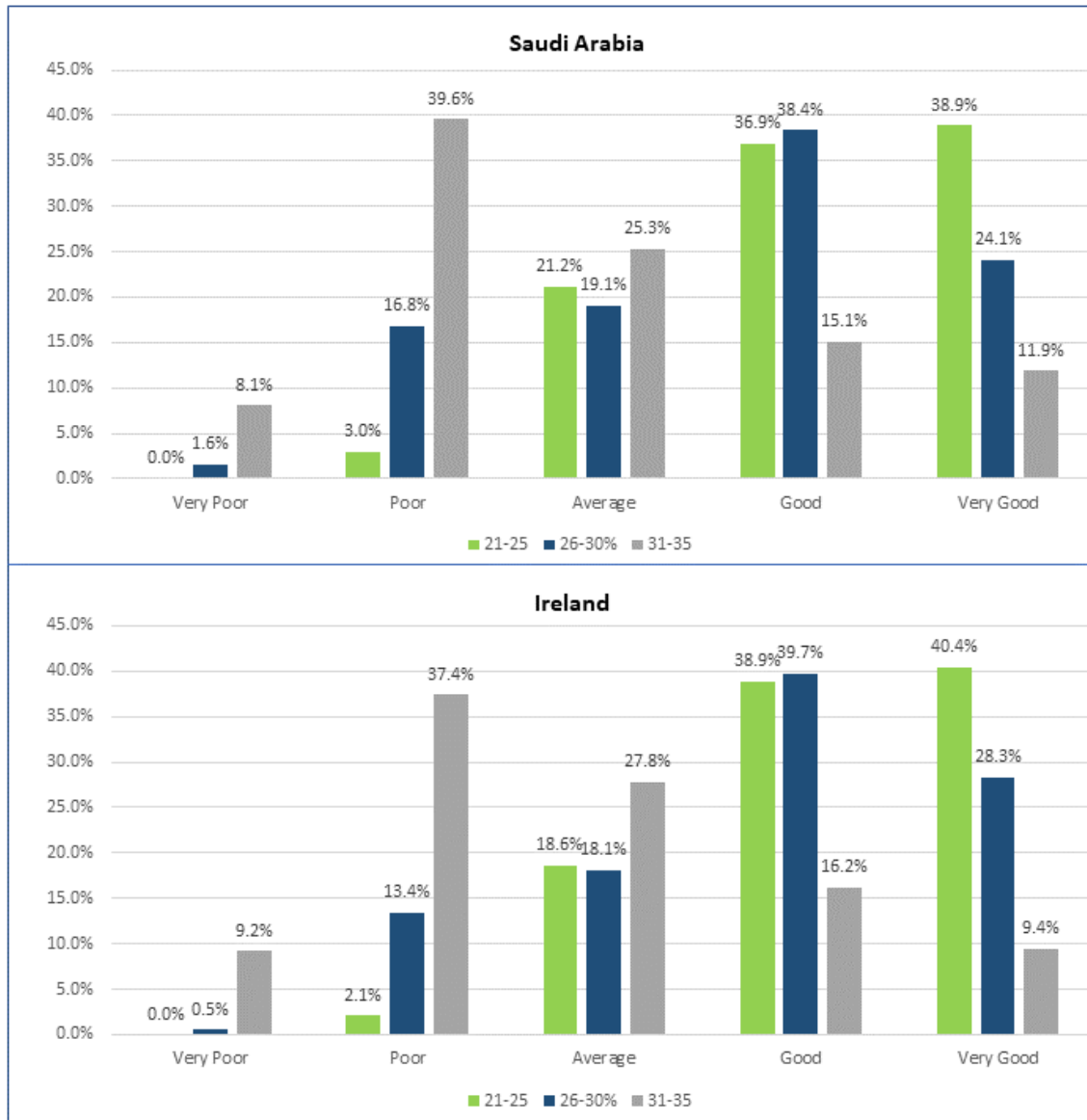


Fig 6.8. Responses for themes feature categorised by age groups

The results indicated that young students (especially those aged 20–25 years) identified themes to be an important feature, more so than older students (31–35 years). In addition, young students in Ireland considered themes to be more important than those in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there is a link between socio-cultural aspects and age group, as young students are more attracted to socio-cultural and social media features on the UCSCP.

6.3.2. Impact of UCSCP features on motivating users to make a purchase decision

It was identified from the literature review (Chapter 2) that various factors motivate people to use S-Commerce platforms and make purchasing decisions.

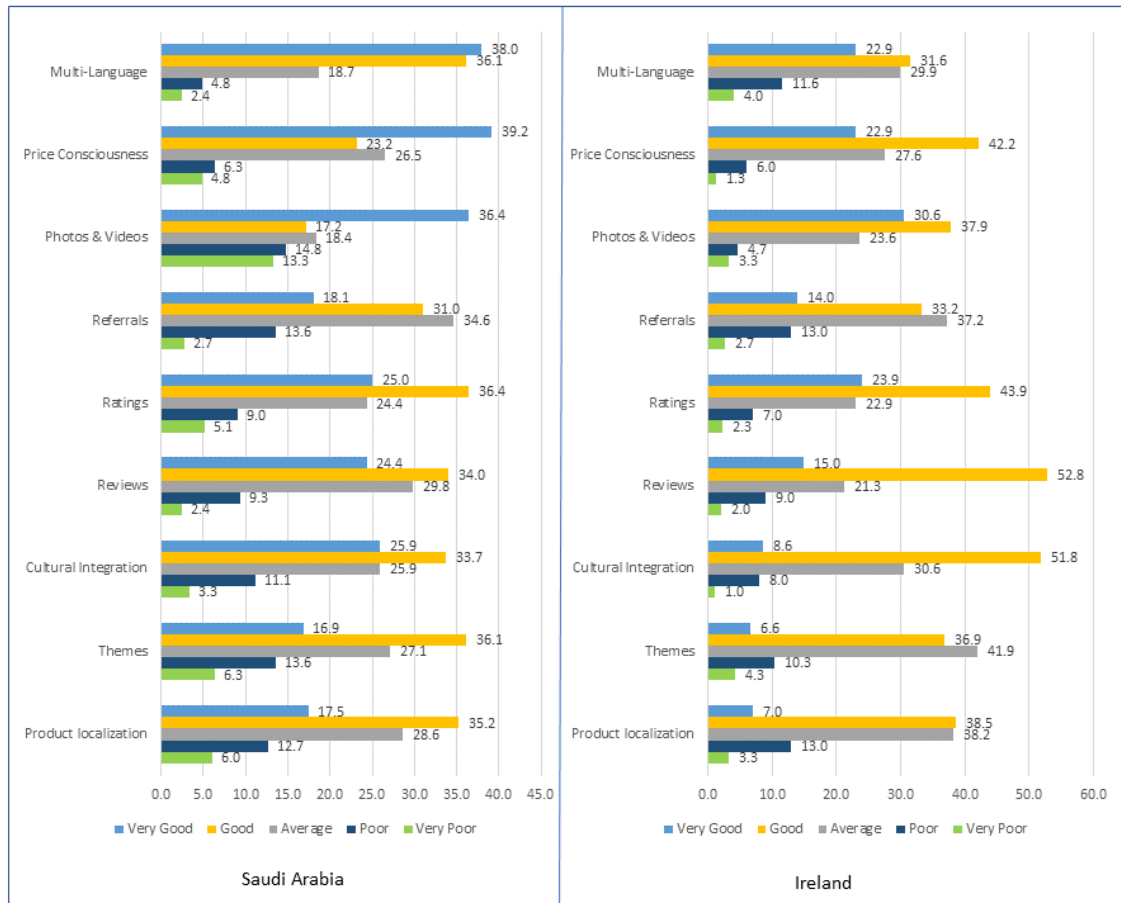


Fig 6.9. Influence of UCSCP features on motivation of users (in %)

These included technological environments such as virtual experience and social support (Zhang et al., 2014a); information quality (Al-Dwairi, 2017); emotional support, referrals, ratings, and trust (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2013; Shanmugam et al., 2016) etc. Accordingly, various studies (Bianchi et al., 2017; Akman & Mishra, 2017; Gvili & Levy, 2019) have identified the positive impact of motivation on consumers' engagement, social presence, purchase and repurchase intentions. In this context, various features on the UCSCP were evaluated for their ability to motivate users to make purchase decision (Figure 6.9). The majority of the participants rated all the features as important in motivating them in make a purchase. However, cultural integration (n = 198), reviews (n = 194), ratings (n = 204), price consciousness (n = 207), and theb MLF (n = 246) received higher ratings than other features in Saudi Arabia. These features mostly reflect socio-cultural aspects, which have a greater impact on users' motivation to make a purchase decision. Similarly, in Ireland, themes (n = 231), cultural integration (182), reviews (n = 204), ratings (n = 204), and photos and videos (n = 206) were considered to be important. It has to be noted that the multi-

language feature received the highest ratings in Saudi Arabia, and lower ($n = 164$) in Ireland. As most of the users in Ireland use the English language, they may not have found the Irish on the UCSCP platform particularly useful, whereas in Saudi Arabia, the majority of the users are Arabic, and they therefore found the Arabic translations on the UCSCP very useful.

Among the Saudi Arabian female participants ($n = 220$), more than 65% of them considered cultural integration, themes, reviews, photos and videos, and the MLF to be good and very good, while the responses of the male participants were almost evenly distributed across all the features. More than 60% of the Saudi Arabian participants from the age group 21–25 years considered price consciousness, reviews, ratings and MLF to be good and very good.

Similarly, out of the female participants from Ireland ($n = 155$), more than 75% of them considered themes, reviews, photos and videos to be important, while the majority of the male participants (65%) identified price consciousness, ratings, and reviews as important motivating features. Looking at age groups, the majority (75%) of the participants in the age group 21–25, and 65% of the participants aged 26–30 years considered socio-cultural factors such as themes, cultural integration, reviews, ratings, and price consciousness to be important. The results from both countries indicate that the integration of socio-cultural factors is important for motivation; however, female participants in Saudi Arabia valued cultural integration the most, whereas female participants from Ireland felt that the look and feel (themes), photos and videos were important. There is a slight difference in what are considered to be important cultural factors for motivation in each country. Thus, the results from both countries indicated that socio-cultural constructs and design features were important for increasing the motivation of users to make a purchase decision.

6.3.3. Impact of UCSCP features on achieving user satisfaction and making a purchase decision

It is important to analyse user satisfaction because it influences the engagement process on S-Commerce platforms. Satisfaction, as analysed in the literature review, depends on various factors such as website and information quality (Alshiby, 2014); relationship quality and social support (Zhang et al., 2016), which increase loyalty towards a brand; reviews, ratings (social support), ease of use, ease of access (information and technical support), branding and other service-related support (Akman & Mishra, 2017).

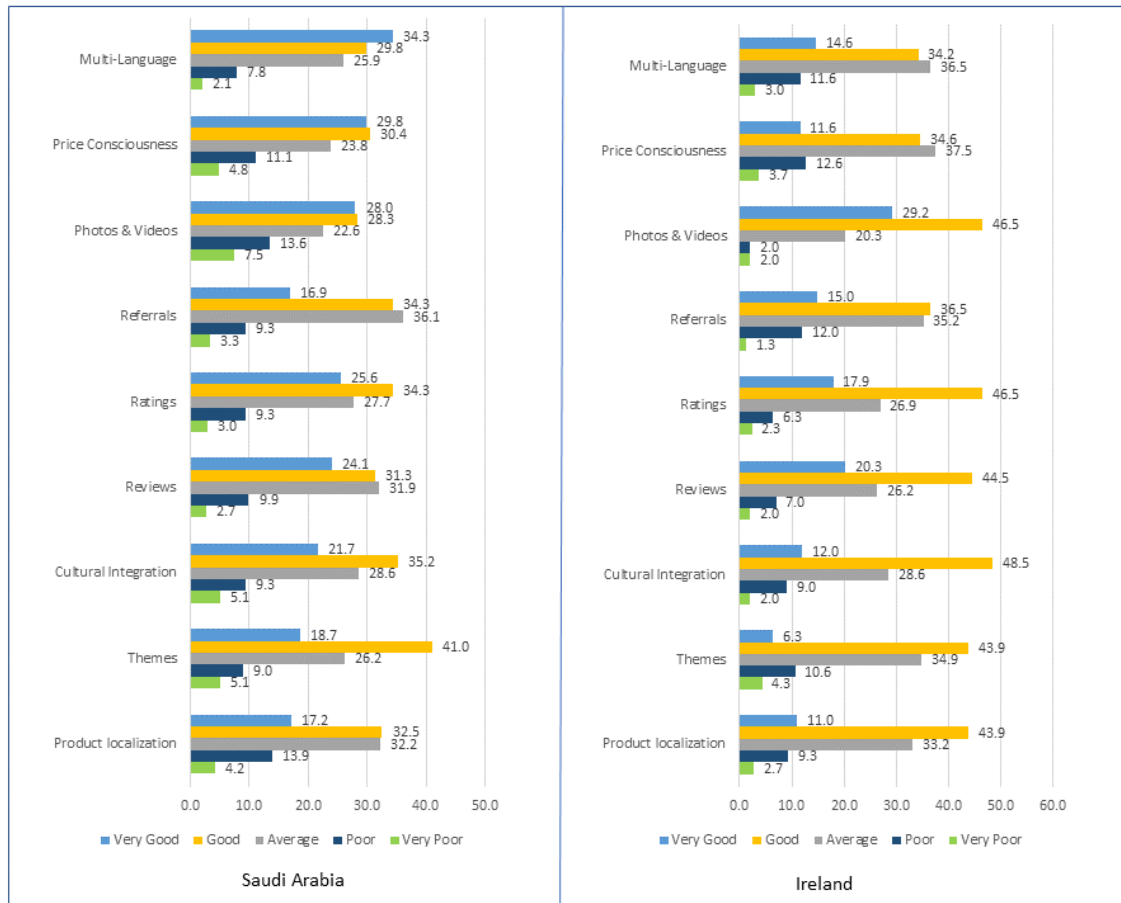


Fig 6.10. Influence of UCSCP features on achieving users' satisfaction (in %)

Accordingly, a positive relationship between satisfaction, trust and purchase intention has been identified in various studies (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Beyari & Abareshi, 2016). In this context, the importance of satisfaction in enabling users to make a purchase decision was evaluated (Figure 6.10). The results from the survey indicated that various features on the UCSCP positively affected overall satisfaction and thus purchase decisions in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Comparing the results, themes, cultural integration, reviews, ratings, photos and videos, price consciousness, and MLF were considered by more than 60% to be important in achieving satisfaction in the Saudi Arabian context. Similarly, cultural integration, reviews, ratings, product localisation, and themes were considered to be important by the majority of the participants in Ireland. It is interesting that referrals were not considered to be very important in comparison to other social factors such as reviews and ratings in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. Though there were marginal differences identified in both countries, the findings revealed that the socio-

cultural factors, and information quality and representation (reviews, MLF, and ratings) were considered to be most important in achieving satisfaction.

Among the female participants in Saudi Arabia ($n = 220$), the majority (more than 65%) thought that themes, reviews, ratings, and price consciousness were important. However, in Ireland, price consciousness was not considered to be very important, while other features such as reviews, ratings, and themes were. In addition, cultural integration and themes were considered to be important by most of the participants aged 26–30 years in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland, whereas other features such as ratings and reviews, price consciousness, and product localisation were considered to be important by most of the participants aged 21–25 years in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Similarities in the participants' preferences with regard to the impact of the UCSCP's features on user satisfaction were seen in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia, categorised by gender and age groups.

6.3.4. Users' experience on the UCSCP

User experiences on S-Commerce platforms are influenced by various factors that are often related to their engagement, satisfaction, trust, and purchasing behaviour. A positive user experience may engage them and improve the chances of making a purchase decision, and similarly, a negative user experience may reduce engagement and reduce the chances of making a purchase decision. As identified from the literature review (Chapter 2), social support (from friends and other users), website design, and technical and usability features could enhance a positive user experience (Gonçalves Curty & Zhang, 2013; Shin, 2013). Similarly, various studies (Chang et al., 2017; Moreno et al., 2019; Horng et al., 2016; Fedorko et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2016) have identified the influence of user experience on the purchasing decision, highlighting the importance of studying and analysing the concept of user experiences in this study. In this context, the importance of user experiences on the UCSCP for enhancing decision making (purchase decision) is evaluated (see Figure 6.11).

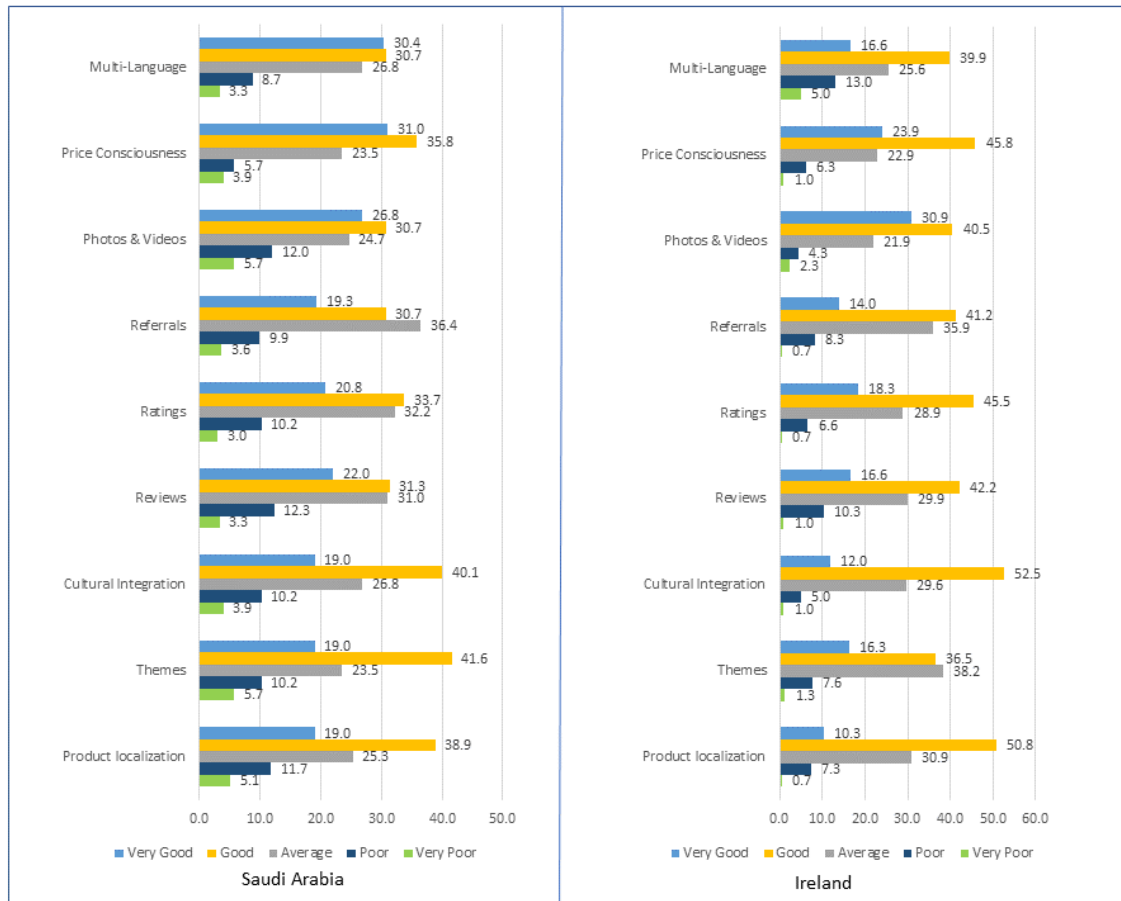


Fig 6.11. UCSCP user experiences (in %)

The survey results from Saudi Arabia revealed that all the users had a good experience with the features on the UCSCP, as more than 55% of the participants rated all the features as good or very good, except for referrals, which was rated as good or very good by 50% of the participants. Similarly, the majority of the participants from Ireland (more than 50%) rated all the UCSCP features as good or very good. However, while all the features were rated important by more than 55% of the participants, the ‘themes’ feature was lower with 53% of the participants rating it as good or very good. Comparing the results from Saudi Arabia by gender, the majority of the female participants (more than 80%) rated themes, photos and videos, MLF, and price consciousness as good or very good, while the majority of the male participants (more than 70%) rated reviews, ratings, MLF, and themes to be good or very good. These results indicate that while female participants were more influenced by design features, male participants were more influenced by technical and usability features such as ratings, reviews, and MLF. With regard to Ireland, the majority of the female participants (more than 70%) rated themes, cultural integration, photos and

videos to be good or very good, while the majority of the male participants (more than 70%) rated reviews, ratings, themes, and price consciousness as good or very good. These results are similar to those obtained from Saudi Arabia, except that more male participants in Saudi Arabia saw MLF as an important feature, and more male participants from Ireland regarded price consciousness as an important feature.

Accordingly, design features such as themes and cultural integration, and social features such as ratings, reviews, and MLF, were considered to be important by the majority of the participants (more than 65%) aged 21–25 in Saudi Arabia for enhancing their experience, whereas most of those aged 26–30 considered MLF and themes to be important for enhancing their experience. The results for Ireland were similar to those for Saudi Arabia for participants in the 21–25 age group, but ratings, reviews, and price consciousness were considered to be important by most of the Irish participants (more than 65%) in the 26–20 age group, and MLF was not given much importance.

6.3.5. Impact of UCSCP features on enhancing learnability and purchase intention

Learnability in the context of this study indicates how effective the platform is in supporting the users to gain knowledge (information related to products, services, and their feedback). Learnability could enhance the users' interaction, observation, and engagement, and it may improve the decision-making process (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Huang, 2018). A positive relationship between learnability and purchase intention or a purchase decision has been identified in various studies (Kuan et al., 2008; Madu & Madu, 2002; Ilbahar & Cebi, 2017). In this context, the impact of the UCSCP's learnability on the process of making a purchase decision was evaluated (see Figure 6.12).

The survey analysis from Saudi Arabia and Ireland revealed that most of the UCSCP features supported the learnability aspect and therefore purchase decisions. Themes, cultural integration, reviews, ratings, photos and videos, price consciousness, and MLF were rated as good or very good by more than 55% of the participants in Saudi Arabia. MLF received the highest response rate ($n = 216$, 65%), indicating the importance of the local language in enhancing the ability to learn on the platform.

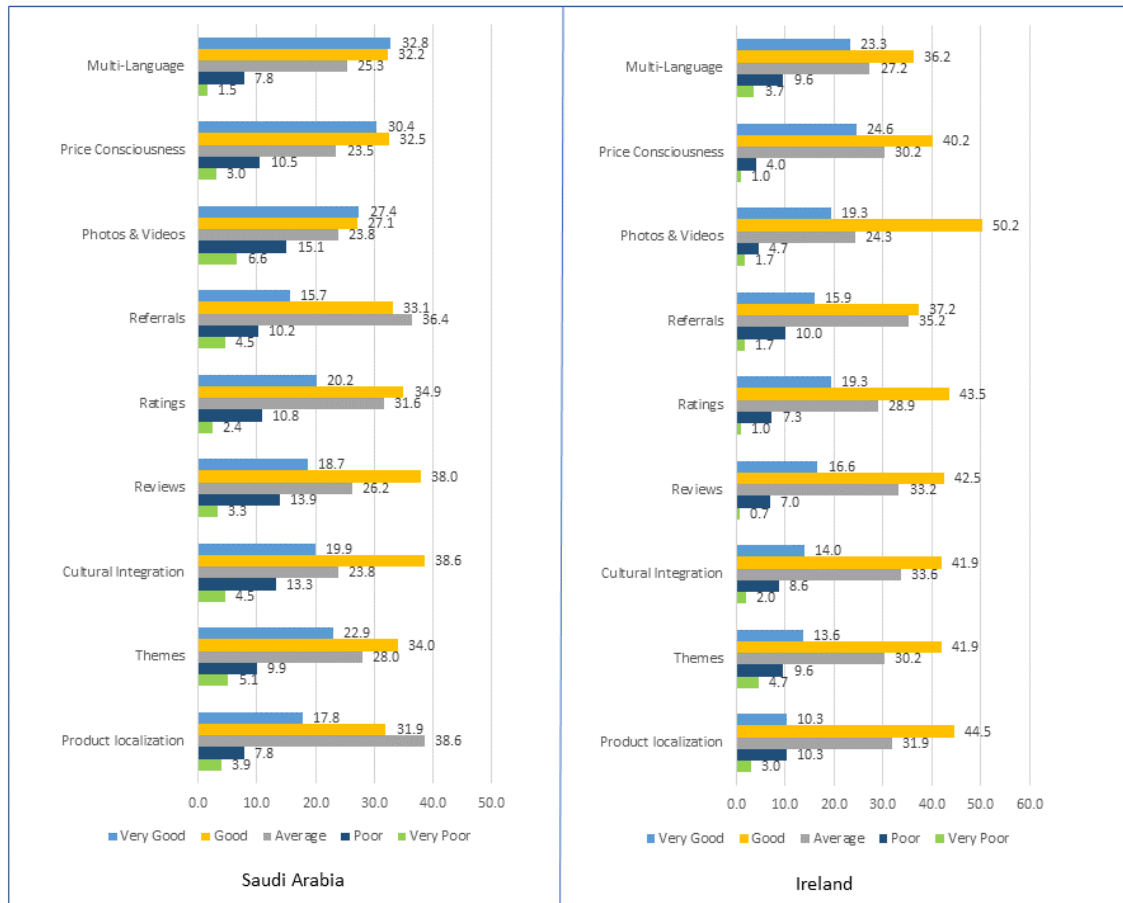


Fig 6.12. Influence of UCSCP features on learnability

Similarly, all the features were rated as good or very good by more than 50% of the participants, with photos and videos ($n = 209$, 69%) and price consciousness ($n = 195$, 65%) being the highest rated features. The results from Ireland indicated that the price comparison feature was important, along with information availability through videos and photos. Accordingly, the differences between Saudi Arabian participants (emphasis on ease of use and understandability) and Irish participants (emphasis on information availability and price savings) were identified.

Similarly, analysing the results by gender indicated that the majority of the female participants (more than 60%) in Saudi Arabia considered MLF and price consciousness as important features for learning, while the majority of the male participants (more than 60%) rated reviews, ratings and MLF as the most important factors for learning. Similarly, the majority of the female participants (more than 60%) in Ireland regarded price consciousness and ratings as important factors, while the majority of the male participants

(more than 60%) named reviews, ratings, themes, and price consciousness as important factors of learning. Similarities in the preferences of female participants in Saudi Arabia and Ireland can be identified in terms of price consciousness, and similarities between male participants from Saudi Arabia and Ireland can be observed with respect to reviews and ratings. Categorising the responses by age groups revealed that the majority of the young participants (21–25 years) in Saudi Arabia rated MLF as the most important feature for learning, while in Ireland, participants in the same age group rated price consciousness as the most important factor for learning. The responses of the participants from the 26–30 age group in Saudi Arabia and Ireland were evenly distributed across the various features.

6.3.6. Impact of UCSCP features on enhancing usability and supporting purchase decisions

Usability is considered to be one of the most important features when evaluating any system or application. In the context of S-Commerce applications, the ability to use various effective technologies such as social networking, Web 2.0. technologies etc. has improved various functionalities, resulting in high usability compared to traditional platforms (Huang, 2018). The 'ease of use' factors have been considered in various studies evaluating their impact on trust, purchase intention, and engagement (Hajli, 2013; Chang et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2015; Abed, 2018). In this context, the usability aspects of the UCSCP were evaluated with respect to their influence on making a purchase decision (Figure 6.13).

The survey results from both Saudi Arabia and Ireland were similar as the majority of the participants from both countries (more than 55%) identified cultural integration, themes, reviews, ratings, photos and videos, price consciousness, and MLF as important features for enhancing usability. However, the analysis of the results by gender identified marginal differences in the preferences of the participants from both countries. The majority (over 50%) of the female participants in Saudi Arabia regarded MLF, themes, cultural integration, and price consciousness as important features, whereas in Ireland reviews and ratings were also considered important. In addition to these features by the majority of female participants (more than 50%). Most of the male participants (more than 50%) considered reviews, ratings, price consciousness, themes, and MLF as important features of usability in Ireland.

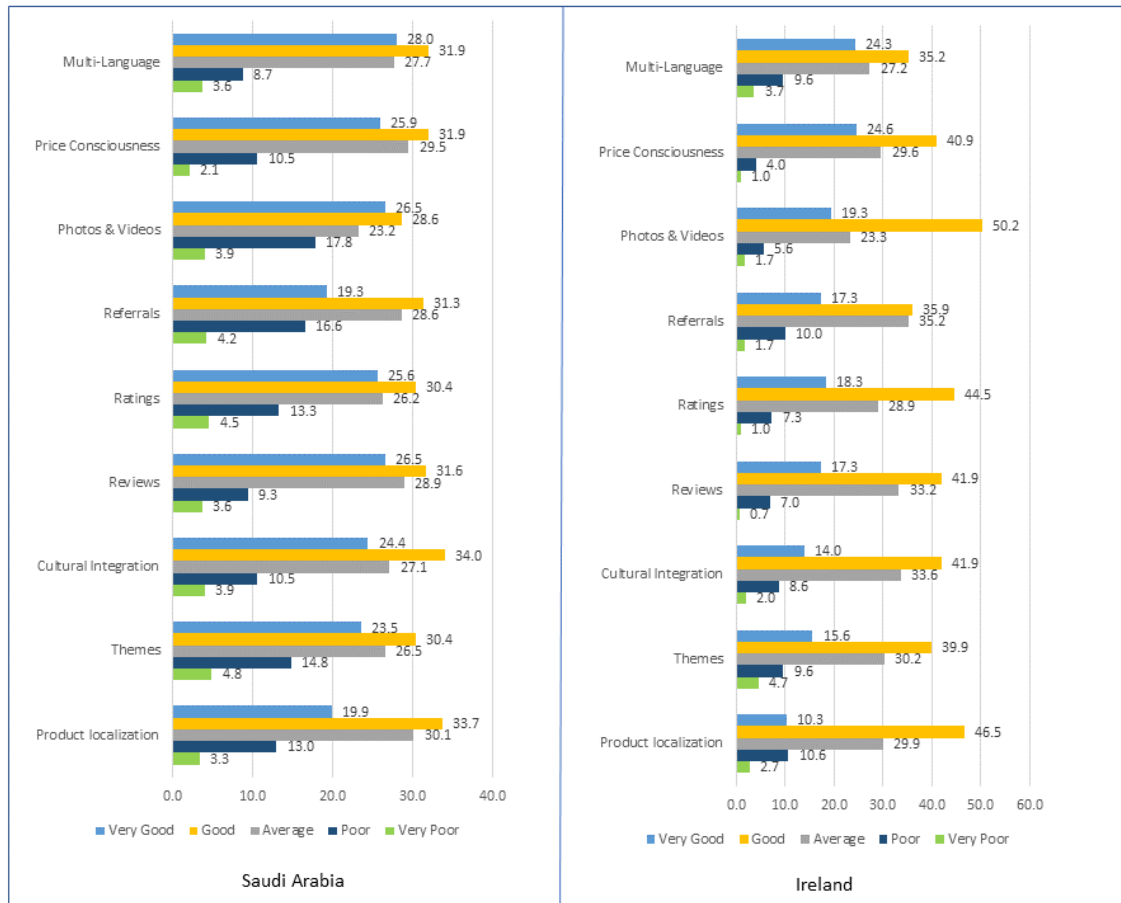


Fig 6.13. Influence of UCSCP features on usability

The responses analysed by age did not show any major differences in terms of the important features of the UCSCP in Saudi Arabia. The MLF, reviews, ratings, and price consciousness were rated important by more than 50% of the participants in the age groups 21–25 years and 26–30 years. However, in Ireland, 76% of the participants named ratings and reviews as important features and 73% regarded price consciousness, photos and videos to be important features in terms of usability (ease of use).

6.3.7. Impact of UCSCP features on enhancing users' trust and supporting purchase decisions

Establishing trust is an important factor for any business. S-Commerce relies completely on online interactions, where trust is an essential factor for achieving success. Various factors that influence trust have been examined by previous studies, such as forums and communities, ratings, reviews, referrals and recommendations (Hajli, 2013; Hajli, 2012a; Hajli, 2012b); usefulness, ease of use, security, privacy, and website design (Noor et al.,

2013); changing attitudes (Shin, 2013); social support (Shanmugam et al., 2016); satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2016); social presence of the web, the perceptions of others, interaction with sellers, emotional social support, informational support, positive reviews, WOM, affective influence, brand influence, advertising value, and viral reach prospects (Hammouri & Abu-Shanab, 2017).

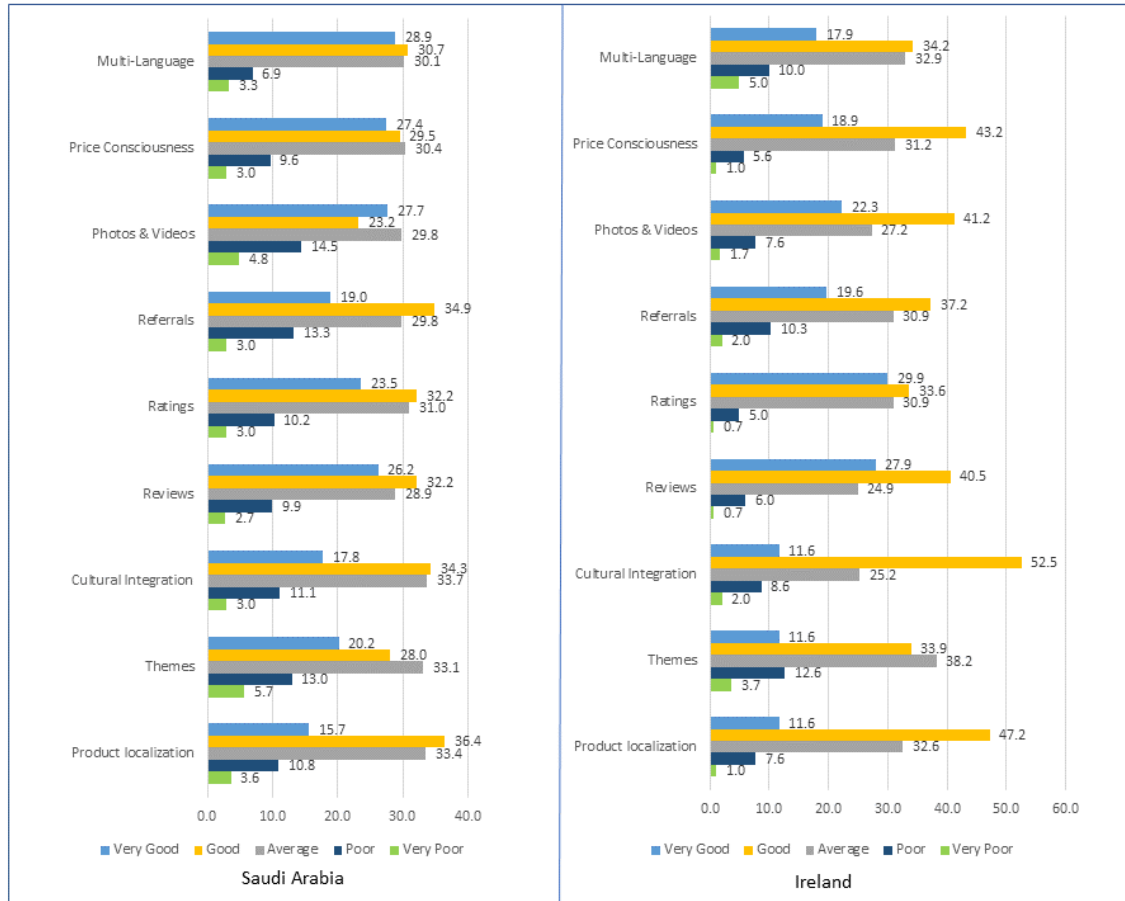


Fig 6.14. Influence of UCSCP features on trust

In addition, a positive relationship between trust and purchase intention was identified in various studies (Hajli, 2015; Gibreel et al., 2018; Bianchi et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2019) by considering trust as a mediating factor between influencing factors and purchase intention. Similarly, in the current study, trust is considered as a mediating factor between various socio-cultural, technical and design features on UCSCP and purchase intention. In this context, the survey results revealed that all the features were important for establishing trust in the UCSCP, in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland (as shown in Figure 6.14).

The majority (more than 50%) of the participants from Saudi Arabia identified ratings, reviews, themes, cultural integration, price consciousness, and MLF as the important features that contributed to the establishment of trust. Similarly, in Ireland, more than 60% of the participants identified cultural integration, reviews, ratings, price consciousness, photos and videos as important features for establishing trust. While most of the identified features in both countries were similar, Saudi Arabians rated MLF and cultural integration highest while the Irish participants did not consider MLF to be an important feature. The findings revealed that MLF could be an important feature only in those countries where people are only aware of their own local languages.

Analysing the results by gender, the majority (more than 50%) of the female and male participants from Saudi Arabia named MLF, ratings, and reviews as important factors. Few differences were identified with respect to the preferences of male and female participants in Saudi Arabia. However, in Ireland, the majority of the female participants (more than 65%) regarded photos, videos, and themes as important features while most of the male participants (more than 65%) identified ratings, reviews, price consciousness, and cultural integration as important features for establishing trust. The female participants were more influenced by the look and feel of the platform and its design aspects, while the male participants were influenced by informational constructs such as ratings and reviews. In addition, the majority of the participants from Saudi Arabia (aged 21–25 years) identified themes, price consciousness, and MLF as important features for trust, whereas the majority of the participants aged 26–30 years identified ratings, reviews, cultural integration, and MLF as preferred features. Similar results were identified in Ireland, and these findings indicate that young people are more interested in the design, look and feel of the platform, which contribute to their establishment of trust, while older people are influenced by informational attributes.

6.3.8. Impact of UCSCP features on users' decision making

S-Commerce applications have converted unidirectional browsing and buying activities in E-Commerce to a bidirectional “purchase decision journey” (Wang & Yu, 2015). Most of the studies in the literature review (Hajli, 2015; Lal, 2017; Huang, 2018; Pienaar, 2015; Yang, 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018) focused on decisions, but the process of decision-making remains largely unexplored. This is an important aspect that needs to be studied, as decisions are influenced by the decision-making process, and the influence of

various constructs on the decision-making process may determine whether or not a purchase is made.

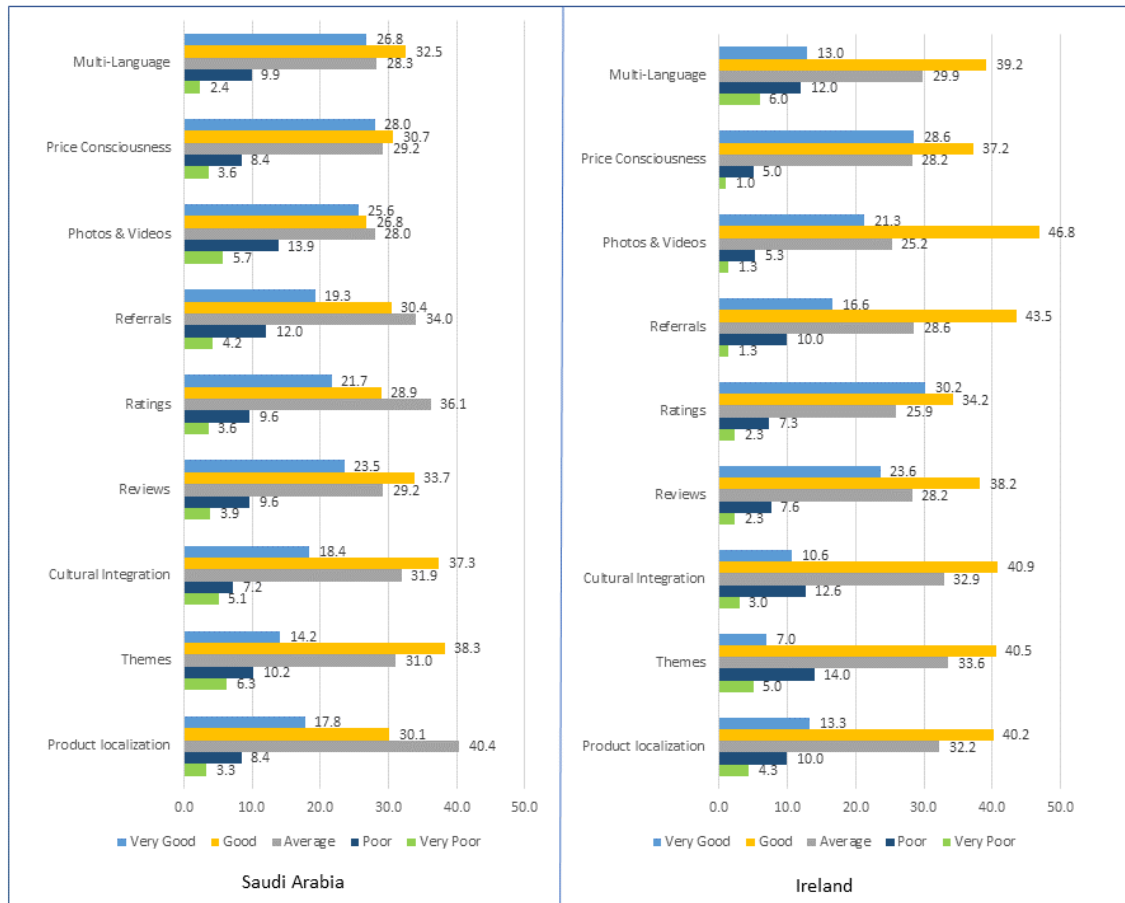


Fig 6.15. Influence of UCSCP features on decision making

For example, ratings and reviews may influence the decision-making process by providing supportive information and thus increasing users' awareness. A positive brand value or effective design features may influence purchase decisions directly, as these are mainly influenced by trust. Therefore, the impact of features on the decision-making process on S-Commerce platform are evaluated (Figure 6.15) to address the research gap.

In this context, themes, cultural integration, ratings, reviews, photos and videos, price consciousness, and MLF were considered to be important features for decision making by the majority of the Saudi Arabian participants (more than 50%). Similarly, reviews, ratings, photos and videos, and price consciousness were identified as important features by the majority of Irish participants (more than 55%). Photos and videos, price consciousness, reviews and ratings were considered to be important by both Irish and Saudi Arabian

participants. However, while the MLF was identified as relevant and important in Saudi Arabia, it was not highly valued in Ireland.

In addition, analysing the responses by gender, we can see that the majority of female participants (more than 75%) in Ireland and Saudi Arabia considered themes, photos and videos, and price consciousness to be important features for enabling the decision-making process. Most of the male participants (more than 70%) in Ireland regarded price consciousness, ratings and reviews as important in this regard, while the majority of the male participants (more than 70%) in Saudi Arabia thought that the MLF, ratings and reviews were important features for the decision-making process.

6.3.9. Impact of UCSCP features on users’ purchase intentions

The influence of the socio-cultural, design and technical features on the UCSCP was analysed by identifying the differences between the decisions made on the traditional platform (which does not embed socio-cultural features) and on the UCSCP (which integrates socio-cultural, design and usability features). The decisions were analysed by collecting the responses for two products – dried dates on the Saudi UCSCP and the Irish over dress on the Irish UCSCP – on the traditional platform (as shown in Figure 6.16) and on the UCSCP (as shown in Figure 6.17).

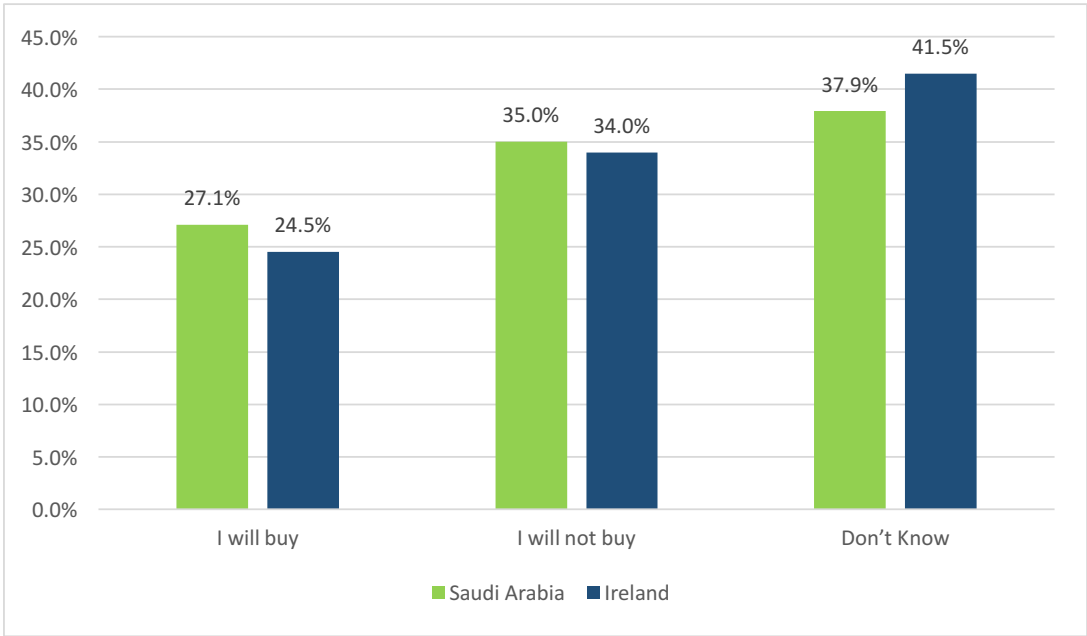


Fig 6.16. Decisions taken on traditional platform

It can be observed from Figure 6.16 that over 65% of the participants from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia responded that they did not know whether they would buy, or they would not buy. Some participants from Saudi Arabia (n = 90) and Ireland (n = 74) responded that they would buy the product. More than 60% of the female and male participants responded that they would not buy, or that they did not know if they would buy, in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Analysing the results by age, most of the participants from Saudi Arabia (n = 7) and Ireland (n = 23) aged above 30 years responded that they would buy on the traditional platform.

Comparing the responses on the traditional platform with those on the UCSCP (Figure 6.17), it can be observed that there is a significant decrease in the number of participants who stated that they did not know whether they would buy, or would not buy. There was a significant increase (three-fold) in the number of participants who responded that they would buy the product on the UCSCP. These findings demonstrate that the information provided on the UCSCP enabled users to make the decision of whether or not to buy, therefore the features on the UCSCP helped users to make a positive decision (purchase decision).

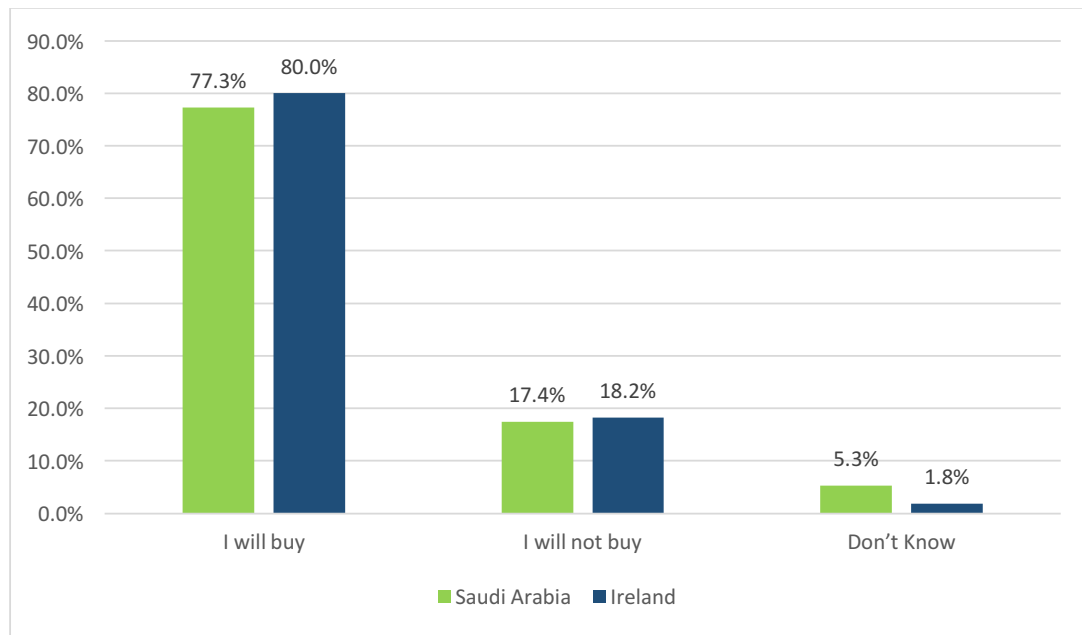


Fig 6.17. Decisions taken on UCSCP

In addition, chi-square (2X2) tests were carried out (considering the null hypothesis that there are no differences in the responses on the traditional platform and the UCSCP) in

order to identify whether there was a significant difference between the responses on the traditional platform and on the UCSCP. The results for Saudi Arabia ($X^2 = 47.78$, $p = .00001$, $p < 0.05$) and Ireland ($X^2 = 39.44$, $p = .00001$, $p < 0.05$) were significant (rejecting the null hypothesis), indicating that participants on the UCSCP were more likely to buy the product than on the traditional platform. In addition, Chi-square tests were reconducted using the Yates correction in order to avoid any type 1 error (false positive). The results for Saudi Arabia ($X^2 = 46.39$, $p = .00001$, $p < 0.05$) and Ireland ($X^2 = 38.22$, $p = .00001$, $p < 0.05$) revealed that the participants were more likely to buy on the UCSCP than on the traditional platform, indicating the positive impact of the UCSCP features on making a purchase decision. One of the unique aspects of the UCSCP was that it integrated cultural and social aspects into the platform design.

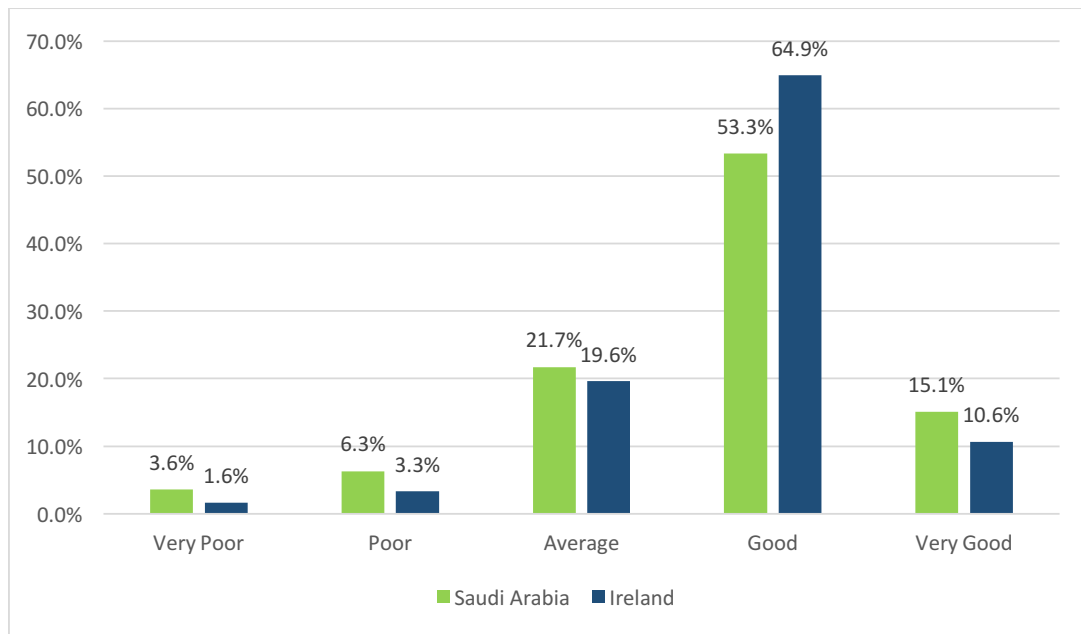


Fig 6.18. Rating the UCSCP for its integration of socio-cultural aspects

This unique feature of the UCSCP is evaluated (Figure 6.18) using the survey responses, which indicated that the majority of the participants (more than 65%) from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia rated it as good or very good. The above-mentioned responses about enabling decision taking and the rating of UCSCP features indicated that the S-Commerce platform had successfully integrated socio-cultural factors, and that these were effective in supporting the decision-making process and making a positive (purchase) decision.

6.3.10. Impact of celebrity endorsement on making a purchase decision

The pilot study, conducted to analyse users' needs and requirements (Chapter 4) as part of the development of the UCSCP, found that celebrity branding was one of the important factors influencing the decision-making process. In this context, the 'Calvin Klein WOMEN' perfume promoted by famous Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, and Dolce & Gabbana's new perfume 'Intenso' promoted by famous Irish actor Colin Farrell on the Irish UCSCP, and the NYX Lipstick promoted by Saudi Arabia's first super model, Roz, on the Saudi Arabian UCSCP were used to evaluate the impact of celebrity branding on the decision to purchase on an S-Commerce platform (Figure 6.19), as well as their impact on trust (Figure 6.20).

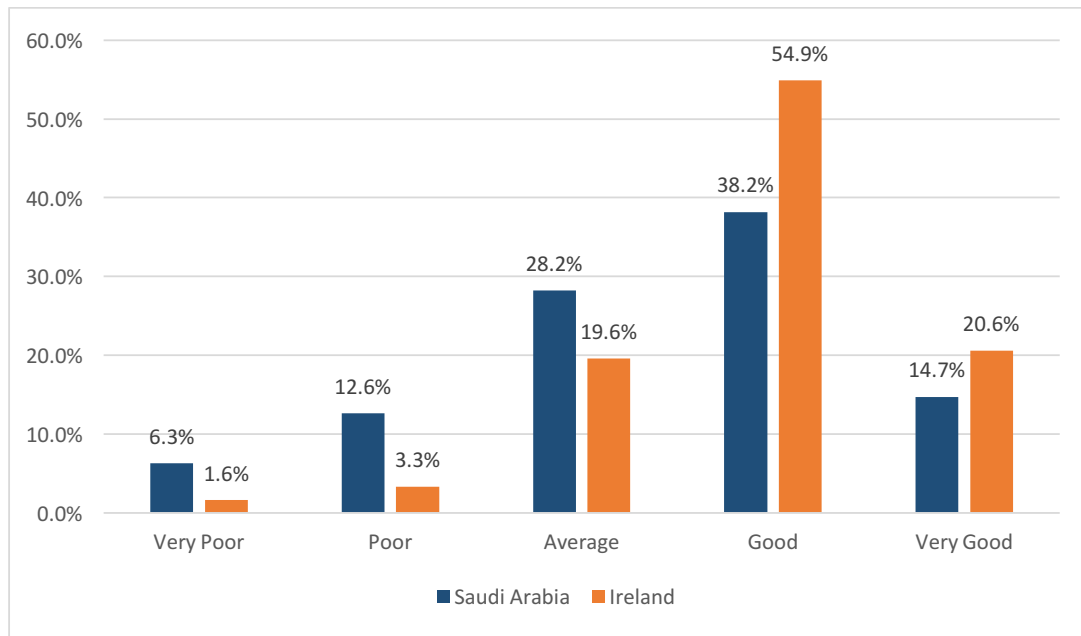


Fig 6.19. Impact of celebrity branding on UCSCP on taking a purchase decision

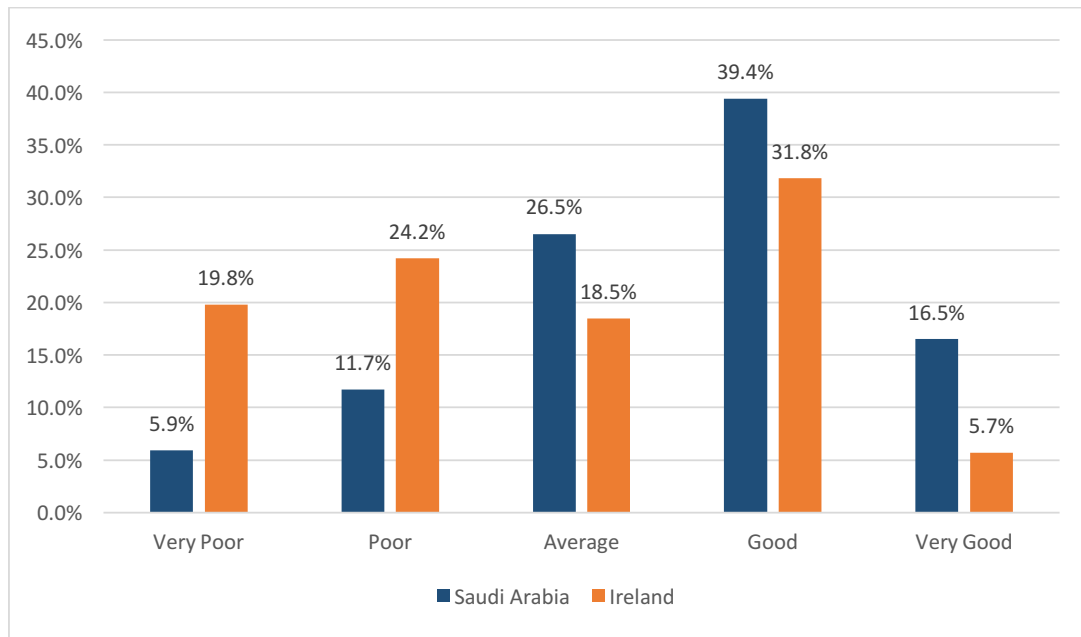


Fig 6.20. Impact of celebrity branding on trust on UCSCP

The survey responses revealed that celebrity branding positively influences purchase decisions in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. However, it is evident from the results that the participants from Ireland (75.5%) were more influenced by celebrity branding than the participants from Saudi Arabia (52.9%), based on the combined ratings for good and very good options. Analysing the results by gender, the majority of the female participants (more than 75%) in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia were influenced by celebrity branding. However, this was not so for the male participants, reflecting the opinion that celebrity branding may not be a significant influencer for males' purchase decisions. In addition, differences can be observed with respect to celebrity branding between the two countries. The Irish participants said that celebrity branding would influence their purchase decisions, but in relation to trust, they perceived that celebrity branding would not have much impact. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, the participants perceived that celebrity branding would have a positive impact on both trust and purchase decisions.

6.4. Validation

This study developed a UCSCP based on the UCSC framework proposed in Chapter 5. The platform is used for addressing the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. This section validates the UCSCP and the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 3. Google

Analytics was used to validate the UCSCP, and PLS-SEM (using SMART PLS Version 3) was used to validate the theoretical framework.

6.4.1. Validation of the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform

The UCSCP was designed by using efficient technologies to integrate social, cultural, design, and usability elements into the S-Commerce platform. Its effective design enabled users to access the platform from various devices, as shown in Table 6.1. It is evident that the majority of the participants accessed the platform on mobile phones. Given the rapid increase in the number of mobile users across the world, it is essential that the S-Commerce platform is designed to be accessed from different devices such as mobiles and tablets.

Table 6.1: Devices used to access the UCSCP

Device	Users (%)	
	Saudi Arabia	Ireland
Mobile	56.2%	63.4%
Desktop	32.6%	29.3%
Tablet	11.2%	7.3%

It is also essential that the platform supports different browsers and operating systems, as shown in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 respectively. The UCSCP supported a number of browsers and operating systems, reflecting its flexibility, adaptability and ubiquity features.

Table 6.2: Types of browsers used to access the UCSCP

Browser	Users (%)	
	Saudi Arabia	Ireland
Safari	66.9%	72.6%
Chrome	24.6%	22.8%
Samsung Internet	5.5%	2.1%
Android Web view	0.7%	1.8%
Edge	0.7%	0.4%
Firefox	0.9%	0.3%
Opera	0.7%	-

Table 6.3: Types of OS used to access the UCSCP

Browser	Users (%)	
	Saudi Arabia	Ireland
iOS	65.1%	71.6%
Android	15.2%	17.1%
Windows	11.5%	5.2%
Macintosh	8.2%	6.1 %

Table 6.4. presents the usage statistics of the UCSCPs designed for Ireland and Saudi Arabia. Irish participants spent less time on the UCSCP compared to the Saudi Arabian participants. However, the average time spent on a page ranged from 59 seconds to 1.11 minutes, reflecting good levels of user engagement. In addition, the low bounce rates (percentage of website users who close the website after viewing only one page) for both platforms .

Table 6.4: Overall usage statistics

Platform	Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page (seconds)	Bounce Rate
Ireland	1655	59.08	32.77%
Saudi Arabia	1562	71.51	37.59%
Total	3217	62.51	34.91%

Table:6.5 Ireland platform usage statistics (top ten pages)

Pages	Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page (Seconds)	Bounce Rate
/index.html	301	72.79	28.48%
/clothing.html	106	78.40	16.67%
/index_theme2.html	85	41.18	27.63%
/index_theme1.html	63	12.04	29.14%
/electronics.html	48	24.45	38.73%
/about.html	42	42.34	52.98%
/groceries.html	40	60.58	56.43%
/clothing_theme2.html	31	42.64	37.82%
/electronics-product-1.html	31	59.60	28.19%
/clothing-product-3.html	24	70.14	26.41%
Total	771	50.42	34.25%

Table 6.6: Saudi Arabian platform usage statistics (top ten pages)

Pages	Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Bounce Rate
/index.html	332	66.23	32.26%
/electronics-product-1.html	145	48.50	51.60%
/clothing-product-1.html	138	50.64	50.00%
/index_theme2.html	117	85.08	29.80%
/index_theme1.html	162	24.64	32.10%
/clothing-product-2.html	105	56.90	26.84%
/clothing.html	131	17.09	38.51%
/groceries_theme1.html	12	199.83	49.18%
/groceries-product-1.html	12	73.71	36.39%
/groceries-product-3_theme2.html	9	11.50	31.82%
Total	1163	63.41	37.85%

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 present the usage statistics of the participants on the Saudi Arabian and Ireland platforms for the top 10 pages. The statistics reveal that the majority of the participants accessed and observed the themes feature, which integrates social and cultural elements into the platform design, indicating good experience levels.

The behavioural flow on the UCSCP shows that the participants used the themes feature most frequently on different website pages, confirming that it engaged them on the platform. The overall statistics and usage behaviour on the UCSCP indicated good user engagement levels, and proved the ability of the platform to support various devices, operating systems, and browsers. This showed its good adaptability, usability, ubiquity, and flexibility features.



Fig 6.21. Usage behaviour of users on the UCSCP

6.4.2. User-Centric S-Commerce Framework

This section validates the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.9). This study used PLS-SEM for data analysis as it has many advantages over other methods. The relevant relationships between various constructs (as shown in Table 6.7) from the UCSC model were tested and validated.

Table 6.7. Constructs in the UCSC Model

Code	Scales	Factor Loading (Saudi Arabia)	Factor Loading (Ireland)
	TRUST		
T1	Themes helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.731	0.634
T2	Integration of cultural and social aspects helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.771	0.476
T3	Product localisation features enabled me to trust the UCSCP	0.756	0.660
T4	Ratings helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.811	0.704
T5	Reviews helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.849	0.782
T6	Referrals helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.786	0.767
T7	Photos and videos helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.806	0.703
T8	Price consciousness helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.778	0.644
T9	Multi-language feature helped me to trust the UCSCP	0.736	0.485
	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS		
Ratings	Ratings are useful in decision making	0.914	0.892
Reviews	Reviews are useful in decision making	0.855	0.878
Referrals	Referrals are useful in decision making	0.893	0.878
	CULTURAL CONSTRUCTS		
PV	Photos and videos helped me with decision making	0.829	0.764
PC	Price consciousness helped me with decision making	0.835	0.714
MLF	Multi-language feature helped me with decision making	0.745	0.631
CB	Celebrity branding influenced my decision making	0.815	-0.179
THEMES	Themes helped me with decision making	0.795	0.590
	EASE OF USE		
U	Usability of UCSCP	1.00	1.00
	OBSERVATION		
L	Learnability on UCSCP	1.00	1.00
	BEHAVIOURAL CONSTRUCTS		
M	Motivation	0.883	0.893
S	Satisfaction	0.935	0.883
E	Experience	0.910	0.886
PD	Purchase Intention	1.00	1.00

Many studies have reported that factor loadings should be greater than 0.5 for the best results (Truong & McColl, 2011; Hulland, 1999), whereas in the tourism context Chen and Tsai (2007) considered 0.5 as a cut-off for acceptable loadings. Additionally, while exploring pro-environmental consumer behaviour, Ertz, Karakas and Sarigollu (2016) considered factor loadings of 0.4 and above for their confirmatory factor analysis. As identified from the literature, there is no fixed benchmarking available to identify the minimum criteria for factor loadings to identify the quality of relationships in a model. Therefore, factor loadings above 0.4 were considered to be reliable in this study. In addition, factor loading for CB in Ireland was identified to be negative. It is identified that a negative sign of loading does not indicate any meaning regarding the strength of the variable to the factor; but, it gives meaning that the variable is related in the opposite direction with the factor (Asnawi et al., 2012; Hair, 2009). Therefore CB is negatively perceived.

6.4.2.1. Reliability

The stability of the measures used in the survey can be used to identify the reliability, which should identify constant results on repetitive measurements (Sapsford, 2007). As the Cronbach reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability) calculated in this study were greater than 0.70 (as shown in Table 6.8), adequate internal consistency was achieved.

Table 6.8. Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	No of items
Saudi Arabia	0.934	0.955	23
Ireland	0.911	0.907	23

6.4.2.2. Validity

As this study is trying to identify the relationship between various constructs and a newly developed S-Commerce model, content validity and construct validity were assessed along with internal consistency. In general, composite reliability is greater than 0.6 and average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5, indicating that the reliability of this model is good (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Srinivasan et al., 2002). Accordingly, the PLS quality criteria are presented in table 6.9 reflected good quality criteria. Accordingly, the PLS quality criteria are presented in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9. PLS quality criteria overview

	Cronbach's Alpha		rho_A		Composite Reliability		Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	
	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia
BEHAVIOURAL	0.865	0.895	0.867	0.9	0.917	0.935	0.787	0.827
CULTURAL	0.823	0.863	0.642	0.865	0.669	0.901	0.851	0.647
EASE OF USE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
OBSERVATIONAL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
PURCHASE INTENTION	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SOCIAL	0.859	0.865	0.861	0.867	0.914	0.918	0.921	0.788
TRUST	0.832	0.92	0.853	0.923	0.869	0.934	0.793	0.611

- Content validity

Content validity is a way to ensure that the questionnaire measures drawn are relevant to the material under investigation (Straub, 1989). In order to achieve high content validity, the questionnaire measures were derived by considering the various studies related to the different elements of the research model, and they were piloted with 12 students in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. The constructs in the model are derived from validated theories: the Social Commerce Adoption model (Hajli, 2013), the TPB (Ajzen, 1991), OLT (Bandura, 1992), and the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In addition, the cultural constructs of images and videos, price consciousness, themes, MLF, and celebrity branding were integrated into the model as described in Chapter 3. Thus, the content validity was ensured by deriving the constructs from validated theoretical models and integrating cultural constructs. In addition, face validity was achieved by showing the survey to untrained people in order to make sure that the questions were understood by the respondents. Accordingly, the survey was conducted after following these steps.

- Construct validity:

Discriminant validity and convergent validity can be used to check construct validity (Chin et al., 1997). Convergent validity is tested by considering the AVE (as shown in Table 6.9), which should be at least 0.5, according to Wixom and Watson (2001). Accordingly, PLS was used to determine the quality criteria, which showed an AVE of more than 0.5 for all constructs. As a result, this research achieved convergent validity. PLS was performed for discriminant validity (Table 6.10), reflecting the path coefficients.

Table 6.10. Path Coefficients (by means, Std.Dev)

	Original Sample (O)		Sample Mean (M)		Standard Deviation (STDEV)		T Statistics (O/STDEV)		P Values	Decision	
	Saudi Arabia (SA)	Ireland (I)	SA	I	SA	I	SA	I	SA	I	
BEHAVIOURAL -> PURCHASE INTENTION	0.084	0.359	0.081	0.359	0.106	0.105	10.796	3.417	0.013	0	Supported at $p < .05$
BEHAVIOURAL -> TRUST	0.018	0.062	0.019	0.065	0.016	0.021	11.174	2.941	0.02	0.002	Supported at $p < .05$
CULTURAL -> TRUST	0.621	0.533	0.62	0.526	0.022	0.03	27.769	17.538	0	0	Supported at $p < .01$
EASE OF USE -> PURCHASE INTENTION	0.129	-0.021	0.133	-0.022	0.113	0.074	1.138	0.278	0.128	0.39	Not Supported
Ease of Use -> TRUST	0.105	0.004	0.105	0.005	0.019	0.013	5.634	0.264	0	0.396	Supported in SA at $p < 0.01$; Not supported in I
OBSERVATIONAL -> PURCHASE INTENTION	0.131	0.092	0.13	0.092	0.13	0.091	1.005	1.006	0.158	0.157	Not supported in SA and I
SOCIAL -> TRUST	0.287	0.529	0.288	0.531	0.018	0.029	15.708	18.079	0	0	Supported at $p < .01$
TRUST->PURCHASE INTENTION	0.194	0.123	0.191	0.121	0.122	0.105	1.596	1.373	0.036	0.021	Supported at $p < .05$

There is no exact threshold to determine discriminant validity; however, if one of the measurement items loads with a 0.70 coefficient on its latent construct, then the loadings of all the measurement items on any latent construct but their own should be below 0.60 (Gefen & Straub, 2005, p.98). This is presented in Table 6.11, based on which it can be concluded that this model has discriminant validity.

Table 6.11. Cross-Loading

	BEHAVIOURAL		CULTURAL		EASE OF USE		OBSERVATION		PD		SOCIAL		TRUST	
	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia	Ireland	Saudi Arabia
E	0.886	0.91	0.697	0.789	0.414	0.785	0.698	0.826	0.424	0.434	0.603	0.785	0.74	0.818
S	0.883	0.935	0.639	0.766	0.396	0.754	0.64	0.771	0.44	0.436	0.456	0.716	0.63	0.777
M	0.893	0.883	0.62	0.7	0.378	0.68	0.614	0.711	0.499	0.396	0.548	0.645	0.678	0.703
CB	-0.075	0.707	-0.178	0.815	-0.156	0.688	-0.084	0.638	-0.024	0.445	-0.083	0.893	-0.108	0.811
MLF	0.463	0.611	0.617	0.745	0.327	0.633	0.471	0.623	0.331	0.345	0.186	0.579	0.457	0.736
PC	0.424	0.702	0.725	0.835	0.18	0.657	0.374	0.628	0.332	0.357	0.486	0.651	0.648	0.778
THEMES	0.463	0.655	0.575	0.795	0.36	0.687	0.539	0.677	0.322	0.424	0.191	0.646	0.448	0.771
PV	0.647	0.654	0.774	0.829	0.191	0.671	0.437	0.642	0.313	0.369	0.501	0.687	0.705	0.806
U	0.446	0.816	0.368	0.83	1	1	0.645	0.838	0.245	0.474	0.286	0.777	0.373	0.859
L	0.734	0.848	0.646	0.798	0.645	0.838	1	1	0.428	0.471	0.551	0.759	0.691	0.824
PD	0.512	0.465	0.466	0.483	0.245	0.474	0.428	0.471	1	1	0.308	0.453	0.45	0.484
RATINGS	0.555	0.726	0.498	0.783	0.257	0.711	0.508	0.726	0.298	0.39	0.892	0.914	0.799	0.849
REFERRALS	0.57	0.669	0.509	0.698	0.263	0.669	0.475	0.655	0.27	0.373	0.878	0.855	0.783	0.786
REVIEWS	0.477	0.707	0.413	0.815	0.237	0.688	0.477	0.638	0.246	0.445	0.878	0.893	0.724	0.811
T1	0.476	0.608	0.487	0.629	0.232	0.659	0.42	0.611	0.266	0.379	0.393	0.591	0.622	0.731
T2	0.463	0.655	0.575	0.795	0.36	0.687	0.539	0.677	0.322	0.424	0.191	0.646	0.448	0.771
T3	0.523	0.594	0.563	0.673	0.282	0.665	0.495	0.588	0.379	0.308	0.357	0.581	0.639	0.756
T4	0.477	0.707	0.413	0.815	0.237	0.688	0.477	0.638	0.246	0.445	0.879	0.893	0.724	0.811
T5	0.555	0.726	0.498	0.783	0.257	0.711	0.508	0.726	0.298	0.39	0.892	0.914	0.799	0.849
T6	0.57	0.669	0.509	0.698	0.263	0.669	0.475	0.655	0.27	0.373	0.878	0.855	0.783	0.786
T7	0.647	0.654	0.774	0.829	0.191	0.671	0.437	0.642	0.313	0.369	0.501	0.687	0.705	0.806
T8	0.424	0.702	0.725	0.835	0.18	0.657	0.374	0.628	0.332	0.357	0.486	0.651	0.648	0.778
T9	0.463	0.611	0.617	0.745	0.327	0.633	0.471	0.623	0.331	0.345	0.186	0.579	0.457	0.736

Table 6.12. R-Squares

	R-Square (Saudi Arabia)	R-Square (Ireland)	Result
PD	0.256	0.274	Weak
TRUST	0.973	0.96	High

According to Chin (1998), an R-square value above 0.67 is considered to be high, and R-square values ranging from 0.19 to 0.33 are considered to be weak. Table 6.12 presents the R-squares for Saudi Arabian and Irish models. The values for the Saudi Arabian model indicated that 26% of the variance in purchase decision was accounted for by the constructs in the UCSC model, and 97% of the variance in trust was accounted for by the social, behavioural, and cultural constructs. Similarly, the R-squares for the Irish model indicated that 27% of the variance in purchase decision was accounted for by the constructs in the UCSC model, and 96% of the variance in trust was accounted for by the social, behavioural, and cultural constructs.

Table 6.13. F-Square values

	PD		TRUST	
	SA	I	SA	I
BEHAVIOURAL	0.002	0.058	0.003	0.036
CULTURAL			2.47	3.123
EASE OF USE	0.005	0	0.103	0
OBSERVATION	0.005	0.003		
PD				
SOCIAL			0.705	4.266
TRUST	0.01	0.007		

The F-Square values are presented in Table 6.13. As specified by Chin (1998), F-square values above 0.35 are considered to indicate a large effect, and values less than 0.1 indicate a small effect. Therefore, as identified from Table 6.13, culture and social constructs were identified as having a large effect in Saudi Arabia and Ireland, while the remaining factors had a small effect.

Table 6.14. Model fit criteria

	Saturated Model		Estimated Model	
	SA	I	SA	I
SRMR	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.087

The goodness of fit (GoF) has been developed as an overall measure of model fit for PLS-SEM. However, the GoF cannot reliably distinguish valid from invalid models and its applicability is limited to certain model setups, such as PLS multigroup analysis (PLS-MGA) (Smart PLS, 2020). Therefore, additional methods such as SRMR (Standardised Root Mean Square Residual), Chi-Squared, and NFI (Normed Fit Index) can be used for assessing model validity (Hair et al., 2017). The SRMR is defined as the difference between the observed correlation and the model implied correlation matrix, which was introduced in PLS-SEM as a GoF measure by Henseler et al. (2014). Thus, it allows the average magnitude of the discrepancies between observed and expected correlations to be assessed as an absolute measure of (model) fit criterion. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), a value less than 0.10 or 0.08 is considered to be a good fit. As shown in Table 6.14, the SRMR values for the Saudi Arabian and Irish models were 0.087, indicating a good fit model.

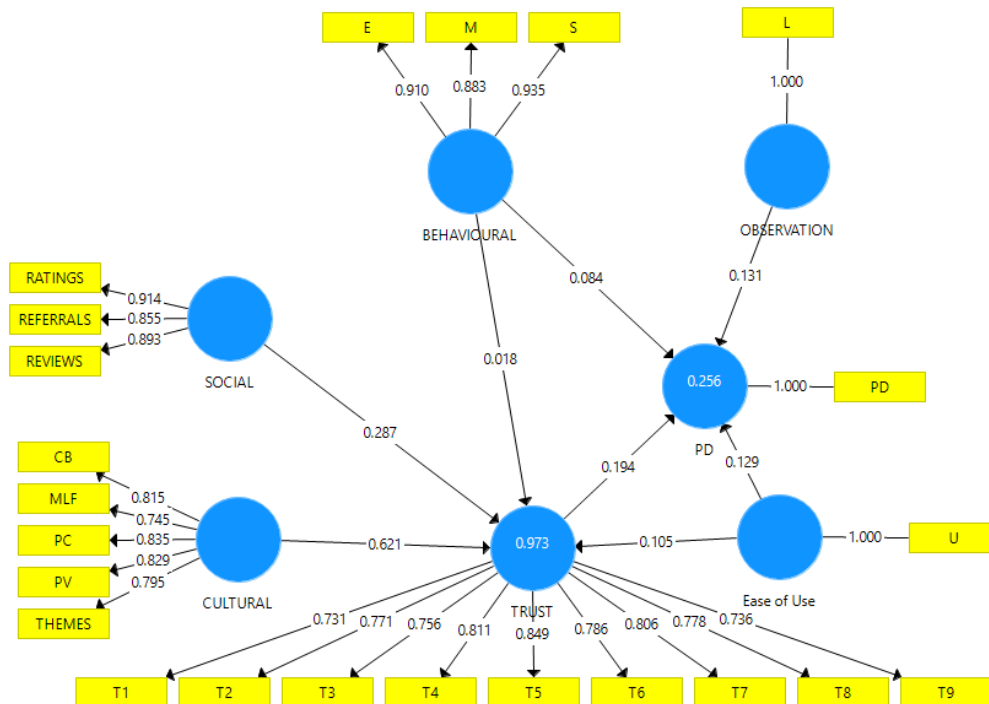


Fig 6.22. PLS structural model for Saudi Arabia

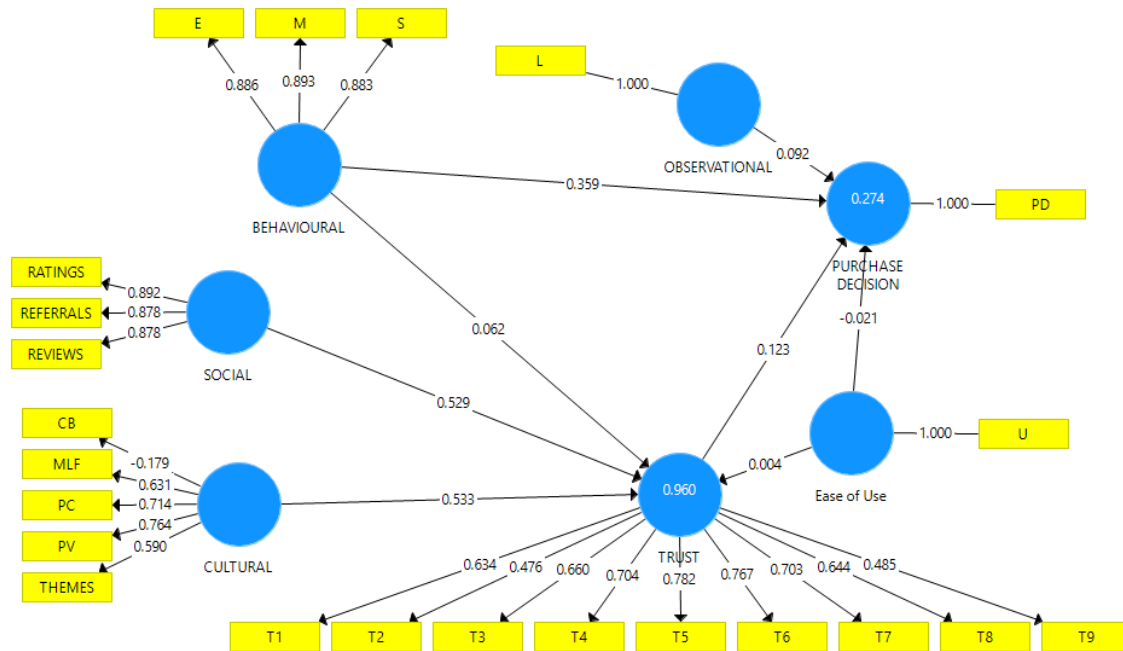


Fig 6.23. PLS structural model for Ireland

The PLS method test results for the Saudi Arabian and Irish platforms are shown in Figures 6.22 and 6.23 respectively. R-Square values and structural paths are used to assess model validity (Chwelos et al., 2001). Bootstrapping was performed on both models to test the statistical significance of path constructs' coefficients by means of t-tests. Ease of use (P -value = 0.128, $>.05$) and observation (learning) (P -value = 0.158, $>.05$) were identified as not having a significant impact on purchase decisions in Saudi Arabia, and similarly, ease of use (P -value = 0.39, $P>.05$) and learning (P -value = 0.156, $P>.05$) were not significant for purchase decision, and ease of use was not significant for trust (P -value = 0.396, $P>.05$) in Ireland (see Table 6.10). In addition, psychological (behavioural) constructs and social constructs were identified as significant at $p < 0.05$ level, as presented in Table 6.10.

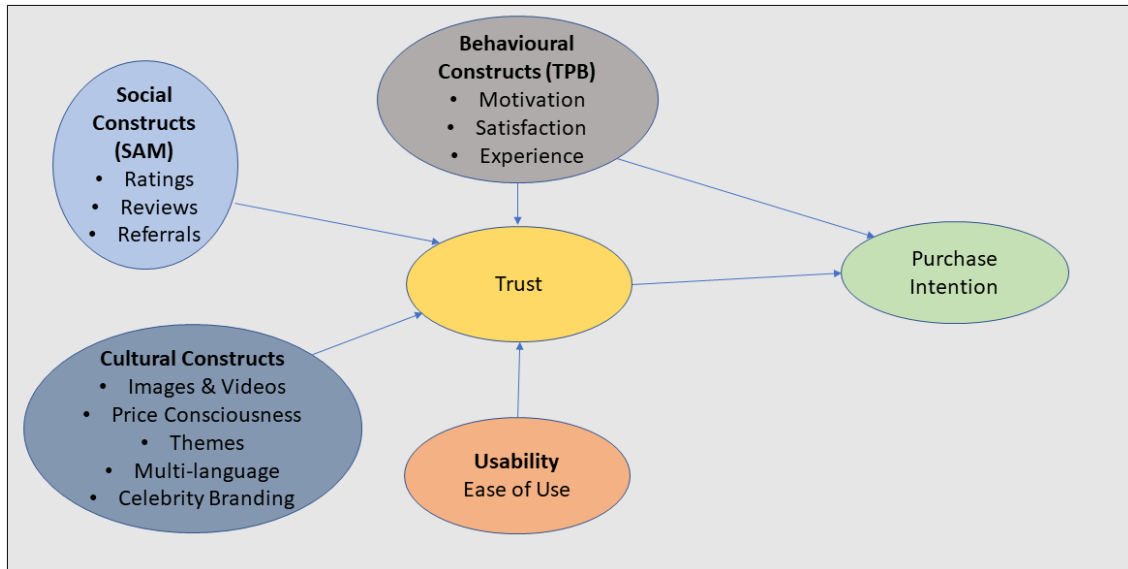


Fig 6.24. Modified Theoretical Framework for Saudi Arabia (developed by researcher)

As ease of use (usability) and observational (learning) were identified as insignificant (in relation to purchase intention) in the Saudi Arabian model, the proposed theoretical model was modified for Saudi Arabia, as shown in Figure 6.24.

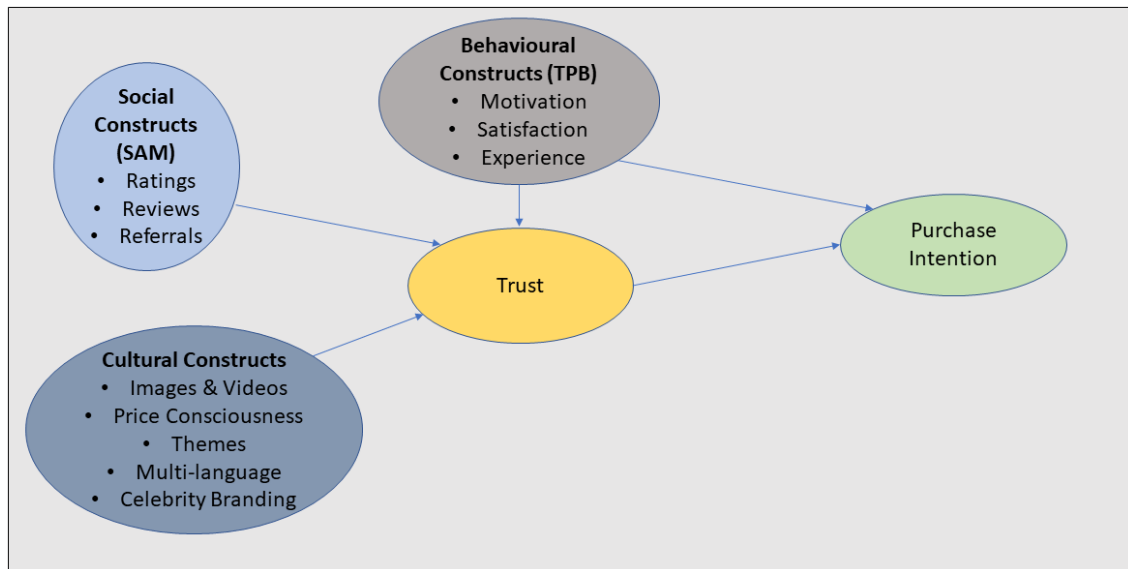


Fig 6.25. Modified Theoretical Framework for Ireland (developed by researcher)

Similarly, as ease of use (usability) was identified as insignificant for both purchase decision and trust, and observational (learning) for purchase intention, the proposed theoretical model was modified for Ireland as shown in Figure 6.25. Thus, the findings

indicate that social, behavioural, and cultural elements have a strong impact on purchase intentions and trust in S-Commerce platforms.

6.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed the survey responses for the UCSCP, specifically the influence of product localisation, themes, cultural integration, reviews, ratings, referrals, photos and videos, price consciousness, and MLF on users' motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability, and experience. In addition, the impact of these features on the decision-making process and the establishment of trust was also evaluated. The findings revealed that most of the features had a positive impact on all the factors measured: motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability, experience, decision making, and trust. In addition, young participants and female participants were found to be more influenced by the look and feel of the platform, through features such as themes, photos and videos. On the other hand, male participants were more influenced by informational constructs such as ratings, reviews, and price consciousness. The MLF was found to be an important feature in Saudi Arabia, but in Ireland it was not considered to be very important.

In addition, the platform was analysed using Google Analytics, which revealed that the UCSCP was effectively designed. In addition, the theoretical model was validated using PLS-SEM, which identified that ease of use and observational learning were insignificant for purchase decisions in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, ease of use was identified as being insignificant for trust and purchase decisions, and observational learning was identified as insignificant for purchase decisions in Ireland. Accordingly, the theoretical model was modified for both Saudi Arabia and Ireland, reflecting the influence of cultural elements on the platform.

The following chapter discusses the qualitative findings from the students and experts' evaluation of the UCSCP. These findings are discussed in relation to the literature review and the findings from the quantitative (survey) analysis presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7: Qualitative Analysis

This chapter analyses the qualitative data collected in this study using students interviews and experts' interviews. Accordingly, the structure of the chapter is organized in relevance to the different types of data collected and analysed as shown in Figure 7.1.

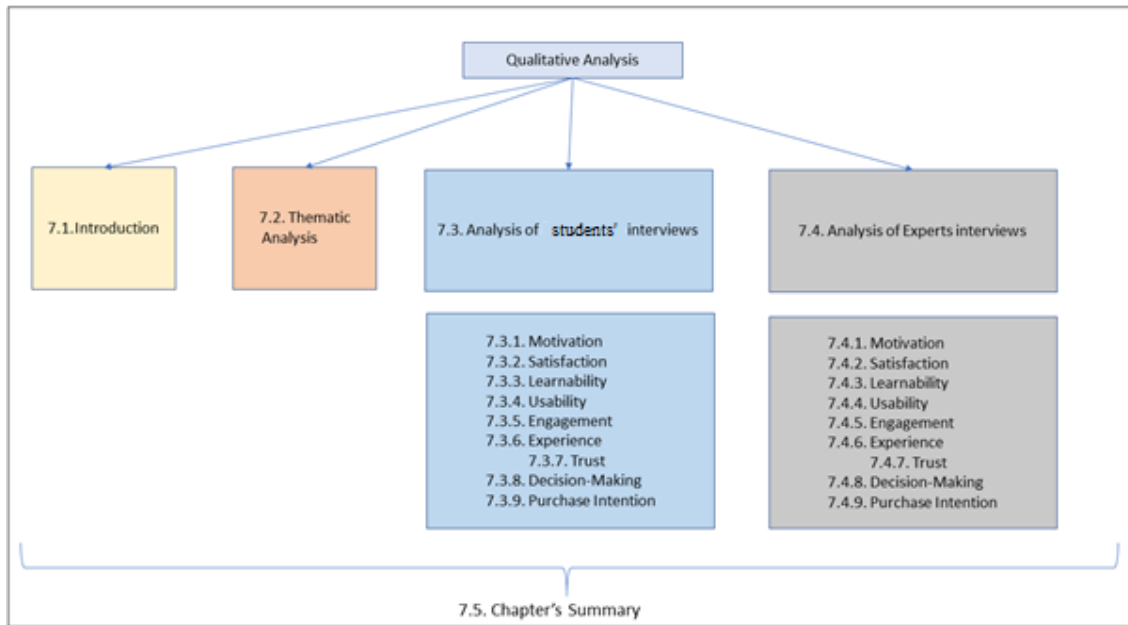


Fig 7.1. Chapter outline

7.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the qualitative data collected in this study using semi-structured interviews with students and experts. Student interviews were used to analyse the impact of the UCSCP features on the users and to identify differences in the preferences of users from Saudi Arabia and Ireland. As identified from the quantitative analysis (Chapter 6), there were differences in the preferences of the Saudi Arabian and Irish participants with respect to various aspects, such as the factors leading to motivation, learnability, usability, decision making, purchase intentions etc. The quantitative analysis highlights the differences but it does not investigate the type of differences. Therefore, qualitative analysis is used to address this drawback, as it can be used to analyse these differences in detail. Accordingly, interviews were conducted in Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The demographic details are presented in the table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Demographics of student interviewees in Ireland and Saudi Arabia

Country	Interviewee (Referred as)	Age	Gender	Education
Ireland	Interviewee 1 (FG-IR1)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 2 (FG-IR2)	25	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 3 (FG-IR3)	23	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 4 (FG-IR4)	24	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 5 (FG-IR5)	25	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 6 (FG-IR6)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 7 (FG-IR7)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 8 (FG-IR8)	23	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 9 (FG-IR9)	26	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 10 (FG-IR10)	25	Female	Post-graduate
Saudi Arabia	Interviewee 11 (FG-SA1)	25	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 12 (FG- SA2)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 13 (FG- SA3)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 14 (FG- SA4)	24	Male	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 15 (FG- SA5)	23	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 16 (FG- SA6)	25	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 17 (FG- SA7)	26	Female	Post-graduate
	Interviewee 18 (FG- SA8)	24	Female	Post-graduate

A total of 18 participants were included in the student interviews. All of them were post-graduate students. Ten post-graduate students (five males and five females) in Ireland, and eight post-graduate students (four males and four females) in Saudi Arabia were included, as shown in Table 7.1. In addition, to further validate the UCSCP, interviews with experts were conducted in order to validate various features of the platform. The details of the experts are provided in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2. Demographics of expert participants in Ireland and Saudi Arabia

Country	Interviewee (Referred as)	Age	Gender	Profession
Ireland	Interviewee 1 (IR1)	39	Male	Manager at digital business company.
	Interviewee 2 (IR2)	38	Female	E-marketing manager
	Interviewee 3 (IR3)	42	Male	Lecturer at DCU
	Interviewee 4 (IR4)	35	Female	E-Commerce design specialist
	Interviewee 5 (IR5)	41	Female	E-Sales manager
Saudi Arabia	Interviewee 1 (SA1)	36	Male	E-Marketing manager
	Interviewee 2 (SA2)	39	Female	Commerce lecturer at university
	Interviewee 3 (SA3)	42	Female	Business analyst
	Interviewee 4 (SA4)	38	Male	E-Marketing manager

Five experts were interviewed in Ireland and four in Saudi Arabia. The interviewees in both countries were identified to be working in diverse areas related to online marketing, sales, business design and analysis, as shown in Table 7.2.

7.2. Thematic Analysis

Analysing the text from the student interviews resulted in 228 codes, and the text from the expert interviews resulted in 267 codes. The identified codes were reviewed by the researcher to identify duplicates or codes that reflected similar opinions, and these were deleted or grouped together, resulting in a final list of codes for the student interviews (192), and expert interviews (206). The identified codes were then categorised under various themes that were identified as the most appropriate and relevant. Nine themes were identified using thematic analysis in NVivo software: engagement, motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability, experience, trust, decision making, and purchase intention. The relationships between themes were developed for use in the analysis (as shown in Figure 7.2).

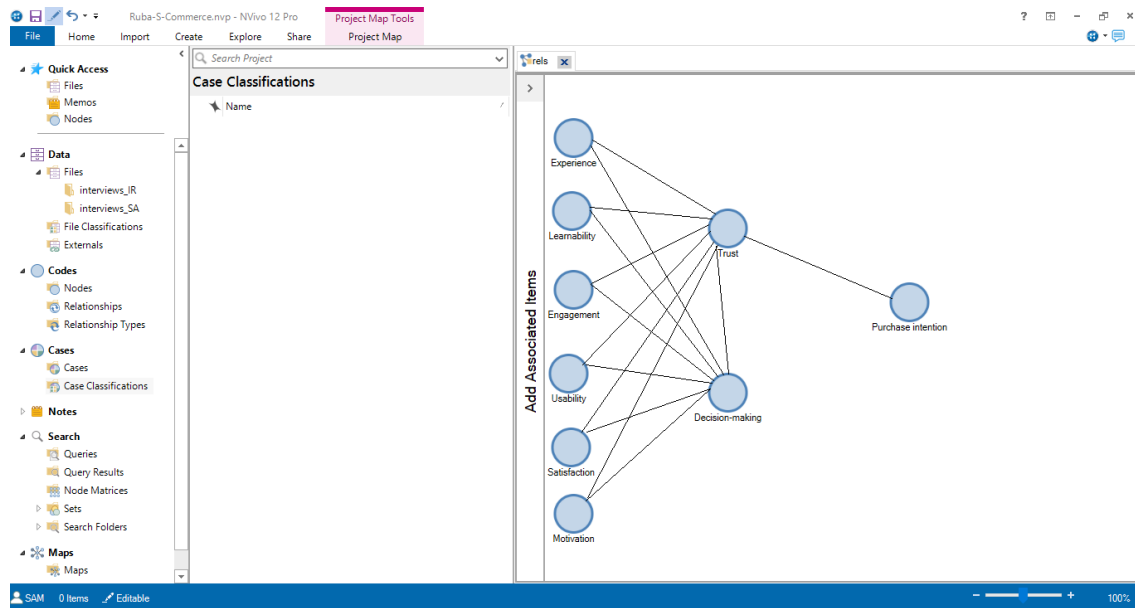


Fig 7.2. Relationships between identified themes

The identified themes were applied to both expert and student interview codes. The thematic analysis of the student interviews focused on identifying the differences in the participants' opinions in two different cultural contexts (Ireland and Saudi Arabia). Accordingly, the identified themes were used to reflect the difference and similarities in the opinions of the participants from Ireland and Saudi Arabia with respect to various factors of influence on S-Commerce platforms. Similarly, the thematic analysis of the experts' interviews focused on validating the UCSCP and also investigating the relationships between variables that influence trust, decision making, and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. Accordingly, the interview data are analysed separately for the students and experts in the following sections.

7.3. Analysis of Student Interviews

7.3.1. Motivation

Motivation in the context of this study refers to any factor that interests the users and motivates them to engage with or make a decision on the UCSCP. One of the motivating factors identified by the interviewees was celebrity endorsement. Endorsement by celebrities might motivate users to buy that product or connect themselves to it. In this context, FG_IR3 stated that:

“There's the use of like celebrities, celebrity images to kind of give you an image of where you'd be motivated by that product, not exactly where you'd be, but the feel to it”.

This statement reflects the establishment of a connection between the product and the users as a result of the fact that it is endorsed by a celebrity. In addition, reflecting seasonal festivals and traditions through the design concepts on an S-Commerce platform could motivate the users to utilise the platform. Accordingly, FG_IR8, referring to the colours and themes presented on the UCSCP, stated that:

“It's going to be everywhere. And then when it comes to Easter, it's more like colour wise they are looking to it. And then when it comes to Christmas, right, the traditional. So, it's something that depends on the season of a year”.

Presenting the platform design in accordance with the seasons and traditions could initiate a sense of motivation to engage and buy on the S-Commerce platform. However, FG_SA1 and FG_IR2 voiced contrasting views to those of FG_IR3, stating that they were not motivated by celebrity endorsement of products or the design, but that rather they were motivated by features such as quality and price, and the discounts offered during seasonal promotions. Accordingly, in relation to the price comparison feature on UCSCP, FG_IR5 stated:

“I think that that can be a game can be a big deal for me anyway through the price comparison. I think that's very important. And that's certainly something that I would use, and it's not something that you see in a lot of websites either. So, it's a unique feature, which could motivate me in purchasing.”

The discounts offered by S-Commerce platforms in relation to the cultural and social events of a specific country attract a large number of users, and as identified from the above statement, price is one factor that motivates users to shop on platforms during these social and cultural events. However, considering the socio-cultural factors, others apart from price were identified as factors for motivation. As FG_SA4 stated,

“I think there is a factor for that. Like if we would want to buy local products and everything, like if I if I'm given an option of buying a local product and buying a foreign product, I would prefer that local product to help local industries”.

This statement reflects a strong attachment of the users towards their Saudi community, which motivates them to buy local products. On the other hand, FG_IR6 from Ireland stated that although he liked local products, this did not motivate him to make a purchase decision; quality was one of the major factors that motivated him. However, he stated that:

“if the local products offer me a great quality, I will prefer them, but do also consider the price. I would say a foreign product with good quality a cheap rate motivates me in buying rather than a local product with good quality at a high price”.

Therefore, it can be understood that features such as themes (colours and design) have a larger impact on females (FG_IR3; FG_IR8); than on males (FG_IR1; FG_SA1). In addition, Saudi participants preferred local products over foreign, whereas Irish participants preferred quality as a motivating factor, and socio-cultural relevance was pushed into second place. In addition, comparing the overall features on the UCSCP that could motivate users, FG_SA6 stated that:

“Seems like a pretty solid application and has all the features that are required, especially ratings and reviews, the price comparisons in particular, really motivates, especially when they're getting value products at lower price, they're far more likely to buy the product”.

Similar opinions were gathered from the Irish participants, including FG_IR4 and FG_IR7, who stated that UCSCP features such as reviews and ratings, referrals, and price comparison motivated them to use the platform and make a purchase decision.

7.3.2. Satisfaction

In relation to the design of the UCSCP (MLF, cultural integration) and the themes feature, the majority of the interviewees stated that they were satisfied. In addition, social elements such as ratings and reviews through which information about products was presented, also contributed to the higher levels of satisfaction. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR8 stated that:

“To reflect my views on themes, I'd say it does play a huge important thing, especially like the colours font and attractive colour or maybe the bright colours. The brighter ideas I see, the more I have the visual satisfaction”.

Similarly, interviewee FG_SA6 stated that:

“It will be interesting to some people for the browsing, for them to actually be able to like if they see the day changing themes, that changes the culture that the icons play”.

In the context of design and themes, FG_IR7 stated that:

“And it's kind of ... it's more towards male and then because the original theme is a bit feminine, I suppose, whereas that was a bit more masculine”.

This showed that design and themes on S-Commerce platforms can be relevant to both males and females, and they feel satisfied when the design reflects their tastes or interests. In addition, interviewees from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia, including FG_IR4, FG_IR7, FG_SA3, and FG_SA7, expressed similar views that they were satisfied with the type of information (reviews, ratings, recommendations, and price comparison) available on the UCSCP.

7.3.3. Learnability

Learnability is associated with how effective the UCSCP is in facilitating learning about its products and services. In this context, the MLF, ratings, reviews, photos and videos were identified as being most influential for enabling learning. Reflecting on the importance of providing multi-language options on platforms, interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“And the bi-lingual aspect is also important. It's inclusive. Though I don't associate with Irish and English, but if I'm an Irish person, I think it's easier for me to adjust to and trying to be loyal to this website ... and yeah, multi-language feature enables them in understanding the information about products more effectively”.

Similarly, FG_IR5 suggested adding more languages, in addition to Irish and English, which would be useful for a larger section of people in Ireland:

“People would definitely appreciate being able to browse as well as offshore, Spanish or French or whoever is browsing sites have the ability to use a broad language. Definitely helps.”

However, Saudi participants did not recommend using more languages, as they (FG_SA2; FG_SA8) preferred to use Arabic, in spite of being good at English. This indicated an inclination to use the local language as a medium on UCSCPs. Accordingly, FG_SA8 stated that:

“I feel a sense of ease and comfort in browsing platform in Arabic than in English because I feel I can learn easily in Arabic rather than in English.”

While the Irish participants preferred the option of more languages on the platform, the Saudi participants preferred browsing the platform in Arabic, reflecting a strong attachment towards their native language. In addition, photos and videos were identified as one of the major factors that facilitated learning. In this context, interviewee FG_IR 7, in reference to the use of photos and videos, said:

“It could be in a position where I'm helping someone who can't read English or Irish, but they know what it is.”

Similarly, linking learnability to purchase decisions, FG_IR 4 stated that:

“Like for example, if you want to buy something and then see a video, you're usually more inclined to want to buy it because like you watch the video and then you get more interested in the rating and review. You know what you're buying as well as finding that the video as well, because you just know more about what you're buying”.

Similarly, FG_SA2 stated that:

“While browsing and reading reviews in Arabic on the platform, I feel connected to the website, as I learn more and more on it ... and at some point, I may intentionally buy a product”

Thus, providing more languages could help to target larger sections of the audience; however, in some contexts, the multi-language option may not be considered a useful option, when the users can browse in their native language. Similarly, photos, videos, and reviews enhance the learning process, which could also influence users' purchase decisions.

7.3.4. Usability

Usability in the context of this study relates to the ease of use of the UCSCP, i.e., how effective the UCSCP features are in facilitating use of the platform. One of the most influential features identified was price comparison. Interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“It's helpful. It saves me time from going around websites to go and check if they have and how much. Yes, it's very helpful”.

Similarly, interviewee FG_SA5 commented that:

“Using features like reviews and ratings along with price comparison would enable me in quickly taking a decision on purchase”.

The above statement links ease of use and purchase intention/decision making. Therefore, the more usable the platform, the more it facilitates decision making and purchases. Considering the UCSCP features, interviewee FG_IR1 stated that:

“Yes, the user-centric platform seems to be far more interactive and in terms of like reviews and the quantity and the colour preferences that he has options as others, like multiple photos”.

Similarly, referring to the MLF, interviewee FG_IR4 linked interactivity and usability:

“You know, you can have multiple people using the same platform and they can change it right now as far as it's only through language, English, Irish. But if you have multiple languages there, that would be quite interesting, you know, because

you can have various nationalities be able to see it in their natural language, which is that I think that's probably of the two interaction bits of the word, making it more interactive”.

Both Irish and Saudi participants expressed the view that the MLF, reviews, ratings, and price comparison facilitated ease of use.

7.3.5. Engagement

Engagement in this context relates to how the effective the UCSCP features are in gaining the attention of the users and keeping them engaged on the platform. As identified from the findings, various features of the UCSCP facilitate engagement. For instance, focusing on the availability of information, interviewee, FG_SA7 stated that:

“This a more a lot more information in there. So, I actually spend time on the website”.

Themes was identified to be another important feature that not only attracts users’ attention but also keeps them engaged. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR2 stated that:

“I agree with that because the way you see events like you're going towards Christmas, and then the listed website will have more features or more themes of Christmas that read officially as a Christmas colour. Yeah, I would go into that, without any doubt. Well, as if I am to see a website without those themes, it'll be like, Oh, what's in there? I shouldn't waste my time going into it”.

In addition, developing themes according to seasons, local culture and traditions also reflects the business’s positive attitude and care for culture and tradition. In this context, interviewee FG_SA4 stated that:

“Oh, it also kind of shows that the business is interested. Yeah. Like it keeps up with time, so it knows what's happening. So, it's kind of the depths that that that emotional side, you know, for you to like engage them”.

However, interviewee,FG_IR9 viewed it as a more business-related approach than a customer-centric approach, stating that:

“It's like it's intelligent marketing. For example, you see a lot of the shops using like the colour red to appeal to persons interests and tastes and all sorts”.

With respect to the themes and design of the UCSCP, some of the participants commented that they not only attracted users but also engaged them on the platform. For example, interviewee FG_IR 3 stated:

“It will make me to go deeper and then you will say more about all what is there on their website”.

Interviewee FG_SA8 further commented that:

“There's the likelihood that they might have more customers going to their website to search for some other things just because of the features that they have. It's like even if you're not interested in it”.

In addition, the localisation feature was identified as one of the factors that promotes engagement on and use of UCSCPs. Accordingly, interviewee FG_SA4 stated that:

“I think bringing localisation aspect into account is beneficial. It just depends on what the product is, but I feel people would be inclined towards the platform that supports local products”.

Features such as themes and information (ratings and reviews) were viewed as factors that promote engagement on UCSCPs. However, the Saudi participants identified localisation in addition to themes and information availability as an important factor that promotes engagement.

7.3.6. Experience

Experience in the context of this study relates to the users' involvement with the UCSCP, identifying it from both positive and negative perspectives. An effective S-Commerce platform should provide a positive user experience through various approaches such as effective and attractive designs, information availability, learnability, enhanced interactivity and usability, etc. A lot of time and effort has to be put into a platform in order to provide a good experience for its users. Accordingly, in relation to current trends, interviewee FG_IR7 stated that:

“They want more details. They want to be trendy. They want to keep up with things. So, they expect everyone else that's trying to get the attention to be there as well. Yeah. Keeping up with trends ensures good experience”.

Users need more details and need other influential aspects in order to lend their attention. Focusing on these, the UCSCP provided detailed information through ratings, reviews, photos, videos, and price comparison features, which facilitate decision making. In addition, themes were used to present the platform in a trendy way, integrating cultural and traditional aspects. The platform has a balanced set of features in order to provide a good user experience. Accordingly, FG_IR10 stated that:

“There's a lot of features in there that can easily persuade somebody to go into further into the website itself. It has a few more influences, these additional photos”.

In addition, specifically referring to themes, interviewee FG_IR8 stated that:

“Obviously, I do like regional kind of themes like for the Irish dancing or whatever kind of a bit from a middle majority to a platform as well as also people can identify with that a bit more as well”.

However, Saudi interviewees FG_SA2 and FG_SA5 preferred using a single theme rather than multiple themes. In this context, FG_SA2 stated that:

“I've got to think maybe it was wonderful to use theme. You recognise what Amazon has its kind of the map like the one theme like you regular is what I thought I was on straight away because people might not recognise a theme if its debut in one way, one day and another day another way. Maybe just have a single theme could be beneficial”.

On the other hand, a few interviewees (FG_IR3 and FG_IR4) from Ireland preferred multiple themes as an effective feature providing a good experience. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR3 stated that:

“Seasonal themes would be interesting. And you know, you did Change Themes, which is kind of a cool feature. What kind of an agreements where it's you know what I thought I wouldn't see as a necessity for me to want to shop on this web so that the fact I can change themes”.

Whereas FG_SA6 stated that:

“I think the language change is probably more interesting than that. In addition, reviews and ratings, especially price comparison and local products make it more interesting, which we usually don't observe in other sites”.

Thus, it can be concluded that differences exist between Saudi and Irish participants in relation to experiences. While Saudi participants preferred a single theme and more informational features such as ratings, reviews, price comparison, and MLF to provide a good experience, most of the Irish participants viewed the design of the UCSCP and the themes as the most important features for providing a good experience.

7.3.7. Trust

Trust is one of the most important factors for determining the effectiveness and efficiency of an S-Commerce platform. It is considered to be a mediating factor between various influencing variables and purchase intention on UCSCPs. It was evaluated based on the

interviewees' experiences of using UCSCPs. In this context, the views of participants were gathered in relation to UCSCPs, and various factors that would influence their establishment of trust. Considering the features and functionalities of UCSCPs, interviewee FG_IR2 stated that:

“No. Well trust is quite rare. Now they were they would be putting in equally shows and the like. But I wouldn't trust exactly what they are doing. Yeah. So, it's like they can just catch my attention. But not to really catch my interest in browsing with whatever is in their website that will at least keep me going”.

This reflects the idea that although the platform cannot be related to gaining trust, its features would catch the attention of the users and engage them on the platform. However, most of the interviewees considered different features of the UCSCP to be related to trust establishment. The features presented on the UCSCP are based on the requirements of S-Commerce users and they are presented in a unique way, such as integrating them into themes and design, which gives it the appearance of a professional platform. Focusing on the presentation, interviewee FG_SA1 stated that:

“I think one of the biggest barriers to people in online shopping websites is a website that doesn't look professional because people find maybe that they can't trust. But this actually has an effect. You don't realise it, but there still is”.

This suggests that some features can have an effect on the establishment of trust, although people do not realise it initially. In addition, referrals were regarded by the interviewees as more influential than ratings and reviews for establishing trust, as the opinions of friends and colleagues were more relevant than the opinions of other unknown users on the platform, because they knew their likes and dislikes. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR7 stated that:

“How about referrals that the recommendation if feel free to come and do to buy from this website to tell us that it is it's got a bigger weight because the moment my friend is able to refer, she sees there is a need or an assist. So, she will know, OK, if this person is like this, I think this product will fit them better from this brand”.

However, interviewee FG_SA4 opined that ratings and reviews were more important, stating that:

“I feel ratings and reviews are more important, using which I get to know more about the products, and this information would help me in gaining trust on the platform. However, it needs to be verified if those ratings and reviews are genuine”.

Looking at the design and information presented on the UCSCP, interviewee FG_IR6 stated that:

“They know exactly why they are in business and they know how they can try to get customers in store”.

This reflects a positive attitude towards the platform, which could facilitate having trust in the platform. In this context, focusing on the promotion of localised products and the integration of cultural aspects into the design, interviewee FG_SA6 stated that:

“Promoting local products on the platform, such as dates would make me more attached to the website, as I feel a sense of connection between my feelings and the products, and I would definitely reflect more positive attitude towards the website and trust it”.

Having more faith in something that comes from where you are, rather than something from other region or country, is one aspect identified by the Saudi participants. The platform’s localisation feature made Saudi users feel more connected to the platform, whereas one of the Irish participants (FG_IR5) questioned the reliability and authenticity of the local product, stating that:

“Yeah. If it's really made in Ireland, then therefore it is easier for me to say, you know what? Yes. This is the exact thing. Yes, it's based on their culture. Whereas if it wasn't, then I would think someone just saw on TV and thought how”.

Those users who knew the local culture may have easily identified the products and may feel a sense of connection, but those who do not know local culture, such as people from other countries living in Ireland, may not feel that connection. Therefore, reflecting the cultural aspects through platform design should target a larger section of the population.

In addition, celebrity endorsement in Ireland was identified to be one of the interesting aspects that could be related to trust establishment. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“If there was a post that I was thinking of buying already and I saw a celebrity endorsing it, it probably would influence me slightly because I know absolutely endorsing it and must be more trustworthy than if someone wasn't endorsing”.

However, an interviewee from Saudi, FG_SA4, stated that:

“Celebrity endorsement does not have an impact on me. I knew they are doing it for money. So, they are endorsing a product will not gain my trust on the website”.

Photos and videos, on the other hand, contributed to gaining trust, as both Irish and Saudi participants (FG_IR1, FG_IR5, FG_IR7, FG_SA3, FG_SA6) opined that these could help

users to understand more about products and help them to establish trust. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR7 stated:

“It's. Yeah. Increase my trust. But also, just. They say I might not go on to. I don't know. Clothing. I never drop down. I wouldn't even be thinking like it's. It increases my likelihood to trust and to buy things that I wasn't even thinking about buying because I might go on, And I see like I wasn't thinking of buying this, but now yeah, I kind of need darkness. I was just increased my likelihood of actually using the site more”.

Thus, it can be understood that Saudi participants identified local products, culture and traditions in design, reviews, and ratings as important factors for establishing trust, whereas the Irish participants identified referral, the authenticity and reliability of products, and celebrity endorsements as the factors of trust establishment.

7.3.8. Decision Making

A good S-Commerce platform should facilitate effective decisions with regard to the purchasing process. Information relating to products and services must be presented in an effective and easy-to-use fashion, so that it enables users to make quick and positive decisions. Accordingly, in relation to interactivity and the presentation of themes on the UCSCP, interviewee FG_IR5 stated that:

“far more interactive and we'll see what the themes section with the pace and presentation these writings are or if it was people's interests as well as this lovely endorsement for that sort of type. People are encouraged to make decisions”.

Themes and design, as identified, can facilitate decision making as they improve interactivity and engagement on the platform and thus enable decision making. Similarly, photos and videos were identified as another important factor which can aid decision making. In this context, interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“Yeah, definitely. Like I think of for me myself. Like I can get frustrated easily with stuff like that. Like if I want to buy a black laptop, I can't see what it looks like. It's going to affect my personal decision. Same as if I want to see a card from a different angle. And there's only one picture where a party is going to go somewhere else where I have more pictures”.

However, interviewee FG_SA7 stated that:

“Though photos and videos present the products in a more detailed way, it may not be sufficient in decision making. Additional information such as ratings and reviews are essential for taking a decision”.

Therefore, the need for various types of information through photos, videos, ratings, reviews, referrals and feedback was identified as being essential for decision making, rather than depending on only one type of information. Similarly, interviewee FG_IR2 stated that:

“ratings and reviews used to help in supporting my decision making, but I try my best to really dig into it like the real people are. This isn't just an image there because I mean it could literally be a company employee just putting something to attract customers into making a purchase”.

It can be understood that the Irish participants are more concerned about the authenticity of reviews and ratings, which may help them with decision making, while Saudi participants did not raise any issues about the authenticity of the information and they perceived what was presented as true. Interviewee FG_IR5 stated that:

“Personally, I don't trust most reviews because I've had an experience whereby, you know, the new website, somebody created a website and then they asked their co-workers to review. Yes. So, if you're working in the same organisation or maybe some company selling the same product to me, even if they're blind, it's bad to say something good about it. So, I wouldn't say lately persuade me more to buy something. But the way my friends said it, they at least going dig further about that product”.

Not only social elements such as reviews and ratings, but also brands were identified to be influencing decision making. Brands purchased by the users (previous experiences) were identified as having more influence on the users' decisions than celebrity endorsements.

For example, interviewee FG_SA8 stated that:

“I prefer to base my decision maybe on brands like specific brands. I don't watch videos. I don't like to look at celebrities, but I'll know that, okay, I've tried this brand before, and they'll probably keep this type of consistency no matter who they put in there”.

However, an interviewee from Ireland, FG_IR10, said:

“I would say Yes depending on the celebrity. Let's say, I am an Arsenal fan. And then if it's that they are putting something concerning Arsenal club. Yeah, definitely. I'll go for it whereas when it comes to their design or the fashion, if I'm not interested in a fashion and then they're showing it, I'll be like, oh no. So, it depends

on your good taste and interest. So, if you're interested in that fashion, it's easy for you. Let's say I like Rihanna; I would be tempted to use the products that she uses".

Depending on the celebrity, the products endorsed may be of interest to the users. If they like celebrities, then they may take decisions to use the products that are endorsed by them. In addition, price comparison was identified as one of the important features that enabled decision making.

"It doesn't really make a difference. I can buy from China if I sort of see that okay, yeah, I know the material. The description is the. But it depends on the product you mentioned. When I see the price for same product on different platforms at a go, I may not visit other sites for purchasing. It saves my time and aids in making quick decisions. It's kind of narrows down the options".

Similarly, interviewee, FG_SA4 stated that

"The default photo video doesn't how it all looks. And I hope you would give me a more sensible way of looking at it. And I have all different angles to persuade myself to buy has to purchase their products".

Thus, it can be understood that while Irish participants considered reviews, ratings, referrals, and interactive themes as the most influential factors that aid decision making, Saudi participants preferred price comparison, previous experiences and different types of information such as reviews, ratings, referrals and feedback (multiple dimensions of information) to assist them with their decisions.

7.3.9. Purchase Intention

Various features on the UCSCP were identified as impacting purchase intention and whether or not to buy a product. Although most of the features were identified as influential for purchase intention, a few issues were identified, and these are discussed in this section. Reviews and ratings were considered to be an important feature that impacted purchase intention; however, the authenticity and reliability of these features were considered to be an issue. In this context, interviewee FG_IR3 stated that:

"And yes, I have to go and check the profile if it's authenticated. Things like that. When last was it purchased?"

Growing online platforms and fake reviews and ratings are one of the major concerns identified by Irish participants. Although they thought that ratings and reviews were important, they still doubted their authenticity and cross-checked to see if the reviewers were real or fake users. Accordingly, interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“Ratings also contributes. If it's high, then I probably buy. But then it also will depend on who's rating”.

Similarly, FG_SA5 commented that:

“Good reviews enable me in taking a purchase decision; negative reviews will make me not to buy”.

However, when two or more features are combined, price was identified as being more influential than ratings and reviews. In this context, interviewee FG_IR9 stated that:

“Yeah. I figured it would help me kind of focus on purchasing the product like, you know, if it has good reviews and now it's right on this website. There are only 2 to 3 reviews. I guess that's it for me. You're going to make me want to purchase it most. The fact that cheapest it out of anything like, you know, description is fine reviews. But when it comes down to factors, I think price is going to be the filter factor. And the fact they've shown that it's the cheapest is publicly”.

Similarly, interviewee, FG_SA6 stated that:

“The comparison of prices is like one of the reasons a person would fight for... if the price compared to others is there. So, it would encourage me to buy more than if you don't see comparison”.

Therefore, price comparison is one of the important features that is mostly associated with normal people's buying behaviour but which can also be adopted online. In addition, celebrity endorsement was also identified as a factor that would influence purchase intention. One of the interviewees, FG_IR4, stated that:

“I'd be very inclined to buy it, if a celebrity is wearing it”.

However, when having a strong desire or attachment towards buying a product, no factors were identified as influencing. As interviewee FG_IR6 stated:

“If I have impulse for purchasing a product, it really wouldn't make a difference to me if I was a celebrity endorsing it or not”.

Visual representation of products through photos and videos was found to have an impact, especially photos, as identified from interviewee FG_IR8:

“Personally, if I don't see a picture, I would probably not buy a thing like, oh, if I see a picture on opening, I'm looking for more details in it. If there's no picture, I wouldn't even open it. Videos. thanks, helps in finding even more about the product”.

However, interviewee FG_SA1 stated:

“I prefer reliable and authorised local products. If a website offers me these, I will definitely buy again and again”.

This reflects a strong sense of attachment towards local products, which would lead to customers making regular purchases. From the replies above, we can see that celebrity endorsement, ratings and reviews were more influential factors for Irish participants. FG_IR9 confirmed:

“When overall features are considered, if you're game for Irish people, I guess it might make them more likely to buy”.

On the other hand, price comparison, localisation, and ratings and reviews were found to be the most influential factors for Saudi participants in terms of making a purchase decision.

7.4. Analysis of Interviews With Experts

This section focuses on analysing the feedback of experts from different backgrounds in relation to the various features and components on UCSCP, in order to validate the platform. As explained, the codes are categorised in to nine themes, and the text is analysed accordingly in the following sections.

7.4.1. Motivation

Cultural associations, especially localisation, celebrity influence, the MLF, and design themes were identified as important factors of motivation on the UCSCP. In relation to localisation, it is one aspect that companies would be interested in adopting and could have far more effect in engaging users and gaining trust from the. In this context, interviewee IR1 stated:

“Yeah, I think that localisation is very important. I think from the experience I have personally, because I have a background in digital business, I have noticed across time that the more companies appreciate localisation, the more success they have. That was we have a global market. People still like to buy global goods, put in a local fashion, say they like to see maybe if you could if you could have a website in England and the website in Ireland, even though they both speak English to me, I would expect the language, the phrase to be somewhat more local and not the same in both countries”.

People are aware of various cultures and languages, and they might feel more motivated and interested when the platform offers language and design that fit with the culture and traditions of that person.

A few suggestions in this regard were made by interviewee IR2, stating that:

“Providing flags of the language related to different countries could be better option, and using more languages is also a relevant option, as the people in Ireland belong to diverse communities, from different countries”.

With regard to the design and themes feature, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“My immediate reaction that I can't answer what is my reaction to that question is ... that I do think that it impacts the female more than male. But that's what I like. But then I can easily start thinking of examples where it's not true and the opposite is true”.

As identified by IR1, themes could influence more females than males in their initial experience of using the platform. However, the themes are based on the culture and traditions of Saudi Arabia and Ireland, and as stated by IR1, they may attract males too, but in a different context, such as a sense of attachment with culture, nationality, and traditions. Interviewee IR3 expressed the importance of changing themes according to events:

“We feel like everything. So, if it was Christmas, everything. So, our Christmas. So, if it was kind of outside the Christmas period, let's say you was during summer and you're talking about back to school like no one wants to go back to school. So, like it does have an effect”.

In a similar context, IR4 said:

“This is like more colourful. It shows you are racing motivates you to put items in your Wishlist and also share the product. Yeah, it does, because it means if the company applying the theme on their website is the company motivating their user to make a decision that the theme attracts the user to engage on the website”.

Similar views were presented by SA2 and SA3. Changing the themes according to the seasons does have an effect. However, themes in this study were considered in the cultural context, not in relation to activities or events. It is understood nevertheless that they do have an impact when used in different contexts. The cultural associations in themes were identified as important for purchase intentions, as SA1 stated:

“As I am a user with a significant cultural association, the cultural elements when they are embedded in e-commerce may have a clear influence on purchase decision or even visit the website.”

In addition to themes, it was identified that celebrity endorsement has an impact, but that this impact may be different for different people (sorted by gender, age, profession). In this regard, IR1 stated:

“Yeah, and I think it depends on who it is. I mean, I think that males would be very much influenced by sporting figures and more than maybe females. Yes. Put down high celebrities might influence females more than males”.

Similarly, IR2 stated that:

“Younger population would be more influenced by the celebrities from movies or music shows, such as Justin Bieber or Rihanna, whereas older population may be more influenced by celebrities from different areas such as politics, movies, social workers, religious figures ... so on...”.

Therefore, with regard to celebrity endorsement, it does motivate users, but there are several other factors such as the users’ age, gender, profession etc., that need to be taken into consideration.

7.4.2. Satisfaction

In relation to satisfaction, localisation was identified as an important factor. The student interviews also revealed that users have a sense of attachment to local products. Accordingly, IR1 stated that:

“I would prefer and be more inclined to interact with a company if I saw it was localised, customised towards me living in Dublin as opposed to think just treating me as somebody who's from London. I tell you, it would satisfy you, if you're satisfied and to feel respected. Respected, yeah.”

The sense of respect that would be felt by the user when the business considers local people in relation to their traditions would make the users more satisfied with the platform and more likely to develop a relationship with the platform. However, not only localisation, but the content (information: reviews, ratings, feedbacks, product information, photos and videos), the quality of the content, and the price are factors that could impact the users’ satisfaction levels. Considering these factors, interviewee IR5 stated that:

“if I hear if I read through the content and somebody talks about the quality, that quality standard and it doesn't really change then and it catches me. And the prices are something that is within my range. So that's one of the things that I would go definitely go for. So, both I want to say that if it's locally made. Yeah, but I don't really think I'll buy. You know, I have an allegiance for locally made items. But what I want is, something that is cheap and easy to get”. The same interviewee also confirmed that themes and designs could impact satisfaction levels by stating that “they are very personalised, connect with a client automatically”.

Representing similar views about price comparison, simplifying the decision-making process, interviewee SA3 said:

“Somewhat helpful for you undertaking for the product that has in the platform competitions will give itself satisfying to make a positive decision”.

In terms of achieving satisfaction with the ease of use, SA4 suggested a voice-enabled feature that would dictate (audio) the text presented on the platform, so that it could be used by the disabled, such as blind people:

“Introduction to the speech would seem to get your features in satisfying the users to make a decision”.

Similarly, considering all the features of the UCSCP, IR4 stated that

“Yeah, it really helps me feel secure in buying the products”

and SA2 said:

“I believe that all of these features are crucial features that may make the customer satisfaction higher, and his experience better, and therefore may support the decision to purchase it clearly”.

These views reflected the view that satisfaction can be achieved by integrating more features and providing relevant and quality information that would aid decision making on the platform.

7.4.3. Learnability

Learnability, as explained in section 7.3.3, is an important aspect of an S-Commerce platform. The platform should support and enable its users to understand more about the products and services offered by maintaining the quality and type of information, providing options for ease of access. The majority of the experts were of the view that the features presented on the UCSCP were effective in promoting learnability, but they made a few suggestions. In relation to information availability, interviewee IR1 stated:

“The first thing that strikes me is that the second platform (UCSCP) has far more data. Yeah. it's far more informative”.

Similarly, reviews were identified as an important factor as they represent the various views of users in relation to a product/service. This can improve the understanding of a user and aid with decision making, as identified from interviewee IR2's statement:

“The review is very, very, very important to me as it needs to be done. Just talking from based on my own personal experience. I make a lot of decisions based on to review on the Internet. And because if I don't see all the people attests to the fact

that they view products similarly, and they are sceptical about various features of products. So, I want somebody to tell me that. Yeah, I've used it before."

An absence of reviews may lead users to doubt the platform's reliability and result in their disengagement. Interviewee SA2 confirmed this by saying:

"I am definitely interested before buying any item in reading the reviews in case they are not available on the site I doubt the reliability. Reviews, ratings, and referrals I suppose the main features could support the learnability."

Along with reviews and ratings, referrals and recommendations were also considered to be important in supporting learnability. In addition, the price comparison feature, which provides the details of prices offered on other platforms for the same product, could save users' time on research and help users with their decision making, as interviewee IR4 stated:

"I think and it shows you a comparison between the prices in the market in different markets. So, you know, you're getting the best value for a product".

Photos and videos also present far more detailed information than only text. They enable the users to get a virtual view of the product and its features, which can help them to gain a clear picture about the product. Photos and videos can also influence the decision to engage and buy on platforms, as is evident from SA1's statement:

"Because if there is no photo, then I can't picture the product. So, I would not I would just buy it because I wouldn't know how it looks on me. So, when the product is on a model, instead of just like looking at the picture, you're actually seeing it on someone because you hear at least say that person looks like that".

And SA4's statement:

"I prefer the video because it gives me more visibility about the product and more information. I may not browse or intend to buy on platforms that do not provide information through photos, videos, reviews and ratings".

The MLF is considered to be one of the effective approaches that enhances platforms' learnability. A similar suggestion to that identified in the student analysis was made by interviewee IR5:

"Essential to reach a larger group of clients as language may become a barrier include at least top 5 languages spoken in Ireland according to ethnic group sizes".

All of the social constructs, ratings, reviews, and referrals, and design features such as MLF and price comparison were identified as important factors that facilitated learnability.

7.4.4. Usability

In referring to usability, interviewee IR1 stated:

“I think ease of use is very important, how easy it is to use something and to find something so that if a company helps me do less work in stopping me from having to do my research, it provides me the information I'm happy and that says something good to me about the company. It tells me that the company are well researched and that they care about the customer”.

This reflects the relationship between usability and the users' attitudes towards the platform. The greater the ease of use, the more positive the attitude of the users towards the platform, as it shows that the company cares about its customers. In this context, linking the MLF with local people and tradition, interviewee IR 2 stated that:

“Speaking a language that I don't know about? Then you're not communicating. For reasons we live in Ireland and it is an English-speaking country. Even though he's Irish and speak Irish. If you value your rights or being Irish, you know, communicating to me in my language. So, I want something I'll be able to identify with. I'll be able to read through and comprehend”.

Although people know various languages, communicating in their own language is perceived to be easier than communicating in other language. Similar views were identified among the Saudi participants in the student interviews analysis. Similarly, linking all features, interviewee IR4 stated:

“Features, MLF, themes etc.: Yeah, it does, because it shows that you care about what your customers want and can read or know or like what they can help out there if you get the reviews”.

This reflects the concept that the company or platform, by providing various features enabling ease of use, values their customers and is ready to provide support if required in a language that the users can easily associate with. Accordingly, interviewee SA4 stated that:

“Features such as multi-language provides an easy way of communication and interaction, whereas features such as photos, videos, reviews and ratings facilitate ease of use in terms of decision making”.

Therefore, usability aspects should not only focus on communication or interaction, but also provide quality information that would enable decision making. In this context, interviewee IR1 provided an example of the price comparison feature, stating:

“Yeah, I think different. Yeah, I like it's something that I can only speak from my own experience. It's something I don't see enough of. And when I think about it, like I know it's easy to use ... it's not hard to ... and saves time and find five different websites and check the price books”.

Thus, usability in this context is related to the features that provide good interaction between the platform and its users, and those that enhance effective decision making.

7.4.5. Engagement

As discussed in the student interviews analysis, features such as themes, design, the multi-language option, reviews, photos, videos etc., were identified as important factors facilitating engagement on UCSCPs. Similar views were voiced by the experts. In relation to interactivity and information availability, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“There's more opportunity for me to interact with. And that's the base of observation and notice and I can say about that, that it makes me want to use it more, spend more time on it”.

In addition, the themes feature was identified as a unique and interesting concept that could help to engage users on UCSCPs. In this context, IR 3 stated that:

“First of all, it's not something I see all the time. It's not something that I expect. But when I see it, I like it. So, I don't have a personal history of knowing loads of websites that do stuff. And I don't like to wake up and expect to see it. Yeah, but when I saw it and was exposed to it, I liked it”.

The themes feature enables users to pick a style on the platform with which they are comfortable. Suggestions were made about the visual identity of the platform and maintaining the brand's significance. Interviewee SA1 stated that:

“The idea of changing styles from one to another is great. It gives the user the flexibility to pick the preferred style. Finally, the colour of the brand has to be taken in consideration. In other words, it has creativity but keeps the visual identity of the brand significant as much as possible”.

In addition, the MLF and other design aspects attracted users to engage with the platform, as reflected in interviewee SA4's views:

“Maybe the presence of the Arabic language in addition to the presence of colours and symbols such as the camel, for example, which are derived from Arab culture, urged me to use the UCSCP site more than the traditional one”.

Along with themes, photos and videos, reviews and ratings, and design themes, changing styles according to users' preferences was identified by the majority of the experts as a major factor that facilitated user engagement on the platform.

7.4.6. Experience

Enhancing the experience of users on S-Commerce platforms can increase the customer base and achieve loyal customers. Various features were integrated into the UCSCP to provide a better user experience. The MLF, for instance, enables users to read the platform in their own language, which makes it more interesting and provides a good experience. Focusing on this aspect, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“And it makes me feel more respected as a customer. And my personal background, as I said, is in digital business. But I also do a lot of work with it, like in Ireland. We have the English language, but we also have the Irish language. Yeah, I work in that area a lot. And a big thing for Irish speakers is a minority in the country. We have more English speakers than Irish speakers. And so, when we as Irish speakers see a company willing to deal with us. True. It has a very positive effect on us”.

IR1 explained the impact by providing an example, which reflected the sense of satisfaction and positive attitude towards a company that interacts with its customers in their own language. This can be observed from IR1's statement:

“It's like this morning. I don't know if you're aware, but one of the major banks in Ireland, Bank of Ireland this morning has had massive issues. The system is down. So, I sent a tweet to Bank of Ireland customer service. I sent in the Irish language and they responded to me in Irish, which I was very happy to see”.

Similar views were reflected by IR4:

“Yeah, well for Irish because in Ireland they'd prefer it to be an Irish because even where I come from is a community with Irish people. So, they only speak Irish around the area. So, they write everything in Irish. So, reading something in Irish rather than in English, would be the best for them”.

Similarly, reflecting the opinion about themes, IR2 stressed that themes catch users' attention, but at the same time, other aspects such as what customers want (products) and prices impact the type of experience a user has on a particular platform. Accordingly, IR2 stated:

“It's what's a sense in my brain immediately has to do with Christmas. And if I want to buy anything that has to do with this month and I come across this website, it

automatically catches my attention. And I want to see what's the amount that I related to what I want. And then the price is in my budgets. Then I go”.

Similarly, IR3 believed that colours, design and themes would catch the attention of users, stating:

“Maybe the colours are kind of gotten me like interested with the cultural platform, kind of like took me away”.

Interviewee IR5, while presenting similar views, made some suggestions:

“Integrating socio-cultural – changing a website according to the cultural aspects of Ireland is very efficient as Ireland is such a broadly multicultural society with residents from over 200 countries living in Ireland, it is a really good idea, but I believe it would be more beneficial to focus on target age groups or genders and clearly indicate these specific headings on the website, and attract these specific people to the website”.

With reference to the language, SA1 stated that

“some prefer Arabic language even if he is fluent in English”

and he stressed that themes would enhance experience:

“it’s great to customise the style of the store with every specific reason such the new year or Ramadan. That will create kind of connecting or loyalty between both sides and better user experience”.

Similarly, SA2 pointed out that different features provide different experiences, which may depend on the type of users. While a few features may be more influential for some people; others may not have much influence.

“I feel that some features may make the experience better than others; for example, in my view, features that relate to the practical and realistic experience of the product from other customers, such as reviews and ratings”.

7.4.7. Trust

In relation to the themes and design aspects that integrate culture and traditions into the platform design, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“Well, it's like it's me again. It's a good sign. It says to me that the company are active that it's not just sitting there and not being worked on. It says to me that company is constantly working on the web”.

The more positive the attitude towards the platform, the higher the trust. Referrals, as identified by IR1, can be important for gaining trust on a platform, as those are made by

known people in whom the user can trust. In this context, stressing the importance of trust, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“Personally, if I would always check to see if the website is secure and I will always check to see that it's got a reputation already that I know people that are already used it serious. And I would be depending on the type of times, the amount of money you're spending, I think the more money you spend, the more I would even look into it to make sure that these are not a bad acting company. And I think that ultimately, I think trust is the most important part of any online interaction”.

Transparency and providing quality information is another important factor that would enhance the trust. Accordingly, interviewee SA3 stated that:

“Yeah. If I see that the website is being honest with its information on possible me as much information as possible being transparent and therefore, I will then trust it more”.

The concept of designing a user-centric platform was identified to be a very promising approach. However, the issues of privacy and security were identified in relation to the customisation of themes according to the users' preferences. Interviewee IR1 stated that:

“I think the user-centric platform is the only way forward. I think that is just going to be the main focus in future, the most common form going forward. And the only thing that I would say to be aware of is that if it's user centric. That to me means that you have to associate your social media profiles with the website so that they can customise itself towards you. And I would be worried because of what's happened in America with Facebook data and things like that. Yeah, I would be worried about more and more companies getting access to my social media activity just so that they can customise their product towards me. I love the idea of customisation and localisation, but I would want the companies to have limited access to my data and tend to tell me what they're doing with it”.

If privacy is breached, it would break the trust of users on the platform. Accordingly, IR5 stated that:

“We're not using the data in any other way. You know that if they did sell it somewhere else, that would break down my trust and I would stop using it. So, I think that customisation localisation user central platform is the way forward. But only if the right trust measures are in place”.

In relation to reviews and ratings, mixed responses were received regarding their impact on trust. Interviewee IR3 commented that:

“For me personally, like I don't like reading guys much like especially reviews because you don't know who is saying what. They could be people, but a company paid them and they're just saying they get paid. So, I don't really trust them unless if I know someone that already bought the same product and you sense I personally might consider buying it from the same place”.

On the other hand, interviewee IR4 stated:

“Yeah, I trust them. Way more than a website that does not have any reviews” and “some photos or videos also help in increasing your trust regarding the platform”.

In relation to the impact of various UCSCP features on trust, SA1 stated that:

“Also, the feature of having other languages urges me to buy from the site, the presence of this feature makes me feel the spread of the site and perhaps its reliability with different clients from different cultures and languages in addition to my feeling of professionalism of the site”.

It reflects the reliability of the users on UCSCP, which is based on the availability of quality and transparent information, along with various features that facilitate easy use. In addition, visual appeal was seen as an important factor for gaining trust. In this context, SA2 stated:

“I am a visual person; such visual effects attract me a lot. Sometimes sites that do not contain advanced visual effects do not attract me, I feel that they may not be advanced enough, or I may feel that the user experience has not been enhanced enough, and I don't trust them”.

Therefore, visual appeal through design, colours and themes must be effectively integrated into the platform, as this gives the platform a professional look, leading users to trust it.

While an expert from Ireland, IR2, positively related celebrity endorsement with trust, another expert from Saudi Arabia stated:

“I don't trust because I found that they are doing. It was just for the sake of money in the sake of that. They don't love this product or they like this product”.

Therefore, the impact of celebrity endorsement on the establishment of trust may be different in different regions, reflecting the impact of socio-cultural factors on the interests and preferences of online shoppers.

7.4.8. Decision Making

With the development of S-Commerce, reviews and ratings have become an essential part of any commerce platform. They were identified as an important source of information that

helps with decision making. The importance of reviews can be understood from one of the examples given by the interviewee, IR1:

“Personally, I think it's very important. I've I learned the hard way. Yeah. So, a couple of years ago on Black Friday, you know, tomorrow's black. Let me ask. The massive online sale. But yeah, a couple of years ago I bought a tablet device from a computer company. And this year at the time it had no reviews. I just thought the price was really good. There was no review available for it. So, I bought it and it broke within a week. Yeah. Later, I went to another website and I found that it had reviews and they all said it was terrible. But the site that I bought it from had no reviews. However, it was a couple of years ago and I wasn't as much conscious or well-informed at that time and I didn't know the best practices online. Yes, but having learned the hard way, I always look for reviews now”.

This example not only reflects the importance of information availability through reviews and ratings; it also highlights the need for user awareness about the best practices for online shopping. Therefore, the level of awareness is one of the important factors that need to be considered when designing, developing and implementing S-Commerce platforms in various regions.

In relation to decision making, IR2 observed that the localisation feature does not really influence decision making, whereas quality and prices do:

“Look, all locally made items doesn't really bother me. I think what bothers me most is that the quality and the price”.

Considering the priority for localisation, quality and price, IR3 had a different perspective, as identified in the following statement:

“No. Well, now it's more kind of quality. Yes, we find all the qualities worth buying on. The brand is also known. So, it's not like risk in any way, just reading the reviews.. So yeah, quality comes first, then the price”.

Quality and brand were prioritised. However, whether that brand was local or global did not make any difference as long as the quality was good. The price factor later influenced decision making, as did the price comparison feature. IR5 commented that:

“It's a price comparison like example. If the website used set price for them and then they put it another website price, say, for example, Amazon or on another website, they show you difference of price between their website and others. I would say, at this point I would make a fixed decision”.

Therefore, the price comparison feature would help users to make a decision about whether or not to purchase. However, the participants stated that other features such as photos and videos were also important factors that influenced their decision making. This can be seen from IR2's statement that:

“If I see someone that has worn it before and I see it's, you know, suits the person and it speaks to me. It speaks to my mind, as you know, or deciding whether to buy it or to not buy it. So, both images and videos are very important for me, in my decision making”.

Photos and videos, as a visual representation of information, can connect with the users' thoughts and analysis of products in relation to their expectations. If their expectations are met, this will result in positive decision making, and vice versa. In addition, reviews, ratings, photos and videos, and price consciousness were identified as the most important features that influenced decision making. Similar reflections were made by interviewee SA1 when referring to the various features that would enable decision making.

“For sure reviews play the main role in changing users' minds towards buying decision. That might refer to human might get affected by others experience Photos, videos, and product descriptions are crucial points to facilitate decision making”.

However, interviewee IR3 expressed a different opinion, expressed in the following statement:

“This recommendation if you are wise would be fairer. Give you more a decision. Which one gets in. If like your friend's suggestion, or an unknown's suggestion? What would you prefer?”

Similar views were expressed by IR5, stating:

“Website allowing feedback, advice and information are beneficial – increases customers' sense of safety and ensures them a product or website is of a high standard”.

Most people buy according to price, and providing the item price increases customer interest in a product and allows them to decide quickly, depending on their budget. However, interviewee SA1 commented that themes would also enable users to make decisions:

“If the user finds his appropriate style of course that will push him/her to take the decision”.

7.4.9. Purchase Intention

Focusing on the information presentation, interviewee IR1 voiced the view that when comprehensive information is presented that reflects all the aspects that need to be known by the user, this can lead to purchase intention. However, if there is information overload, it may lead to user disengagement. In this context, interviewee IR1 states that:

“Yeah, I think there is an interesting balance to be found. I think that sometimes you can be given too many options and you have a kind of information overload. So, I think that website and every website have to find the balance between give the customer as much information as possible. But don't slow them down either. If I feel like I have to read for 5 minutes, you know what I mean? Yeah, it's going to slow me down. I'm waiting. OK, I'll do it later. But if you can. If the site can find a way to deliver the most important information quickly, then yeah, it would lead to a purchase decision”.

Therefore, providing quality information is an important factor which would influence users to make a purchase. In relation to celebrity endorsement, various views were presented by the interviewees. For instance, interviewee IR1 stated that:

“And I don't think I'm that influenced by that kind of thing. I'd be more influenced by usability. Trustworthiness. Yeah, I am. But I definitely agree that there is a very important role for it. Yeah. And definitely. Definitely, definitely. Just on a personal level. Yeah. It wouldn't be the thing that influenced me the most. I'm bored on a macro level. On a wider level. I totally agree. I had a massive, massive, important role to play. Like celebrity endorsement”.

Reflecting a general view, interviewee IR1 stated that celebrity endorsement does have an impact on purchase intentions. However, interviewee IR3 stated that it depends on which celebrity is endorsing the product, and whether people would follow a celebrity or their own views.

“All depends on who the celebrity is. Who is the celebrity here? Depends on who this is. So, you'll follow them, or you follow your opinions?”

Similarly, IR4 stated that familiar faces would influence a buying decision, stating that:

“And the fact that there's actors on. Yeah, that encourages me to buy the product because they're familiar faces and they're probably people. I liked it. I see on TV so that I'd want to. and you trust them? Yeah”.

However, interviewee SA2 reflected a completely contrasting opinion:

“In fact, I am not affected by buying products that are promoted by celebrities or influencers. I believe that such marketing actions raise sales only in the short term and do not enhance brand awareness in the long term”.

Focusing on reviews and ratings, the majority of the interviews opined that these would affect their purchase intentions. In this context, interviewee IR4 stated that:

“The reviews and ratings motivate me to make a purchase because it shows how much products, how well the product stays with other people.”.

In reference to localisation, interviewee IR3 commented:

“Yeah. Yeah. Buying the local product from the locals ... that effect really”.

However, SA1 linked it to prices, stating that

“It will enhance purchase decision in case if there is guaranteed and reasonable prices”.

In contrast to SA1, SA2 reflected a more positive opinion about localisation:

“The presence of traditional local products in E-Commerce attracts me and may prompt me to buy. Respecting the culture of the user whatever it is and trying to contain it and include it in his purchase journey is attractive and worthy of appreciation; makes me support buying from one site against another”.

Similarly, SA4 stated:

“I want to buy products from Saudi Arabia or from any other country as long as it satisfies my needs”.

Thus, with reference to localisation, it does impact purchase intention, but it is also associated with the influence of other factors such as users' needs and product price. Focusing on the impact of the price comparison feature on purchase intentions, interviewee IR4 confirmed its usefulness:

“Yes, the price comparison does help when buying the product, because when you know that the price, you're getting is the best value for money you can get, then you want to buy the cheaper option”.

Interviewee SA2 voiced a similar, but slightly different view:

“Price: It affects but not that much. As long as the product is in demand, he will make the buying decision”.

Accordingly, price, along with other features such as photos and videos, visual appearance, and quality, were some of the aspects of the UCSCP identified as having an impact on purchase intentions, as identified from IR5's statement:

“Photos and videos provide visual content of products, higher chance of purchase. Personally, celebrity advertising does not have a huge effect on me. Price, visual appearance and quality too comes consideration for me”.

7.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter analysed the qualitative data collected from the students and expert interviews. The student interview analysis revealed differences in the preferences and opinions of the participants from Ireland and Saudi Arabia in relation to the various themes identified. The expert interview analysis identified that the features available on the UCSCP were effective in relation to users’ motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability, engagement, and experience. They were also found to be effective in establishing trust, enhancing decision making, and developing purchase intentions.

Chapter 8: Discussion & Validation

This chapter discusses the findings and validates the theoretical model developed in this study. Accordingly, this chapter is structured by discussing the findings in relevance to research questions as shown in Figure 8.1.

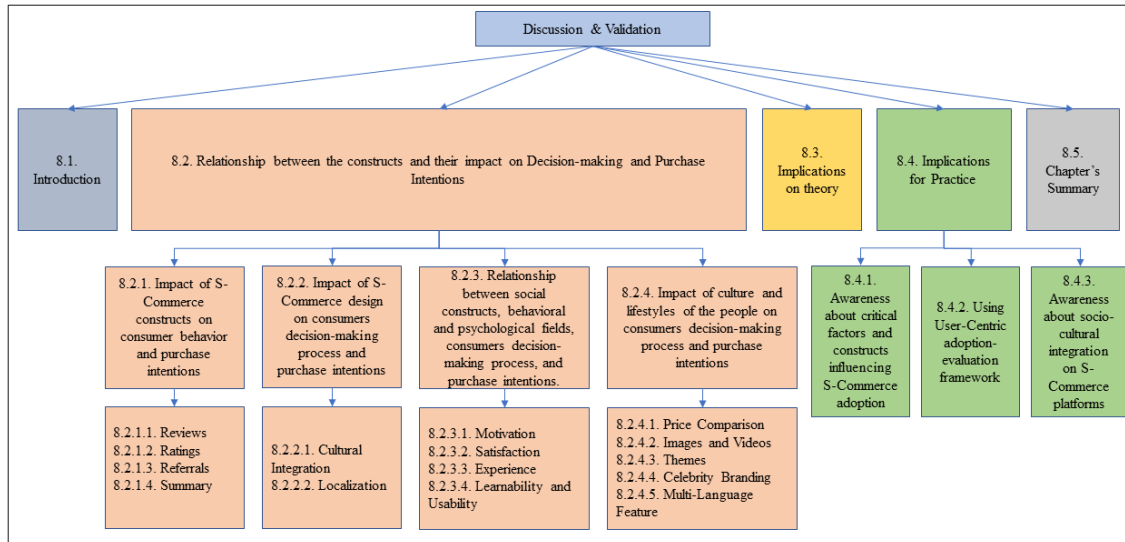


Fig 8.1. Chapter outline

8.1. Introduction

As explained in Chapter One, the aim of this study is to design a User-Centric S-Commerce design framework that can be used for designing and developing a customised S-Commerce platform according to the preferences of users in different regions. The study also developed a UCSCP for Ireland and Saudi Arabia, and examined the various factors of influence on S-Commerce platforms. It was observed that the majority of extant studies (Hajli, 2013; Hajli et al., 2013; Hajli, 2014; Hajli et al., 2014; Wang & Zhang, 2012; Yang et al., 2012; Kim & Park, 2013; Noor et al., 2013; Shanmugam et al., 2016; Wang & Yu, 2017) relied on S-Commerce platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which are primarily intended for social networking. However, with the development of S-Commerce, existing social networking platforms have integrated commercial applications, and led the change. Considering these platforms, it is possible that consumers may have already developed a sense of attachment such as trust or motivation to social networking platforms, which may influence their behaviour on modified commerce platforms such as F-Commerce. As identified from the research trends and S-Commerce development

(Chapter 2, Section 2.2), these platforms focus on facilitating consumers' interactions rather than developing the platforms according to the consumers' preferences. Therefore, in order to undermine the influence of consumers' pre-existing attachment to S-Commerce platforms, a UCSCP prototype was developed for Ireland and Saudi Arabia, according to the preferences of the respective countries. This can minimise the bias of pre-existing relationships and attachments, influencing the consumers' decision-making process, behaviour and purchase intentions.

Accordingly, a UCSCP was used for studying various aspects related to S-Commerce, with a focus on investigating consumer behaviour and decision making in two culturally different countries (Ireland and Saudi Arabia) in order to identify the impact of culture on S-Commerce user. Focusing on these aspects, this chapter discusses the findings of this study in three sections. The first section focuses on analysing the relationship between the constructs considered in this study; their impact on decision making and purchase intentions on UCSCPs; and the differences of opinion of the Irish and Saudi Arabian participants.

The discussion in the first section includes references to social constructs, design (usability and learnability) constructs, behavioural constructs, and cultural constructs; the relationship between them; and their relationship with trust and purchase intention. The second section focuses on the theoretical implications of the study, and it discusses the theoretical framework including SAM, UTAUT, TPB, and OLT, integrated with the design and cultural constructs proposed in this study in light of the literature reviewed, and the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study. Based on the findings and discussion, the theoretical framework is reviewed and updated for Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The third section focuses on the practical implications of the study, which are discussed in detail.

8.2. Relationship Between the Constructs and Their Impact on Decision Making and Purchase Intentions

The relationships between the constructs used in this study are discussed under the following points.

- The impact of S-Commerce constructs on consumer behaviour and purchase intentions.

- The impact of design constructs on consumer behaviour in the decision-making process (whether to buy or not) and purchase intentions.
- Impact of behavioural and psychological fields on decision making and purchase intentions.
- Relationship between S-Commerce constructs, and behavioural and psychological fields.
- Impact of consumers' culture and lifestyles on their decision making and purchase intentions.

The findings in this study are discussed in relation to each aspect in the following sections.

8.2.1. Impact of S-Commerce constructs on consumer behaviour and purchase intentions

S-Commerce constructs such as ratings, reviews, referrals differentiate S-Commerce platforms with traditional E-Commerce platforms. They are used to improve interactions between the consumers and provide assurance and responsiveness on the platform, as a result of which it may lead to enhanced experience, decision making, and purchase intentions. Accordingly, the findings are discussed in relation to each social construct in the following sections.

8.2.1.1. Reviews

Reviews are the experiences shared by S-Commerce users in relation to products and services, and they can assure other users regarding the quality of products. The reliability of reviews can be assessed by the type of information presented in various reviews. The assurance, responsiveness, and reliability achieved by S-Commerce constructs can have a significant effect on perceived usefulness, and empathy and responsiveness have a significant effect on customer satisfaction (Sura & Ahn, 2017). In line with this, the quantitative findings in this research study revealed that the majority of Irish (64.8%) and Saudi Arabian (55.5%) participants confirmed that reviews gave them a sense of satisfaction in relation to the products they were viewing, as their knowledge/awareness about the products was increased. S-Commerce constructs such as reviews, ratings, and referrals can influence consumer behaviour by providing quality information and social support, which may influence psychological aspects such as motivation and experience, and thus develop trust among consumers. The quantitative findings in this research study identified that the majority of Irish (58.8%), and Saudi Arabian (53.3%) participants stated

that reviews improved their experience on the UCSCP and 67.8% and 58.4%, respectively, confirmed that they improved motivation to purchase. We can therefore see that reviews led to higher levels of motivation and satisfaction among Irish participants compared to Saudi Arabian participants, while their impact on experience, learnability, and usability in relation to the UCSCP was very similar among Irish and Saudi Arabian participants. However, the qualitative findings revealed that reviews led to satisfaction, motivation, experience, learnability, and usability among both Ireland and Saudi Arabian participants as 'reviews' were referred to on multiple occasions by the interviewees in reference to motivation, satisfaction, and experience.

The positive influence of S-Commerce constructs on consumer behaviour and psychological fields may facilitate effective decision making and develop trust and purchase intentions among consumers. Accordingly, Rad and Benyoucef (2012) found that S-Commerce elements can have a positive impact on trust and therefore improve the decision making process. Similarly, Kim and Park (2013) identified that trust directly affects two major variables of S-Commerce: purchase intentions and WOM. The quantitative findings reflected similar results, as reviews were identified as having a positive impact on the majority of the participants. However, a larger percentage of the Irish participants (68.4%) opined that reviews were useful for establishing trust on the UCSCP compared to Saudi Arabian participants (58.4%). On the other hand, no significant difference was identified between Irish (61.8%) and Saudi Arabian (57.2%) participants in relation to the impact of reviews on purchase intentions.

8.2.1.2. Ratings

Ratings are rankings that reflect the features of a product on a measurement scale, which usually ranges from one to five. They can help users on S-Commerce platforms by creating an awareness about other users' perceptions about a product. As people are influenced by awareness, ratings may impact users' behaviour and psychological aspects, similar to reviews. The quantitative findings in this research study showed that the majority of Irish (64.4%) and Saudi Arabian (59.9%) participants thought that ratings led to a sense of satisfaction with the products they were viewing, as their knowledge/awareness about the products was increased. In addition, the quantitative findings in this research study also confirmed that the majority of Irish (63.8%), and Saudi Arabian (54.5%) participants believed that ratings improved their experience on UCSCPs and resulted in improved

motivation – 67.8% and 61.4%, respectively. Thus, ratings led to slightly higher levels of motivation and satisfaction among Irish participants compared to Saudi Arabian participants, and their impact on experience was higher among Irish than Saudi Arabian participants. Ratings were also thought to impact learnability, with slight differences being identified between Irish and Saudi Arabian participants. However, the qualitative findings revealed that ratings led to participant satisfaction, motivation, and experience, and enhanced the learnability and usability of the platform among both Irish and Saudi Arabian participants, as ‘ratings’ were referred to on multiple occasions by the interviewees in reference to motivation, satisfaction, and experience. Considering the impact of ratings on trust and decision making, the majority of the participants from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia thought that they had a positive impact, which is in line with the findings of Rad and Benyoucef (2012) and Kim and Park (2013). However, a larger percentage of Irish participants opined that ratings were useful for decision making and establishing trust on UCSCPs compared to the Saudi Arabian participants.

8.2.1.3. Referrals

Similar to ratings and reviews, users on S-Commerce platforms are influenced by referrals. Referrals are a more personal interaction, as users tend to receive referrals from a known person, and they may therefore have a more significant impact on their behaviour, psychological fields, and trust. As people are influenced by social support, referrals may impact users’ behaviour and psychological aspects, similar to reviews and ratings. Accordingly, the quantitative findings in this research study revealed that the majority of Irish (51.5%) and Saudi Arabian (51.2%) participants thought that referrals led to a sense of satisfaction in relation to the products they were viewing on S-Commerce platforms. In addition, the quantitative findings identified that 55.2% and 50% of the Irish and Saudi Arabian participants respectively stated that referrals improved their experience on UCSCPs, but this reduced to 47.2% and 49.1% respectively for believing that referrals improved motivation. No major differences were identified with respect to referrals’ impact on the motivation, satisfaction, and experience of users. Similarly, no major differences were identified between Irish and Saudi Arabian participants in relation to referrals’ impact on learnability and usability. Unlike ratings and reviews, referrals (the person who refer a product or service) recommend a product or service to a known user, so they may not be closely related to usability and learnability. Supporting the quantitative findings, the qualitative findings in this research study revealed that referrals were mostly mentioned in

relation to motivation, trust, and decision making by the interviewees. Considering the impact of referrals on trust and decision making, the majority of the participants from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia thought that they had a positive impact, which is similar to the findings of Rad and Benyoucef (2012) and Kim and Park (2013). However, a larger percentage of Irish participants opined that referrals were useful for decision making and establishing trust on UCSCPs, compared to Saudi Arabian participants.

8.2.1.4. Summary

In this study, S-Commerce constructs were identified as being positively related to the psychological and behavioural fields, trust, and the decision-making process, supporting the findings from previous studies. Only very slight differences in opinions were identified in relation to S-Commerce constructs' impact on psychological and behavioural fields, and trust among Irish and Saudi Arabian participants. For instance, considerably more Irish participants opined that referrals and ratings helped them to make purchasing decisions on UCSCPs compared to Saudi Arabian participants. Similarly, a larger percentage of Irish participants opined that reviews led to increased motivation and satisfaction on UCSCPs compared to Saudi Arabian participants.

However, differences in the perceptions and opinions of people in relation to S-Commerce have been identified in different nations in various studies (Abed et al., 2016; Rouibah & Al-Qirim, 2017; Al-Dwairi, 2017; Leeraphong and Papasratorn, 2017; Shdaifat et al., 2016; Ng, 2013), as explained in the literature review (Chapter 2, section 2.2). However, these studies did not compare the findings between regions, but rather focused on studying people's perspectives in a specific region. In addition, few studies (Sunhee Seo, 2016; Ng, 2013; Oleynikova and Zorkin, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2017) have identified the impact of culture on S-Commerce adoption. In this context, this study focused on comparing S-Commerce adoption, S-Commerce constructs and other factors affecting the trust, decision-making process and purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms (as shown in the theoretical framework, Figure 3.10) in two culturally different countries, Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The differences in the perceptions of the participants from these countries can be observed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, reflecting the positive impact of S-Commerce constructs on the psychological and behavioural fields, including motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability; the mediating factor trust; purchase intentions; and decision making.

8.2.2. Impact of S-Commerce design on consumers' decision-making process and purchase intentions

The quality of a platform is an important factor that may influence consumers' behaviour, trust, and intentions to engage. Accordingly, Gonçalves Curty and Zhang (2013) stated that technical features focused on strengthening the relationships between customers and merchants, information flow, and user experience. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2014a) identified that an effective and efficient technological environment on platforms encourages users to participate in S-Commerce, and they found that experiences such as social support, social presence, and information flow can have a major impact on users' motivation. Therefore, the relationship between S-Commerce design and the psychological and behavioural fields can be identified from the literature. Considering these aspects, the UCSCP developed in this study has integrated an effective and efficient user-centric design with S-Commerce features in order to increase its learnability and usability for its users, and to provide an enhanced experience for users engaged on the platform. These design features are discussed in the following sections.

8.2.2.1. Cultural Integration

The design of the UCSCP reflected the local cultures and lifestyles in its product catalogue and presentation, rather than adopting a unique platform design across all regions. In this context, Alshibly (2014) found that satisfaction levels are correlated with S-Commerce sites' quality and customer psychological empowerment. In addition, studies (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Huang, 2018) have identified the positive impact of learnability on purchase intention on S-Commerce platforms. In line with this, the quantitative findings in this study indicated that cultural integration on UCSCPs was favoured by the majority of the participants from both Ireland (51.5%) and Saudi Arabia (55.7%) for enabling decision making. Similarly, the majority of the participants from both Ireland (64.1%) and Saudi Arabia (52.1%) favoured cultural integration for establishing trust. We can therefore state that cultural integration was correlated more with trust than with decision making among the participants from both countries. Similarly, the qualitative findings indicated that aspects such as themes and cultural integration had a positive impact on developing trust, and enabling decision making and purchase intentions among the participants from both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The UCSCP design was found to be attractive and it attracted the

users' attention, engaging them more than the traditional platform used for reference. In addition, the effective presentation of the information facilitated the participants' decision making, which is in line with the findings of Maity and Dass (2014), who reported that media-rich channels or platforms are preferred by consumers as they ease the decision-making process on online platforms.

8.2.2.2. Localisation

Another important feature of S-Commerce design is location-based services, which are services whose content is related to the location of an individual. This is often referred to as 'localisation', 'location sensitivity' or 'location awareness' in S-Commerce (Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002). Our UCSCP utilised localisation (product localisation) in its design and development. Accordingly, the quantitative findings in this research study indicated that product localisation on UCSCP was favoured by the majority of the participants from both Ireland (53.5%) and Saudi Arabia (47.9%) as it supported their decision making. Similarly, the majority of the participants from both Ireland (58.8%) and Saudi Arabia (52.1%) favoured product localisation for establishing trust. We can therefore confirm that product localisation was correlated more with trust than with decision making among the participants from both countries. Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that the cultural integration and product localisation features influenced the decision making process (section 7.4.8), and established trust (section 7.4.7), developing purchase intentions as explained in Chapter 7.

Focusing on the impact of the cultural integration design aspect on trust, no major differences were identified between Saudi Arabia and Ireland. However, a slight difference was identified in relation to the impact of the cultural integration design aspect on decision making. Saudi Arabian participants reported a greater influence of cultural integration on decision making than the Irish participants. In addition, the Irish participants observed a greater influence of product localisation on trust and decision making than the Saudi Arabian participants. Thus, it can be deduced that design constructs do have an impact on the decision-making process and the establishment of trust, which may lead to purchase intentions. There are slight differences between Ireland and Saudi Arabia, as the Irish participants were more influenced by the design constructs than the Saudi Arabian participants (as identified from the qualitative findings).

8.2.3. Relationship between social constructs, behavioural and psychological fields, consumers' decision-making process, and purchase intentions

8.2.3.1. Motivation

As identified in sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2, S-Commerce constructs and design constructs can enable effective and efficient information representation. This can motivate users and in turn enable the decision-making process and purchase intentions. These findings can be related to Hajli's (2015) study, which identified the significant impact of information quality, representation and types on the various psychological aspects relating to consumer behaviour. Similarly, Sinaga et al. (2017) identified self-worth, enjoying helping, reciprocity, and social support from social exchange as a few factors that would increase the motivation for online shopping and knowledge sharing on platforms. Qualitative findings in this research study from the student interviews analysis (Chapter 7, section 7.3.1) have indicated that celebrity endorsement and design constructs such as cultural integration motivated the participants to engage on UCSCPs. However, celebrity endorsement was found to have more influence on females than males in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. In addition, the analysis of the expert group (Chapter 7, section 7.4.1) identified that the product localisation, multi-language feature (MLF), and celebrity endorsement constructs were positively correlated with motivation in Saudi Arabia. However, the experts opined that celebrity endorsement was more motivating for young consumers than for old consumers.

8.2.3.2. Satisfaction

S-Commerce constructs have a significant effect on emotional and informational support (Shanmugam et al., 2016). For instance, referrals (WOM), ratings, and reviews can significantly increase the likelihood of actual buying and sharing product information, as the customers are satisfied with the platform (Wang & Yu, 2015a; Wang & Yu, 2015b). Therefore, satisfaction can be an important psychological factor in building customer loyalty towards brands and it explains the variance in trust (Alhulail et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2016). To demonstrate this, the student interviews analysis (Chapter 7, section 7.3.2) indicated that S-Commerce constructs are positively correlated with satisfaction among both Irish and Saudi Arabian participants. Expert analysis (Chapter 7, section 7.4.2) identified that in addition to S-Commerce constructs, design constructs such as MLF, and product localisation features will increase satisfaction and establish trust among consumers.

8.2.3.3. Experience

As the experience on S-Commerce is collaborative in nature (interacting with the vendor and other consumers), it would vary between the various platforms and also with respect to the various dimensions of measuring experiences (Ye et al., 2016). Such experiences can be influenced by several factors on commerce platforms. Focusing on experience, the student interviews analysis (Chapter 7, section 7.3.6) identified design constructs as a main factor that determined the experience. For the Irish participants, cultural factors such as celebrity promotions, seasonal themes, and social factors such as reviews and ratings influenced their experience on UCSCPs, while the Saudi Arabian participants identified S-Commerce constructs as the most influential factors on experience. In addition, the expert group analysis (Chapter 7, section 7.4.6) identified that design features including MLF, product localisation, and themes were the most influential factors for providing a better experience on UCSCPs. However, the student participants from Ireland mentioned that MLF was not necessarily providing them with a better experience, whereas the Saudi Arabian participants stated that MLF was an important factor in providing usability and good experience.

8.2.3.4. Learnability and usability

The learnability and usability aspects of the UCSCP were influenced by several constructs. For instance, the factors of cultural integration, MLF, and price comparison were identified as significantly influencing the learnability of the platform for Saudi Arabian participants, whereas reviews, ratings, images and videos, and price comparison significantly influenced its learnability for the Irish participants (Chapter 6, Figure 6.12). Similarly, MLF, price comparison, and cultural integration were identified as significantly influencing the usability of the platform for Saudi Arabian participants, whereas price comparison, images and videos, and themes significantly influenced the platform's usability for the Irish participants (Chapter 6, Figure 6.13).

In addition, the PLS-SEM analysis of the path coefficients (Chapter 6, Table 6.10) identified that both learnability and usability were not significant in relation to purchase intentions in either Ireland or Saudi Arabia. However, usability was found to have a significant association with trust in Saudi Arabia but a non-significant association with trust in Ireland. Therefore, it can be stated that the design features that enhance usability for people on S-Commerce platforms may vary from region to region, indicating that local

culture and lifestyles have an impact on S-Commerce adoption, purchase intentions, decision making, and trust establishment.

Thus, based on this discussion, it can be deduced that S-Commerce design and cultural constructs may influence psychological factors such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience, which in turn may impact the decision-making process, trust, and purchase intentions. In addition, it can also be assessed from the findings that motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability may directly impact purchase intentions, without trust as a mediating factor.

8.2.4. Impact of culture and lifestyles of consumers on the decision-making process and purchase intentions

Investigating the impact of culture and lifestyles on the decision-making process and purchase intentions is one of the major objectives of the study, which is why two culturally different countries, Ireland and Saudi Arabia, were selected. Among the various cultural factors that exist, this study focused on five main constructs for assessing how people are influenced: images and videos, price comparison, themes, MLF, and celebrity branding/endorsement.

8.2.4.1. Price Comparison

The price comparison feature presents the price for a product from different S-Commerce platforms to reflect potential savings. It is possible that different users may react differently to the idea of savings. For instance, some users may have established trust in a certain platform and do not hesitate to pay more on this platform; they prefer to purchase from one they trust, even if it offers the same product for a higher price. Focusing on this concept, Yahia et al. (2018) found that the reputation of a platform and price advantage have the strongest influence on trust. However, the quantitative findings in this study revealed that the majority of the participants from both Ireland (65.8%) and Saudi Arabia (58.7%) opined that the price comparison feature influenced their purchase intentions, while slightly fewer (62.1% and 56.9%, respectively) considered that the price comparison feature influenced their trust establishment. Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that the price comparison feature would influence the motivation, satisfaction, experience, decision making, and purchase intentions of the users on the UCSCP. Therefore, incorporating a

price comparison feature may improve users' trust in the platform, and enable decision making.

8.2.4.2. Images and videos

Curty and Zhang (2011) reported that product visualisation with respect to users' favourites like pictures and videos can influence the purchase intention of consumers. Accordingly, images and videos features were provided on the UCSCP to identify the participants' preferences. The quantitative findings in this research study revealed that images and videos can significantly impact the users' trust, purchase intentions, and decision making. However, a larger percentage of Irish participants (63.5%) confirmed that images and videos would impact their trust than Saudi Arabian participants (50.9%). Similarly, a larger percentage of Irish participants (68.1%) said that their purchase intentions would be influenced by images and videos, compared to Saudi Arabian participants (52.4%). The qualitative findings also confirmed that both Irish and Saudi Arabian participants were positively influenced by images and videos with regard to decision making and trust establishment, supporting the findings of Curty and Zhang (2011).

8.2.4.3. Themes

Cultural aspects can be measured by observing the changes in the behaviour or reactions to a particular product/service presentation (Sheik et al., 2017; Alcantara et al., 2017; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2017). To present the platform in a more attractive and interactive way, themes feature, which reflects the local culture through the S-Commerce design, was added to the UCSCP. The quantitative findings in this research study demonstrated that this feature was positively correlated with trust and decision making, and both the qualitative and quantitative findings emphasised that the cultural integration and product localisation features on UCSCP were positive for engaging and making purchasing decisions. Similar to these findings, other studies (Alhorr et al., 2010; Hall, 2002) have identified a positive correlation between localisation and the success of E-Commerce platforms.

8.2.4.4. Celebrity Branding

Focusing on celebrity branding, both the Irish and Saudi Arabian participants stated that it would impact trust and purchase intentions. However, a smaller percentage of Irish participants (37.5%) stated that celebrity branding would positively impact their trust in a UCSCP compared to the Saudi Arabian participants (55.9%), and similarly more Irish

(75.5%) than Saudi Arabian (52.9%) participants stated that celebrity branding would positively impact their purchase intentions on a UCSCP. The results support the findings of Patel and Basil (2017), who identified celebrity branding as an effective marketing strategy for attracting customers. However, it is possible that consumers may react differently to the same content delivered by retailers on social media, and so a type of behaviour observed in one country or region may not be generalisable to others (Yao et al., 2019). Therefore, there may be differences in participants' perceptions about the impact of cultural constructs on trust establishment, decision making, and purchase intentions on UCSCPs. The current findings demonstrated that both Irish and Saudi Arabian participants opined that cultural factors would influence their decision making, purchase intentions, and trust establishment.

8.2.4.5. Multi-Language Feature

Previous studies (Desmond et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014) have identified that providing content in several languages can effectively improve the usability of commerce platforms. In this study, the MLF was identified as having a positive impact on the trust, purchase intentions, and decision making of both the Irish and Saudi Arabian participants. However, the positive impact of MLF on trust was identified by a significantly larger percentage of Saudi Arabian participants (59.6%) than Irish ones (52.1%). Similarly, the impact of MLF on purchase intentions was identified by a significantly larger percentage of Saudi Arabian participants (59.3%) than Irish ones (52.2%). The qualitative findings also reflected the finding that more Saudi Arabian participants acknowledged the benefits of MLF than those in Ireland, where the participants did not consider the MLF to have much impact.

From the above, it can be deduced that culture plays a role in enhancing purchase intentions in the S-Commerce context and that the mediating role of trust in a social network community is conditional on culture.

8.2.5. Relationship between S-Commerce constructs, design constructs, and behavioural and psychological fields

Chen et al. (2017a) revealed that consumers' learning from S-Commerce components can greatly influence decision quality. They also identified that uncertainty was one of the important factors that reduced decision quality. Firstly, the learnability factor may be influenced by S-Commerce and the design constructs as they support enhanced information representation, social support, and effective information exchange features. Social support

quality has been found to significantly influence consumers' initial attention, intuitive evaluation, and intention to buy; secondly, S-Commerce constructs (both unperceptive and perceptive) have been found to significantly influence consumers' interaction experience and intention to buy (Aladwani, 2018). In this study, as discussed in section 8.2, the qualitative and quantitative findings indicated that S-Commerce constructs are positively correlated with psychological fields such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience. These in turn may establish trust and facilitate decision making and purchase intentions on the UCSCP. Accordingly, a number of researchers have reported that social components such as information attributes and design features, and other components such as technology and business models motivate consumers to adopt S-Commerce (Zhang et al., 2014a; Hashim et al., 2015; Akman & Mishra, 2017). Thus, it can be deduced that S-Commerce constructs are positively correlated with psychological fields.

8.3. Implications for Theory

Social constructs such as reviews, ratings, referrals, forums and communities have been identified as having a positive impact on building trust (Hajli, 2015a). The perceived behavioural constructs, as discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.3, which include motivation, satisfaction, and experience, can influence users' behaviour and intentions. However, the impact of these constructs on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process has been poorly addressed in extant research studies on S-Commerce. The quantitative findings in Saudi Arabia revealed ratings as the most important construct that motivated users to take a purchase decision, followed by reviews and referrals. Similarly, in Ireland, both ratings and reviews were considered to be the most important constructs, followed by referrals, in motivating users (Chapter 6, section 6.3.2). This was supported by the qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.3.1, section 7.4.1), which identified ratings and reviews as the most important influential factors for motivating users on UCSCPs. These findings can be related to Zhang et al.'s (2014a) study, which identified social support as one of the important factors of motivation. While Saudi Arabian participants preferred ratings over reviews, the Irish participants regarded both as equally important factors of motivation. Social constructs such as ratings, reviews, and referrals provide social support to the users, which helps them to make the decision of whether to buy a product or not. Focusing on satisfaction, the Saudi Arabian participants considered reviews, ratings, and referrals as equally important constructs for satisfaction, as they provided information

quality and availability. However, the Irish participants considered reviews to be the most important construct leading to satisfaction, followed by ratings and referrals (Chapter 6, section 6.3.3). Referrals were considered to be less important by the participants from both countries compared to ratings and reviews. Similarly, the qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.3.2, section 7.4.2), identified ratings and reviews as important factors of users' satisfaction on UCSCPs. These findings revealed that the quality of UCSCP psychological empowerment for users resulted in high satisfaction, motivation, and experience levels (Alshiby, 2014). Satisfied users exhibit loyalty towards a brand (Zhang et al., 2016). Therefore, high satisfaction levels can increase the loyalty towards a UCSCP.

The Saudi Arabian participants identified ratings as the most important factor for learning on the platform about a product or service, followed by reviews, while the Irish participants preferred reviews over ratings (Chapter 6, section, 6.3.5). The qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.3.3, section 7.4.3) similarly identified ratings and reviews as important factors of UCSCPs' learnability. These findings show that Saudi Arabian participants prefer summarised information (ratings) so that they can make quick decisions, whereas Irish participants prefer detailed information (reviews) for making decisions. Focusing on the social constructs that enable decision making, both the Saudi Arabian and Irish participants identified reviews as the most important for taking decisions, followed by ratings and referrals (Chapter 6, section 6.3.8). However, the qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.3.8, section 7.4.8) identified referrals and reviews as important factors of the learnability of UCSCP. It is clear that the social constructs on UCSCPs affect users' behaviour and enable them to take effective decisions. Differences in the preferences for social constructs could be observed between the participants from Saudi Arabia and those from Ireland. However, all of the participants considered social constructs as important factors that had a positive impact on user behaviour.

Reviews were identified as the most important construct for increasing users' trust, followed by ratings and referrals, in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.7). However, the social constructs of ratings, reviews and referrals had more influence on users' trust in Ireland than in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the results from the PLS-SEM analysis indicated positive correlations between social constructs and trust. Thus, based on the findings, it can be stated that social constructs can have a positive impact on behavioural aspects such as users' experience, motivation, and satisfaction, and also on trust, and

therefore the relationship between these constructs for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. As discussed, the findings demonstrate that S-Commerce constructs can have a positive impact on the behaviour of users in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia, and this new relationship identified in the study is indicated in Figure 8.2 by the red arrow.

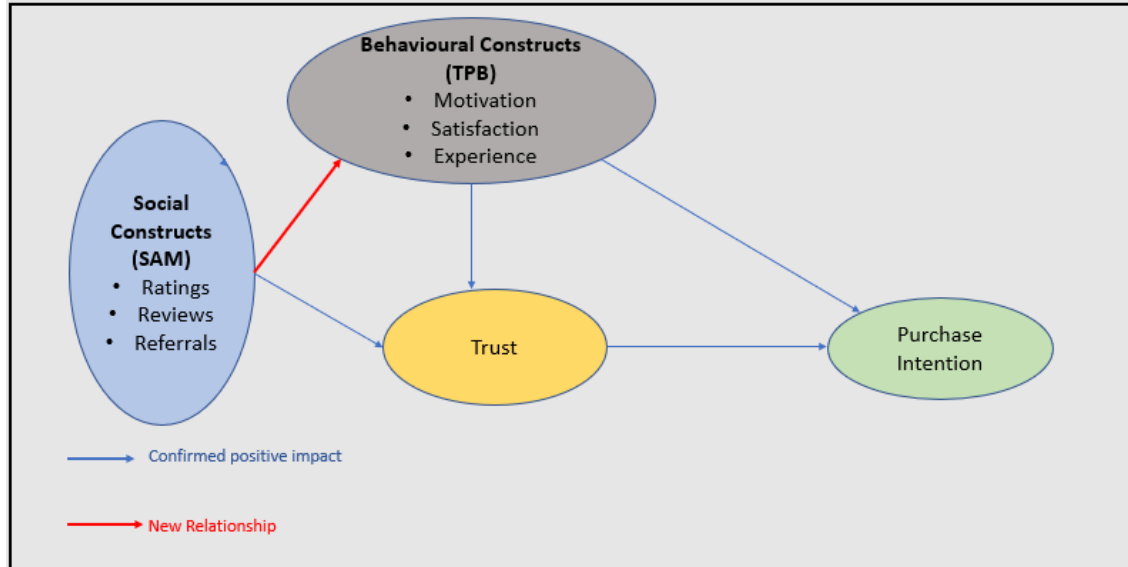


Fig 8.2. Relationship between social constructs, behavioural constructs, and trust on UCSCP in Ireland and Saudi Arabia (developed by researcher)

Studies have identified that social constructs can affect user behaviour in various ways including improved motivation (Al-Dwairi, 2017; Bianchi et al., 2017; Akman & Mishra, 2017; Gvili & Levy, 2019), improved satisfaction (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Beyari & Abareshi, 2016), and improved learnability (Kuan et al., 2008; Madu & Madu, 2002; Ilbahar & Cebi, 2017). This leads to increased engagement, effective decision making and improved purchase intentions (Hajli, 2015; Lal, 2017; Huang, 2018; Pienaar, 2015; Yang, 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018) on UCSCPs. Thus, it can be concluded that S-Commerce constructs positively impact consumers' behaviour and increase trust, which enables them to take effective decisions, and increases the intention to purchase.

Platform design features such as information quality and representation were also identified as important factors in enabling users to take effective decisions (Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002; Bianchi et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2016). As discussed in Chapter 3, ease of use (UTAUT: section 3.5) and learnability (OLT: section 3.4) can influence users' behaviour (attitudes) and intention to use. In addition, factors such as gender and age can

influence usability (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Accordingly, the UCSCP proposed in this study employed an effective and efficient platform design that integrated social, design, technological, and cultural constructs. This enhanced users' interactivity and experience, and provided quality information, which would lead to effective decision making. The quantitative findings revealed that the majority of the participants from both Saudi Arabia (50.8%) and Ireland (62.3%) identified the overall design of the UCSCP as effective and efficient in supporting users in the decision-making process (Chapter 6, section 6.3.1). In addition, the themes feature, which was uniquely designed to integrate cultural aspects into the platform design, was found to be effective by the majority of participants from Saudi Arabia (64.2%) and Ireland (71.3%). Considering the design features, the Irish participants thought that they would have more impact on the decision-making process than the Saudi Arabian participants did. One of the important observations is that young participants valued the idea of themes (integrating cultural aspects into the platform design) more than the older participants. Cultural integration on the UCSCP was rated by Saudi Arabian participants (59.1%) and Irish participants (64.5%) to be providing a very good experience (Chapter 6, section 6.3.4). In terms of the usability of themes, the majority of the Saudi Arabian (53.9%) and Irish participants (55.5%) rated them as very useful in decision making (Chapter 6, section 6.3.6). Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that the unique presentation (themes) of features such as ratings, reviews, referrals option, photos and videos, price comparison, MLF, and celebrity branding were thought to be very useful in the decision-making process (Chapter 7, section 7.3.8, section, 7.4.8). The participants' responses also showed that the effective and efficient design of the UCSCP and the social constructs integrated with cultural constructs such as product localisation, MLFs, price comparison, and celebrity branding provided good user experience and satisfaction levels. This would motivate users to engage with the platform and develop purchase intentions (Chapter 7, section 7.3.1–section 7.3.6, section, 7.4.1–section 7.4.6).

During the PLS-SEM analysis, bootstrapping was performed on both the Saudi Arabian and Irish models to test the statistical significance of the path constructs coefficients by means of t-tests. Usability (ease of use) and observation (learning) were identified to be insignificant for their impact on purchase decision, although ease of use had a significant relationship with trust in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, usability and observation were not significant for purchase decisions, and usability was also insignificant for trust in Ireland. Accordingly, the relationship between constructs presented in Figure 8.2 was

further developed for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia, and presented in Figure 8.3. The relationships identified as not significant are highlighted.

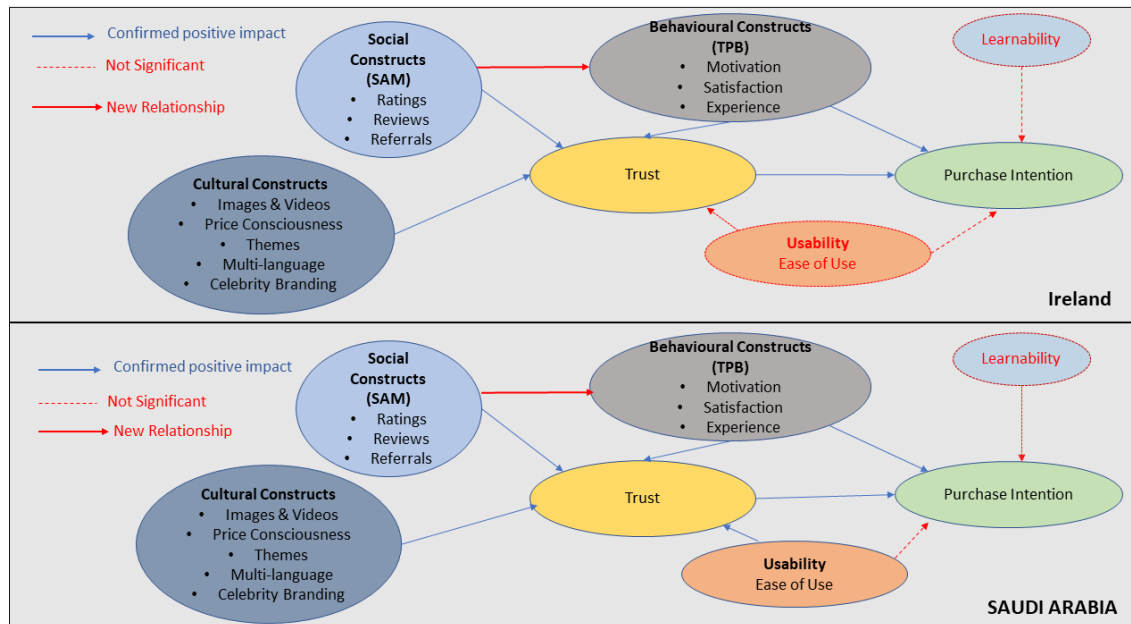


Fig 8.3. Relationship between social, behavioural, learnability and usability constructs, and trust on UCSCP (developed by researcher)

The findings from the literature review, which suggested that effective design features were information quality and representation (Huang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2014a; Hashim et al., 2015; Akman & Mishra, 2017), localisation (Rao & Minakakis, 2003; Zhang et al., 2002), and cultural and lifestyle aspects (Bianchi et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2016; Rouibah & Al-Qirim, 2017; Dwairi, 2017; Sukrat et al., 2017; Leeraphong & Papasratorn, 2017; Shdaifat et al., 2016) supported the findings from this study's qualitative and quantitative analysis. These suggested that having an effective and efficient design for an S-Commerce platform could positively influence consumers' behaviour and their decision-making process.

Psychological fields such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience can influence consumer behaviour. Findings from the quantitative analysis (Chapter 6, section 6.3.2) revealed that various S-Commerce constructs contributed to the users' motivation, helping them to make a purchase decision. However, minor differences were observed between the opinions of Saudi Arabian and Irish participants. The MLF on the UCSCP was identified as being one of the most important factors for motivation by the Saudi Arabian participants (74.1%), followed by price consciousness (62.4%), ratings (61.4%), and product localisation (52.7%). In contrast, the Irish participants identified photos and videos

(68.5%), followed by ratings (67.8%), reviews (67.8%), price consciousness (65.1%), MLF (54.5%), and product localisation (45.5%) as being important for motivation. It can be observed that ease of use features such as MLF and ratings, and cultural features such as product localisation and themes motivated Saudi Arabian participants, while information features such as photos and videos, reviews, ratings, and price consciousness motivated Irish participants. In addition, the qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.3.1, section 7.4.1) identified that Irish participants were motivated by features such as price comparison, ratings, themes, and celebrity branding, while Saudi Arabian participants were motivated by MLF, product localisation, and cultural integration.

Overall, we can state that constructs such as MLF, price consciousness, ratings, themes, and product localisation motivated Saudi Arabian participants to make a purchase decision, whereas constructs such as price consciousness, photos and videos, reviews, ratings, and referrals motivated Irish participants to make a purchase decision (Chapter 6, section 6.3.2). However, the qualitative analysis revealed that Irish participants were more satisfied with constructs such as themes (colours, design), celebrity branding, and the look and feel of the platform, and Saudi Arabian participants were more satisfied with localisation (supporting local cultural products), MLF, and themes (Chapter 7, section 7.3.2, section 7.4.2). In terms of enhancing trust and encouraging a purchase decision, the qualitative findings showed that the Saudi Arabian participants were most satisfied with the cultural features and the Irish participants were most satisfied with the informational and design features.

Similarly, a satisfactory experience of using a UCSCP can increase trust and purchase decisions. The PLS-SEM analysis demonstrated a positive relationship between behavioural constructs, and trust and purchase intention. Accordingly, the relationship between these three factors is presented in Figures 8.2. and 8.3. The Saudi Arabian participants stated that the constructs of MLF, themes, cultural integration, referrals, and reviews provided a good experience, while the Irish participants highlighted price consciousness, photos and videos, themes, ratings, and reviews as providing a good experience (Chapter 6, section 6.3.4). The findings in relation to experience were similar to those related to satisfaction and motivation. In the qualitative findings (Chapter 7, section 7.4.6), it was clear that MLF, themes, and design features were identified by the Irish participants as providing a good experience – the themes employed Christmas colours

(event-based themes). Similarly, Saudi Arabian participants preferred MLF, ratings, themes, and product localisation as features that provided a good experience.

The findings from the literature supported these findings as they confirmed that S-Commerce constructs can impact psychological constructs such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience (Al-Dwairi, 2017; Bianchi et al., 2017; Beyari & Abareshi, 2016), and these psychological fields accordingly impact consumer behaviour and purchase decisions (Hajli, 2015; Lal, 2017; Huang, 2018; Pienaar, 2015; Yang, 2019; Hallikainen & Laukkanen, 2018). Thus, it can be stated that S-Commerce constructs can influence the psychological fields of users, which in turn influence users' decision-making processes and purchase intentions.

The quantitative findings clearly indicate the impact of cultural constructs on user behaviour and purchase intentions. Cultural features such as MLF, themes, price comparison, localisation etc. influence the learnability and usability of the platform for both Saudi Arabian and Irish participants (Chapter 6, section 6.3.5, section 6.3.6). However, there were differences in the preferences of participants in both countries. While Saudi Arabian participants preferred more cultural integration, Irish participants preferred the usability, design and learnability aspects such as themes, reviews, price comparison, celebrity endorsement, and ratings. A large percentage – 77.3% of Saudi Arabian participants and 80% of Irish participants (Chapter 6, section 6.3.9) – stated that they would make purchase decisions by considering the cultural integration of the platform design. However, there were differences in the cultural constructs used on the platform. For instance, 52.9% of Saudi Arabian participants and 75.5% of Irish participants stated that celebrity branding would influence their purchase decisions. However, in relation to trust, the Irish participants stated that celebrity branding would influence their purchase decisions, but not building trust. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, the participants perceived that celebrity branding would have a positive impact on both trust and purchase decisions. The findings clearly indicate that celebrity branding had a lower impact on the purchase intentions of Saudi Arabian participants than on the purchasing intentions of Irish participants. One of the important observations to be made is that although cultural constructs affect users' engagement, decision making, and purchase intentions, they do not have any major impact on the development of their trust in the platform, whereas social constructs positively affect trust (Chapter 6, section 6.3.7). A few of the cultural constructs,

such as MLF and product localisation, were identified as positively affecting trust among Saudi Arabian participants, and features such as price consciousness and themes positively affected trust among Irish participants.

Similarly, the qualitative findings revealed that cultural constructs had a positive impact on trust and a significant impact on decision making and purchase intentions. Integrating cultural aspects into the design was considered positive by the participants as it showed them that the platform/company cared about the local culture, values and traditions, which may develop positive intentions to buy from the platform (Chapter 7, section 7.4.7–section 7.4.9). In addition, the customisation feature using themes that matched the users’ preferences was identified as more appealing by the Irish participants than by the Saudi participants, while cultural constructs such as localisation was identified as more appealing by the Saudi Arabian participants. Supporting the findings, the PLS-SEM analysis showed a positive correlation between the cultural constructs and trust, and accordingly, the theoretical framework was modified for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia as shown in Figure 8.4.

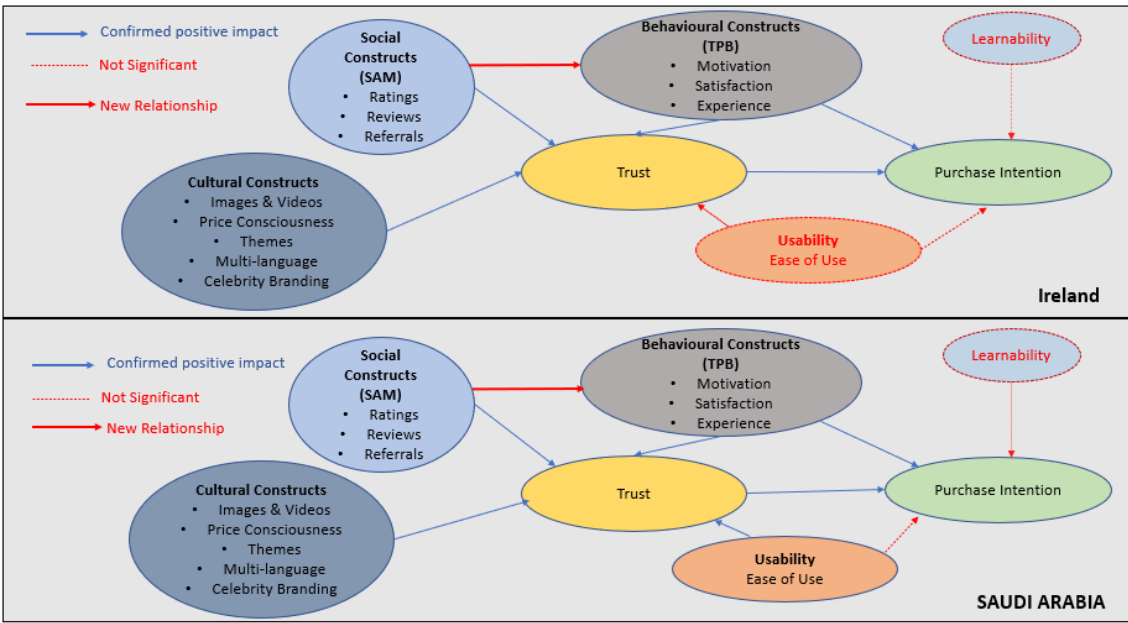


Fig 8.4. Modified theoretical frameworks for Ireland and Saudi Arabia (developed by researcher)

These findings contradicted Ng’s (2013) findings, which stated that culture has a moderate impact on purchase intentions. The findings in this study revealed that culture has a high impact on decision making and purchase intentions. However, different cultures were

observed in this study, and it included the impact of S-Commerce constructs on users' psychological beliefs such as motivation, experience, and satisfaction. Previous studies (Sunhee Seo, 2016; Ng, 2013; Oleynikova and Zorkin, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2017; Abed et al., 2016; Rouibah & Al-Qirim, 2017; Dwairi, 2017; Sukrat et al., 2017; Leeraphong & Papasratom, 2017; Shdaifat et al., 2016) have found that culture has a varying impact in S-Commerce.

8.4. Implications for Practice

This study's findings have implications for practice in several areas. These insights can be leveraged by commerce system designers and developers, S-Commerce companies, and other stakeholders in S-Commerce. In the following sections, the suggestions for practice are discussed in three areas: awareness of critical factors influencing S-Commerce adoption; using a User-centric adoption-evaluation framework; and awareness of the impact of socio-cultural integration on S-Commerce platforms.

8.4.1. Awareness of critical factors and constructs influencing S-Commerce adoption

The findings in this study have identified the relationship between various constructs in S-Commerce, and their influence on trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. The constructs used in this study were limited according to the Irish and Saudi Arabian users' requirements, which were assessed from the surveys and interviews. However, the literature review (Chapter 2) identified various constructs in S-Commerce that were systematically categorised into social, design, business model, culture and lifestyle, and user-centred aspects in the UCSCF (Figure 2.4). This framework has identified critical factors and constructs that can be used by companies for designing and developing S-Commerce platforms. In addition, the theoretical framework (Chapter 3, Figure 3.10) proposed in this study can be used to assess the relationships between various constructs specific to different regions, and to assess consumer behaviour, needs, and adoption of S-Commerce. In this study it was used for evaluation in Ireland (Chapter 6, Figure 6.25) and Saudi Arabia (Chapter 6, Figure 6.24).

8.4.2. Using a user-centric adoption-evaluation framework

As mentioned in the previous section, the UCSCF proposed in this study can be used for identifying various constructs in specific to different cultures or regions. However, for

assessing the adoption of S-Commerce, various influencing factors and constructs have to be reviewed, along with their impact on establishing trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. The theoretical framework, in this context, clearly reflects the relationship between various constructs, trust, and purchase intentions. Accordingly, user-centric platforms in different regions can be evaluated using the framework, and the necessary changes can be made to the platform based on the evaluation findings specific to different regions. In addition, by adopting a systematic approach and using the user-centric framework, risks and barriers in the design and development of S-Commerce platforms can be addressed by industry practitioners.

8.4.3. Awareness of the impact of socio-cultural integration on S-Commerce platforms

The findings in this study have indicated the high impact of culture and lifestyles on consumers' behaviour, decision making, and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. Differences between the Irish and Saudi Arabian participants' perceptions of various constructs related to S-Commerce can be identified. These findings shed light on the adoption of user-centric approaches for industry practitioners, and provide motivation for including cultural integration and localisation features in the design and development of S-Commerce platforms. These findings are also useful for new S-Commerce companies, or companies that are integrating their commerce operations with social media elements on online platforms. A stand-alone platform is designed, developed, and used in the study, rather than using pre-existing platforms such as F-Commerce, to which consumers might have already developed a sense of attachment.

8.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings in this study by relating the quantitative and qualitative findings with studies reviewed in literature. The discussion has confirmed that differences in cultural implications for trust and purchase intentions on UCSCPs were identified between Saudi and Irish participants. A strong positive correlation between S-Commerce constructs and trust was identified among both Saudi and Irish participants. Behavioural constructs were identified as having a positive impact on both trust and purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia and Ireland. In addition, usability and learnability were found to be insignificant in relation to trust and purchase intentions in Ireland. Only learnability was identified as not being significant for trust in Saudi Arabia. The discussion of the findings, accordingly, led to the modification of initial theoretical framework for both Saudi Arabia and Ireland.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the findings in this study, and presents the contributions and limitations of this study and provides directions for future research. Accordingly, the chapter layout is designed as shown in Figure 9.1.

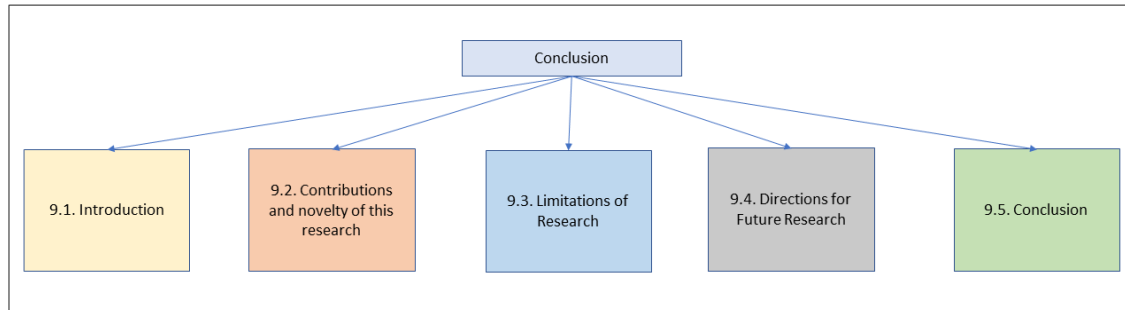


Fig 9.1. Chapter layout

9.1. Introduction

The main aim of this study is to develop an integrated model or framework that considers various aspects of S-Commerce – the design aspects, cultural aspects, social constructs, relationships etc. – and how they influence consumer behaviour. The model is used to study the impact of these aspects in two culturally different regions, Saudi Arabia and Ireland, using a UCSCP developed for both countries. To achieve this aim, an extensive literature review was carried out. This helped the researcher to understand the various concepts of S-Commerce (objective 1), the various definitions and perspectives of S-Commerce (objective 2), the recent changes and techniques that have been implemented on S-Commerce platforms (objective 3), S-Commerce constructs and design features (objective 4), the role of consumer behavioural and psychological fields in the consumer decision-making process (objective 5), the role of these constructs and their impact on the psychological fields that impact the decision-making process and purchase intentions (objective 6), and the role and impact of cultures and lifestyles on S-Commerce platforms (objective 7). A UCSCF was developed based on these findings that can be used to guide researchers and developers on the various features that should be included in S-Commerce platforms, achieving objective 8. In addition, to address the research gaps in relation to the influence of culture in S-Commerce, a cross-cultural study including Ireland and Saudi Arabia was conducted (objective 9), where the various factors of influence and the relationships between them were investigated and evaluated using the UCSCP (via the UCSCF) developed for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia (objective 10).

In addition, various research questions (RQs) outlined in this study were addressed using the evaluation of the theoretical frameworks developed for both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Focusing on RQ1 (What impact do S-Commerce constructs have on consumer behaviour and purchase intentions?), S-Commerce constructs (reviews, ratings, referrals) were identified to be positively related to the psychological and behavioural fields, and to trust and the decision-making process, supporting the findings from previous studies. In addressing RQ4 (Can S-Commerce constructs impact these behavioural and psychological fields?), a new relationship was identified between S-Commerce constructs and behavioural constructs (Figure 8.4) in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia, indicating the positive impact of S-Commerce constructs on behavioural constructs. When addressing RQ2 (How do the design aspects in S-Commerce influence consumer behaviour in the decision-making process (whether to buy or not) and purchase intentions), trust was considered as a mediating factor. The findings from the study (Figure 8.4) reflected the positive impact of S-Commerce constructs on the decision making and purchase intentions of the consumers, reflecting the importance of integrating cultural factors in to the S-Commerce design (section 8.2.2, Chapter 8). However, in Saudi Arabia, usability (design aspect) was identified as being positively related to trust, but no significant relationship was identified with purchase intention. On the other hand, in Ireland, the usability factor had no significant relationship with trust and purchase intentions. Moreover, the behavioural aspect of learnability had no significant relationship with purchase intention (Figure 8.4). In addressing RQ3 (How important are the behavioural and psychological fields in influencing consumer behaviour (decision making) and purchase intentions?), the behavioural and psychological constructs (motivation, satisfaction, experience) were identified as having a positive impact on decision making (using trust as mediating factor), and also purchase intentions (Figure 8.4) in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Finally, in addressing RQ5 (Do the culture and lifestyles of consumers influence their decision-making process and purchase intentions?), it was identified that cultural factors can significantly influence trust, which can further moderate consumers' behaviour and psychological factors and lead to purchase intentions in both Saudi Arabia and Ireland. Thus, all the research questions outlined in this study were addressed.

9.2. Contributions and Novelty of This Research

This section presents the key contributions of this study. The deficiencies identified in the literature related to S-Commerce and the factors of influence in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 were addressed using the proposed theoretical framework and the findings from the studies in both Ireland and Saudi Arabia. The key contributions include the following.

Contribution One: Introducing the User-Centric S-Commerce Framework

Considering the limitations of research on S-Commerce, with the majority of studies focusing on social media elements, and little emphasis given to other factors of influence, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has identified various factors of influence. However, focusing on the availability of different types of S-Commerce platforms (for example, onsite and offsite), and various types of factors, the need for categorising various factors and providing a comprehensive framework for S-Commerce emerged. Accordingly, the factors identified from the literature review were categorised under various layers including social, design, business model, cultural, and user-centric aspects in the proposed UCSCF. The user-centric aspects focusing on the psychological and behavioural aspects, and the cultural and social factors were the main areas of investigation in this study. The framework is considered to be one of the major contributions of this study, as it can support researchers and academicians by providing a comprehensive body of literature on S-Commerce and various factors of influence. In addition, it can also have practical implications, as industry practitioners can use the framework for designing and developing UCSCPs.

Contribution Two: Understanding the critical factors that influence users on S-Commerce platforms

This study has identified various factors that influence users of S-Commerce, and these are categorised into various constructs. Firstly, S-Commerce constructs/social media elements, which include reviews, ratings, and referrals, were identified as influencing users' trust and behavioural aspects such as motivation, satisfaction, and experience. These social media elements ensure high information quality and representation, which not only motivates users to engaging with S-Commerce platforms, but also improves their usability and learnability. Secondly, the behavioural and psychological (user-centric) constructs, including motivation, satisfaction, learnability, usability and experience, which may be specific to each user, influence trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. One of the

interesting aspects identified by this study is the influence of various cultural constructs such as language, celebrity branding, cultural design, and themes on S-Commerce platforms, and images, videos, and price comparison aspects in S-Commerce. It was identified that they can impact users' trust, decision making and purchase intentions on the platforms.

Contribution Three: An investigation into the relationship between various factors of influence in S-Commerce, and decision making and purchase intentions

The constructs included in this study (social, cultural, behavioural, psychological) were identified as influencing trust, decision making, and purchase intentions. Trust is considered to be a mediating factor between various factors of influence and purchase intentions. While there was no identified relationship between social constructs and cultural factors, social elements such as ratings, reviews, and referrals were identified to be influencing behavioural and psychological constructs, including motivation, satisfaction, experience, learnability, and usability. In addition, social, cultural, behavioural, and psychological constructs were identified to be influencing users' trust, which in turn influences the decision making and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. In addition, factors such as motivation, satisfaction, experience can directly impact purchase intentions. These findings provide a valuable contribution to the S-Commerce literature by explaining the relationships between various constructs.

Contribution Four: Contribution to the scarcity of cross-cultural research on S-Commerce

This study contributes to the S-Commerce literature by presenting the impact of culture on various factors that influence users on S-Commerce platforms. One of the key findings in this chapter is that the factors of influence and the relationship between them are subject to change depending on the culture being considered. The relationship between the constructs used in the theoretical framework differed for Ireland and Saudi Arabia. A new relationship (for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia) between social constructs and behavioural constructs demonstrated that improving information availability and representation by using social constructs (reviews and ratings) can influence users' motivation, satisfaction, and experience. However, usability had no impact on trust and purchase intentions in Ireland, whereas it had an impact on trust but not on purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia. In addition, learnability had no impact on purchase intentions in either Ireland or Saudi

Arabia. Therefore, the relationships between the constructs in S-Commerce may change with cultures, which is one of the key findings of this study.

Contribution Five: Theoretical and empirical contribution

The theoretical contributions of this research related to the technical, social, cultural, behavioural, and psychological fields based on the review of SAM, TPB, OLT, UTAUT, and the diffusion of cultural aspects. Although these theories have been used in different contexts, integrating them and using them in relation to the cultural context is relatively new. In addition, the theoretical contributions have successfully demonstrated that the constructs in these theories may differ among people with different cultures. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated how S-Commerce platforms should be modified according to culture, and the importance of design and integrating cultural aspects into S-Commerce platform design.

9.3. Limitations of the Research

Limited research has been identified related to the investigation of various factors of influence using an integrated framework in S-Commerce. Although some studies have focused on single constructs such as social constructs, it is important to understand various factors of influence, the relationships between them, and how they are influenced by culture. The consideration of various factors increased the complexity of the study model. Accordingly, different methods were adopted in the data collection and analysis for evaluating the complex study model. However, there are a few limitations in this study, and these are explained in the following points.

- The UCSCF proposed in this study included social, design, business, culture, and user-centric aspects. However, the factors considered in the development of the UCSCPs for Ireland and Saudi Arabia were based on the requirements derived from the participants in both countries. As a result, only a few factors in each layer were considered for the study, and other factors such as platform types (E-tailor, group buying, sharing commerce etc.) were avoided.
- Another limitation is that only two culturally different countries were considered for the study. Increasing the number of case studies/countries could have improved the findings and the assessment of the impact of different cultures in S-Commerce. Due to the time and travel constraints and the fact that the researcher had to travel

many times to Ireland for data collection, only two countries were selected for the study.

- Another limitation is related to the sample population. The researcher focused on students for the sample population because of their accessibility, and prerequisite knowledge about online commerce and shopping. However, including more diverse participants could have further added to the value to the findings. Nevertheless, in order to minimise bias, an expert sample was used for semi-structured interviews to evaluate the UCSCPs for both Ireland and Saudi Arabia.

9.4. Directions for Future Research

The study has established a starting point for understanding the impact of various factors and the inter-relationships between them by developing an integrated theoretical framework for cross-cultural comparisons in S-Commerce. This approach can lead the way forward in understanding the relationship between different factors of influence in S-Commerce, and how they collectively impact users' behaviour, decision making, and purchase intentions. The overall findings, as well as the limitations of this research, provide a guide for further research in different areas, including the following.

- A comparison of studies in different countries in relation to users' behaviour, attitudes, and psychological aspects, and their perceptions about the influence of social, design, and technological aspects might reveal the importance of understanding culture and its influence in S-Commerce operations.
- This study can be further improved by using a diverse sample population and comparing the differences between them.
- This study has developed UCSCPs in order to investigate the impact of cultural and user-centric aspects. However, using existing platforms such as Facebook-Commerce, Pinterest, Amazon platforms and comparing the differences between cultures may further integrate the brand value construct into the study model, and further contribute to the literature and industry.
- This study has adopted qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative surveys for data collection. Further adopting different methods could enhance the quality of the data, thus improving the data analysis and providing deeper insights into the findings.

- The UCSCF proposed in this study can be investigated and further developed. In addition, it can also be used for designing and developing UCSCPs for other countries.

9.5. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations presented in this chapter, this study contributes significantly to the identification of various factors of influence in S-Commerce operations, the relationships between the factors, and their impact on users' decision making and purchase intentions. Several relationships between the constructs were evaluated, and a few were proved to be significant, while others were insignificant. The findings derived from the qualitative and quantitative data provided evidence to support the relationships between the constructs and their influence on decision making and purchase intentions. This was achieved through the exploration, observation, and investigation of users' (Irish and Saudi Arabian) perceptions of and behaviour towards the UCSCPs developed in this study. The study further explores the UTAUT, TPB, OLT, and SAM theories in the context of UCSC. These theories were further integrated with cultural factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of various factors (social, cultural, design, behavioural, psychological, and technical) on decision making and purchase intentions on S-Commerce platforms. Finally, this study has designed and proposed a UCSCF that can be used to design and develop S-Commerce platforms, and also used by academicians to understand the various factors involved in S-Commerce operations, and the relationships between them. This framework can also be reviewed and further developed in future research. Thus, this study can conclude that various factors can influence S-Commerce users, and that the relationship between these factors may in turn be influenced by culture. In addition, social, design, behavioural, psychological, and cultural aspects can influence the decision making and purchase intentions of users on S-Commerce platforms.

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A survey for identifying the users' perceptions about various elements of S-Commerce platforms

Purpose:

The purpose of the survey is to identify the importance of various elements in developing the S-Commerce platform, how they are perceived by the users and how they are related with each other. Accordingly, the survey questions focus on collecting demographic data, users' interactivity information, and their perceptions about the design, social and cultural elements of S-Commerce platforms. The information collected from the survey will be used for developing the user-centric S-commerce platform.

This survey is being conducted by an MBA Student at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, School of Business and Technology. Saudi Arabia.

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NOTE:

Personal data collected in this survey will be used only for academic studies.

1. Name:
2. Gender: Male/Female/LGBT
3. Age group: <20/ 20-30/ 30-40/ 4—50/ >50
4. Education: School/Undergraduate-Degree-Diploma/Post-graduate/n/a
5. Email:
6. Phone:
7. How often do you use the internet?

- 1-2 hours a day
- 2-4 hours a day
- 4-6 hours a day
- 6+ hours a day

8. What do you use the internet for? (Check all that apply)

- Email
- Social networking
- Gaming
- Listening to music/watching videos
- Buying things/online shopping

User-Centric Aspects

9. Have you ever bought anything online?

- Yes
- No

10. What items would you buy online? (Check all that apply)

- Music/videos
- Clothes/accessories
- Sports equipment
- Games
- Computers/accessories
- Home equipment/accessories
- Electronics
- Jewellery
- Furniture
- Other

11. Do you prefer buying things online from Ireland or from other countries? (Check all that apply)

- Ireland
- Other Countries

Interaction and Design Features

12. Do you use social networking sites for online purchases?

- Yes
- No

13. What items would you buy on S-Commerce platforms? (Check all that apply)

- Music/videos
- Clothes/accessories
- Sports equipment
- Games
- Computers/accessories
- Home equipment/accessories
- Electronics
- Jewellery
- Furniture
- Other

14. How frequently do you purchase on S-Commerce platforms?

- More than once a week
- Two to three times a month
- Once a month
- Rarely (once in 6 months)
- I don't purchase on S-Commerce platforms

15. Do you find the current S-Commerce platforms efficient in making your purchasing experience joyful?

- Yes
- No

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not very important/2 = important/3 = neutral/4 = very important/5 = extremely important), rate the perceived importance of the following design features for developing an S-Commerce platform.

16. Mobility (ability to access from multiple devices)

17. Ubiquity (availability of S-Commerce services in real time that can be accessed from anywhere)

18. Personalisation (ability of the S-Commerce application to personalise features specific to each user)

19. Localisation (ability of the S-Commerce application to modify its elements according to the location of the user)
20. Interactivity (ability of the S-Commerce application to allow and enhance the interaction between the different users on its platform through various techniques like reviews, likes, sharing, feedback, support, FAQs etc.)
21. Content (accuracy, completeness, and sustainability) on S-Commerce platforms
22. Security and privacy
23. Reliability
24. Usability

Social Elements

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not very important/2 = important/3 = neutral/4 = very important/5 = extremely important), rate the perceived importance of the following social and informational features on an S-Commerce platform.

25. Ratings (Rating given by the customer to a product or service)
26. Referrals (Referring a product or service to others)
27. Feedback (Opinions of customers about the product or service they have purchased)
28. Reviews (Customers' experiences of a product or service)
29. Videos (A video presenting the product or service)
30. Price Consciousness (showing savings)
31. Support for social networking using third-party applications like Facebook, Twitter etc.
32. Support for in-built social networking to interact with other customers.

Cultural Aspects

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not very important/2 = important/3 = neutral/4 = very important/5 = extremely important), rate the perceived importance of the following cultural features for developing an S-Commerce platform.

33. Multi-language support (**local language**)
34. Product localisation
35. Reflecting the local customs and culture through **Themes (Visual appeal of S-Commerce platform such as text formats, design aspects like colour, symbols etc.)**

Interview Questions

1. Briefly explain what you have understood about the following elements relating to S-Commerce platforms.
 - Mobility
 - Ubiquity
 - Personalisation
 - Localisation
 - Interactivity
 - Content
 - Reliability
 - Usability
2. Do you find any relationship between these elements? Please explain briefly.
3. Briefly explain what you have understood about the following elements relating to S-Commerce platforms.
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Feedback
 - Reviews
 - Videos
 - Price consciousness (showing savings)
 - Support for social networking using third-party applications like Facebook, Twitter etc.
 - Support for in-built social networking to interact with other customers.
4. Do you find any relationship between these elements? Please explain briefly.
5. Briefly explain what you have understood about the following elements relating to S-Commerce platforms.
 - Multi-language support (**local language**)
 - Product localisation
 - Reflecting the local customs and culture through **Themes (Visual appeal of S-Commerce platform such as text formats, design aspects like colour, symbols etc.)**
6. Do you find any relationship between these elements? Please explain briefly.

7. Do you think the introduction of the proposed intervention (themes) would increase consumers' participation in S-Commerce platforms and increase purchases?

Meanings of each element:

Element	Meanings
Themes	Changes the look and feel of the web pages.
Reviews	Reviews contain the more detailed experiences of users with a product or service.
Ratings	Ratings are used to rate a product or service on an S-Commerce platform, and they are part of the collaborative approach adopted by online shoppers.
Referrals	Referrals are another social construct reflecting the process of referring an online product or vendor to colleagues, friends, or relatives.
Photos & videos of products	Product listing contains video Zhang and Benyoucef (2016)
Price consciousness	Price consciousness reflects the savings perceived by users if they buy a product or service; awareness of this can be enhanced by providing comparisons with prices for the same product on other platforms.
Multi-language feature	The local language and English (a common language).
Celebrity branding	Celebrities use to promote the products and brands. (Patel & Basil, 2017).

Appendix B: Survey and Semi-structured Interview Questionnaires for Evaluation

Saudi Arabia Survey Questionnaire

A survey for investigating the impact of the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform

(UCSCP) on purchasing decisions

Purpose:

The purpose of the survey is to investigate the impact of a User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (integrated with cultural and social constructs through the unique design specifications) on the decision-making process and psychological aspects of S-Commerce users. The survey is conducted for academic purposes to analyse how integrating cultural and social aspects in to an S-Commerce platform would influence the purchasing decisions (to buy or not) and psychological aspects (trust, motivation, ease of use, satisfaction) of S-Commerce users. The participants are initially requested to access the traditional platform (available at: http://ucscp.com/traditional/saudhi/html/index_simple.html) and then the UCSC platform (available at: <http://www.ucscp.com/Saudhi/html/index.html>), and to browse their features, functionalities and products. After browsing they are requested to participate in the survey.

This survey is being conducted with business school students at Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University, Saudi Arabia.

This survey is being conducted for an MBA student at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, School of Business and Technology. Saudi Arabia.

Researcher details:

Razaz Attar

School of Business, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Email: razaz.attar2@mail.dcu.ie

NOTE:

Personal data collected in this survey will be used only for academic studies.

Personal Details

1. Name:

2. Gender: Male/Female/LGBT
3. Age group: <20/ 20-30/ 30-40/ 4—50/ >50
4. Education: School/Undergraduate-Degree-Diploma/Post-graduate/n/a
5. Email:
6. Phone:

Questions

7. Have you observed anything unique (e.g., themes) on the UCSCP website that is different from other traditional S-Commerce websites?
 - Yes
 - No
8. If yes, how do you rate the overall design of the UCSCP on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good).
9. Please rate the use of the ‘Themes’ feature, which changes the look and feel of the website by changing the design according to the cultural and social aspects of Saudi Arabian users on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good)
10. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in motivating you to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website.
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature

11. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in satisfying you to make a purchasing decision.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

12. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in providing a good experience while browsing on the UCSCP.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website.
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

13. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in supporting the learnability for users.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
- Themes

- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

14. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in terms of usability (ease of use).

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

15. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) for their ability to increase trust among users.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products

- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
16. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) for their ability to support the decision-making process (whether to buy or not to buy).
- Product Localisation (e.g., sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
17. Consider a product, for example dried dates, displayed on the traditional website. With the given information (photos and product information) and the design (themes, look and feel), how will you be influenced in the process of taking a decision?
- I will buy the product
 - I will not buy the product
 - Don't know
18. Consider a product, for example dried dates, displayed on the UCSCP improved website. With the given information (photos, videos, reviews, ratings and price consciousness), and the design (themes, look and feel), how will you be influenced in the process of taking a decision?
- I will buy the product
 - I will not buy the product
 - Don't know

19. Please rate the UCSCP approach of integrating cultural and social aspects in to an S-Commerce platform in comparison to other platforms, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good).
20. Considering products like the NYX Lipstick promoted by Saudi Arabia's first super model, Roz, on the UCSCP, how likely is it that you would buy a product promoted by a celebrity? (1 = Not very likely, 2 = Not likely, 3 = Average, 4 = Likely, 5 = Very likely).

Saudi Arabia Interview Questionnaire

An interview questionnaire for collecting experts' responses on the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform

Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to investigate the impact of the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (integrated with cultural and social constructs through the unique design specifications) on the decision-making process and psychological aspects of S-Commerce users. This interview is conducted for academic purposes to analyse how the cultural and social aspects integrated in to the S-Commerce platform would influence the purchasing decisions (to buy or not), and the psychological aspects (trust, motivation, ease of use, satisfaction) of S-Commerce users. The participants are initially requested to access the UCSC platform (available at: <http://www.ucscp.com/Saudhi/html/index.html>), and browse the features, functionalities and products. After browsing they are requested to participate in the interviews.

This interview is being conducted with experts in marketing and E-Commerce fields in Saudi Arabia.

Researcher details:

Razaz Attar

School of Business, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Email: razaz.attar2@mail.dcu.ie

NOTE:

Personal data collected in this survey is used only for academic studies.

Interview Questions

1. Have you observed anything unique (e.g., Themes) on the UCSCP website that is different from other traditional S-Commerce websites?
2. If yes, please present your views on the overall design of the UCSCP.
3. Please share your views about the 'Themes' feature that changes the look and feel of the website by changing the design according to the cultural and social aspects of Saudi Arabian users.

4. Please share your views about the following features embodied on the UCSCP and their power to motivate users to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
5. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to satisfy users to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
6. Please share your views about the following features in providing a good experience for the users while browsing on the UCSCP.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews

- Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
7. Please share your views about the following features in supporting the learnability for the users.
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
8. Please share your views about the following features in terms of usability (ease of use).
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)

- Multi-language feature
9. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to increase trust among the users.
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
10. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to support the decision-making process (whether to buy or not to buy).
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as dates)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on the website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
11. Please share your views about the UCSCP approach of integrating the cultural and social aspects on the S-Commerce platform in comparison to other platforms.
21. Considering products like the NYX Lipstick promoted by Saudi Arabia's first super model, Roz, on the UCSCP, how likely is it that you would buy a product promoted by a celebrity? (1 = Not very likely, 2 = Not likely, 3 = Average, 4 = Likely, 5 = Very likely).

Ireland Survey Questionnaire

A survey for investigating the impact of a User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (UCSCP) on purchasing decisions

Purpose:

The purpose of the survey is to investigate the impact of a User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (integrated with cultural and social constructs through the unique design specifications) on the decision-making process and psychological aspects of S-Commerce users. The survey is conducted for academic purposes to analyse how the cultural and social aspects integrated in to the S-Commerce platform would influence the purchasing decisions (to buy or not) and the psychological aspects (trust, motivation, ease of use, satisfaction) of S-Commerce users. The participants are initially requested to access the traditional platform (available at: http://ucscp.com/traditional/ireland/html/index_simple.html) and the UCSC platform (available at: <http://www.ucscp.com/Ireland/html/index.html>), and to browse their features, functionalities and products. After browsing they are requested to participate in the survey.

Researcher details:

This survey is being conducted by a Business School Student at Dublin City University, Ireland, Dublin

Researcher details:

Razaz Attar

School of Business, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman and University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Email: razaz.attar2@mail.dcu.ie

NOTE:

Personal data collected in this survey is used only for academic studies.

Personal Details

1. Name:
2. Gender: Male/Female/LGBT

3. Age group: <20/ 20-30/ 30-40/ 4—50/ >50
4. Education: School/Undergraduate-Degree-Diploma/Post-graduate/n/a
5. Email:
6. Phone:

Questions

7. Have you observed anything unique (e.g., themes) on the UCSCP website, which is different from other traditional S-Commerce websites?
 - Yes
 - No
8. If yes, how do you rate the overall design of the UCSCP on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good).
9. Please rate the use of the 'Themes' feature that changes the look and feel of the website by changing the design according to the cultural and social aspects of Ireland users on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good).
10. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in motivating you to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature

11. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in satisfying you to make a purchasing decision.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

12. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in providing a good experience while browsing on the UCSCP.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

13. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in supporting the learnability for the users.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

14. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) in terms of usability (ease of use).

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

15. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) for their ability to increase trust among the users.

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes

- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

16. Please rate the following features on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good) for their ability to support the decision-making process (whether to buy or not to buy).

- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
- Themes
- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
- Reviews
- Ratings
- Referrals
- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

17. Consider a product, for example Irish over dress, displayed on the traditional website. With the given information (photos and product specifications), and the design (themes, look and feel), how will you be influenced in the process of taking a decision?

- I will buy the product
- I will not buy the product
- Don't know

18. Consider a product, for example Irish over dress, displayed on the UCSCP website. With the given information (photos, videos, reviews, ratings, price consciousness), and the design (themes, look and feel), how will you be influenced in the process of taking a decision?
- I will buy the product
 - I will not buy the product
 - Don't know
19. Please rate the UCSCP approach of integrating cultural and social aspects in to the S-Commerce platform in comparison to other platforms, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Very Good).
20. Considering products such as the 'Calvin Klein WOMEN' perfume promoted by famous Irish actress Saoirse Ronan, and Dolce & Gabbana's new perfume 'Intenso' promoted by famous Irish actor Colin Farrell, how likely is it that you would buy a product promoted by a celebrity? (1 = Not very likely, 2 = Not likely, 3 = Average, 4 = Likely, 5 = Very likely).

Ireland Interview Questionnaire

An interview questionnaire for collecting experts' responses on the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform

Purpose:

The purpose of this interview is to investigate the impact of the User-Centric S-Commerce Platform (integrated with cultural and social constructs through the unique design specifications) on the decision-making process and psychological aspects of S-Commerce users. This interview is conducted for academic purposes to analyse how the cultural and social aspects integrated in to the S-Commerce platform would influence purchasing decisions (to buy or not) and the psychological aspects (trust, motivation, ease of use, satisfaction) of S-Commerce users. The participants are initially requested to access the UCSC platform (available at: <http://www.ucscp.com/Ireland/html/index.html>) and browse the features, functionalities and products. After browsing they are requested to participate in the interviews.

This interview is being conducted with experts in marketing and E-Commerce fields in Ireland.

Researcher details:

Razaz Attar

School of Business, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman and University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Email: razaz.attar2@mail.dcu.ie

NOTE:

Personal data collected in this survey is used only for academic studies.

Interview Questions

1. Have you observed anything unique (e.g., themes) on the UCSCP website that is different from other traditional S-Commerce websites?
2. If yes, please present your views on the overall design of the UCSCP.

3. Please share your views about the ‘Themes’ feature that changes the look and feel of the website by changing the design according to the cultural and social aspects of Irish users.
4. Please share your views about the following features embodied on the UCSCP and their ability to motivate users to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
5. Please share your views about the features and their ability to satisfy users to make a purchasing decision.
 - Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature

6. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to provide a good experience for the users while browsing on the UCSCP.
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
7. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to support the learnability for the users.
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
8. Please share your views about the following features in terms of usability (ease of use).
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes

- Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
9. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to increase trust among the users.
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals
 - Photos & videos of products
 - Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
 - Multi-language feature
10. Please share your views about the following features and their ability to support the decision-making process (whether to buy or not to buy).
- Product localisation (e.g., the sale of local products such as Irish over dress)
 - Themes
 - Integration of cultural and social aspects (e.g., colours, local products, language, and design) on website
 - Reviews
 - Ratings
 - Referrals

- Photos & videos of products
- Price consciousness (display of price offered on UCSCP along with price offered on other websites like Amazon)
- Multi-language feature

11. Please share your views about the UCSCP approach of integrating cultural and social aspects on the S-Commerce platform in comparison to other platforms.
12. Considering products such as the 'Calvin Klein WOMEN' perfume promoted by famous Irish actress Saoirse Ronan and Dolce & Gabbana's new perfume 'Intenso' promoted by famous Irish actor Colin Farrell, how likely is it that you would buy a product promoted by a celebrity?

Appendix C: Ethical Approvals

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،

سعادة الأستاذة/ رزاز عطار الموقرة
تهديك جامعة الأعمال والتكنولوجيا بجدّة أطيب تحياتها.

كما نفيد سعادتنا بأنه لا مانع لدى الجامعة بعمل البحث الميداني الخاص
بدراسة الدكتوراه الخاصة بك في الجامعة من خلال مقابلتك مع طلاب
وطالبات الجامعة في شهر شوال القادم فترة الصيف.
أسأل الله لك التوفيق والنجاح



Dr. Loay B. Altayar
Dean of Student Affairs

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E: altayar@ubt.edu.sa
W: www.ubt.edu.sa



Mr Razaz Attar
Dublin City University Business School

5th February 2019

REC Reference: DCUREC/2018_256

Proposal Title: Conceptualising the Social Commerce (S-Commerce)
Constructs in relation with Psychological fields for
building a framework to assess consumer behaviour
through a cross cultural study.

Applicant(s): Mr Razaz Attar, Dr Paul Davis, Mr Nawal Adam

Dear Colleagues,

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this project.

Materials used to recruit participants should state that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



Taighde & Maslaocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

Research & Innovation Support
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F +353 1 200 8002
E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

رقم التعميم: ١٩٠٦٧

تاريخ التعميم: ١٤٣٨ / ٥ / ١٩٩٠ هـ

موضوع التعميم: بشأن تسجيل مهمة الباحثة / رزان وهيب عطار .

حفظها الله .

سماحة / عميدة

طالبة التربية	☐	طالبة العلوم	☐	طالبة علوم الحاسب والعلوم	☐
طالبة الآداب	☐	طالبة الهندسة	☐	طالبة الخدمة الاجتماعية	☐
طالبة اللغات والترجمة	☐	طالبة الإدارة والأعمال	☐	طالبة الصيدلة	☐
طالبة التسميم والتفتون	☐	طالبة التمريض	☐	طالبة الصحة وعلوم التأهيل	☐
طالبة التمريض	☐	طالبة الطب البشري	☐	طالبة طب الأسنان	☐
معهد اللغة العربية للتأهيلات بنورها	☐	أخرى	☐		

جهات استلام التعميم

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته..

محتوى التعميم:

تفيد سعادتكم بأن الباحثة / رزان وهيب عطار ، طالبة دكتوراه بالإدارة والأعمال بجامعة ديكن
مانيلا ومعاشرتنا بكلية الإدارة والأعمال بجامعة الأميرة نورة ، وبصدد إعداد بحث بعنوان، التمسور
التجارة الاجتماعية والتجارة الإلكترونية لتقييم سلوك المستهلك في المملكة العربية السعودية
نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة أعلاه بالسماح لها بتوزيع الاستبيان وأجراء
المقابلات للطلقات. وذلك حسب الانظمة الشعة لديكم .

ولسعادتكم فائق الشكر وبالح التقدير..

عميدة البحث العلمي

د. منال بنت / بنت العزيز الشدي .