



Factors affecting Kuwait University students' adoption of social media

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of this study was to explore how social media is diffused among Kuwait University students in light of the diffusion of innovation theory (DOI). **Method:** A convenience sample of Kuwait University students (N=2000, males= 89 and females= 1171) who used social media tools was selected. A questionnaire was administered to measure frequencies of using Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. In addition, 15 statements that explained reasons for using certain social media tools in terms of the five DOI factors, that is, compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and relative advantage were presented to the participants. **Results:** The results showed that new social media applications were more advantageous and easier to use than old social media networks. These new social media applications were also compatible with the user's lifestyle, were typically available to try before adoption, and offered benefits to the user. The reasons for adoption varied by gender. For males, relative advantages superseded other reasons. Females, on the other hand, found observability to be the dominant factor. **Conclusion:** The study results might be utilized for brand or product promotion, publicity, or organizational objectives. The results of this study might assist in determining which subjects can be skillfully employed in political or social media news releases. The findings reveal how communication messages, public service announcements, news, and other targeted communications might be tailored to the desired audience.

Keywords: social media, diffusion of innovation theory, Kuwait

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العوامل المؤثرة في تبني طلاب جامعة الكويت لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

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ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية انتشار وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بين طلاب جامعة الكويت، وذلك في ضوء نظرية انتشار الابتكار. **المنهج:** اختيرت عينة متاحة من طلبة جامعة الكويت (ن=2000؛ الذكور=829، والإناث=1171) ممن يستخدمون وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وقد استخدمت الاستبانة لقياس عدد مرات استخدام الفيسبوك، والتويتر، والإنستغرام، إضافة لبحث أسباب استخدامهم لهذه الوسائل في ضوء العوامل الخمسة لنظرية انتشار الابتكار وهي: التوافق، والتعقيد، وقابلية التجربة، والملاحظة، والميزة النسبية للمشاركين. **النتائج:** كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن تطبيقات التواصل الاجتماعي الجديدة تتمتع بمزايا أكثر وتكون أسهل في الاستخدام من شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي القديمة. كما أنها تتوافق مع نمط حياة المستخدم، وعادةً ما تكون متاحة للتجربة قبل الاعتماد الكامل عليها، وتقدم فوائد للمستخدم. ووجدت الدراسة أيضاً أن سبب تبني هذه الوسائل يختلف باختلاف الجنس. بالنسبة للرجال، فإن المزايا النسبية تتفوق على الأسباب الأخرى. أما بالنسبة للنساء؛ فقد وجد أن قابلية الملاحظة هي العامل المهيمن. **الخاتمة:** يمكن الاستفادة من نتائج الدراسة في الترويج للعلامات التجارية أو المنتجات، والدعاية، أو تحقيق الأهداف التنظيمية. كما يمكن أن تساعد الدراسة في تحديد الموضوعات التي يمكن استخدامها بمهارة في البيانات الصحفية السياسية أو على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. وتكشف النتائج أيضاً كيفية تصميم رسائل الاتصال والإعلانات الخدمية العامة والأخبار وغيرها من الاتصالات المستهدفة لتتناسب مع الجمهور المستهدف.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وسائل التواصل الاجتماعية، انتشار الابتكار، طلبة

جامعة الكويت

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Introduction

Social media has been one of the most innovative products since the advent of the internet. Although scholars differ on this social networking phenomenon's origin, its explosive popularity is undeniable. Compared with traditional media, social media, which has become part of everyday life for billions of people worldwide, is deemed a fairly modern technology (Zacher, 2017). Among the most common social media applications developed during the past decade were Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram although others also emerged (Kim et al., 2021). These applications allowed individuals to share the details of their lives using photos and other media, such as videos. Teens, college students, and young adults were increasingly drawn to these networks (Abaido, 2020; Dennen et al., 2020), and young Kuwaiti students were among them (Alenezi & Brinthaup, 2022). Although young adults adopted these tools to relieve stress (Stockdale, 2020), social media was also useful for classroom instructions (Van Den Beemt et al., 2020). However, today, the social media environment is more fractured than ever, with people increasingly migrating away from long-used social media networks (Modo Labs Team, 2017).

It was found that 60% of the world's population uses social media. The average daily usage is 2 hours and 24 minutes (Chaffy, 2023). It was determined that 67 percent of all internet users had Facebook accounts at the time. Ortiz-Ospina (2019) indicated that Facebook was the most popular social media network in 2019, featuring nearly 2.3 billion total users that year. YouTube, Instagram, and WeChat were the closest runners-up, with a billion users each on average. Lesser-used networks included Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Tumblr (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). However, Facebook clearly

became fractured as time progressed, leading users to adopt other networks. A greater understanding of why users adopt different networks, including culturally relevant characteristics, may help researchers better understand users' shifts to new networks (Stump & Gong, 2020).

Consequently, the current study was aimed at understanding social media adoption among young Kuwaitis, a population that has not been fully explored (AlFailakawi, 2016). The diffusion of innovation (DOI) theory was applied to help identify the social media decision, approval, and expansion process among this population. The diffusion theory involves spreading innovation through a certain population (Rogers, 2003). This is done to explain how, why, and the rate at which new ideas, particularly technologies, spread through a social system. The theory is also used to determine the rate at which users adopt an innovation (Rogers, 2003). Therefore, the theory helps educators, researchers, and advertisers understand how trends occur and evaluate the likelihood of their innovation's success or failure. By applying the DOI theory, inventors can better predict which users will adopt their innovations.

In the DOI theory, the users do not change; rather, the innovations do. Why are some innovations adopted more quickly than others? Moreover, why do others fail to be adopted? Diffusion scholars recognize five factors that determine an innovation's success: compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and a relative advantage. As Rogers (2003) indicated, these five factors determine between 49 and 87 percent of the variation in adopting new innovation. Whether an innovation is adopted or not depends upon how well it meets the user's needs.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

More than three billion individuals used social media as of 2020 (Clement, 2020). People rely on it to share personal information and news of local and global importance. For this reason, why people adopt specific social media networks has become increasingly important. This study used the DOI theory to evaluate how a particular social media application is adopted and gains popularity among students at Kuwait University. The study also involved investigating which of the theory's factors influence the social media diffusion rate among users. Various hypotheses were defined and examined using the DOI theory. Understanding the targeted population's habits and characteristics will help shape future social media technology innovations. This study's outcomes will allow for a greater understanding of why social media is adopted.

This information should act as a guide for the further adoption of innovative applications. Al-Sumait et al. (2022) found that information seeking is the primary goal driving Kuwaitis to use information communication technology, followed by the desire to stay connected with others, to seek entertainment, for occupational use, and to share original content. Thus, this study's secondary objective was to investigate and determine which of the factors, or sets of technical attributes, will influence the adoption of the innovations in e-commerce and e-government services on the Kuwaiti horizon. It was posited that the factors associated with the DOI (compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and relative advantage) relate to social media and future business and government innovations.

Social Media Applications

Social media is a decades-old phrase but one that, by 2020, generally referred to as an online method for socializing with family

and friends (Aichner et al., 2021). Social media was also useful for making romantic connections, interacting with companies and brands, networking professionally, and conducting business. As of 2020, social media was heavily commodified (Voorveld, 2019). Even individuals with increasingly large followings became the stars of an internet-focused era, capable of branding and advertising products to large numbers of people (Hudders et al., 2020). However, at the heart of all these activities was the internet's ability to facilitate online interactions between people (Aichner et al., 2021). Social media helps individuals stay connected with family, friends, and business associates. Social media facilitates these connections globally in a way that was previously impossible (Li et al., 2021).

Traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and radio news, interact less with audiences than social media. Families no longer sit around the television to watch late shows and get caught up on dramas. Rather, information can now be instantaneously accessed (Voinea et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media is unique because it allows participants to interact with news sources and share news rapidly (Thompson et al., 2019). This has led to rapid social media adoption. It took radio 38 years to attract 50 million users and television 13 years to adopt the same number (Awake, 2011). In contrast, Facebook required only 12 months to attract 50 million users. Still, Facebook is not the social network of choice among young Kuwaitis. Among this group, 43% use Instagram, 25% use Twitter, 19% use Snapchat, and 4% use Facebook (AlFailakawi, 2016). Al-Sumait et al. (2022) found that the strongest social pressures that motivate information and communication technology (ICT) use in Kuwait are that friends and family already utilize these technologies (93%) and centrality within work-based endeavors (79%). This shows that a strong social component is inherent to the process of ICT diffusion.

Such findings indicate different trends in social media use among young Kuwaitis. Both Winograd (2016) and Kastrenakes (2019) suggested that Twitter and Facebook usage would decline among the young. The current study may help identify what specifically characterizes social media adoption among young Kuwaitis.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is adopted through communication channels over time among the members of a social system. It is a special type of communication in which the messages are about a new idea (Rogers, 1995). Diffusion is the process of adopting innovation and gaining acceptance from members of a specific community (Rogers, 2003). In essence, the DOI theory examines how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology are communicated and adopted (Rogers, 2003).

The DOI is a social process. An individual's adoption of a particular innovation is largely restricted by the social group's behavior. The DOI tradition has sought to explain individual adoption decisions or intentions to adopt, which concern well-defined innovations and relatively homogeneous populations (Garcia-Aviles, 2020). Nevertheless, the level of complexity associated with social networks and the associated heterogeneity of individuals make it challenging to explain how such local associations may affect the diffusion process's outcome. Bakshy et al. (2012) indicated that the diffusion process with any social network time causes an increasing number of people to adopt the platform. Eventually, all members of society may be open to adopting the innovation. However, this diffusion process happens more rapidly in modern times due to improvements in communication and information sharing between social networks.

The DOI also translates to the professional setting. The workforce is always searching for innovative ways to facilitate workplace communication (Lindbeck & Fodrey, 2010). Kuwait specifically has grown its communication infrastructure and e-government services, and adopting these services has driven Kuwaiti e-commerce (Alawadhi & Morris, 2008). Whereas traditional communications relied on phone calls, letters, and emails (Lindbeck & Fodrey, 2010), social media has facilitated further communication through blogging, social networking, and microblogging (Duong, C., 2021). Consequently, researchers have suggested that the DOI theory can be used to test and perhaps explain the substantial growth in social media and social media innovation.

Several studies have been conducted on the DOI theory and its applications in social media, such as the study by Ahmad et al. (2019), who discussed social media adoption and its impact on firm performance in the United Arab Emirates. Another study is done by Effendi et al. (2020), which focused on social media adoption in small- and medium-sized enterprises that COVID-19 impacted. Another study was aimed at approaching social media from the perspective of the DOI approach (Koçak et al. 2013). Ma et al. (2014) sought to understand news sharing on social media in light of the DOI theory. In addition, Folorunso et al. (2010) studied the DOI on social networking sites among university students.

Some factors influence the diffusion process, such as the innovation itself, how information about the innovation is communicated, time, and the nature of the social system it introduces (Rogers, 1995). Rogers identified five factors that strongly influence whether someone will adopt an innovation. Understanding these factors often helps people make new technologies more effective

and efficient (Çakmak & Ocak, 2008). These features include compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and relative advantages (Rogers, 1995).

"Compatibility" refers to the level to which an innovation is deemed consistent with the current values, past experiences, and future adopters' needs. People evaluate innovations based on mental models formed by their prior experiences. The more an innovation is compatible with their current understanding, the more likely they are to adopt it. The complexity of an innovation is characterized by the perceived difficulty of its use "Complexity," according to Rogers, is the "degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively difficult to understand and use" (Rogers, 2003: 15). Complexity is the only attribute that, as defined, is negatively correlated with the rate of adoption of an innovation. The more complex an innovation is perceived to be by its potential adopters, the less likely it is to be adopted. High complexity can be a significant hurdle to the diffusion of innovations that would likely be adopted based upon their relative advantage and compatibility alone (Beaman et al., 2021).

According to Rogers (2003), "trialability" is the level at which an innovation can be used and experimented with on a short-term basis. High trialability, or the ability to test an innovation before broad adoption, is positively related to adoption rate. One of the primary goals of the decision-making process, when faced with the decision to adopt an innovation, as with any decision, is to reduce the level of uncertainty about the innovation (Call & Herber, 2022). "Observability" refers to the ease and relative advantage with which the potential adopter can see, imagine, or describe the technology. A significant factor that affects observability is whether the innovation consists of a tangible product or is more information -or process-

oriented. Tangible products typically generate effects that are directly observable and widely understood (Call & Herber, 2022). With regards instant messaging, Ilie et al. (2005) found that women placed more importance on ease of use compared with men.

The “relative advantage” refers to the level at which the adopter views the innovation as being better than the current method. Most studies revealed that the relative advantage is significant (Huang et al., 2020). Relative advantage is perhaps the most intuitively understood attribute of innovations. Innovations that are perceived as offering an advantage over the status quo are more likely to be adopted. Perceived relative advantage has been shown to be one of the strongest predictors of the adoption rate of an innovation (Call & Herber, 2022).

Peslak et al. (2010) discovered that behavioral compatibility with social networking, a relative advantage, complexity, and trialability positively correlate with the desire to use and implement social networking. Folorunso et al. (2010) found that text messaging’s (SMS) relative advantage, complexity, and observability do not positively affect the attitude toward using social media technology. Meanwhile, SMS’s compatibility and trialability positively affect the attitude toward using the technology considerably.

Criticism of Diffusion of Innovation Model

Criticisms have arisen with Roger’s DOI model, which has been used in more than 5000 research studies and was widely accepted in the agricultural extension space until the 1980s when the transfer of technology approach became popular. In fact, Rogers (2023) himself admitted that, over the years, his model had been oversimplified, and he criticized the “stereotyped and limited ways in which many diffusion scholars have defined the scope and method of their field

of study” (2003, p. xix). He blamed DOI researchers for being more oriented to the dependent variable of adoption than to actual implementation itself or to studying the consequences of innovation (García-Avilés, 2020).

Diffusion research has been chastised for favoring innovation. Many diffusion studies were completed based on the implicit assumption that all members of a target group will propagate and embrace a given innovation, and the innovation will not be reinvented or rejected (García-Avilés, 2020). Rogers encouraged academics to understand that certain ideas should be reinvented, whereas others should be rejected (Rogers, 2003).

Hypotheses

Folorunso et al. (2010) and Silver and Huang (2019) believed that the reasons for using social media differ from person to person and region to region. This study was aimed at exploring how social media has been diffused among Kuwait University students. The study used Roger’s (1995) five factors (compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and relative advantages), which strongly influence whether someone will adopt an innovative social media application. This study tested the following hypotheses:

- H1:** Higher levels of the complexity of a social media application have an inverse relationship with the adoption of that application.
- H2:** The compatibility of social media with the adopter’s values has a positive relationship with the user’s attitude toward using the technology.
- H3:** Social media’s trialability has a positive relationship with users’ attitudes toward using the technology.

H4: Social media's observability has no positive relationship with users' attitudes toward using the technology.

H5: A positive relationship exists between relative advantage and social media usage.

H6: Significant differences exist between male and female preferences regarding the use of various social media applications.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify which factors significantly influence how various social media applications have been diffused among Kuwait University students. The researchers applied the DOI theory to confirm or disprove the research hypotheses. In order to test the five factors that affect the diffusion of social media, the following was done.

Participants

A convenience sample of Kuwait University students (N= 2000) who used social media tools was selected from different Colleges at Kuwait University (College of Arts, College of Education, College of Science, College of Law, College of Social Sciences, and College of Islamic Studies). Most of those colleges were located at Sabah Al Salem University City which is located in Al-Shadadiya area. Of the total participants 41.5% were males (n= 829) and 58.5% 1171 were females (n= 1171).

The data collection process took eight days. Data collection was conducted in the Fall semester of 2021-2022. Students were selected from various classes and from their rest areas. area between 8:00 am till 4:00 pm. Students were asked if they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.

Measure

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included questions about the frequency of using Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. Responses were given on a scale to represent a usage score in the analysis, ranging from 1=Use a lot to 7=Never used. The second part of the questionnaire included 15 statements that represent the five DOI factors: compatibility, complexity, trialability, observability, and relative advantage. Students were given three statements to test each factor and were asked to rate these statements using a Likert Scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree). These statements were used by Peslak et al. (2010) to test the diffusion of innovation’s factors (see Table 1). A summary score for each factor was calculated as the mean of the response to each of the three items. The three items’ internal consistency and reliability were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. The last part of the questionnaire included demographic questions to identify class and gender.

Table 1
Reasons for Using Certain Social Media

Factors	Reasons
Compatibility	It is compatible with the people I’d like to communicate with.
	It is compatible with how I like to communicate.
	It is compatible with my current situation.
Complexity	It is easy to understand it.
	It is frustrated.
	It doesn’t require mental effort.

Cont. Table 1

Reasons for Using Certain Social Media

Factors	Reasons
Trialability	Trying it is disturbing.
	It is easy to try.
	I tried it and I quickly I liked it.
Observability	Many people use it.
	Through it I can find many people who I want to communicate with.
	I see many people use it.
Relative Advantage	It provides an overall advantages to me.
	It gives me the information I need quickly.
	It gives me more control of what and how I want to communicate.

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) was used to calculate descriptive statistics usage across social media applications and gender. Average usage and factor scores were compared between male and female applicants using the Mann-Whitney test and across applications using the Kruskal-Wallis test. Spearman's correlation was used to summarize the combined relationship between usage and the five diffusion factors across all four social media applications. Linear mixed-effects models were then used to explore the associations between the factors, gender, and usage while allowing for a correlation between repeated observations from the same individual and adjusting for social media applications.

Reliability of Scales

The reliabilities of the scales used to represent the innovation factors were assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Only three scales had reliabilities > 0.7 : the complexity, compatibility, and observability scales. As shown in Table 2, the complexity scale had the highest reliability ($\alpha = .785$, $N = 12$), followed by the compatibility scale ($\alpha = .763$, $N = 12$) and then the observability scale ($\alpha = .705$, $N = 12$). Two scales had reliabilities below the .7 threshold: the relative advantage scale ($\alpha = .606$) and the trialability scale ($\alpha = .639$, $N = 12$) as shown in Table 2. The trialability and relative advantage scales initially had Cronbach's alpha scores of .565 and .567, respectively. To improve the scale reliability, the items of Trying Facebook is stimulated and Facebook gives me more control of what I want to communicate were removed from the trialability and relative advantage subscales, respectively. Reliability analysis was repeated for the trialability scale. The trialability scale reliability improved as evidenced by the positive change in Cronbach's alpha from 0.565 to 0.606. The relative advantage scale's reliability also improved from 0.567 to 0.608.

In an analysis of the established scales, a reliability of > 0.7 is generally deemed satisfactory, whereas in exploratory analysis, values > 0.6 are acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Therefore, all three items contributing to each of the five factors were retained and combined to yield a mean score used in the analysis.

Table 2

Reliability of the Complexity, Compatibility, Observability, Trialability, and Relative Advantage Scales

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Complexity	.785
Compatibility	.763
Observability	.705
Relative Advantage	.608
Trialability	.606

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The frequency of the use of each social media application, along with mean scores in each of the five factors, is summarized in Table 3. Facebook was used significantly less than other applications, with 889 (44.6%) respondents stating they had never used it, whereas 609 (30.5%) stated they had used it in the past but no longer used it. In contrast, more than half of the respondents (1092, 54.7%) stated that they used Snapchat frequently, and less than 10% had never used Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram. All respondents had used at least one of the four social media applications.

Significant differences were found between male and female students in social media usage. Females had a higher usage score overall but were less likely to use Facebook and Instagram. They were more likely to use Twitter and Snapchat than males. When restricted to only users of a particular application, males and females spent similar amounts of time on Instagram. Females, again, spent significantly less time on Facebook and more on Twitter and Snapchat than males.

The five DOI factors differed significantly between the social media applications, with the scores for all factors being the highest among Facebook users (all $p < 0.001$). This indicates that respondents felt that Facebook was less compatible; was more complex; and offered lower trialability, observability, and relative advantage compared with other social media applications.

Table 3

Frequency of Using Social Media and Factors of Diffusion of Innovation

Applications	Twitter	Facebook	Snapchat	Instagram	<i>p</i>
Total Number (n)	n=2000	n=1994	n=1997	n=1997	
Frequency of use					
I have never used it before.	152 (7.6%)	889 (44.6%)	162 (8.1%)	118 (5.9%)	<0.001
I used it before, but I do not use it now.	140 (7.0%)	609 (30.5%)	56 (2.8%)	132 (6.6%)	
Use it once a week.	173 (8.7%)	134 (6.9%)	49 (2.5%)	96 (4.8%)	
Use it a few times a week.	279 (13.9%)	104 (5.2%)	86 (4.3%)	239 (12.0%)	
Use it a few times a day.	265 (13.3%)	67 (3.4%)	221 (11.1%)	358 (17.9%)	
Use it several times a day.	304 (15.2%)	84 (4.2%)	331 (16.6%)	420 (21.0%)	
Use it a lot.	687 (34.4%)	104 (5.2%)	1092 (54.7%)	634 (31.7%)	
Usage Score					
All respondents	3.1 (2.0)	5.7 (1.7)	2.2 (1.9)	2.8 (1.8)	<0.001

Cont. Table 3

Frequency of Using Social Media and Factors of Diffusion of Innovation

Applications	Twitter	Facebook	Snapchat	Instagram	<i>p</i>
Total Number (n)	n=2000	n=1994	n=1997	n=1997	
Males	3.2 (2.0)	5.3 (2.0)	2.7 (2.2)	3.0 (2.0)	
Females	2.8 (1.9)	6.1 (1.4)	1.9 (1.5)	3.6 (1.6)	
p-value (Male versus Female)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.003	
Users only*	2.7 (1.7)	4.7 (1.7)	1.8 (1.3)	2.5 (1.5)	<0.001
Males	2.9 (1.7)	4.4 (1.9)	2.0 (1.4)	2.6 (1.7)	
Females	2.5 (1.6)	5.1 (1.5)	1.7 (1.1)	2.5 (1.4)	
p-value (Male versus Female)	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.488	
Relative advantage*	3.7 (0.8)	3.2 (0.7)	3.9 (0.8)	3.8 (0.7)	<0.001
Complexity*	3.9 (0.8)	3.1 (0.9)	4.01 (0.9)	4.0 (0.8)	<0.001
Compatibility*	3.8 (1.0)	2.7 (1.2)	4.2 (0.8)	3.9 (0.9)	<0.001
Trialability*	3.5 (0.6)	3.1 (1.1)	3.6 (0.6)	3.6 (0.6)	<0.001
Observability*	4.1 (0.8)	3.2 (1.2)	4.3 (0.7)	4.2 (0.7)	<0.001

Note. *Excludes respondents who said that they had never used the social media application.

Usage score ranged from 1 to 7, with 1= use it a lot and 7=never used it before.

Relative advantage, complexity, compatibility, trialability, and observability scores are the mean of Likert scale responses to three items representing each of the five factors, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. On the original scale, lower scores indicate that the users feel that the application offers a relative advantage, is not complex, and has a higher compatibility, trialability, and

observability. However, the items were reverse coded to reflect high scores, indicating relatively higher agreement levels.

Correlations between Social Media Usage and Factors of Diffusion of Innovation

The correlations between social media usage and the five factors of the DOI are summarized in Table 4 using data from all four applications combined. Table 4 is a correlation matrix showing the correlation between social media usage and the five innovation diffusion factors (complexity, compatibility, observability, trialability, and relative advantage). As shown in the table, a significant negative correlation exists between social media usage and the perceived complexity of social media platforms ($r = -.205, p < 0.1$). On the contrary, a significant positive correlation was found between social media usage and trialability ($r = .186, p < 0.05$), compatibility ($r = .302, p < 0.05$), observability ($r = .267, p < 0.05$), and relative advantage ($r = .253, p < 0.05$). These statistics provide evidence of a positive association between each of the five factors of DOI and social media usage.

Table 4

Correlations between Social Media Usage and Each of the Five Factors of Diffusion of Innovation

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Usage	-					
2. Complexity	-.205**	-				
3. Compatibility	.302**	-.177**	-			
4. Observability	.267**	-.084*	.359**	-		
5. Relative Advantage	.253**	-.300**	.560**	.395**	-	
6. Trialability	.186**	-.254**	.437**	.360**	.375**	-

Diffusion of Innovation Factors and Social Media Usage

Testing H1

According to the H1, a negative relationship exists between complexity and social media usage. Table 5 shows a significant negative relationship between social media usage and complexity ($\beta = -0.339$, $p = 0.019$). Individuals who perceived social media use as less complex were likely to use social media platforms. This relationship was also observed separately in males ($\beta = -0.50$, $p = 0.001$) and females ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.013$).

Testing H2

A significant positive relationship was also observed between compatibility and social media usage. Individuals who perceived social media platforms as consistent with their current and future needs and values were more likely to use them ($\beta = 0.351$, $p = 0.00$). Consistent findings were also obtained for the males-only group ($\beta = 0.393$, $p = 0.00$) and females-only group ($\beta = 0.267$, $p = 0.00$).

Testing H3

A significant positive relationship existed between observability and social media platform usage ($\beta = 0.181$, $p = 0.018$). In the males-only group, the relationship between observability and social media usage was also significant ($\beta = 0.313$, $p = 0.004$). However, this relationship was not evident in the females-only group ($\beta = 0.118$, $p = 0.281$).

Testing H4

A significant positive relationship was also found between trialability and social media usage ($\beta = 0.221$, $p = 0.004$). Similar to observability, this relationship was only evident in the males-only

group ($\beta = 0.383, p = 0.00$) and not in the females-only group ($\beta = 0.03, p = 0.797$).

Testing H5

Finally, no significant relationship was found between relative advantage and social media usage among university students ($\beta = -0.003, p = 0.967$). The same findings were observed in the females-only group ($\beta = -0.003, p = 0.972$) and males-only group ($\beta = 0.012, p = 0.921$).

Table 5

Regression Coefficients for Diffusion of Innovation Factors

Variable	All			Female			Male		
	B	SE	p	B	SE	p	B	SE	p
(Constant).	3.214	0.422	0	4.259	0.556	0	2.343	0.655	0
Compatibility.	0.351	0.065	0	0.267	0.096	0.006	0.393	0.089	0
Observability.	0.181	0.076	0.018	0.118	0.109	0.281	0.313	0.107	0.004
Relative Advantage.	-0.003	0.074	0.967	-0.003	0.097	0.972	0.012	0.117	0.921
Trialability.	0.221	0.075	0.004	0.03	0.115	0.797	0.383	0.099	0
Complexity.	-0.339	0.019	0	-0.28	0.112	0.013	-0.5	0.156	0.001

Note. Dependent variable is Social Media Usage.

Complexity, compatibility, observability, relative advantage, and trialability scores represent the Likert scale responses to three items representing each of the five factors, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Higher scores indicate that the users felt the application offered a relative advantage; was not complex; and had greater compatibility, trialability, and observability.

Gender and Social Media Usage

Testing H6

A non-parametric test was conducted to determine whether significant differences in the usage of different media types existed between males and women. A non-parametric test was necessary because the dependent variables (Facebook usage, Instagram usage, Twitter usage, & Snapchat usage) were measured on an ordinal scale, whereas the independent (grouping) variable was measured on a nominal binary scale. In particular, a Mann–Whitney U-test was conducted to test whether males and females significantly differed in the frequency of the usage of various social media platforms.

Table 6 shows the differences in the usage of various social media platforms between male and female students. A statistically significant difference exists between males and females regarding Facebook usage ($U = 369294$, $p = 0.00$). In particular, the mean rank for males ($R_1 = 1134.1$) was significantly higher than that for females ($R_2 = 900.68$). These findings suggest that females were more likely to use Facebook than males. However, females ranked significantly higher in Twitter usage ($R_1 = 932.48$ vs. $R_2 = 1048.65$, $p = 0.00$), Instagram usage ($R_1 = 954.34$ vs. $R_2 = 1030.51$, $p = 0.00$), and Snapchat usage ($R_1 = 892.42$ vs. $R_2 = 1074.18$, $p = 0.003$).

Table 6
Differences between Males and Females in Terms of Social Media Usage

Social media	Gender	Mean Rank	N	Mann–Whitney U	sig.
Facebook	Males	1134.1	826	369294	0
	Females	900.68	1168		
Twitter	Males	932.48	829	541766.5	0
	Females	1048.65	1171		
Instagram	Males	954.34	826	520516	0
	Females	1030.51	1171		
Snapchat	Males	892.42	826	571661.5	0.003
	Females	1074.18	1171		

Hypotheses Findings

The data from this study provided the following evidence related to the six hypotheses that the researchers posed at the beginning of the study. In H1: *Higher levels of the complexity of a social media application have an inverse relationship with the adoption of that application*, reduced levels of complexity gave rise to the application’s increased adoption. This was supported by the correlation among complexity, usage, and the independent significant associations observed in both males and females in the multivariable analysis.

The researchers found that H2: *The compatibility of social media with the adopter’s values has a positive relationship with the user’s attitude toward using the technology* was supported by the positive correlation between compatibility and usage, as well as by the significant independent associations observed in both males and females in the multivariable analysis.

The third hypothesis, H3: *Social media's trialability has a positive relationship with users' attitudes toward using the technology*, was also supported by the positive correlation among trialability, usage, and the significant independent associations observed in both males and females in the multivariable analysis.

Partially supported by the results of H4: *Social media's observability has no positive relationship with users' attitudes toward using the technology*, the results of the multivariable analysis indicated no association between observability and usage in males. However, a significant positive relationship was observed in females, and an overall positive correlation was found between observability and usage.

The fifth hypothesis, H5: *A positive relationship exists between relative advantage and social media usage*, was not supported by the findings obtained because no significant positive correlation was found between relative advantage and social media usage.

The final hypothesis, H6: *There are significant differences between males and females in the use of social media*, was also supported by the differences observed in the level of use of social media applications between males and females. Furthermore, non-parametric analyses revealed that the effect of the DOI factors on the level of usage differed between males and females.

Discussion

The current study's results suggest the widespread use of social media and demonstrate that Roger's five innovation factors helped explain social media adoption among Kuwait University students. All respondents reported using either Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat. Snapchat was the most popular social media network,

with 89% of students using it at least once a week. Other popular social media networks included Instagram at 87% and Twitter at 85%. Only 25% of participants used Facebook at least once a week although this rate remained higher than the Facebook usage rate previously reported among young people (AlFailakawi, 2016). Previously, among individuals aged 18 to 24 in Kuwait, 43% used Instagram, 25% used Twitter, 19% used Snapchat, and 4% used other social media networks (AlFailakawi, 2016). The significantly higher adoption of social media in this study may be due to the differences between the general population of young people and that of university students. Another reason could be social media's relative advantage and ease of use, thanks to the addition of new features. Differences in adoption may be partly explained by the increasingly rapid social media adoption rate in recent years (Winograd, 2016). This is also an indication of compatibility related to cultural characteristics: values, needs, and experience. It also indicates the difference between public relationship variance for females versus males in Kuwait as Stump and Gong (2020) stated.

Relative advantage was an important factor in the adoption of social media among males but not females. This difference between genders was consistent with prior findings by Algahtani (2020) and Ilie et al. (2005). Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) found that males use social media to form new friendships and connections, whereas females are more likely to use it to maintain friendships. Females using social media to maintain relationships may therefore be less likely to view new social media applications as having an advantage, as these would require reestablishing existing networks. In contrast, social media adoption offered males the opportunity for new connections.

Complexity and compatibility were significant predictors of social media use for both males and females. This suggests that, among university students, ease of use and compatibility with existing lifestyles are important factors when considering the use of social media. Trialability is also an influential factor in social media adoption. Consequently, social media adoption among this demographic group may be improved by providing demonstrations and allowing users to explore the application before signing up.

It was hypothesized that observability would not be related to social media use. However, a significant relationship between observability and social media adoption was found in females but not in males. A previous study by Ilie et al. (2005) also found observability to be important for females only, but this concerned instant messaging adoption rather than social media as a whole. The findings suggest that observability is likely to be more important as people become aware of others around them using the application. This finding suggests that more females than males may emphasize the media that their social circles use when adopting new social media.

Conclusion

This study used the DOI theory to investigate the use of social media among Kuwait University students. The diffusion factors of new social media applications compared with older ones—ease of use, compatibility with lifestyle, ability to try before adoption, and seeing the relative advantage and benefits of a network—were all significant factors in adopting social media. Social media applications have gained popularity among Kuwait university students based on the advantageous factors presented in this study. These applications' advantages relative to older social media networks primarily motivate students' decisions for using social media applications. The

gender differences observed in social media use were that relative advantage was important to male students, whereas observability was important to female students. These findings expand Illie et al.'s (2005) findings on gender differences, which were limited to text messaging to include social media networks. Future research may therefore focus on social media usage using gender as a variable to further investigate these differences.

Limitation of the Study

The participants are not representative of the whole population. They only students who took courses at Kuwait University in Fall 2022. The study result represents a big part of the Kuwaiti society but not the entire population. A future study should have a sample that represents all Kuwaitis, which may help inform future social media adoption efforts.

Future Studies

The results point to several applications for future efforts in social media adoption. The findings can support the future marketing of social media networks by taking into account the factors of social media networks' adoption specific to student populations. The study findings may also be used for brand or product advertising, publicity purposes, organizational purposes, and other communication needs that cannot be controlled, unlike those of traditional mass media channels. For decision-makers in Kuwait, this study demonstrates the need to focus on particular aspects of digital technology to accelerate the adoption of e-commerce and e-government within the country. Such applications, like social media, must focus on efficiency, complexity, and the targeted user group's specific needs. Information concerning the benefits gained and the ease of use should be made public to ensure the broad adoption of the technologies.

Furthermore, the analysis that this study provides could help with determining which topics can be used strategically in political or social media news releases, as an estimated 90% of journalists use social media as part of their daily work (Willnat & Weaver, 2018). The current research findings suggest ways in which communication messages, public service announcements, news, and any targeted communication can be directed toward the intended audience. As social media is routinely used to look for breaking news (Willnat & Weaver, 2018), news outlets can benefit from this study's findings to increase their visibility to the Kuwait university student population.

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