

Prioritising Factors Influencing Travellers Sharing Travel Experiences on Social Media

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Abstract | Social media platforms are the most used platforms for travellers worldwide to share their travel experiences. Recently, Oman has started gaining attention as a tourism destination when people started sharing their travel experiences through photos, videos, blogs on social media platforms. This offers an opportunity to harness the potential of social media for promoting Oman's tourism industry. To leverage this opportunity, it is important to delve into the key factors that motivate and inhibit travellers from sharing their travel experiences on social media platforms. Therefore, this study takes a comprehensive approach to identify and prioritise the key motivating and inhibiting factors using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique. The insights gained from this research can provide valuable insights to tourism stakeholders and policymakers, enabling them to refine their strategies for promoting Oman as an attractive and competitive tourist destination aligning with the goals outlined in the National Tourism Strategy 2040.

Keywords | inhibiting factors, motivating factors, sharing travel experience, social media, analytic hierarchy process

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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have become significant for travellers to share their travelling experience. This can be achieved by posting travel-related photos, videos, blogs, among others, on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok or Twitter, to name but a few. This phenomenon has benefited several nations in different aspects, particularly in the tourism industry. Several countries with beautiful destinations, which were previously not well-known to the world, have come into light when some travellers shared their real travel experiences on social media. Previously, Norway was not a popular destination, however visitants sharing what it was like experiencing breathtaking landscapes and northern lights have given the country more visibility (Rosenberg, et al. 2021). On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan's tourism has been boosted by people showcasing its natural beauty and cultural heritage on social media (Lu et al. 2024). Moldova has used social media to boost its visibility as a wine tourism destination (Sultana, 2015) and social media has helped Palau gain recognition for its pristine marine environments and diving spots (Poushter, et al. 2018). Thus, it is evident that social media has brought attention to various destinations, encouraging people to visit and explore their diverse offerings (Wengel et al., 2020; Dedeoğlu et al., 2020).

Likewise, though it is globally recognised as a hidden gem, Oman has started getting attention when travellers shared real travel-related posts on social platforms (Medhat, 2017; Thio, 2023; Henderson, 2015; Al-Masroori, 2006; Wood & Al-Azri, 2019). To distinguish itself from other nearby GCC countries, Oman focuses on eco-tourism, wellness, agriculture, and adventure. The country featured the oasis landscape (wadis), beaches, mountains, sea, islands, date palm groves, oceans, deserts, ancient water systems (falaj), coastal areas, prehistoric villages, caves, and marvellous architectural buildings. Nonetheless, the country has not gained much attention from the global travel community.

Many citizens (Omanis and ex-pats) make a significant effort to promote the unexplored destination of the country by sharing their travel-related posts on their social media platforms (Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar, 2024; Oman Observer, 2019). Therefore, thanks to citizens' endeavours, tourism in Oman has started gaining attention on social media at the national and international levels. Many people around the world have begun following local's social media accounts to know

more about this attractive destination. Still, there is a long way for Oman to make it as a unique travel destination. However, the journey can be shortened by using the power of social media to promote Oman tourism.

In Oman, there are 4.39 million social media users as of January 2022 (DataReportal, 2023). It is interesting to note that 83.2% of Oman's population uses social media and that this percentage is drastically increasing. According to a Kepios research report (2023), the number of social media users in Oman has risen by 250 000 (+6.0%) between 2021 and 2022. Considering the growing potential of social media in Oman, it can be considered a strong tool for promoting tourism in Oman. The proliferation of social media is a major development indicator in the tourism sector of Oman. Few travellers are popularising the unexplored destination by sharing their travel-related photos, videos, blogs etc. on their social media accounts (Oman Observer, 2019). These small efforts have made people from all over the world start noticing the beautiful "underrated" travel destination of Oman (MarketResearch.com, 2021). More visitants can be motivated to also share their travel experiences to popularise the country.

There are some inhibiting factors that also restrict travellers from sharing their travel experience on social media. Surveys by Alkindi and Al-Suqri (2013) have shown that the lack of time and the insufficient IT (information technology) skills, disclosure of personal information were the main barriers for not using social networks. Another study by Al-Badi et al. (2017) reported that privacy concerns and cultural factors limit social media users in Oman. Hence, it is unclear if these constraints have a significant impact on the Omani social media users to share their travelling experience. Researchers have not yet analysed these constraints in much detail. Hence, it is imperative to gain insights into the factors that motivate or inhibit travellers from sharing their travel experiences on social media.

The present literature review serves as an in-depth exploration of motivating and inhibiting factors providing a strong foundation for the subsequent utilisation of the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique in the research. AHP is a structured and analytical approach to rank systematically the inhibiting and motivating factors affecting travellers to share their travel experiences on social media platforms, specifically in the context of Oman. Prioritising these factors plays a crucial role as it enables to identify the most significant motivating and inhibiting factors. In practical terms, this prioritisation holds the potential to provide a powerful roadmap for stakeholders in the tourism

industry. Stakeholders can use insights to focus their efforts on mitigating inhibiting factors while enhancing the motivating factors for boosting Oman as an attractive tourism country and being among top travel destinations, as mentioned in the National Tourism Strategy 2040. According to this strategy, over 85% of the investment will come from the private sector, which will attract 11.7 million tourists domestically and internationally. This strategy also aims at generating 500 000 job opportunities, of which the majority for Omani citizens (Times News Service, 2019).

2. Literature review

Travellers' intention to share their travel experiences on social media plays a critical role in boosting the tourism industry (Anggarawati & Saputra, 2023; Nautiyal et al., 2023). Their posts on social media platforms are reported to contribute to a valuable database for the tourism sector (Chen et al., 2022; Chiwaridzo & Masengu, 2023). However, it is worth noting that not all travellers are inclined to share their travel experiences, even though a significant number of people actively consume information from social media (Septiari and Omar, 2023; Choi et al 2019). It is a relatively small group of travellers that contributes most of the tourism-related content on social media platforms (Coronel et al. 2023; Arica et al., 2022; Luo et al. 2019).

The existing literature presents various motivating and inhibiting factors for sharing travel experiences on social media. Sharing travel experiences on social media is a means for people to express themselves and their personal interests towards travel and tourists' intentions to do so are positively influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Chang et al. 2020; Wang et al. 2014). Travellers share their experiences on social media to engage with people with similar interests. By sharing their travel experiences on social media, visitors build a travel community for future travel collaborations (Fu et al. 2017; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar, 2024). This is particularly true for travellers who are enthusiastic about exploring new destinations and experiencing new cultures. Similarly, Li et al. (2020) found that recognition & status, sharing tourism information, disclosure and enjoyment are critical factors for sharing photos on social media. Therefore, numerous travellers share their travel experiences to seek validation and approval from their social groups. Munar & Jacobsen (2014) cited altruistic and community-related motivations as a main factor for sharing travel experiences on social media. Travellers look to motivate others to travel, explore new destinations and have new experiences. They want

to help others plan their trips by providing information on popular attractions, accommodations, and travel tips through social media (Fu et al. 2017; Wang et al. 2014; Arica et al. 2022). Similarly, Magno et al. (2018) examined the impact of egoistic and altruistic motivations on the frequency of posting reviews online on social media. Travellers indeed share experiences on social media to preserve memories of their trips so that they can look back on their posts and reminisce about their travel experiences (Jamshidiet al. 2023; Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

Few researchers have investigated the inhibiting factors for sharing travel experiences on social media. According to Arica et al. (2022), environmental relations and security concerns have a negative impact on intentions for sharing travel experiences on social media. Furthermore, this practice can also raise security and privacy concerns, particularly when individuals are sharing sensitive information such as their personal identity, location, or family photos (Oliveira et al. 2020). It can also lead to unwanted attention or even harassment and cyber-crime (Widiana, and Novani, 2022; Johnson et al., 2012). In the context of Oman, Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024) revealed cultural barriers, time constraints, lack of self-confidence and lack of technical knowledge as critical inhibiting factors for sharing travel experiences on social media (Sigala et al 2012; Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar 2024).

It is evident from the literature that motivating and inhibiting factors affect travellers' intentions for sharing their travel experiences on social media. Thus, it is important to understand and hence prioritise those factors. Table 1 shows factors that have been considered in the conceptual framework for prioritisation of inhibiting and motivating factors.

Table 1: Conceptual framework: Inhibiting and motivating factors for sharing travel experience on social media

Inhibiting factors			
Main factor	Sub-factor	Focus	Reference
External factor	Security and privacy issues	Risk of a hacker using social media to gain access to personal information	Oliveira et al., (2020); Arica et al., (2022); Huang et al. (2010); Aqdas et al., (2016a); Widiana and Novani, (2022); Johnson et al., (2012); Ravindran et al. (2018)
	Cultural barriers	Cultural norms on sharing content on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Trepte et al. (2016); Alsaleh et al. (2019); Dillelte et al. (2019)

	Cyber-crime	Fear of unauthorised parties using data inappropriately posted on social media platforms	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Taddicken, (2014); Alsaleh et al. (2019); Widiana, R. and Novani, (2022); Johnson et al. (2012)
Internal factor	Lack of self-confidence	Feeling incompetent to post on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Sigala et al (2012)
	Lack of technical knowledge	Inadequate technical Skills for posting on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Sigala et al. (2012)
	Time constraints	Inadequate time to post on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Huang et al. (2010); Sigala et al (2012)
Motivating factors			
Extrinsic motivation	Self-branding	Promoting oneself as a travel brand on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Fu et al. (2017); Thompson et al. (2019); Li et al. (2022); Zell and Moeller (2018); Taylor, (2020); Park et al. (2016)
	Being in social media trends	Following the travel trends on social media	Li et al. (2022); Zell and Moeller (2018); Park et al. (2016); Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024);
	Travel community belongingness	Forming social connections and making personal interactions in the travel community	Fu et al. (2017); Munar & Jacobsen, (2014); Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Hays et al. (2013); Wang et al. (2014); Park et al. (2016)
	Promoting country tourism	Developing country tourism by sharing travel experiences on social media	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024) Mughairi et al. (2022); Wong et al. (2019); Nanggong and Mohammad (2020); Aftab and Khan (2019); Park et al. (2016); Joshi and Bhaskar (2020)
Intrinsic motivation	Perceived enjoyment	Degree of sharing travel experience on social media perceived to be enjoyable	Wang et al. (2014); Al- Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Sukhu et al. 2020); Li et al. (2022); Choi et al. (2021); Ghazali et al. (2018); Oliveira et al. (2020)
	Altruistic motivation	Desire to help other people through social media to make a travel decision	Li et al., (2022); Magno et al., (2018); Magno et al. (2018); Arica et al. (2022); Fu et al. (2017); Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004); Wang et al. (2014); Arica et al. (2022); Munar & Jacobsen, (2014); Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024)
	Self- fulfilment	A feeling of satisfaction to share one's travel experience on social media	Choi, et al., (2021); Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004); Arica et al. (2022); Al- Mughairi and Bhaskar (2024); Thompson et al. (2019); Li et al. (2022); Huang et al (2010); Li et al (2022); Arica et al (2022); Fu et al. (2017)

Source: Own Elaboration

3. Research Methodology

The primary aim of this research paper is to categorise and prioritise the factors which inhibit and motivate travellers from sharing their travel experiences on social media. To reach this objective, the study uses the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) methodology, which is a structured technique for prioritising the factors and assigning ranks based on their relative importance. Thomas L. Saaty created the AHP in the 1970s as a methodical and organised approach to decision-making. The AHP technique is a simple and comprehensive mathematical method (Ikram et al. 2020) which combines the scientific method and the real behaviour of individuals in decision-making (Benítez et al., 2017). This technique shows the relative importance of each main factor and sub-factors. AHP provides a framework for breaking down a decision problem into a hierarchical structure, making it easier to analyse and prioritise various factors and sub-factors. The AHP approach has been widely employed by researchers in different fields (Gupta et al. 2023; Panchal & Shrivastava, 2022; Agarwal et al 2022; Sood et al 2023; Dixit et al 2022; Irfan, et al 2022; Bhaskar et al. 2023). This study has followed AHP (Saaty, 2005) steps meticulously to fulfil its objective. In contrast to the traditional AHP methodology, which typically focuses on analysing decision-making behaviour in real-life scenarios, the present study uses a modified version of AHP. Instead of directly examining behavioural patterns, our approach prioritises and ranks decision-making criteria in a hierarchical structure. This adaptation is specifically designed to align with the goals of our research, ensuring a clearer focus on the criteria themselves rather than on the behaviour of decision-makers. The adapted version of AHP employed, designed to establish a hierarchy of decision-making criteria, involves pairwise comparisons of factors using Saaty's scale. Expert Choice software application has been used for conducting Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) analyses. It provides a user-friendly interface for creating decision hierarchies, performing pairwise comparisons, and calculating the final priorities and rankings.

Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) steps are presented in the subsequent sections:

Step 1: Structuring the problem and building the analytic hierarchy process model.

The problem has been developed into a hierarchical framework including goals, criterion, and decision alternatives. Traditionally, AHP employs terms like ‘goals,’ ‘criteria,’ and ‘alternatives,’ but here these terms are adapted as ‘goal,’ ‘factors,’ and ‘sub-factors’ to reflect the study’s context. The main goal is to understand inhibiting and motivating factors for sharing travel experience on social media travel. The two primary categories of factors are motivating factors and inhibiting factors. Each of them is further divided into main factors and sub-factors.

Figures 1 and 2 shows the AHP hierarchical model of the study.

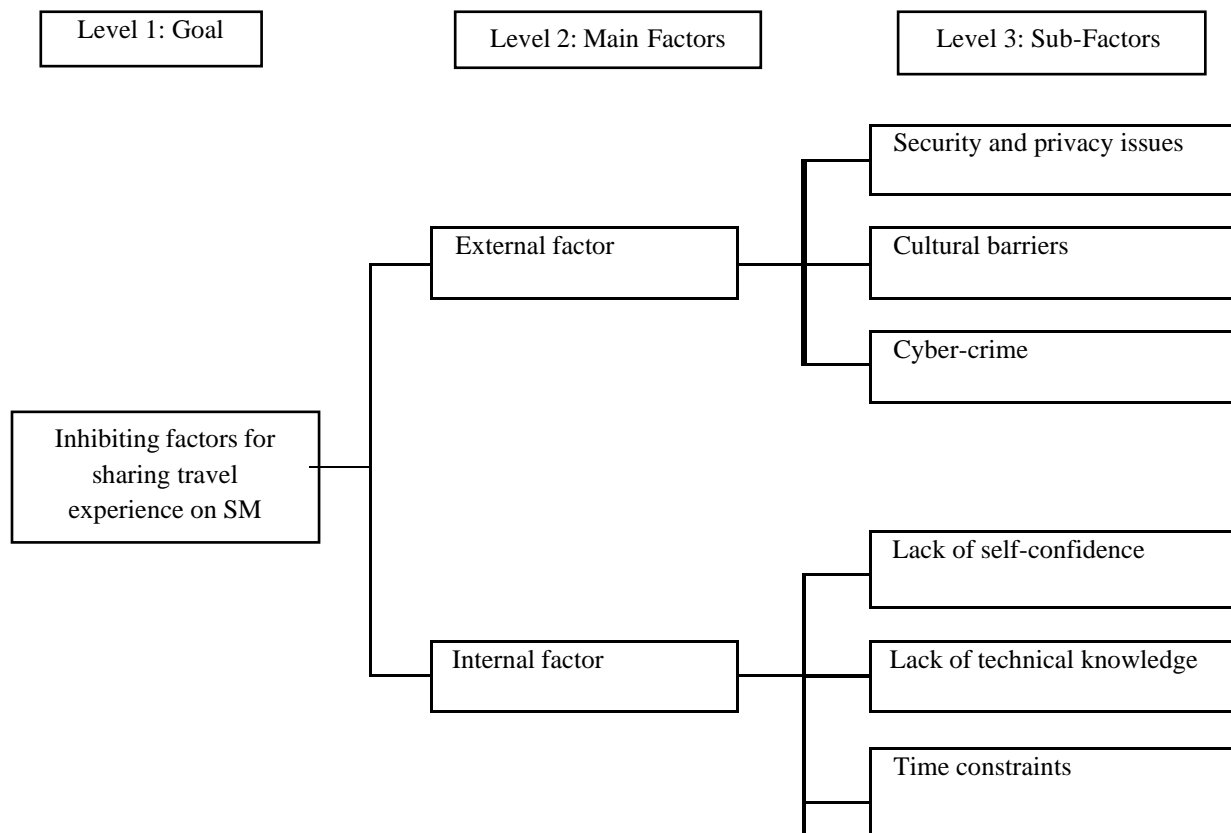


Figure 1: The AHP Hierarchy for Inhibiting Factors

Source: Own Elaboration

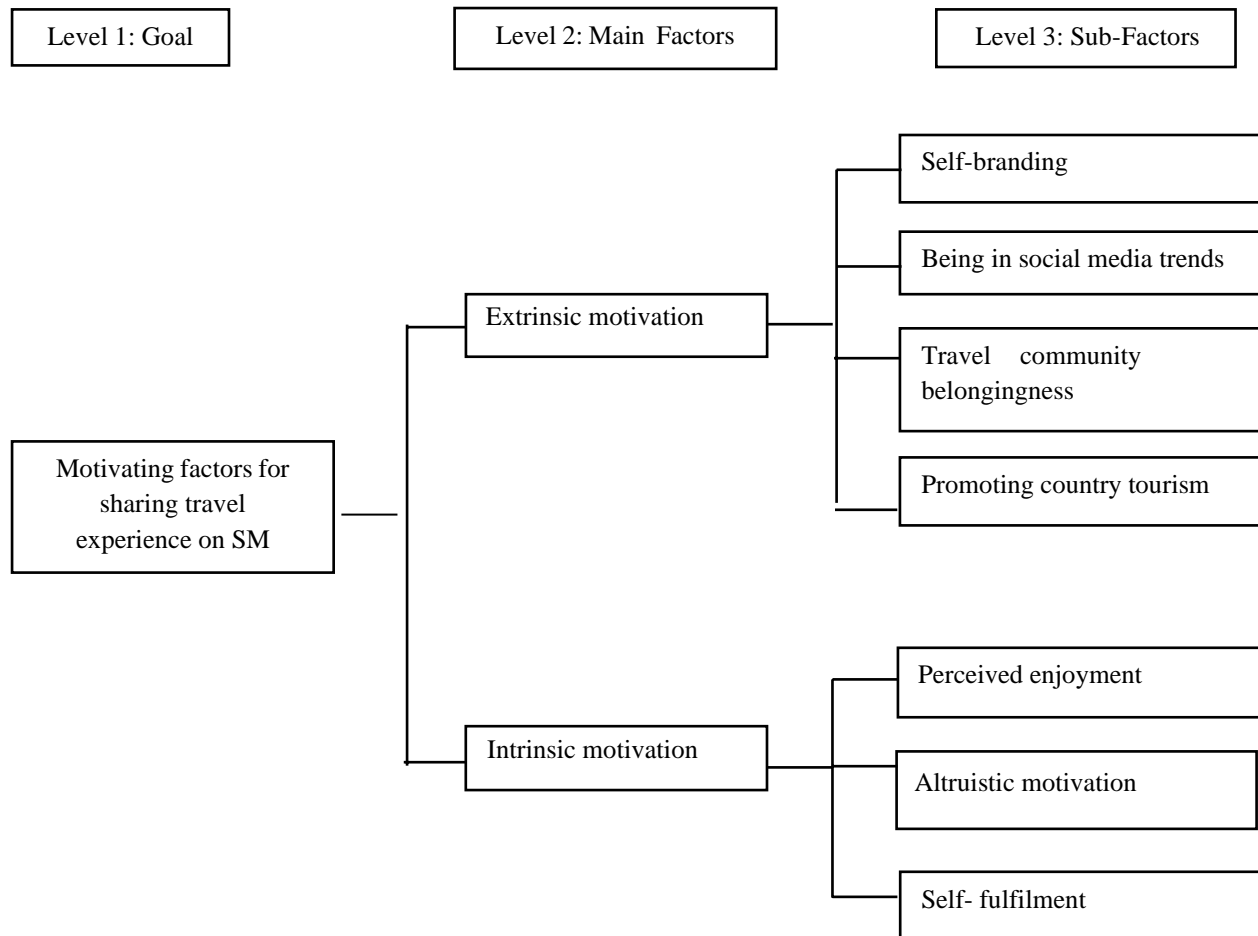


Figure 2: AHP hierarchical model for Motivating factors

Source: Own Elaboration

Step 2: Collecting data from experts

The data has been collected from experts on the relative importance of each criterion on a pairwise comparison matrix on Saaty's nine-point scale of relative importance (Saaty, 1970). The data for this study was gathered from Omani and expatriates who were regularly sharing their travel experiences on social media in Oman and were familiar with Oman's tourism. The total sample size is 23. According to Melillo & Pecchia (2016), a sample size of 19 can be sufficient when alternatives are equally important. The sample profile of the respondents is stated in table 2.

Table 2: Sample profile of the respondents

Demographic	Category	No. of participants
Nationality	Omani	9
	Other Nationality (expatriate)	14
Age	18 to 30	12
	31 to 40	8
	41 to 50	2
	51 to 60	1
Education	High school	2
	Graduate	9
	Post-graduate	9
	PhD	3
Gender	Female	8
	Male	15
Occupation	Students	6
	Employees	8
	Self-employed	5
	Unemployed	4
Governorates of Oman	Muscat	5
	Musandam	1
	Dhofar	3
	Al Buraimi	1
	North Al Batinah	2
	South Al Batinah	1
	South Al Sharqiyah	3
	North Al Sharqiyah	3
	A'Dakhiliya	2
	Al Wusta	1
	Al Dhahirah	1

Source: Own Elaboration

The additional data obtained to comprehend the usage of social media for travel experiences on social media is illustrated in figures 3 to 5.

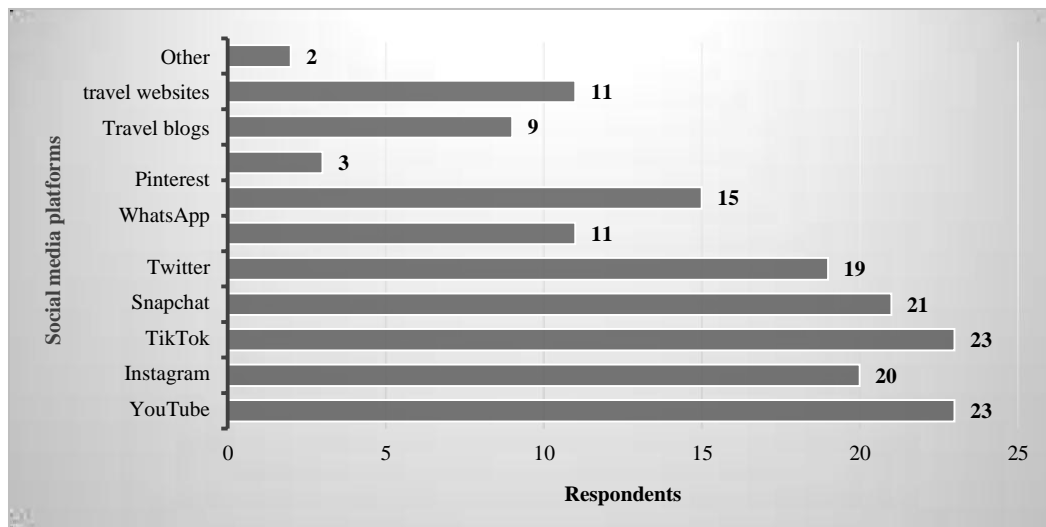


Figure 3: Social media platforms used for sharing travel experience

Source: Own Elaboration

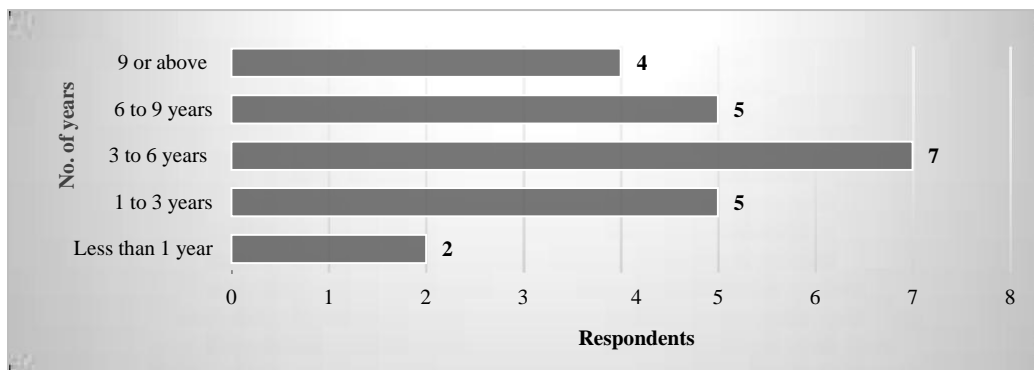


Figure 4: Number of years using social media for sharing travel experience

Source: Own Elaboration

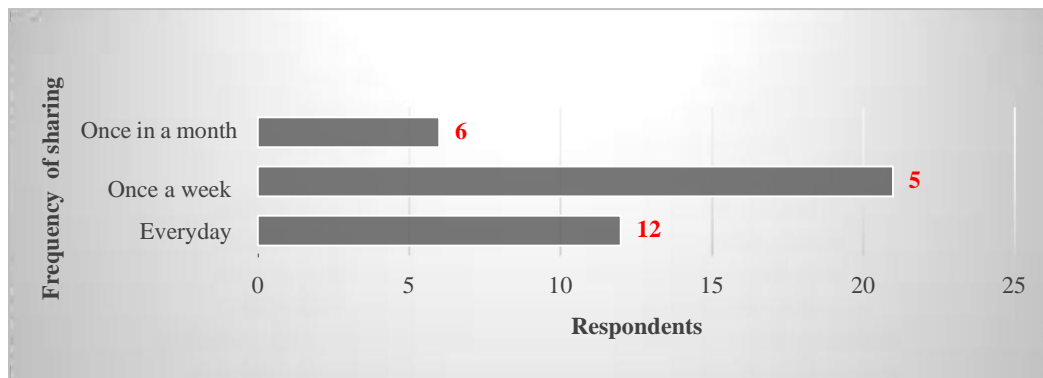


Figure 5: Frequency of using social media for sharing travel experience

Source: Own Elaboration

Step 3: Determining the normalised priority weights of individual factors and sub-factors or determining normalised weights, the following steps are undertaken:

- **Construction of pair-wise comparison matrices for all factors and sub-factors**

Pairwise comparison matrices were constructed to assess the relative importance of all factors and sub-factors. Each matrix compared one factor or sub-factor against every other factor or sub-factor within the same category, assigning numerical values to represent their relative importance. The pairwise comparison process was conducted using a structured questionnaire (Appendix 1). Respondents compared two factors at a time based on their perceived importance, applying Saaty's 1 to 9 scale (Table 3). This approach, rooted in the AHP methodology, systematically captured the respondents' preferences, and calculated the priority weights for each factor and sub-factor. The 1 to 9 scale reflects varying degrees of importance, where 1 denotes equal importance and 9 denotes extreme importance. Reciprocal values (e.g., 1/9, 1/8) represent the inverse relationship when one factor is considered less important than the other. Table 3 provides a summary of the scale and its reciprocal values.

Table 3: Saaty's 1 to 9 scale

Scale	Numerical Rating	Reciprocal
Extremely important	9	1/9
Very to extremely strongly important	8	1/8
Very strongly important	7	1/7
Strongly to very strongly important	6	1/6
Strongly important	5	1/5
Moderately to strongly important	4	1/4
Moderately important	3	1/3
Equally to moderately important	2	1/2
Equally important	1	1

Source: Own Elaboration

Example of Pairwise Comparison for Sub-Factors (External Factors)

Table 4 illustrates the pairwise comparison process among three sub-factors: *Cultural Barriers*, *Security and Privacy Issues*, and *Cybercrime*. Respondents evaluated the relative importance of each sub-factor by assigning values from Saaty's 1 to 9 scale, and reciprocal values were applied for the inverse comparisons.

Table 4: Pairwise Comparison Matrix for Sub-Factors under External Factors (Example)

Sub-Factor 1 (Row)	Sub-Factor 2 (Column)	Rating (Participant Response)	Reciprocal Value
Cultural Barriers	Security and Privacy Issues	5	1/5
Cultural Barriers	Cybercrime	7	1/7
Security and Privacy Issues	Cybercrime	3	1/3

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the example given through table 4, here follows an explanation:

- Cultural Barriers vs. Security and Privacy Issues: Respondents considered *Cultural Barriers* to be strongly more important than *Security and Privacy Issues*. Thus, they assigned a score of 5 to *Cultural Barriers* and a reciprocal value of 1/5 to *Security and Privacy Issues*.
- Cultural Barriers vs. Cybercrime: Respondents considered *Cultural Barriers* to be very strongly more important than *Cybercrime*. Therefore, a score of 7 was assigned to *Cultural Barriers* and 1/7 to *Cybercrime*.
- Security and Privacy Issues vs. Cybercrime: Respondents deemed *Security and Privacy Issues* to be moderately more important than *Cybercrime*, assigning a score of 3 to *Security and Privacy Issues* and 1/3 to *Cybercrime*.

- **Checking the consistency of each comparison matrix to validate the results**

The pair-wise comparison matrices used for data collection have been included in appendix 1. After constructing the pair-wise comparison matrices, it is essential to check the consistency of these comparisons. This is done to ensure that the comparisons made are logical and do not contain contradictions. The consistency check is conducted by calculating the Consistency Ratio (CR). The CR helps determine the reliability of the comparisons. The CR is calculated as the consistency index (CI) divided by the random index (RI). If the CR is less than or equal to 0.10 (Saaty's threshold), the comparisons are considered consistent. If the CR exceeds 0.10, it may indicate that the judgments are not consistent, and you might need to revise the pair-wise comparisons. In this study consistency ratios are acceptable, ranging between less or equal to 0.10 (Saaty, 1980).

- **Calculation of Global and Local Weights**

Based on the criteria calculated in the previous step, both the Global Weights (GW) and Local Weights (LW) for factors and sub-factors are calculated. The GW and LW of each factor allow for the overall prioritisation of factors relative to the main goal, while also highlighting importance within each category. GW represents the overall importance of a factor while LW indicates the importance of a factor within its main factor. Once the GW and LW have been calculated, priority ranks are assigned to the main factors and sub-factors based on their weights.

4. Findings and results

Tables 4 and 5 show the weights and ranking of inhibiting and motivating factors, respectively. Table 4 shows weight analyses of the main inhibiting factors and their sub-factors for sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. Among the two main inhibiting factors, the external factor (weight = 0.772) has the highest ranking followed by the internal factor (weight = 0.227). Three external factors "Security and privacy issues" has the highest weight (LW = 0.386) followed by "Cybercrime" (LW = 0.342) and "cultural barriers" (LW= 0.270). Moreover, among the three internal factors "Lack of technical knowledge" has the highest weight (LW = 0.386) followed by "Time constraints" (LW = 0.342) and "Lack of self-confidence" (LW = 0.270). According to global weight, the top three inhibiting factors are security and privacy issues (GW = 0.298); Cybercrime (GW = 0.264); and Cultural barriers (GW = 0.208).

Table 4: Inhibiting factors to share travel experiences on social media in Oman

Main factor	Weights	Sub-factor	LW	GW	Overall rank
Externalfactor	0.772	Cultural barriers	0.270	0.208	3
		Security and privacy issues	0.386	0.298	1
		Cybercrime	0.342	0.264	2
Internalfactor	0.227	Lack of self-confidence	0.255	0.058	6
		Lack of technical knowledge	0.413	0.094	4
		Time constraints	0.331	0.075	5

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 5 shows the detailed weight analyses of motivating factors and their sub-factors for sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. Among the two main motivating factors, extrinsic motivation (weight = 0.75862067) has the highest ranking followed by intrinsic motivation (weight equals 0.241379329).

The extrinsic motivation factor “Being in social media trends” has the highest weight (LW= 0.421), followed by “Promoting country tourism” (LW = 0.256) and “Travel community belongingness” (LW = 0.186); “Self-branding” (LW = 0.136). Among the three intrinsic motivations, “Perceived enjoyment” has the highest weight (LW = 0.476), followed by “Altruistic motivation” (LW = 0.363) and “Self-fulfilment” (LW = 0.160). According to the global weight, the top three motivating factors are “Being in social media trends” (GW = 0.319); “Travel community belongingness” (GW = 0.141); “Perceived enjoyment” (GW = 0.103).

Table 5: Motivating factors to share travel on social media in Oman

Main factor	Weights	Sub-factor	LW	GW	Overall rank
Extrinsic motivation	0.758	Self-branding	0.136	0.102	5
		Being in social media trends	0.421	0.319	1
		Travel community belongingness	0.186	0.141	2
		Promoting country tourism	0.256	0.103	4
Intrinsic motivation	0.241	Perceived enjoyment	0.476	0.115	3
		Altruistic motivation	0.363	0.087	6
		Self- fulfilment	0.160	0.038	7

Source: Own Elaboration

5. Discussion

The decision to share travel experiences on social media is influenced by various motivating and inhibiting factors. According to global weight, it is interesting to note that the top three inhibiting factors reported are security and privacy issues, cybercrime, and cultural barriers when sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. Many respondents were concerned about their security and privacy issues for sharing their travel experience on social media. In fact, incidents of data breaches have alarmed many visitors to rethink sharing travel experiences on social media in recent years (Herath et al. 2022). The findings of this study align with numerous studies that have identified security and privacy issues as significant barriers to sharing travel-related posts on social media (Oliveira et al., 2020; Arica et al., 2022; Widiana and Novani, 2022). Moreover, respondents

were concerned about how cybercrime and the fear of sharing personal information, location, and travel pattern could lead to security issues. Cybercrime, social engineering, false flags, and malware have been discussed by many researchers in their studies as inhibitors to sharing content on social media (Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar 2024; Alsaleh et al. 2019; Widianana, R. and Novani, 2022, Herath et al. 2022). Al-Hyasat and Maqableh, (2024) pointed out that people fear that unauthorised parties may misuse their personal data and identity information which they have shared on social media. It is recommended that people need to be informed about creating strong security settings on social media sites. The inhibiting factors can be mitigated by providing proper training sessions on maintaining security and privacy issues and dealing with cybercrime within a legal framework. Many travellers lack technical knowledge to use social media to share travel experiences and some social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat require basic technical skills to edit photos and videos (Mirzaalian and Halpenny, 2019). On the other hand, writing a blog requires creativity to express these opinions in written form. Travellers sometimes find it difficult to identify blog pages and writing impressive content becomes a tiresome activity for them. They need to devote time to editing photos, videos, and blogs to make a memorable post on social media. Besides that, respondents also highlighted that time constraints inhibit them from sharing travel experiences on social media. The findings corroborate Long's (2020) claim that tourists may struggle to find the time necessary to edit and publish content, preferring to spend their time visiting the location instead. Lastly, a lack of self-confidence in their travel content also inhibits them. They feel that their travel-related photos, videos, and blogs are of poor quality as compared to other bloggers. These results are consistent with Al-Mughairi and Bhaska (2024) and Sigala et al. (2012), who pointed out that people feel incompetent and lack the technical skills to post travel content on social media. Previous studies reported that cultural factors can act as barriers to sharing travel photos on social media platforms and it is interesting to note that cultural barriers are clearly understandable in the context of Oman because of its conservative culture (Yuan et al. 2024). Omani travellers prefer to post about their destinations rather than their personal pictures or videos on social media. Yet, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman is trying to reduce the cultural barriers by giving equal opportunities to promote tourism on social media platforms. It organises various events and competitions for travel bloggers to post about beautiful places in Oman. The "cultural barriers" factor ranks in the top three inhibiting factors, which means that more efforts are required to mitigate these barriers.

According to global weight, the top three motivating factors are social media trends, travel community belongingness and perceived enjoyment for sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. People post on social media to remain up to date with the tourism industry's social media trends. They share travel experiences once a week on multiple social media platforms at the same time and want to follow the trends by sharing some small narratives related to travel with the intent to stay relevant and popular in the social spheres of the travel industry (Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar, 2024; Li et al. 2022; Zell and Moeller, 2018). Travellers promote themselves as a brand on social media to boost Oman's tourism. In Oman, people want to promote country tourism by sharing travel experiences on social media. Many travel bloggers from Oman are gaining attention at the international level for sharing a post about the beautiful destination. They feel motivated when getting positive comments about the country and when people show interest in visiting it. As a result, they feel like an important part of the "travel community" and get motivated to share more travel experiences on social media, while forming social connections and making personal interactions, contributing to the travel community itself (Fu et al. 2017; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar 2024). People perceive enjoyment in sharing travel experiences on social media, feeling happy and satisfied. Their satisfaction gets immense when other people ask for more details about the destinations. This leads to altruistic motivation where they look forward to helping people with their travel plans, which consequently gives them a feeling of self-fulfilment where they believe that they have done good deeds for others. Several researchers defend that people feel happy and content when sharing travel posts on social media (Arica et al. 2022; Choi, et al. 2021; Li et al., 2022; Tham et al. 2020).

6. Conclusion

Social media's influence on the travel industry is evident in the current digital era. Travellers have widely adopted social media platforms to share their travel experience providing a window into the many adventures, cultures, and landscapes the world has to offer. This research must systematically analyse and prioritise the motivating and inhibiting factors influencing travellers' intention to share their travel experiences on social media, with a specific focus on the context of Oman, by leveraging the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique. The AHP analyses have offered valuable insights into the relative importance and rankings of both inhibiting (external and internal)

and motivating factors that influence travellers to share travel experiences on social media in Oman.

External inhibiting factors include security and privacy concerns, as well as the fear of cybercrime, which plays a pivotal role in inhibiting content sharing. Additionally, cultural barriers rooted in Oman's conservative culture pose a unique challenge. On the internal front, travellers' lack of technical knowledge, time constraints, and self-confidence further inhibit them from sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. These findings underscore the need for tailored interventions and strategies to address these inhibiting factors.

The motivating factors identified in this study serve as powerful drivers for travellers in Oman to actively share their travel experiences on social media. These factors include staying in tune with social media trends, feeling a sense of belonging within the travel community, and the enjoyment derived from sharing valuable travel insights to promote Oman's tourism through social media. These factors also reflect their altruistic motivation in assisting fellow travellers with their travel plans. By understanding motivating factors, Oman can harness the reasons for travellers to share their travel experiences on social media to boost the destination's tourism.

6.1. Practical implications

Regarding practical implications, this study makes a valuable contribution to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners by offering rich insights into the inhibiting and motivating factors for sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. The prioritisation of these factors will enable stakeholders to focus on mitigating the inhibiting factors while promoting the motivating factors to enhance Oman's tourism through individuals sharing their travel experiences on social media. Promoting tourism through social media can be a powerful tool to attract travellers and highlight the beautiful destinations of Oman. Based on the findings, the following suggestions are likely to be implemented to promote tourism through social media in Oman:

- **Collaborate with Social Media Influencers:** Tourism stakeholders can collaborate with influencers with a high number of followers and a genuine interest in promoting the destination. Influencers can help promote destinations and activities and are able to provide valuable feedback regarding the travel experience.

- **Encourage Authenticity:** Travel companies should motivate travellers to post their real travel experiences on social media like sharing their photos, testimonials, videos, etc. Authentic travel experiences are more relatable and can provide a more realistic representation of a destination.
- **Create high-quality content:** Travellers can be assisted in designing creative content to highlight the attractions of Oman. Creating more hashtags to make content easily discoverable by users who are interested in Oman would be an effective measure to implement.
- **Government collaboration with travel agencies:** Travellers who are motivated to promote Oman's attraction on social media can be motivated by rewards, like sponsoring trips to various beautiful destinations of Oman. It would be helpful assisting them to make their content visually appealing, informative, and tailored to the interests of the target audience, providing exclusive access to unexplored attractions.
- **Leverage user-generated content:** Encourage travellers to share their personal photos and videos of Oman on social media and feature this content on the official tourism account (experienceoman.om). This can help to build a sense of community and display the diverse experiences that Oman has to offer to prospective travellers. This kind of information can help travellers plan their trips and create more meaningful experiences.
- **Develop a social media strategy:** Create a specific plan that outlines the objectives, target audience, key messages, and tactics to be used on social media platforms for promoting Oman. This can include information on popular attractions, local customs, and travel tips. It is important to identify suitable social media channels for reaching the target audience.
- **Engage with the Community:** Tourism stakeholders should engage with the social media community by responding to comments and questions and sharing user-generated content. Responding promptly to comments and questions about the destination of Oman also encourages travellers to share their own experiences and stories about Oman. Engaging with the community can help build a positive reputation for the destination and create a sense of community among travellers.

6.2.Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its examination of the factors that motivate or inhibit travellers from sharing their experiences on social media, specifically within the context of Oman. By using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique, this research identifies and prioritises these motivating and inhibiting factors, thereby clarifying their relative significance. This framework provides essential insights for tourism authorities, marketers, and policymakers in their efforts to enhance Oman's tourism industry. Ultimately, the findings underscore the potential of social media as a powerful tool for tourism promotion and highlight the necessity for targeted strategies to address inhibiting factors while leveraging motivating factors.

6.3.Limitation and future scope of research

The limitation of the study is that it does not analyse real behaviour but rather focuses on understanding the importance of motivating and inhibiting factors. The research findings are limited by the small sample size and respondent characteristics. Future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples to enhance the generalisability of the findings. Future researchers could also compare the Omani and expatriate responses to sharing travel experiences on social media in Oman. Additionally, the results are specific to the context of Oman and may not be directly applicable to other regions, as various cultural, social, and economic factors can influence travellers' decisions to share their experiences on social media. Researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in distinct cultural contexts to facilitate comparison and contrast of the findings. Furthermore, this study captures a snapshot of travellers' motivations and inhibitions at a specific point in time. Given that social media trends and traveller preferences can change rapidly, future research should investigate how these factors evolve over-time and adapt to the dynamic landscape of social media and tourism. One of the limitations of this study is the ethical complexity associated with relying on citizens to promote Oman's tourism. They may only highlight attractive destinations while ignoring issues such as environmental challenges, infrastructure limitations, or cultural perspectives.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Please compare two factors at a time based on the relative importance of one factor over the other regarding Factors Influencing Travellers Sharing Travel Experiences on social media. Please rate the importance of a factor by choosing a number from the scale provided. If Factor 1 is more important than Factor 2, tick towards the lefthand side, else tick towards the right-hand side.

Comparisons among Main Factors (Inhibiting factors)

[illegible]

Comparisons among Sub-Factor (External factor)

[illegible]

Comparisons among Sub-Factor (Internal factor)

[illegible]

Comparisons among Main-Factor (Motivating factors)

[illegible]

Comparisons among Sub-Factor (Extrinsic motivation)

Factor 1	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Factor 2
Self-branding																		Being in social media trends
Self-branding																		Travel community belongingness
Self-branding																		Promoting country tourism
Being in social media trends																		Travel community belongingness
Being in social media trends																		Promoting country tourism
Travel community belongingness																		Promoting country tourism

Comparisons among Sub-Factor (Intrinsic motivation)

[illegible]