

# Acceptance of Social Media in Religious Tourism: The Case of Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

As an integral part of the lives of individuals and thus society, the rapid development of the telecommunications sector affects all areas of life. This is especially true for social media. Recently, many government departments have launched social media accounts in order to improve their communication with the public. In particular, religious tourism is of great concern to officials as they seek to provide more services to pilgrims. The aim of this study is to identify the factors that encourage pilgrims to adopt social media in their religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. This study extended the technology acceptance model (TAM) for religious tourism to explain the factors influencing user acceptance of social media in this context. TAM constructs (such as awareness, social influence, level of education, age, enjoyment, and trust) were thus applied in the study as means of determining user intention and willingness to adopt social media. The model was tested by means of 200 surveys distributed to students, academics and respondents forum. SPSS and Partial Least Square (PLS) were used to analyze the data and produce results. The study revealed that awareness and social influence have significant effects on perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of social media. Moreover, enjoyment and trust have significant effects on behavioural intentions to use social media. Age also has a significant effect on attitudes toward the probability of adopting social media. The implications of this study are discussed and suggestions for future study are presented.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Technology Adoption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), User Attitude, Behavioural Intention, PU, PEOU, Saudi Arabia.

## Introduction

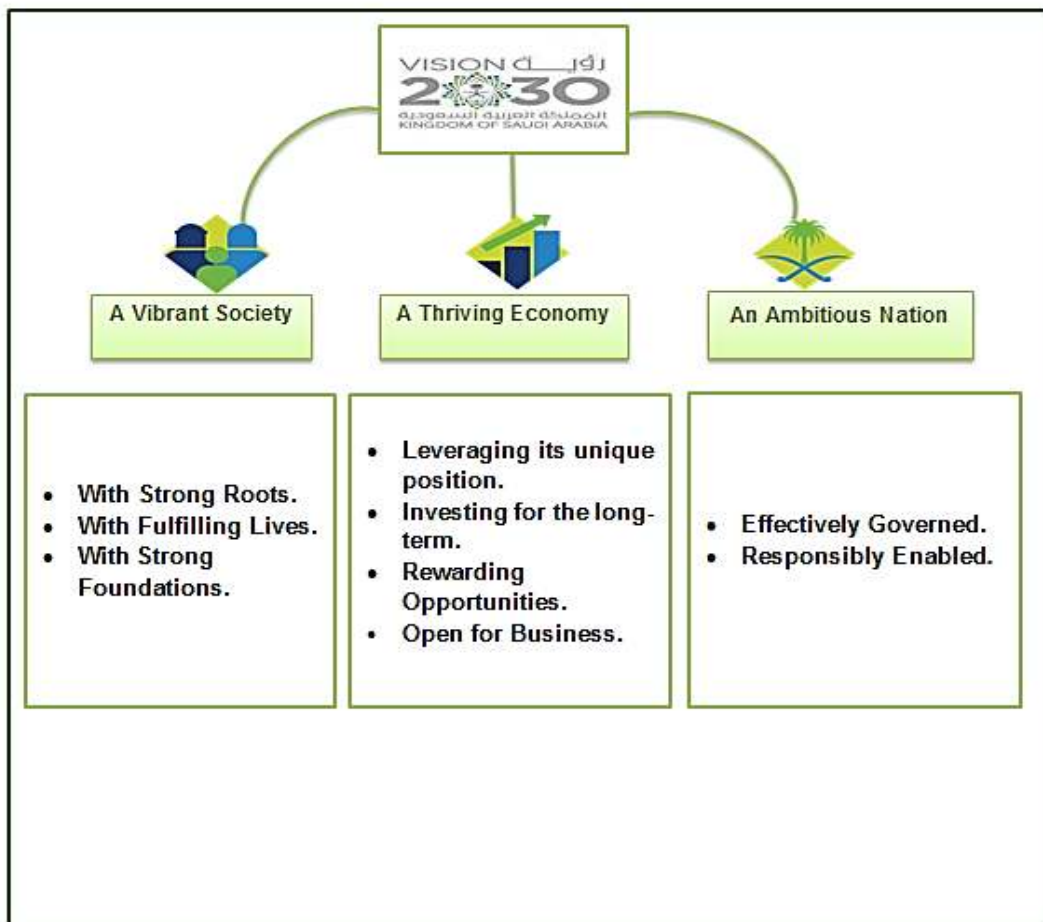
### 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important sources of income for the economies of many countries and it represents one of the main components of service exports, with a high impact on the balance of payments. It also helps to increase GDP and foreign exchange earnings (Amoucha, 2012). In the Middle East, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the most important countries with regard to religious tourism because it is the location of the two especially holy places for Muslims: Mecca Al-mukaramah and Medina al-Munawwarah. Some have suggested that religious tourism is an economic alternative to oil; in fact, Saudi Arabia's annual revenue from Hajj and Umrah in 2012 was more than 62 billion riyals (USD 16.5 billion), with more than 12 million pilgrims visiting these holy sites, according to a study conducted by Umm Al Qura University (CNN, 2014). According to the annual publication of the Department of Statistics and Information, the number of arrivals for the Hajj pilgrimage from both inside and outside Saudi Arabia rose to 2,085,238 in 2014 AH (General Administration of Statistics, 2014) and there is an expectation that this number will increase further after the completion of the expansion project at the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

The use of social media by religious tourism companies has contributed to the development of the religious tourism sector. Social media has revolutionized communication in the tourism industry. A recent study revealed that 84% of leisure travellers used the internet as a planning resource to find information about flights, costs, and destinations (Nezakati *et al.*, 2015). The rapid development of

information technology and Web 2.0 applications has had a profound impact on the tourism industry (Nezakati *et al.*, 2015). Web 2.0 allows the tourism industry to change how it traditionally conducts internal and external business operations, as travellers are now more proactive information providers who share their travel experiences (e.g., travellers as co-creators and co-distributors) (Chung and Koo, 2015).

During the current year 2016 the Council of Ministers approved the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2030, which was based on three points: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, an ambitious Nation. Vision 2030 included the development of all sectors, whether governmental or private, which will be reflected on the nation's development. The following figure 1.1 shows a vision of Saudi Kingdom in 2030.



**Figure 1.1 Saudi Vision 2030 . (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016)**

## 1.1 Study Background

The tourism industry has experienced continuous and rapid growth over the last six decades, making it one of the leading industries in the world (Alizadeh and Mat Isa, 2015). Many studies have focused on the impact of social media on tourism in general, but few studies have focused on the impact of social media on religious tourism. Most studies, such as Banger's (2013), discuss a development plan for religious tourism with the aim of finding sources of income to reduce the unemployment rate and to provide time searching for information for pilgrims using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Some studies have focused on certain aspects of tourism in Saudi Arabia and the public's awareness of the tourist sites (Mufeed and Gulzar, 2014).

Regarding the increase in the numbers of pilgrims each year, Table 1.1 illustrates this increase over the last six years. Saudi Arabia's projects to expand the holy places parallel this increase in the numbers of tourists. However, there are important guidelines for Haj and Umrah, including information on the most important steps that must be taken by pilgrims before and after the Haj or Umrah. There is also the difficulty of controlling large numbers of pilgrims by Mutawwifs. Religious need to share experiences with others to cope with any lack of information given by Mutawwifs, which increases the importance of social media in the field of religious tourism. For these reasons, there is an increased need to use social media as a communication tool.

**Table 1.1 The Number of Pilgrims Over the Past Six Years.  
(General Administration of Statistics, 2015)**

Year	The Number of Pilgrims
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2010	2,789,399
2011	2,927,717
2012	3,161,573
2013	1,980,249
2014	2,085,238
2015	1,952,817

Note that the lower number of pilgrims in 2013 and 2014 coincided with the start of the expansion of the Haram al-Sharif ordered by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, may God have mercy on him. Over the decades, travel and tourism has proven to be a resilient economic sector, despite its vulnerability to exogenous variables such as war, terrorism, social and political unrest, natural disasters, disease (e.g., SARS and swine flu), and financial crises (Scott, 2013). Tourist Information and Study Center (2015a) has reported that the contribution of tourism to Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2015 was 2.7% and expects that by 2020 it will be 2.9%. Despite the economic, environmental, and health conditions in the world, the tourism sector still contributes significantly.

## 1.2 Definition of the Study Problem

Studies indicate that the number of internet users in the world in 2011 exceeded two billion, or about one-third of the world's population; in other words, one out of every three people in the world uses the internet. In 2015, the number reached three billion users around the world, as seen in Table 1.2 (Internet World Stats, 2015).

**Table 1.2 World Internet Usage and Population Statistics. (Internet World Stats, 2015).**

WORLD INTERNET USAGE AND POPULATION STATISTICS NOVEMBER 30, 2015 - Update						
World Regions	Population (2015 Est.)	Population % of World	Internet Users 30 Nov 2015	Penetration (% Population)	Growth 2000-2015	Users % of Table
<a href="#">Africa</a>	1,158,355,563	16.0 %	330,965,359	28.6 %	7,231.3%	9.8 %
<a href="#">Asia</a>	4,032,466,882	56.5 %	1,622,084,293	40.2 %	1,319.1%	48.2 %
<a href="#">Europe</a>	821,556,904	11.3 %	604,147,280	73.5 %	474.9%	18.0 %
<a href="#">Middle East</a>	236,137,236	3.3 %	123,172,132	52.2 %	3,049.0%	3.7 %
<a href="#">North America</a>	357,178,284	4.9 %	313,867,363	87.9 %	190.4%	9.3 %
<a href="#">Latin America / Caribbean</a>	617,049,712	8.5 %	344,824,199	55.9 %	1,808.4%	10.2 %
<a href="#">Oceania / Australia</a>	37,158,563	0.5 %	27,200,530	73.2 %	256.9%	0.8 %
<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>7,259,902,243</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>3,366,261,156</b>	<b>46.4 %</b>	<b>832.5%</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

NOTES: (1) Internet Usage and World Population Statistics updated as of November 30, 2015. (2) CLICK on each world region name for detailed regional usage information. (3) Demographic (Population) numbers are based on data from the [US Census Bureau](#), [Eurostats](#) and from local census agencies. (4) Internet usage information comes from data published by [Nielsen Online](#), by the [International Telecommunications Union](#), by [GfK](#), by local ICT Regulators and other reliable sources. (5) For definitions, disclaimers, navigation help and methodology, please refer to the [Site Surfing Guide](#). (6) Information in this site may be cited, giving the due credit and placing a link to [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com). Copyright © 2001 - 2016, Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved worldwide.

The problem that will be discussed in this study is the viability of using social media in religious tourism, such as for the Haj or Umrah or for places associated with religious events, including Jabal Auhad in Al-Medinah, Gar Hira in Jabal Al Noor, and Gar Althor in Mecca and other Islamic sites.

According to the literature, there is limited study on the use of social media in religious tourism. Despite efforts to develop religious tourism systems, and the dramatic increase in the use of social media around the world, the use of social media has largely gone unnoticed by those in charge of religious tourism. As a result, there is a need to understand and gain acceptance of the use of social media in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia, and there is a need to identify the factors that can influence the use of social media in religious tourism. This is important because the results will help both companies and the government to communicate with the pilgrims and to formulate strategies to improve present and future operations.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives have been determined for this study:



- 1) To determine the acceptance of social media in religious tourism.
- 2) To discover what factors influence the acceptance of social media in religious tourism.

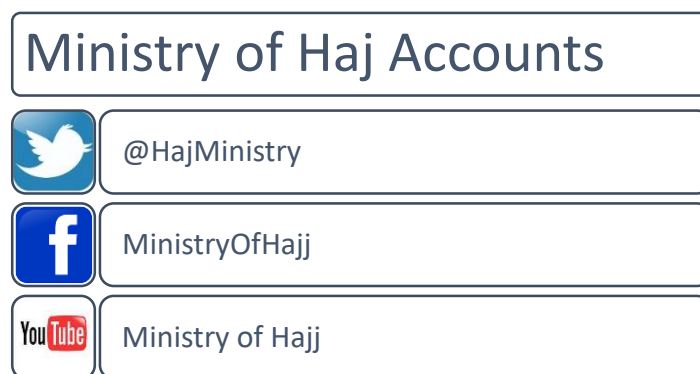
#### **1.4 Religious Tourism in Saudi Arabia**

Recently, tourism in Saudi Arabia has taken most attention in the country as religious tourists from other Islamic countries travel to Saudi Arabia to visit the Two Holy Mosques and the cradle of Islamic civilization. This makes it a religious tourist attraction that satisfies the spiritual needs and the faith of millions of Muslims from across the world come to perform Haj and Umrah, go to the Grand Mosque in Mecca and visit the grave of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina (Mansour and Sarhan, 2013). The General Authority for Tourism and Antiquities is the government department responsible for the development and rehabilitation of tourist and heritage sites and provides services to ensure the satisfaction of tourists.

The Ministry of Haj facilitates the Haj and Umrah every season, and there are massive government projects in Mecca, Mina and Muzdalifah to keep pace with technical and technological developments, making Saudi Arabia one of the pioneers in the management of the largest religious event in the world. Consequently, the country's expertise in crowd management has been studied by a number of governments and international agencies and expansion plans are in the works , Stunned the Kingdom's experience in human crowds carried out during the Hajj season, the United States , Sweden and universities, which are beginning to move to the teaching experience of the Kingdom in management for more than three to four million pilgrims at one time from of different cultures and languages and in a limited geographical area are moving at a specified time ; it needs to double the effort and frequently experience profound training efforts (Alriyadh, 2015). The Ministry of Haj's vision is as follows:

"That the ritual of Haj and Umrah and to visit the Masjid Al-Nabwi is to be codified with much ease and convenience in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity so that the pleasant and contented memories will be deeply remembered by the pilgrims, Umrah performers and visitors acting as an ambassador to the world by giving a positive image of the services offered by the Kingdom to serve the guests of Allah" (Ministry of Haj, 2015).

To keep up with new trends, companies and governments need a presence on social media. To facilitate communication with pilgrims and the companies sponsoring the pilgrimage services, the studyer has found that the Ministry of Haj and other sectors concerned with pilgrims have accounts on social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, as seen in Figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.2 Ministry of Haj's Accounts on Social Media.**

### 1.5 The use of Social Media in Tourism

Through a review of studies on tourism and the use of social media, the importance and benefits of social media in the field of tourism in general, and its benefits for both parties (whether the user or the service provider) through social media, is clear.

Richardson and Morton's (2015) paper on how much social media influences the perceptions of clients in tourism was based on Van Dyne and Pierce's (2004) theory of psychological ownership in combination with the work of Xiang *et al.* (2008), along with the work of Tuominen (2011), which



gathered online reviews of hotel performance. In their study, a stratified sample survey of 154 individuals highlighted how age, gender and education can affect the use (or lack thereof) of digital media. It showed a slight disparity between genders with increasing levels of interaction found amongst women who were significantly more likely to post reviews on the internet. Moreover, the results showed that 81% had used the internet in some form to gather prior information before travel. The results showed that relationships exist between consumer age and the importance they place on utilizing online resources and smart phone travel technology.

Treer (2010) study discussed the use of social media among Danish travellers to Hungary in order to give marketers a chance to exploit the features of social communication in their promotional activities. The results of the study agreed with previous studies (Gretzel *et al.* 2008; Litvin *et al.* 2008; Cox *et al.* 2009), which found that social media is an important source of information for travel planning and that social media has some useful attributes, such as credibility and informatively. The study results suggested that the act and the extent of the use of social media during the travel planning period depends on the purpose of the trip alone and not on any demographic variables, such as age. Moreover, the use of social media mainly in the pre-trip information search and “narrow down the choices stage” may serve as a source of inspiration as well.

Another study contributed to our understanding of the use of social media in marketing a destination. While there are a growing number of studies on social media in the context of tourism, only some of these have dealt with the application of social media by tourism service providers. Alizadeh and Mat Isa's (2015) study aimed to establish a detailed understanding of the current use of social media by the national tourism organizations (NTOs) of 193 countries. The results of their study indicated that many NTOs are still not aware of the potential and opportunities offered by social media, and that there is great room for improvement in the strategic use of social media. There are a large number of studies that cannot be mentioned in this study in order to preserve the structure of the study and its objective.

## 2. Factors Influence the use of Social Media in Religious Tourism

Kang and Schuett's (2013) study, which was based on Kelman's social influence theory (1958, 1961) and the perceived enjoyment concept ( Davis *et al.* 1992) explored why people shared their travel experiences on social media sites, finding that this was based on four components, which have been formalized as the technology acceptance model (TAM): internalization, compliance, identification, and perceived enjoyment. The results showed that identification and internalization are critical determinants for increasing travel experience sharing on social media, as mediated by perceived enjoyment.

Chai *et al.* (2011) found that trust and social ties are key factors that influence knowledge-sharing behaviour. Paris *et al.* (2010) examined the influence of trust, expected relationships and perceived enjoyment in shaping consumer attitudes towards Facebook and consumer intentions to attend events. The results of the study indicated that user trust and the expected relationship through Facebook has a significant impact on the user's acceptance of Facebook and intended offline behaviour to attend a Facebook event.

Mulero (2012) added two new constructs, 'perceived credibility' and 'awareness,' as factors that influence the user's acceptance of social-network marketing. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of social network marketing systems by Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in South Africa and the perception of consumers. The results showed that the intention of the user to use Social Network Marketing (SNM) are strongly associated with positive user acceptance and that there was a positive relationship between awareness and behavioural intention.

According to Lin and Lu (2011) enjoyment is the most important factor that affects the behaviour of SNS (social networking site) users. By allowing users to publish photos, movies, blogs and share links to their profiles, SNS service providers can ensure that users and their friends are interested and having

fun. The number of peers and perceived complementarity effectively reinforces SNS usefulness and enjoyment, providing SNS service providers with important information, which in the context of a pleasure-oriented information system makes social effects an important construct, as a user's friends and relatives affect the level of enjoyment of the user. Moreover, the user has the opportunity to meet new friends, so people can expand their social networks. Lin and Lu (2011) also found that influences on the continued use of information technology varied according to gender (number of peers has the greatest influence on usefulness and enjoyment for women, and the number of peers and perceived complementarity are most influential for men), although enjoyment was the strongest factor affecting the continued use of SNS for both men and women.

Brdese *et al.* (2015) identified the motivations and barriers that affected the use of information systems (IS) by religious tourism companies in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, they added to the understanding of technology adoption in Arab countries by drawing upon generic theories of technology change and using their insights to study the issue of IS utilisation in the specific cultural locale of Saudi Arabia. They examined the specific cultural language of Saudi Arabia, and discovered that government initiative is one of the main issues that affects IS use in the industry. One government initiative to establish a mandatory e-business portal, Makh'a and Yesser, used the existing Haj/Umrah operators. Brdese *et al.* (2015) study was based on personal interviews, but since it was a very small sample (ten companies only) taken from the city of Jeddah, the results cannot be generalized to all companies, such as those in Mecca. The results indicate that while the government initiatives promote the use of the industry, there are some major barriers to the private companies taking full advantage of the benefits of information systems. These include external factors, such as the lack of support from the information technology industry and access to information technology resources, as well as internal factors, such as a lack of commitment or the need for professional technical expertise. The study concludes that the comparative advantage is a critical contributor and a benefit that relies on

information systems' properties. Additional, Brdesee *et al.* suggest applied ( IS ) for to the necessary and essential needs of the Haj and Umrah services.

According to Hagen (2012), there was a very strong relationship between the intention to share and actual sharing and SN, perceived enjoyment, and perceived risk were significantly related to the intention to share. It was also found that trust was significantly related to perceived risk as this was based on an extended ETAM, which is an extension of TAM as constructed by Pavlou (2003).

The literature also revealed that tourists' previous experiences or previous visits in different tourism contexts were likely to influence their satisfaction and future behaviour (Rajaratnam *et al.* 2014).

## 2. 1 Factors Influencing the Acceptance of Social Media in the Tourism Industry

There are numerous studies on social media acceptance in general, and these have tested several factors affecting the degree of user acceptance of social media and information technology. Table 2.1 shows the factors that have been tested in these studies.

**Table 2.1 Factors That Were Studied and Their Impact on the Acceptance of Social Media.**

Factor	Surveyed Studies	Description
Awareness	(Al-Somali, 2009; Mulero, 2012)	1-Quality of internet connection, awareness of online banking and its benefits, security, trust, social influence, culture, computer self-efficacy, and internet use have significant effects on PU and PEOU with regard to online banking acceptance.

		2-Mulero also found that there were significant effects from PU, PEOU, PC, and awareness on the behavioural intention to use SNM.
<b>Social Influence</b>	(Al-Somali, 2009; Scott, 2013)	<p>1-Quality of internet connection, awareness of online banking and its benefits, security, trust, social influence, culture, computer self-efficacy, and internet use have significant effects on PU and PEOU with regard to online banking acceptance.</p> <p>2-Social influence impacted the PU and perceived enjoyment of technological applications. These factors ultimately affected user behaviour.</p> <p>However, social influence tended to be stronger in the younger age groups, and this is consistent with the literature, which indicates that age moderates user behaviour (Morris and Venkatesh, 2000).</p>
<b>Level of Education</b>	(Al-Somali, 2009)	Educational level was determined to be a significant factor in terms of influencing the acceptance of online banking.
<b>Age</b>	(Lu <i>et al.</i> , 2003; SJ <i>et al.</i> , 2001; SJ and Sharit, 1998).	<p>1-Age had strong direct and a moderating effects on major causal relationships toward wireless mobile data services adoption intentions.</p> <p>2-Older adults may perform better if the task demands are reduced and they are able to compensate for limitations in abilities by increased expertise.</p> <p>3- Although there were no age differences in overall attitudes, there were age effects for the dimensions of comfort, efficacy, dehumanization, and control.</p>

**Supplement :Table 2.1 Factors That Were Studied and Their Impact on the Acceptance of Social Media.**

Factor	Surveyed Studies	Description
<b>Enjoyment</b>	(Hagen, 2012; Scott, 2013)	<p>1-An analysis of the data shows that the intention of the division leads to actual sharing in most cases. Perceived enjoyment, subjective norms, and expected risk were strongly associated with the intention to participate.</p> <p>2- Tourist traits influence each of the core constructs—mobile value elements, social influences, PEOU, PU, and perceived enjoyment—which ultimately influence in-trip user behaviour.</p>
<b>Trust</b>	(Enter and Michopoulou, 2013; Mulero, 2012; Rauniar <i>et al.</i> 2014)	<p>1-The results indicated that information search, sharing travel experiences, and trust were the main determinants of the intention to use Facebook.</p> <p>2-The results show that a user’s intention to use SNM was strongly and positively correlated with user acceptance. The empirical results confirmed that PC and PU were the strongest determinants in predicting a user’s intention to use SNM.</p> <p>3-The findings suggest that utilitarian orientations of PU and the trustworthiness of a social media site are important determinants of a user’s intention to use the social media, which in turn is an indicator of the actual usage behaviour regarding the social media.</p>

## 2.2. External Variables (Independent) and Hypothesis

### 2.2.1. Awareness



Bjørn *et al.* (2003) found that social awareness has an important influence on the acceptance of technology. Awareness as a concept has been categorized in different ways. Prinz (2002) identified two types of awareness: social awareness and task-oriented awareness. Steinfield *et al.* (1999) proposed a number of awareness categories, including activity awareness, availability awareness, process awareness, environmental awareness, and perspective awareness.

However, most relevant to our study is perspective awareness, which is defined as “giving group members information helpful for making sense of others’ actions, such as background on team members belief and knowledge” (Steinfield *et al.*, 1999, p. 84). Awareness of the services provided through social media and its benefits, such as information on the regulations and instructions concerning the Hajj. The study therefore posits the following:

H1: There is a positive relationship between awareness and PEOU.

H2: There is a positive relationship between awareness and PU.

### 2.2.2 Social Influence

Numerous psychological studies have proven that individual behaviour is influenced by the behaviour of others (Rauniar *et al.*, 2014). For example, the psychological concept of social influence (Latané, 1981) is rooted in the assumption that a person’s behaviour is heavily influenced by the behaviour and presence of others. Therefore, the mass of users in social media who are connected to a user could be a critical component in explaining social media usage behaviour (Rauniar *et al.*, 2014).

Social influence has been found to be important in technology acceptance. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) developed and tested a modified version of the original TAM which explains PU and usage intentions in terms of social influences (subjective norm, voluntariness, and image) and cognitive instrumental processes (job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability, and PEOU).

An important construct that has received little attention in the context of TAM study is social influence, even though it plays an important role in determining how customers or users make decisions about whether to adopt and use new technologies (Gefen and Straub, 1997). Moreover, Venkatesh and Morris (2000) proved that social influence plays an important role in define the acceptance and usage behaviour of adopters of new information technologies . Scott (2013) showed that there are several variables that are influential in the adoption of technology in the field of tourism, including social influence.

The study therefore posits the following:

H3: There is a positive relationship between social influence and PU.

## **2.3 Internal Variables (Dependent) and Hypotheses**

### **2.3.1 Perceived Ease of Use**

Perceived ease of use refers to the ability of consumers to experiment with a new innovation and evaluate its benefits easily (Jahangir and Begum, 2008). A wide range of study over the past decade provides evidence of the significant effect of PEOU on usage intention through its effect on PU (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000; Venkatesh *et al.* 2003). According to TAM, there is a small direct effect between PEOU and attitude (Davis, 1989). The study therefore posits the following:

H4: There is a positive relationship between PEOU and PU.

H5: There is a positive relationship between PEOU and the attitude toward using social media in religious tourism.

### **2.3.2 Perceived Usefulness**

Perceived usefulness is the individual's perception that using the new technology will enhance or improve her/his performance (Davis, 1993; Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). There is also extensive study in the field of information systems that provides evidence of the significant effect of PU on the attitude toward usage (Al-Somali, 2009). The TAM (Davis *et al.*, 1989; Davis, 1989) model suggests that customer adaptation behaviour is determined by the intention to use a particular system, which in turn is determined by the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the system. The studyer thus tests the following hypotheses:

H6: There is a positive relationship between PU and the attitude toward using social media in in religious tourism.

H7: There is a positive relationship between PU and the intention to use social media in religious tourism.

### **2.3.3 Attitude Toward Using Social Media in Religious Tourism**

According to Davis (1989, p. 476), an attitude toward using social media is defined as "the degree of evaluative affect that an individual associates with using the target system in his or her Job". According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) an attitude toward a behaviour is an affective evaluation of the behaviour. Reviewing the benefits of social media leads to developing an attitude toward using social media, and therefore affects the intention to use social media. This attitude toward using social media occur as a result of a reaction to the action as a whole (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Therefore, the studyer test the following hypothesis:

H8: There is a positive relationship between the attitude toward using, and the intention to use social media.

### **2.3.4 Intention to Use Technology**

Behavioural intention is defined as the extent to which an individual intends to perform a specific behaviour (Davis *et al.*, 1989). TAM assumes that beliefs or attitudes about the PU determine the intention to use the technology, which then leads to actual usage (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

## **2.4 Additional Independent Factors**

### **2.4.1 Age**

The technology acceptance literature proposes that there is a strong relationship between age and the acceptance of new technologies. Older users are found to have negative attitudes toward technology and innovation. On the other hand, younger adults have been found to be more interested in using new technologies, such as the internet, to conduct activities, such as looking for new products and product information to compare, and evaluate their options (Lu *et al.* 2003; SJ *et al.* 2001; SJ and Sharit, 1998).

The studyer test the following hypothesis:

H9: There is a positive relationship between age and attitudes toward using social media in religious tourism.

### **2.4.2 Level of Education**

Education levels also play a significant role with regard to attitudes toward technology use. More highly educated users, such as university graduates, are more comfortable using technology. One reason for this is that education is often positively correlated with an individual's level of internet literacy (Burke, 2002). The studyer test the following hypothesis:

H10: There is a positive relationship between education level and attitudes toward using social media in religious tourism.

### **2.4.3 Enjoyment**

Prior study proposed enjoyment as a determinant of behavioural intention (Davis *et al.* 1992; Venkatesh *et al.* 2002). According to Nysveen *et al.* (2005), an intrinsic motivational factor, such as

perceived enjoyment, has a stronger effect on consumers' intentions to use experiential mobile services than to use goal-directed services. Hagen (2012) found that perceived enjoyment had a significant impact on the behavioural intention to share. The studyer test the following hypothesis :

H11: There is a positive relationship between enjoyment and the intention to use social media in religious tourism.

#### **2.4.4 Trust**

According to the study of Ayeh *et al.* (2012), Casaló *et al.* (2012) and Gretzel *et al.* (2008), tourists trust the information generated by other travellers. However, they also pointed out that the confidence of the whole community contributes to what constitutes relevant knowledge and is more important than confidence in individuals, which may explain why confidence is the second most powerful indicator regarding the intentions of tourists to use Facebook for purposes related to travel (Parra-López *et al.* 2011). Trusting a social media site to keep information confidential and to not abuse it is an aspect of trustworthiness for users. Social media sites can employ various security features to reduce a user's privacy concerns and build trust (Culnan and Armstrong, 1999). If users are to establish trust in a social media site, it will require their prior use of social media. The trustworthiness of the site will influence their future intentions to use the social media site (Rauniar *et al.* 2014).

***The studier test the following hypothesis:***

H12: There is a positive relationship between trust and the intention to use social media in religious tourism.

Hypothesized relations are illustrated in Figure 2.1.

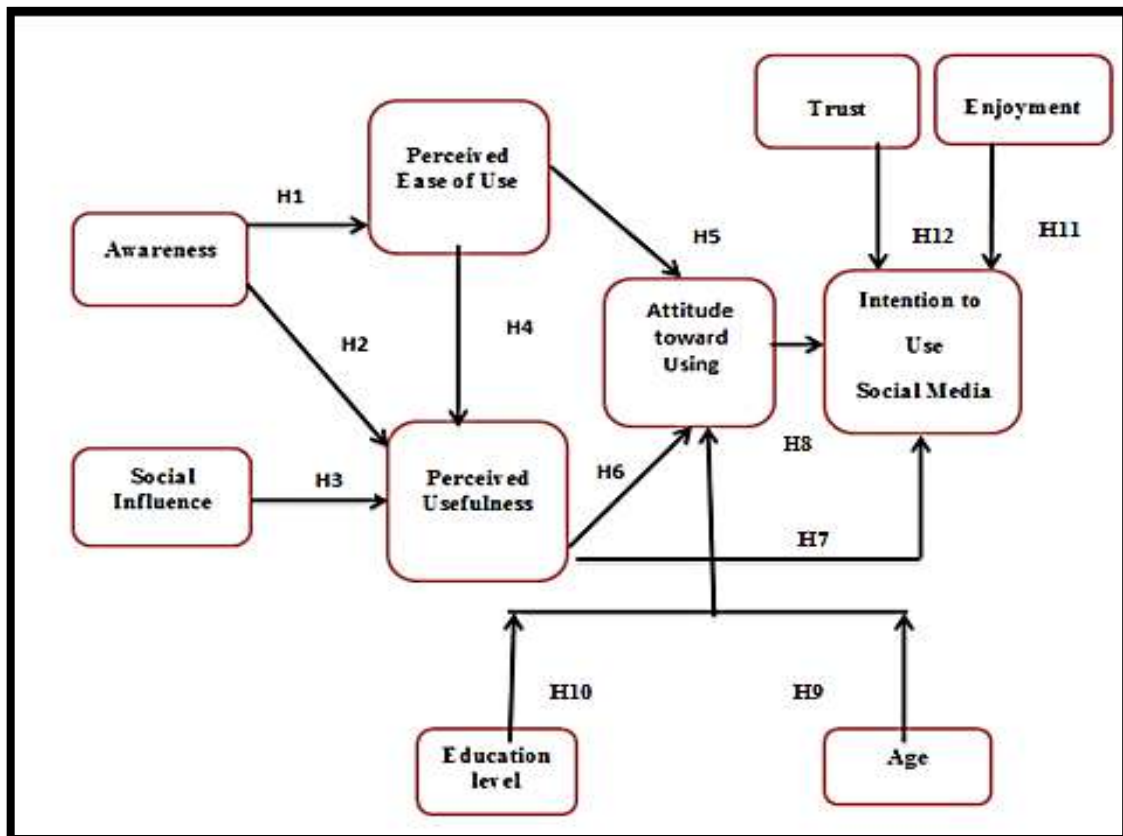


Figure 2.1 Proposed Study Model.

### 3. Study Methodology

This study has adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire in a survey. The survey for this study depends on a test of the proposed study model.

This study provides an in-depth study of the factors affecting the acceptance of social media in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. The quantitative survey, in the form of a questionnaire, fits the goals of the study. Quantitative study is associated with a deductive approach, while qualitative study is associated with an inductive approach (Alghamdi, 2007). Deductive study sets out to test a hypothesis, while inductive study sets out to explore a field. In this regard, deductive study requires a greater degree of structure in the data collection process. If the studyer seeks to test a hypothesis, he or she



will need to measure the relationship between different variables (Bryman, 2004; David and Sutton, 2004).

Riley and Love (2000) recently reviewed the range and scope of qualitative and quantitative approaches used in tourism study by investigating the articles produced by four major tourism journals (*Journal of Travel Study*, *Annals of Tourism Study*, *Tourism Management*, and *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*) from their first issues to the end of 1996. They revealed that the quantitative approach still plays a dominant role in tourism as well as in marketing study. Therefore, a quantitative approach has been chosen in this study as the most suitable approach.

### **3.1 Study Sample and Population**

The population is all the members of a group in which the studyer is interested (Burgess, 2001). David and Sutton (2004, p.226) defined the population as “every possible case that could be included in your study”. The study was done within the Saudi community, including Saudis and non-Saudis, who were aged 18–65. The studyer targeted anyone who was going to the holy places, or who intended to go to the holy places, and had a social medial account.

According to Bryman (2004) decisions about sample sizes depend on a number of considerations, including time, cost, non-response, heterogeneity of the population, and type of analyses to be conducted. He emphasized the factors of time and cost, because these factors are important for every studyer. Bryman also indicated that a large sample cannot guarantee precision. Therefore, if the studyer expects a poor response rate, he or she must provide more questionnaires and increase the intended sample size. Two hundred questionnaires that were distributed were returned completed, however only 153 questionnaire responses were considered valid for further analysis after the exclusion of a small number (47) that were found to be erroneous (for example, more than one answer was provided to a single-answer question).

The sample targeted users of social media by posting an electronic questionnaire on Twitter and Facebook .A survey was also distributed to academic staff and students at King Abdulaziz University in the Faculty of Economics and Management (female section) and distributed at the digital visual media forum (Shoof), which was held at the Hilton Hotel in Jeddah on November 15, 2015. Excluding the erroneous responses, the participation rates of the questionnaire in paper and electronic form are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 The Participation Rate of the Questionnaire**

	Paper Questionnaire	Electronic Questionnaire
	89	64
<b>Total</b>	153	

### 3.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study is not a pre-test, but is used more formatively to assist the studyer in developing relevant lines of questioning (Yin, 2015). A pilot study also provides the studyer with the opportunity to focus on particular areas that may have been unclear previously (Janesick, 1994). It may also enable studyers to perform a trial analysis on a pilot study sample and hence test out all analysis procedures (Burgess, 2001).

For this study, the pilot test's reliability required a level greater than 0.7, however, there is no universal agreement on the appropriate interpretation of Cronbach's alpha or what constitutes an acceptable alpha level (Shevlin *et al.* 2000). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was calculated to assess the items' consistency for the representative sample of 30 respondents that were randomly chosen in order to correct any issues related to language and the response options in the survey. Table 3.2 presents the Cronbach's alpha used to check the validity and reliability of the questionnaires which was conducted prior to completely distributing the questionnaire.

**Table 3.2 Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) Reliability Test for the Pilot Study.**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Number of Cases
Perceived Ease of Use	.971	3	30
Perceived Usefulness	.924	3	
Attitudes Towards Social Media	.939	3	
Intention to Use Social Media	.930	3	
Trust	.898	4	
Enjoyment	.902	4	
Awareness	.945	5	
Social Influence	.858	4	

The results of the pilot study reflected a reliability that was greater than 0.8 for all items, thus indicating that the representative items were reliable. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to calculate Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) in order to test the reliability of the modified instruments applied in this study.

### 3.3 Statistical Analysis

The analysis of quantitative data is known as social statistics. Data analysis involves several stages: coding data, data entry, and data analysis. There are a number of specialized applications and software available to support quantitative data analysis. These include Minitab, SPSS and SAS for Windows.

The studyer used SPSS v.22 for Windows that applied the following statistical methods: Reliability analysis, Frequencies and percentages, Mean score and Factor analysis.

#### **4. The Study Results**

The following section provides a discussion of the results of the study on each construction, as follows:

##### **4.1 Awareness**

The results of this study supported Hypothesis H1, demonstrating a positive relationship between awareness and perceived ease of use of social media in religious tourism in Saudi Arabia. It was found to be significant at 0.000 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.361$ ). This result is consistent with the work of Muller and Al-Somali, and most prior studies (e.g. Bjørn *et al.* 2003; Jensen *et al.* 2004).

Awareness of the services provided through social media and its benefits, such as information on the regulations and instructions concerning the Hajj has appositively affect the perceived ease of use of social media, and social media can be used as a tool to link pilgrims and state officials.

Moreover, Hypothesis H2, proposing a positive relationship between awareness and perceived usefulness, was found to be significant at 0.000 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.579$ ). The greater the awareness of the perceived usefulness, the higher the use of social media in religious tourism. This supports the relationship established by previous studies (e.g., Al-Somali, 2009; Banger, 2013; Bjørn *et al.*, 2003; Eid, 2012; Jahangir and Begum, 2008; Jensen *et al.*, 2004; Richardson *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, this shows that a fair amount of pilgrims are aware of the utility of visiting social media sites before visiting holy places. The study sample reveals that the 51.6% of people use social media sites 1-3 times before visiting holy places.

##### **4.2 Social Influence**

Hypothesis H3 supported the assumption that there is a positive relationship between social influence and the perceived usefulness of social media in Saudi religious tourism. It was found to be significant

at the 0.000 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.318$ ). This result is consistent with Scott and Al-Somali and is supported by previous studies (e.g., Lee *et al.*, 2006; Páez and Scott, 2007; Ráthonyi, 2012). It also confirms that 88.2% of the sample believes that there is a benefit to the use of social media in religious tourism.

#### 4.3 Perceived Ease of Use

Hypothesis H4 expected a positive relationship to be found between the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of social media, and the results showed a level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.657$ ). This result is consistent with Davis *et al.* (1989), Davis (1989), Jahangir and Begum (2008), Lu *et al.* (2003), Paris *et al.* (2010) and Venkatesh and Davis (2000). If pilgrims' understanding and awareness of social media as something that is easy to use thus affects their behavioural intentions for its use in religious tourism, their behavioural intentions will increase.

Moreover, Hypothesis H5 suggests the existence of a positive relationship between ease of use and attitudes toward using social media; it has been found to be significant at the 0.000 level ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.552$ ). This conclusion is also supported by the literature, such as Davis *et al.* (1989) and Davis (1989), therefore if social media is considered easy to use then the intention to use it will be affected.

#### 4.4 Perceived Usefulness

Hypothesis H6, concerning perceived usefulness and attitudes toward using social media, was supported at a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.652$ ). Perceived usefulness has a significant positive effect on attitudes toward using social media for religious tourism. This is consistent with the results of previous studies, such as Al-Somali (2009), Davis *et al.* (1989), Davis (1989, 1993) and Jahangir and Begum (2008). The results also supported Hypothesis H7, in that there is a relationship between perceived usefulness and behavioural intention at a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0$ ).

527). This result is similar to the findings of prior studies (such as Davis ,1993 and Venkatesh and Morris , 2000 ) which demonstrated that increased usefulness leads to greater intention to use.

#### **4.5 Attitude Toward Use**

The results support Hypothesis H8, in that there is a positive relationship between attitude toward of using social media and the behavioural intention to use it at a significance level of ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.643$ ). This is consistent with previous studies that have confirmed the strength of this relationship (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Davis, 1989; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, the tendency of pilgrims to use social media leads to its actual use through their behavioural intention for its use in religious tourism.

#### **4.6 Age and Education Level**

This study investigated the impact of age and education level on the acceptance of social media. It was found that a pilgrim's age has a significant effect on their attitude towards accepting social media use in religious tourism . Wherefore, hypothesis H9 was supported in this study a significance level of ( $p < 0.05$ ) ( $\beta = 0.206$ ). These findings disagree with some of the previous studies, such as Al-Somali (2009) and Baghabra (2013), while other studies have proposed that the younger the user, the greater their interest in, acceptance and use of technology (like social media), and vice versa than older user (Lu *et al.*, 2003; SJ *et al.*, 2001; SJ and Sharit, 1998).

Hypothesis H10 was not supported by this study and was not found to be significant at either 1% ( $p < 0.01$ ) or 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis H10 was rejected because it found an insignificant relationship between education level and attitudes toward social media, which contradicts the findings of Al-Somali (2009) and Burke (2002) in their studies. This may be explained by the sample in this



study being skewed, since the results indicate that 47.1% of the participants held Bachelor's degrees and 27.5% held Master's degrees, respectively.

#### **4.7 Enjoyment**

Hypothesis H11, which pertained to the enjoyment effect on behavioural intention to use social media, was supported at a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, this study revealed a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.442$ ) between enjoyment and the intention to use. This supports prior studies that have shown that enjoyment is a specific factor of behavioural intention (Davis *et al.*, 1992; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2002), Moreover, Nysveen *et al.* (2005) proved that enjoyment is a core motivational factor.

#### **4.8 Trust**

The results also support Hypothesis H12, that trust with a positive relationship with the behavioural intention to use social media in religious tourism. This was supported by a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ) ( $\beta = 0.462$ ). The results proved that the trust of the pilgrims in the information generated by social media and the ability to take decisions based on it, as well as the confidentiality of their accounts when using social media, were essential. These results are consistent with the Mulero (2012) study and other previous studies (Chai *et al.*, 2011; Paris *et al.*, 2010)

### **5. Discussion**

The survey results confirmed all the traditional relations in the form of TAM, in addition to the importance of trust and enjoyment in social media and awareness of the benefits of using social media in the religious tourism and social influence of the adoption of the use of social media in Saudi Arabia.

Matching of the hypothesis result H1 and H2 with previous studies gives us evidence of the importance of awareness about the use of social media in religious tourism. Many of the problems

faced by the pilgrims or religious tourists have a lack of awareness of its causes. Awareness about the perceived ease of use of social media in religious tourism affects the adoption of technology in religious tourism, including social media . According to the survey results 88% responded that there are benefits from the use of social media in religious tourism. Where we can have the awareness of tourists religions using social media to fill the lack of information gap and knowledge-driven religious tourists, and thus the social media played a major role in the dissemination of information and access to all the pilgrims, such as identification of (emergency plans, places of public services, hospitals, commercial centers, facilities Other healthy).

Social influence, no doubt that played a major role in the acceptance of the use of social media in religious tourism, has been supporting the hypothesis No. 3, which underscores the role of the social influence on the perceived usefulness of using social media . It is noted the increasing use of social media when performing Hajj or Umrah, especially when you are done and send photos to friends and relatives. Some social media continue to have helped in the transfer of those experiences by tourists as well as some of the sites has helped in promoting both services or to raise awareness of the most famous YouTube. Corporate use of social media in the knowledge that it has a great role in the promotion or awareness. Spirituality affect the experiment carried out by religious tourists and published through social networking does not stimulate the use of social networking by other tourists. Hypothesis Nos. 11 and 12 (the trust and enjoyment) is to confirm its impact on the intention to use social media . Trust and enjoyment depends very much on the content provided through the social media . Here is a must for officials on religious tourism to operate on its own content development so as to ensure enjoyment for the tourists when they are used and prepare a plan to ensure preservation of content validity to feel tourist trust in the information published in the use of social media .

Acceptance of the hypothesis No. 9, it was Compatible to some studies, and opposite to the other. The existence of more than half of the respondents between the ages of 18-35 may have a role in supporting this hypothesis. In recent years older people was going along with the world of technology and the

pattern view disappeared which talks about not accepting social media or technology in general. It is noticeable that the benefits of social media is not just interested in chatting or add images and even became more than that became provide a photo place with complete guide about the travel destination by the content provided by other users, so that social media users from various age groups. Rejected the hypothesis No. 10 not be compatible with the results of previous studies, and this maybe because the small sample size or the most educated people warned of the use of social media in the belief that it takes a lot of time or a lack of trust in what is published there.

The literature reveals that there are factors that help the government adopted the use of social media and there are factors that will help tourists to use it too. More specifically, the relevant determinants of the tourist include: social influence, awareness and trust, enjoyment ,age and level of education. It is important for the Ministry of Hajj and the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage to pay attention to these factors to gain more acceptance by the religious tourists in Saudi Arabia. From the other side the interested institutions in religious tourism must admit with the importance of social media in line with the vision of the Kingdom in 2030 in the development of tourist and historical facilities and infrastructure for information technology in the Kingdom. Moreover, understand they effect of perceived ease of use , and perceived usefulness, can help the responsible in religious tourism in the provision of services across social media where it is easy and useful and trustworthy.

## **6. Contribution and Implications of the Study**

The results of this study provide important guidelines for better and deeper understanding to accredit the social media in the religious tourism in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition, they identify the factors influencing the acceptance of social media, shedding light on their importance.

Moreover, the study results provide significant information to the decision-makers in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, represented by the Ministry of Haj and other stakeholders, for helping them to focus on

the needs of pilgrims, providing them with all the information needed before Hajj, during it (emergency cases) or after ending the rituals and their departure to their countries.

Furthermore, the current study contributes to the existing studies by investigating the factors that influence the acceptance of social media in the religious tourism. In addition, this study is one of the first studies which gathered the model of technology acceptance and religious tourism in particular.

## 7. Conclusion

This study is committed to study the factors which affect the acceptance of pilgrims to use social media in the religious tourism in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study mentioned accreditation of the acceptance of using social media in the religious tourism. Therefore, the suggested experimental model has been examined by the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), using the Partial Least Square (PLS). The results has indicated great support for the suggested model as, in eleven out of twelve hypothesis, the supposed relationships have been greatly supported.

The results has been reached that there is a strong and effective relationship between the study model and the factors influencing the acceptance of social media.

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