

Impact of social media marketing on Umrah travel planning: The case study of Algerian Umrah performers

Boubakeur YESSAD¹ / Research Laboratory in Innovation, Economic and Financial Analysis (LARIEF), Department of Finance Sciences, Faculty of Economics, Commerce & Management, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University, Annaba, Algeria,
boubakeur.yessad@univ-annaba.dz

Mohamed Yazid KAHOU / Research Laboratory in Innovation, Economic and Financial Analysis (LARIEF), Department of Finance Sciences, Faculty of Economics, Commerce & Management, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University, Annaba, Algeria,
med-yazid.kahoul@univ-annaba.dz

Received: 10/10/2025

Accepted: 15/12/2025

Published: 29-12-2025

Abstract:

The present study sheds light on the impact of Social Media Marketing on Umrah Travel Planning. It investigates the factors that influence the intention of Algerian Umrah performers to use social media for planning their Umrah travel. The study used a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The sample size was 300 Algerians who have already performed Umrah. Data were collected electronically between March and April, 2025 -spanning Ramadan to Shawwal 1446H-. SmartPLS (v4.1.1.4) was used to analyze data. The SEM-PLS method and Bootstrapping statistical technique were used respectively to create the model and test hypotheses. Findings indicate that, during the pre-trip planning phase, both marketer-generated content (MGC) -travel and tourism agencies- and user-generated content (UGC) moderately impact Algerian Umrah performers' intention to use social media for Umrah travel planning. However, the MGC effect is slightly stronger compared to that of UGC.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Umrah Travel Planning; Algerian Umrah Performers; Marketer-Generated Content (MGC); User-Generated Content (UGC).

Jel Classification Codes : L83; M31; M37; Z32; Z33.

Résumé:

Le présent article a pour objectif d'étudier l'impact du marketing des réseaux sociaux sur la planification des voyages de l'Omra. Il examine précisément les facteurs qui influent l'intention des pèlerins algériens à utiliser les réseaux sociaux pour planifier leur voyage. L'étude a ciblé, à l'aide d'un questionnaire, un échantillon de 300 Algériens qui ont déjà accompli l'Omra. Les données ont été collectées électroniquement entre mars et avril 2025 -correspond du mois de Ramadan au Shawwal 1446H-. L'analyse des données a été réalisée à l'aide du logiciel SmartPLS (v4.1.1.4). La méthode statistique SEM-PLS et la technique du Bootstrapping ont été utilisées respectivement pour élaborer le modèle et tester les hypothèses de recherche. L'étude a démontré que pendant la phase de pré-voyage, le contenu généré par les marqueteurs (CGM) -Agences de voyage et de tourisme- a eu un impact modéré sur l'intention des pèlerins algériens à utiliser les réseaux sociaux pour la planification de voyages de l'Omra. Ainsi, le contenu généré par les utilisateurs (CGU) a également eu un effet modéré, mais légèrement faible que celui du CGM.

Mots clés: marketing des réseaux sociaux ; planification du voyage de l'Omra ; pèlerin algériens de l'Omra ; contenu généré par les marqueteurs (CGM) ; contenu généré par les utilisateurs (CGU).

Jel Classification Codes : L83; M31; M37; Z32; Z33.

¹. Corresponding author: Boubakeur YESSAD, e-mail address: boubakeur.yessad@univ-annaba.dz

I. Introduction

In the digital age, the internet has become an interactive medium where users actively create, share, and collaborate on content (Parra-López et al., 2011). It encompasses different tools and platforms that facilitate communication between corporations and customers. One of these important platforms is Social media that is considered as a vital tool both in daily and professional life. It is used in different marketing activities to present, promote, and distribute products and services (Akehurst, 2009). Thus, organizations seek to develop effective social media marketing strategies to attract more customers and fulfill their wants and needs (Effing & Spil, 2016).

As a vital sector, Tourism has been profoundly impacted by social media. On the one hand, tourists can research destinations, compare services, and view multimedia content. On the other hand, tourist organizations leverage it for promotion and engagement (Xiang et al., 2017; Gretzel et al., 2015). To do so, tourism organizations, especially tourism agencies, need to comprehend the tourists' travel planning process. Social media has revolutionized trip planning and destination selection. It plays a crucial role in tourists' information search and decision-making (Yoo et al., 2011).

Additionally, Islamic tourism (Hajj and Umrah*) has also influenced by the emergence of social media. Umrah is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, the holiest city in Islam, located in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia. It is not an obligatory ritual for Muslims as Hajj, which obliges Muslims to accomplish certain conditions (maturity, physical abilities, financial abilities, etc.) (A. K. Muslim & Harun, 2023). Muslims, men or women, who perform Umrah are called Umrah performers or Umrah pilgrims**. Many of them seek to perform it in a limited organized season from the first Hijri month (Muharam) to the tenth Hijri month (Shawal) (Dar al-Iftaa al-Misriyyah, 2014).

The ritual of Umrah consists of four essential components: Ihram (entering the sacramental state of purity with prescribed intention and garments), Tawaf

* The term "Umrah / 'Umrah" represents the transliteration of the Arabic word "عمرة", sometimes rendered as "lesser Hajj" (Britannica Editors, 2025). This study consistently employs the standardized spelling "Umrah" throughout the text.

** Umrah performer is the translation of the Arabic term (مُعْتَمِر) that can be translated into English through different translation methods: Transliteration "Mu'tamir" (Glossary - Hajj, n.d.). Literal Equivalence "Umrah pilgrim" (Sa'dom et al., 2023; Yezli et al., 2017). Functional Equivalence "Umrah performer" (GASTAT, 2025; Osra & Yasein, 2024; A. K. Muslim & Harun, 2023; Elgammal et al., 2023; Gazzaz & Mohamed, 2021). Generalized Tourist Terms: "Umrah traveler" / "Umrah visitor". However, the most used terms in academic research are "Umrah pilgrim" and "Umrah performer". "Umrah pilgrim" is used in religious, health and behavioral context mainly by Muslim researchers from south east of Asia like: Malaysia, Pakistan, India...etc. "Umrah performer" is used in Saudi official guidelines and statistics and in tourism and travel marketing studies by researchers from Gulf countries and Egypt in general. Therefore, the present study adopts "Umrah performer" for its marketing, religious, tourism and travel context.

(circumambulating the Kaaba seven times counterclockwise), Sa'i (walking between the hills of Safa and Marwah), and Taqsir or Halq (trimming or shaving the hair). Umrah typically requires several hours to complete and is undertaken as an act of spiritual purification, devotion, and connection to the Divine (Dar al-Iftaa al-Misriyyah, 2014).

As Umrah requires careful preparation before travelling to Mecca, Muslims seek to collect more information and evaluate the alternatives in the tourism market. Thus, social media has become a key influencer in shaping travelers' decisions, enhancing accessibility, and fostering trust within the Muslim community (Wijaya et al., 2025).

In Algeria, tourism agencies employ diverse approaches to market and promote Umrah services. They rely on traditional marketing tools like: word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, brochures, posters, and deployment of Islamic tourist guides. However, the widespread adoption of social media and its extensive use by tourists has driven agencies to create, share, and promote Umrah content through professional social media pages (Benia & Beldjilali, 2023). In order to shape effective marketing strategies on social media, travel agencies should investigate how the Algerian Umrah performers behave when planning for Umrah travelling.

Research Question:

Based on the aforementioned about social media marketing and Umrah travel planning, the problematic of the study could be as follow:

To what extent does social media marketing impact travel planning of Umrah for Algerians?

Sub Questions:

This principal question could raise the following sub-questions:

- Does marketer-generated content (MGC) impact travel planning of Umrah for Algerians?
- Does user-generated content (UGC) impact travel planning of Umrah for Algerians?
- Which has a stronger impact on travel planning of Umrah for Algerians: marketer-generated content (MGC) or user-generated content (UGC)?

The present study sheds light on the impact of Social Media Marketing on Umrah Travel Planning. It investigates the factors that influence the intention of Algerian Umrah performers to use social media for planning their Umrah travel. To reach the research claim, it utilized an electronic questionnaire to collect data between March and April, 2025, -spanning Ramadan to Shawwal 1446H-. The sample consists of 300 Algerians who have already performed Umrah. Moreover, the study is only restricted to the first stage of travel planning that is the pre-trip

stage. The two other stages, during trip and after trip, are excluded.

The research paper will elaborate the literature background about the subject. It will clarify the methods used in gathering, selecting and analyzing data. Finally, it will discuss results and provide limitations of the study and suggestions for further researches.

II. Literature Background

The present part investigates the different researches that deal with the concept of social media marketing (SMM) in tourism sector. It also shapes the impact of SMM on travel planning process. Finally, it stresses on the contribution of SMM in promoting and marketing Umrah travel services.

II.1 Social Media Marketing and Tourism

Social Media Marketing (SMM) encompasses the activities of all actors in tourism sector: destination organizations, tourism suppliers, travel agencies, and travelers who are connected through social media platforms. Therefore, SMM includes two complementary but contrasting concepts: MGC and UGC. While MGC results from the activities of tourism organizations and agencies to present marketing content, UGC refers to content created by users (travelers).

II.1.1 Marketer-Generated Content (MGC)

MGC, also known as firm-generated content (FGC), is any content such as posts, images, videos, and articles created by marketers to promote their products, services, brands, or to engage consumers, through different platforms including social media (Wan & Ren, 2017). MGC is categorized into informational content like product or service details, performance, guarantees, etc., and emotional content such as storytelling brand, advertisements and promotions. The two types play an important role in consumer engagement, purchase intention, and brand loyalty. However, certain studies address that informative content is generally more persuasive for complex or high-involvement purchases, while promotional and persuasive content may work better for low-involvement products or services (Wan & Ren, 2017).

In tourism sector, MGC plays a vital role in managing destination image and branding. Tourism practitioners (Destination management organizations, tour operators, travel agency, etc.) use MGC to craft and communicate official brand messages, promotional campaigns, and strategic storytelling (María Munar, 2011). Moreover, MGC impacts tourists' awareness, perceived quality, and intention to evaluate, choose and visit destinations. It shapes tourists' attitudes by providing detailed, accurate, and persuasive content that can stimulate positive perceptions and travel intentions (Nguyen & Tong, 2023).

II.1.2 User-Generated Content (UGC)

UGC is one of the essential tools in social media marketing. It describes content that is produced and shared on the internet by consumers of a product or service (Ramos & Ramos, 2025; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In tourism sector, Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) state that UGC refers to digital content like photos, videos, comments, etc. about tourist experience, created and disseminated by tourists via social media or review sites. Thus, they cite different forms of UGC (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014):

- Text-based content: e.g. reviews and blog posts shared on platforms.
- Visual content: e.g. photos and videos shared on platforms.
- Ratings and recommendations: e.g. stars, likes and brief comments.
- Live and real-time content: e.g. live streaming, stories etc.

The importance of UGC has significantly shaped tourism and travel practices. A large percentage of travelers read other travelers' reviews in the travel planning process (Rathore, 2020). Studies confirm that UGC is a trustful tool by travelers and tourists (Yuan et al., 2022). Besides, UGC is a great persuasive tool for travel information adoption (Rathore, 2020). Different studies have revealed that UGC strongly impacts tourist behavior, especially during the pre-trip planning stage (Chilembwe & Gondwe, 2020; Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020).

II.1.3 MGC vs UGC

There are substantial differences between MGC and UGC (see table 01).

Table (01): Comparison between MGC and UGC in a tourism context

Key point	Comparison	Source
Source of creation	UGC created by travelers and tourists. MGC created by tourism professionals.	(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)
Credibility and Trust	UGC is more credible and trustful than MGC.	(Yuan et al., 2022)
Influence on decision making	UGC is more influential than MGC, especially in the pre-trip stage. MGC is more influential than UGC in delivering official information.	(Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Rathore, 2020; Tsiakali, 2018)
Cost	UGC is lower-cost than MGC.	(Krishnamurthy & Mukherjee, 2024)
Engagement	UGC have greater engagement than MGC.	(Wijaya et al., 2025)

Source: Combined by the authors

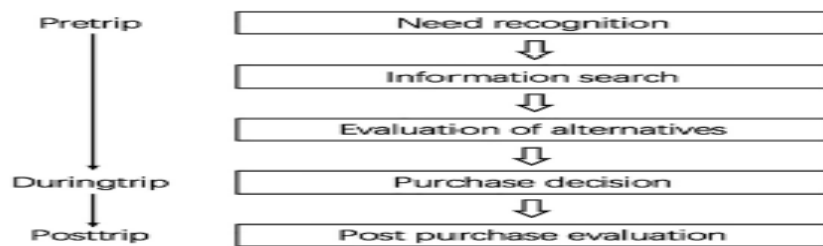
Despite the differences that exist between MGC and UGC, tourism professionals try to combine the two tools in order to gain more advantages. This enhances the appearance of new term influencer-generated content (IGC), which is a fusion between MGC and UGC positive sides. It mixes authentic personal

storytelling with high-quality professional production. Thus, it effectively shapes and influences audience decision making (Gross & von Wangenheim, 2022).

II.2 Social Media Marketing and Travel Planning Process

The travel planning process goes through several stages. Based on the generative consumer behavior model proposed by (Engel et al., 1973), there are three stages as shown in figure (01). This model is widely adopted by scholars to investigate the travel planning process (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Yuan et al., 2022). The first stage is pre-trip. It encompasses three phase; need recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives. Here, travelers create the idea of traveling, stage that includes need recognition phase, information search phase, and evaluation of alternatives phase. The second one is during trip stage where travelers make purchase decision and travel to the destination. The last one is the post-trip stage in which travelers share their experiences.

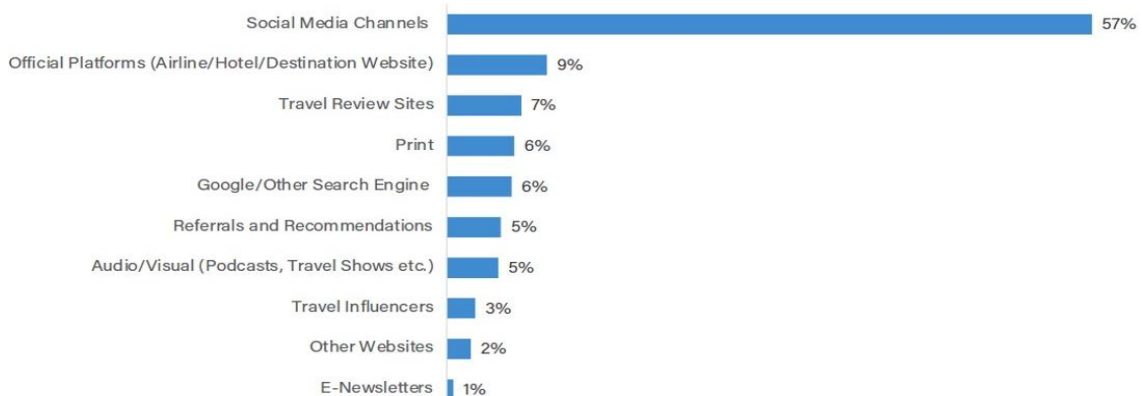
Fig.(01): The three stages of travel planning process



Source: Yuan, et al., 2022, p. 4

The spread of the internet has heavily influenced the ways people perform their travel planning process. Travelers use different platforms to plan trips like: official platforms (airline companies, hotels... etc.), travel review sites, search engine (google, bingo... etc.), social media... etc. However, Social media platforms remain the most influential tool of travel planning among Millenials and Gen Z travelers, surpassing the other sources as shown in figure (02) (Thoppil, 2025).

Fig.(02): Travel planning sources used by Millenials and Gen Z travelers



Source: Thoppil, 2025

II.3 Social Media Marketing and Umrah

Social media marketing is a key driver of Umrah package sales, as travel agencies leverage social media networks like: Instagram and Facebook to post itineraries, pricing, and real-time testimonials (Ahmadi & Sudahri, 2025). Moreover, social media networks are important for pilgrims themselves in planning and enriching their Umrah trips. Studies show a high percentage of pilgrims use social media to gather information about health, safety, cultural programs, and tourist attractions in Makkah, which influences their travel decisions (Zakari et al., 2025).

In Algeria, Umrah has emerged as a lucrative segment of the religious tourism industry. Statistical data indicate that a substantial number of Algerians undertake annual visits to the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Haram) in Makkah, particularly during the month of Ramadan. For instance, the number one hundred twenty-seven thousand three hundred thirty-six (127336) Algerian Umrah performers have traveled to Makka from September 2024 to February 2025 (كيموش، 2025). This important number underscores the economic viability of Umrah services. It renders the sector particularly attractive to investors (Mishra & Singh, 2022).

To ensure standardized and responsible provision of Umrah packages, the Algerian government, through the National Office for Hajj and Umrah, issues annual operating agreements subject to a fixed quota. According to the Register of Umrah Organization Conditions delivered by the National Office for Hajj and Umrah, agencies must meet the following criteria (الديوان الوطني للحج والعمرة، 2020):

- A minimum of three years' experience in the general tourism sector (agency or director/manager).
- At least one year of documented experience in organizing Umrah packages (agency or director/manager).
- No prior legal penalties or final judicial rulings related to their operational activities.
- A signed discharge of liability with the National Office for Hajj and Umrah.

These requirements promote integrity and professional responsibility within the Umrah sector. Agencies are thus encouraged to adopt trust-based marketing strategies, leveraging digital platforms and transparent communication to foster confidence among prospective pilgrims (Ahmadi & Sudahri, 2025).

III. Research Context, Framework, and Hypotheses of the Study

This section will situate the study within its academic domain. It will discuss how the present study differs from previous studies about travel planning via social media. Then, it will present the research framework and the hypotheses.

III.1 Research Context of the study

Numerous research papers have examined the impact of social media marketing on the travel planning process. Many of them address the topic from the perspective of users; tourists/travelers (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Yuan et al., 2022). Table (02) provides a summary of the aims and key findings of some significant studies in this area of study.

Table (02): Review of prior literature about social media and travel planning

Study	Aim and context	Method	Major findings
(Wijaya et al., 2025)	Demonstrates how social media content (UGC and FGC) shapes destination perceptions and travel intentions among Muslim travelers, focusing on its role in decision-making and trust building.	Quantitative: survey (284)	- UGC and FGC significantly affect attitudes toward halal tourism and visiting intentions.
(Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023)	investigating the factors that impact intentions of tourists (outside of Saudi Arabia) to use social media for planning travel to Saudi Arabia	Design Science Research (DSR) methodology Survey (573)	- Factors that impact tourist' intentions to use social media for travel are: planning perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), satisfaction (SAT), (MGC), and (UGC). - UGC is more influential than MGC.
(Yuan et al., 2022)	investigating the usage and trust of Chinese social media in the travel planning process (pre-trip, during-trip and post-trip) of Chinese tourists	Mixed method: online survey (406) and interview	- Trust in content was higher for UGC than MGC. - Social media influence travelers during their trips, enabling real-time modifications to plans. - Social media influence the travel planning process in its three phases; pre-trip phase, during trip phase and post-trip phase.
(Rathore, 2020)	determining the influence of UGCs on social media platforms in the travel planning of tourists in Udaipur, India	Quantitative: survey (309)	- UGC is more effective than MGC
(Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020)	Investigating the influence of social media use on activity planning and travel arrangements for women and men (From Europe and the USA)	Quantitative: survey (804)	- Social media use affects travel planning of both women and men more in pre-trip phase rather than the other phases.
(Chilembwe & Gondwe, 2020)	Role of social media in travel planning and tourism destination decision making	Mixed methods: case study, survey (792)	- Social media have a critical role to modify travel plans among tourists.
(Tsiakali, 2018)	Investigating the role of the personality in the travelers'	Quantitative: survey	- UGC is more influential than MGC.

	decision-making in relation to the usage of the content generated in social media	(582)	
--	---	-------	--

Source: combined by the authors

Previous studies have focused on several factors influencing travel planning, across different contexts and applications. The two most prominent common factors identified are MGC/FGC and UGC (Wijaya et al., 2025; Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Rathore, 2020; Tsiakali, 2018). Studies also examined the factors' influence through the three stages of the planning travel process, stressing that social media's influence was most pronounced in the pre-trip stage (Yuan et al., 2022; Chilembwe & Gondwe, 2020; Karatsoli & Nathanail, 2020). Some studies have also introduced certain mediating variables affecting these two factors, such as age, which was found to have a greater impact on MGC as a factor in travel planning than on UGC (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023).

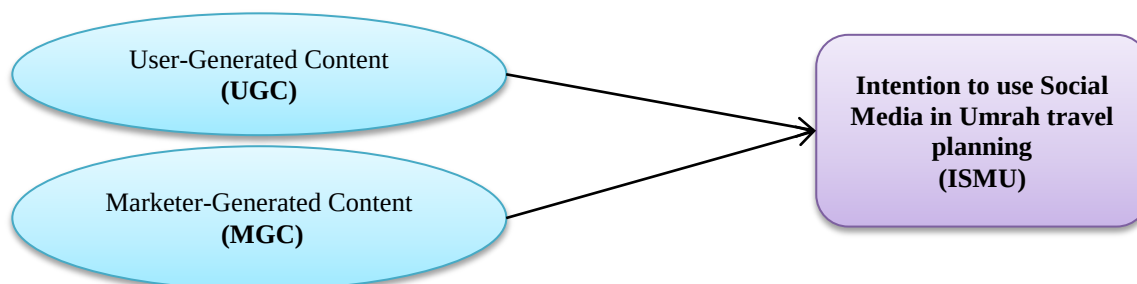
The present study follows the approach of the mentioned studies, focusing on analyzing the impact of both MGC and UGC on Algerian Umrah performers in planning their Umrah travel during the pre-trip stage. It also aims to determine which of the two has a greater influence on Umrah travel planning process. Therefore, this study differs from previous researches in terms of context, sample characteristics, and the targeted tourism destination. It will focus on Algerians who have already performed Umrah. This represents a research gap that has not been addressed by the aforementioned studies or other literature.

Moreover, studies related to Umrah as an Islamic ritual have mainly focused on how to market Umrah services in the digital age (Sieradianto et al., 2024; A. K. Muslim & Harun, 2023; Khadijah et al., 2022; A. Muslim et al., 2020). Thus, to the best of our knowledge, there is no published academic study that discusses Umrah travel planning as a unique type of travel with its own specific characteristics and methods. Therefore, this study aims to pave the way for further research to comprehensively discuss this topic.

III.2 Framework of the study

Based on the literature review and the context of the study, the following framework is proposed:

Fig.(03): Framework of the study



Source: combined by the authors

III.3 Hypotheses of the study

From the previous framework, the following hypotheses could be derived:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): MGC positively affects Algerian Umrah performers' intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning.
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): UGC positively affects Algerian Umrah performers' intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning.

IV. Methods and Materials

This study employs a quantitative survey design with 300 Algerians selected via convenience sampling from active Umrah groups on Facebook and email lists (Creswell, 2014). Data were collected electronically between March and April, 2025 -spanning Ramadan to Shawwal 1446H-. A structured questionnaire measured agreement on key constructs using a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree), chosen for its demonstrated reliability in travel behavior studies (Dawes, 2008).

The questionnaire includes three main axes. The first axis includes general information about the sample of the study such as gender, age, educational level, and income. It also includes specific information related to the Umrah travel (Table 04 and Table 05). The second axis contains the questions of the two independent variables, MGC and UGC about Umrah travel, as shown in (Table 03). The first variable has 3 questions, while the second includes 4 questions. The last axis represents the dependent variable, Intention to use social media for Umrah Travel Planning (IUSM) as indicated in Table 03.

Table (03): Description of measurement items.

Constructs		Items
Marketer-Generated Content (MGC): Content generated by Travel and Tourism Agencies in Algeria	MGC1	I like the posts (videos, photos ...) of tourism and travel agencies about Umrah.
	MGC2	Posts by travel and tourism agencies contain detailed information about Umrah.
	MGC3	I feel confident in the posts published by travel and tourism agencies on social media pages.
User-Generated Content (UGC): Content generated by users/travelers who have performed Umrah	UGC1	I rely on the comments and likes of followers on the pages of travel and tourism agencies about Umrah contents.
	UGC2	I benefit from the stories shared by followers about Umrah on the travel and tourism agency pages.
	UGC3	I follow the pages of influencers on social media about Umrah contents.
	UGC4	I rely on the opinions of my acquaintances on social media pages about Umrah contents.
Intention to use Social Media in Umrah travel planning (ISMU)	ISMU1	I use social media to search for information about Umrah.
	ISMU2	I follow the social media pages of travel and tourism agencies when planning for Umrah.
	ISMU3	I trust agencies that have pages on social media When planning for Umrah.

Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

Data analysis proceeded in two phases. First, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentage) summarized respondent demographic characteristics (age, education, occupation, and monthly income) and the Umrah travel characteristics. Second, PLS-SEM was conducted with SmartPLS (v4.1.1.4) to evaluate the measurement model -assessing Cronbachs' alpha (≥ 0.70), composite reliability (≥ 0.70), and average variance extracted (≥ 0.50)- and the structural model, testing hypothesized paths via bootstrapping technique (Hair et al., 2019).

V. Results and Discussion

This section provides a descriptive analysis of the different constructs of the questionnaire. It also checks the validity and the stability of the model through different measurement tools. Finally, it tests the validity of hypotheses of the study.

V.1 Descriptive analysis

The research sample contains 300 responses with 101 (34%) males, and 199 (66%) females. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 55 years. The largest age group among the participants was 114 between the ages of 31 and 40, making up a significant (38%) proportion of the total sample. For the educational level, the results show that the most prevalent one was postgraduate degree with 195 (53%) respondents. Finally, the respondents' monthly income results indicated that the most common income category was AD (Algerian Dinar) 60000 - AD 10000, with 120 (40%) respondents. Table (04) shows the detailed information.

Table (04): Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	101	34%
	Female	199	66%
Age	18-30	58	19%
	31-40	114	38%
	41-50	83	28%
	51 and above	45	15%
Educational level	High school or less	20	7%
	Bachelor's degree	121	40%
	Postgraduate	159	53%
Income	AD 50000	80	27%
	AD 60000-100000	120	40%
	More than AD 100000	100	33%

Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

The results can be explained as following. For the gender, the proportion of females is higher than that of males, which can indicate several things: first, women are more inclined to perform Umrah due to Saudi authorities facilitating

pilgrimage for women over 45 years old without requiring a **Mahram**^{***}; second, the social status of Algerian women, who have the right to employment in many sectors, providing them with a stable income that can be invested in various areas; third, women tend to be more active and responsive to published contents on social media, including the present questionnaire. As for men, whose proportion is lower, this does not mean a lack of interest in performing Umrah to a great extent, but can be explained by their lack of interest in responding to such academic surveys, especially in the Algerian context.

Regarding the age variable, the dominant group includes those aged between 30 and 41, which can be explained by several advantages: financial capacity, as they generally have a clear income, allowing them to achieve their curiosity and exploration, including traveling for Umrah. Additionally, they are more responsive to such academic activities, belonging to the millennial generation that carries generation X values and keeps pace with the technological development characteristic of generation Z and generation Alpha.

For the education level, the largest proportion was represented by postgraduate studies, which is logical since the questionnaire is electronic and constitutes an academic study; this group would be the most responsive. It should be noted that in the Algerian context there is not much responsiveness from respondents to electronic forms, based solely on personal experience (there is no published study on this topic to the best of our knowledge).

Regarding income variable, the results were generally similar, as the cost of Umrah is solely high, starting from 200000 Algerian dinars, which requires a considerable income. Umrah travel characteristics could be consulted in table (05).

Table (05): Umrah travel characteristics

Variable	Description	Frequency	%
Duration of stay	15 days	210	70%
	20 days	45	15%
	30 days	35	12%
	More than 30 days	10	3%
Types of accommodation	near the Sacred Mosque	180	60%
	Moderate distance from the Sacred Mosque	70	23%
	Far from the Sacred Mosque	50	17%

Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

^{***} In Islamic jurisprudence (Sharia), a Mahram is defined as a person (male) with whom marriage is permanently unlawful or prohibited due to blood relations, foster relationship (such as breastfeeding) or marital connections (Sodiqin & Mustaqim, 2025). This includes close male relatives such as the grandfather, father, brother, husband, uncles, and nephews. Thus, Muslim women are required to be accompanied by one of these men when traveling to perform Umrah or Hajj (Sodiqin & Mustaqim, 2025).

The results show that a stay of 15 days has the highest frequency, with (70%), while the lowest was for duration of 30 days with (3%). As for the proximity to the Sacred Mosque, the largest proportion was for stays close to the mosque with (60%).

V.2 Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability test is a crucial step to evaluate the quality of measurements in the model. The present study used different indicators to measure the consistency of constructs and the stability of the model like: outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability (Rho_A), Average variance extracted (AVE) as shown in table (06).

Table (06): Measurement model: validity, reliability

Variables	Items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Rho-A	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Marketer-generated content	MGC1	0,858	0,864	0,865	0,786
	MGC2	0,906			
	MGC3	0,895			
User-generated content	UGC1	0,896	0,871	0,875	0,724
	UGC2	0,906			
	UGC3	0,829			
	UGC4	0,765			
Intention to use social media in Umrah travel planning	ISMU1	0,836	0,850	0,851	0,770
	ISMU2	0,925			
	ISMU3	0,870			

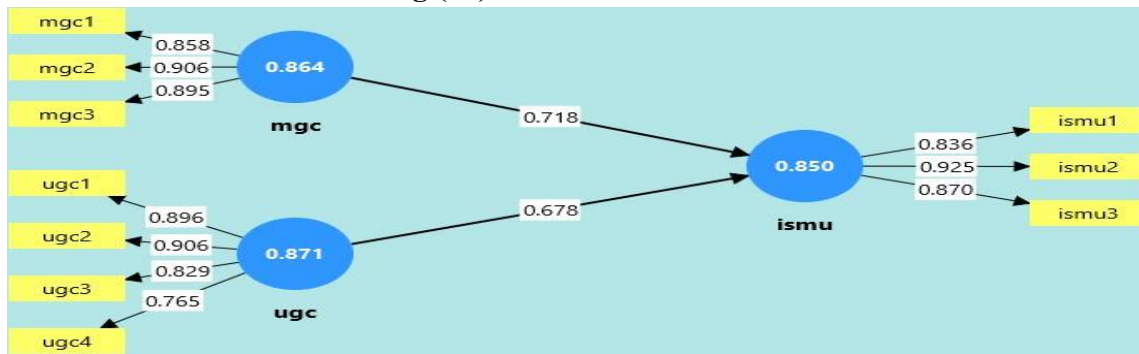
Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

The results above show that all outer loadings exceed 0.760, demonstrating strong representation of constructs. The highest loadings are $mgc2 = 0.906$, and $ugc2 = 0.906$, $ismu2 = 0.925$. Furthermore, all the values of Cronbach's alpha for the constructs are more than (70) (see also fig.3), indicating excellent internal consistency. Composite reliability (Rho_A) surpasses (0.85) ($ismu = 0.909$, $mgc = 0.917$, $ugc = 0.913$). Average variance extracted (AVE) is above (0.70) for every construct ($ismu = 0.770$, $mgc = 0.786$, $ugc = 0.724$), ensuring convergent validity. We can conclude that the model is strong for PLS-SEM analysis with 3 reliable constructs ready for modeling.

V.3 Correlation analysis

The present study used Spearman coefficient for Correlation analysis. It is a valuable nonparametric statistical tool for determining the direction and strength of the linear relationship between two variables. It is valuable for normal and non-normal data distribution (De Winter et al., 2016). The results of the correlation analysis between variables are presented in figure (04) and table (07).

Fig.(04): Correlation results



Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

The results show that the Spearman correlation coefficient between ISMU and MGC presents a strong positive correlation with ($r = 0.718$). Moreover, the correlation between ISMU and UGC is also strong and positive with ($r = 0.678$).

Table (07): Spearman correlation outcomes

	ISMU	MGC	UGC
ISMU	1	0,718	0,678
MGC	0,718	1	0
UGC	0,678	0	1

Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

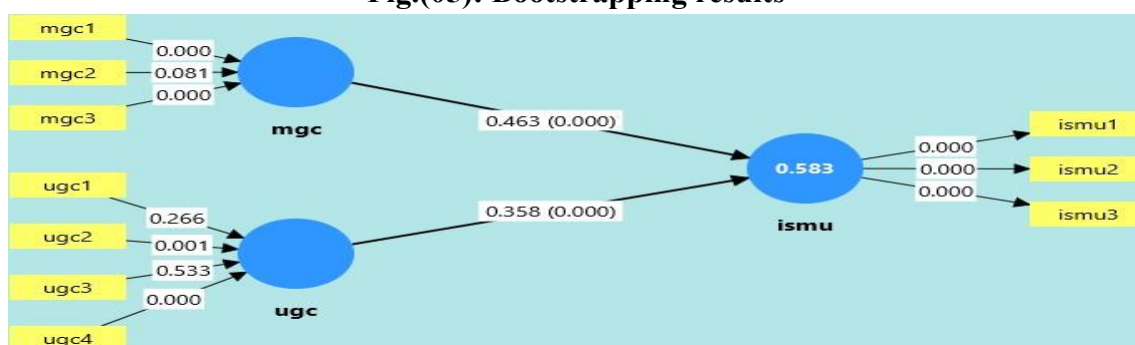
Thus, it could be concluded that the dependent variable ISMU is influenced by the two independent variables, where MGC being the most influential factor comparing to UGC. This means that the more the intention to use MGC on social media networks increases, so does the use of social media networks to Umrah travel planning. Furthermore, UGC also has a positive and strong relation with ISMU, which means that the higher the intention to use UGC on social media networks for Umrah travel planning, the greater the ISMU for social media networks. However, this relation is weaker than MGC with ISMU.

V.4 Hypothesis testing

To test the hypotheses, the present study used the bootstrapping statistical technique. This permits to determine the different values of β -value, standard deviation, t-statistics, and p-value as presented in table (06) and figure (05). These values help to determine whether the independent variables (MGC and UGC) have an effect on the dependent variable (ISMU) or not.

Before testing the hypotheses, we can see that the value of R^2 for ISMU is (0.583) as shown in figure (05). This indicates that MGC and UGC together explain 58.3% of the variance in intention to use social media for Umrah travel planning, confirming stable predictive performance of the model (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023).

Fig.(05): Bootstrapping results



Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

Figure (04) indicates a direct effect of MGC on the dependent variable ISMU with (β -value=0.463, p-value=0.000). There is also a direct effect of UGC on the dependent variable ISMU with (β -value=0.358, p-value=0.000). However, the effect of MGC on ISMU is greater than the effect of UGC on ISMU.

Table (08): Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis	β -value	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-Statistics	p-value	Result
H1: MGC→ ISMU	0,463	0,061	7,600	0,000	Accepted
H2: UGC→ISMU	0,358	0,065	5,534	0,000	Accepted

Source: combined by the authors based on Smart PLS 4 outcomes

The results of Hypothesis 1 (H1): “MGC positively affects Algerian Umrah performers’ intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning” presented as follow: the coefficient (β -value) is 0.463, with a standard error of 0.061, a t-value of 7.600, and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. Therefore, the results support Hypothesis 1 (H1), which means that MGC positively impacts Algerian Umrah performers’ intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning. It could be said that Algerian Umrah performers are more likely to use social media for Umrah travel planning if they are exposed to attractive content of local travel agencies on social media networks.

For the results of Hypothesis 2 (H2): “UGC positively affects Algerian Umrah performers’ intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning”, the coefficient (β -value) is 0.358, with a standard error of 0.065, a t-value of 5.534, and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis can be rejected, and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. The empirical findings corroborate Hypothesis 2 (H2), demonstrating that UGC significantly enhances Algerian Umrah performers’ intention to employ social media in planning their Umrah Travel. The findings suggest that Algerian Umrah performers demonstrate a higher propensity to utilize social media for Umrah

travel planning when exposed to compelling content produced by other users on social media.

V.5 Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of social media marketing on Algerian Umrah performers to planning their Umrah travelling. It tries to determine what variable(s) influence their intentions during the pre-trip planning process. Thus, it started by a central problematic: “To what extent does social media marketing impact travel planning of Umrah for Algerians?”.

The SmartPLS bootstrapping analysis technique provides strong evidence that both MGC and UGC significantly influence the intention to use social media for Umrah travel planning (question 1+2). Results show a slightly stronger effect of MGC comparing to UGC (question 3). This make straight with the results of certain studies that proved that MGC is more important than UGC to impact tourists’ intention to use social media for travel planning (Rathore, 2020; Tsiakali, 2018). However, it differs from other studies that indicate that UGC is more effective rather than MGC (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Yuan et al., 2022). For the present study, this could be explained by the fact that Umrah is a sacred worship that needs more credibility and trustfulness.

Thus, both MGC and UGC contribute to the preparation of Umrah travel planning. MGC appears to establish a higher level of cognitive trust and perceived credibility, which aligns with trust theory in tourism decision-making. At the same time, user-generated content (UGC) fosters emotional involvement and a sense of authenticity, reflecting the involvement theory’s emphasis on personal relevance and engagement. Furthermore, differences in how MGC and UGC convey information can be understood through media richness theory, as richer, multi-format messages tend to have a stronger persuasive impact. Integrating these perspectives provides a more holistic understanding of how digital communication influences Umrah travel behavior.

To sum up, we can conclude that the use of social media has a significant influence on Algerian Umrah performers during planning Umrah travelling. So, travel agencies must adopt a strategic approach combining both (MGC and UGC) for promoting their Umrah services.

VI. Conclusion

The outcomes of the present study show that MGC and UGC have a moderate impact on tourists’ intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning. However, the impact of MGC is to some extent more effective than UGC. Thus, the study answers the central problematic: “Algerian Umrah performers?” proving that Umrah travel planning is influenced by the use of

social media. However, the type of travel (Religious tourism) and the context of the study (Algerian Umrah performers) show that MGC is more significant than UGC unlike other studies (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Yuan et al., 2022).

Although the importance of this study, it has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size was merely small, and a larger sample would be more generalizable to a larger population. Secondly, the study focused on Algerian Umrah performers' intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning, and the sample may need to be more generalizable to other aspects of tourism marketing. Thirdly, the theoretical framework was developed based on specific and limited variables, and the results may need to be tested with more variables and characteristics that might impact Algerian Umrah performers' intentions. Fourthly, the study used just one research tool which is the questionnaire that includes only closed-ended questions. It would have been better to add another tool like the interview and varied questionnaire including some open-ended questions to have more ideas and perspectives. Fifthly, the study has used limited independent variables comparing to other studies (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Yuan et al., 2022). They used several variables like (Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use 'PEU', Trust, Satisfaction, etc.). It is better to enlarge and diversified the variables for more credible results.

However, the results offer important insights into the factors that influence Algerian Umrah performers' intentions to use social media for Umrah travel planning. Future research could provide further perceptions for this topic. They may use larger sample and different tools of data collection (questionnaire and interview). They could also expand the context of the study for other Muslim countries or specific region where Muslims have similar characteristics. Future Studies could also investigate the impact of demographic characteristics like gender and age on the intention of using social media for Umrah travel planning.

From a practical perspective, the results of the present study could provide the following implications to travel agencies in Algeria to better use social media to promote Umrah services:

- **Prioritizing MGC:**
 - Investing in high-quality content such as such as interactive videos and verified guides.
 - Creating a specific content according to the region of the agency like: the north of Algeria or the south in sahara by respecting the specificities of each region.
 - developing Umrah-specific apps with real-time MGC updates.
 - Developing comprehensive travel guides and promotional materials
 - Creating visually appealing and informative content about Umrah experiences.



- Leveraging UGC:
 - Motivating customers to share their Umrah experience by organizing contests on social media pages, such as a “best video” or “best photo” competition, as well as quizzes and other similar methods.
 - Creating platforms for testimonials and travel stories.
 - Implementing user review systems and community features.
- Integrating MGC And UGC:
 - Combining both content types for maximum impact.
 - Using MGC for foundational information and UGC for social proof.
 - Monitoring and optimizing content performance regularly.

VII. References

- Ahmadi, E. S. A., & Sudahri. (2025). Analysis of communication strategies of Hajj and Umrah travel agencies in building pilgrims' trust through digital media: A case study of PT. Assunniyah Al-Jauhari. *Ilomata International Journal of Social Science*, 6(2), 642–668. <https://doi.org/10.61194/ijss.v6i2.1710>
- Akehurst, G. (2009). User generated content: The use of blogs for tourism organisations and tourism consumers. *Service Business*, 3(1), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11628-008-0054-2>
- Alnajim, R. A., & Fakieh, B. (2023). A tourist-based framework for developing digital marketing for small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector in Saudi Arabia. *Data*, 8(12), 179. <https://doi.org/10.3390/data8120179>
- Benia, S., & Beldjilali, F. (2023). The role of social media in the local touristic promotion in Algeria—Outlook study on a sample of social media users-. *Journal of Contemporary Business and Economic Studies*, 6(1), 276-286.
- Britannica Editors. (2025, March 21). *Umrah Definition & Facts Britannica*. 'Umrah. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved April 15, 2025, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/umrah>
- Chilembwe, J. M., & Gondwe, F. W. (2020). Role of social media in travel planning and tourism destination decision making: In C. M. Q. Ramos, C. R. D. Almeida, & P. O. Fernandes (Eds.), *Advances in Hospitality, tourism, and the services industry* (pp. 36–51). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1947-9.ch003>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Dar al-Iftaa al-Misriyyah. (2014). *The rites of Hajj and 'Umrah booklet*. <https://www.dar-alifta.org/images/Languages/OnlineBooks/Hajj%20booklet%20pdf.pdf>
- Dawes, J. (2008). Do Data characteristics change according to the number of scale points used? An experiment using 5-point, 7-point and 10-point scales. *International Journal of Market Research*, 50(1), 61–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530805000106>



- de Winter, J. C. F., Gosling, S. D., & Potter, J. (2016). Comparing the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients across distributions and sample sizes: A tutorial using simulations and empirical data. *Psychological Methods*, 21(3), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000079>
- Effing, R., & Spil, T. A. M. (2016). The social strategy cone: Towards a framework for evaluating social media strategies. *International Journal of Information Management*, 36(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2015.07.009>
- Elgammal, I., Alhothali, G. T., & Sorrentino, A. (2023). Segmenting Umrah performers based on outcomes behaviors: A cluster analysis perspective. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 14(3), 871–891. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-01-2021-0004>
- Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Kollat, D. T. (1973). *Consumer behavior* (2nd ed.). Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- GASTAT. (2025, August 21). *GASTAT: Umrah performers exceed 15 million in Q1 of 2025*. الهيئة العامة للإحصاء. Retrieved September 01, 2025, <https://www.stats.gov.sa/w/news/77>
- Gazzaz, O. B., & Mohamed, H. S. (2021). The Extent of Pilgrims and Umrah Performers' Reliance on the Mobile Exhibition Using Hologram Technology During the Performance of the Rituals. *International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management (IJCRMM)*, 12(4), 76–96.
- Glossary—Hajj. (n.d.). Retrieved September 26, 2025, from <https://www.hajinformation.com/main/s.htm>
- Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C. (2015). Smart tourism: Foundations and developments. *Electronic Markets*, 25(3), 179–188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-015-0196-8>
- Gross, J., & von Wangenheim, F. (2022). Influencer marketing on instagram: Empirical research on social media engagement with sponsored posts. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 22(3), 289–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2022.2123724>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Karatsoli, M., & Nathanail, E. (2020). Examining gender differences of social media use for activity planning and travel choices. *European Transport Research Review*, 12(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12544-020-00436-4>
- Khadijah, U. L. S., Novianti, E., & Anwar, R. (2022). Social media in guiding and marketing religious tourism: The case of Umrah and Hajj services. *Sosiohumaniora*, 24(1), 69–76. <https://doi.org/10.24198/sosiohumaniora.v24i1.36579>
- Krishnamurthy, R., & Mukherjee, R. K. (2024). Is user-generated content (UGC) a double edged sword for Marketers? *California Management Review*.



<https://cmr.berkeley.edu/2024/11/is-user-generated-content-ugc-a-double-edged-sword-for-marketers/>

- María Munar, A. (2011). Tourist-created content: Rethinking destination branding. *International Journal of Culture Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 5(3), 291–305. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506181111156989>
- Mishra, A., & Singh, M. (2022). Impact of digital-marketing promotion on religious tourism: A case study of Ayodhya. *International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences*, 11(12), 8046–8057.
- Muslim, A., Harun, A., Ismael, D., & Othman, B. (2020). Social media experience, attitude and behavioral intention towards umrah package among generation X and Y. *Management Science Letters*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.8.020>
- Muslim, A. K., & Harun, A. (2023). Challenges And opportunities In developing Malaysian Umrah tourism: Implication of social media application among Umrah consumers and Umrah travel agents. *Res Militaris*, 13(1), 3908–3920.
- Nguyen, T. T. T., & Tong, S. (2023). The impact of user-generated content on intention to select a travel destination. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 11(3), 443–457. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-022-00174-7>
- Osra, K., & Yasein, M. S. (2024). Transportation nature during mega-events: Investigating trip characteristics of umrah performers during umrah peak-seasons. *Journal of Advanced Engineering Trends*, 43(2), 471–479. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jaet.2024.251482.1265>
- Parra-López, E., Bulchand-Gidumal, J., Gutiérrez-Taño, D., & Díaz-Armas, R. (2011). Intentions to use social media in organizing and taking vacation trips. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 640–654. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.05.022>
- Ramos, E. C., & Ramos, C. M. Q. (2025). User-Generated Content and Its impact on purchase intent for tourism products: A Comparative analysis of millennials and centennials on TikTok. *Future Internet*, 17(3), 105. <https://doi.org/10.3390/fi17030105>
- Rathore, S. (2020). Analyzing the influence of user-generated-content (UGC) on social media platforms in travel planning. *Turizam*, 24(3), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.5937/turizam24-24429>
- Sa'dom, N. Z. M., Yusoff, S. H. M., & Sa'dom, S. A. F. M. (2023). Umrah, the spiritual journey of a lifetime: A bibliometric analysis using VosViewer. *International Journal of Innovation and Business Strategy (IJIBS)*, 18(1), 37–49. <https://doi.org/10.11113/ijibs.v18.134>
- Sieradio, D. A., Ardiansyah, A., & Muttaqin, R. B. (2024). Instagram content marketing analysis in increasing Umrah interest (study on Jannah Travel Account). *Multazam: Jurnal Manajemen Haji Dan Umrah*, 4(2), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.32332/multazam.v4i2.9290>
- Sodiqin, A., & Mustaqim, A. (2025). In the concept of mahram for women in long-distance travel (in the perspective of the hadith of the Prophet). *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 8(7). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i7-100>

- Tsiakali, K. (2018). User-generated-content versus marketing-generated-content: Personality and content influence on traveler's behavior. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 27(8), 946–972. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2018.1477643>
- Thoppil, A. (2025, March 3). *How social media is shaping travel planning and booking*. Retrieved May 15, 2025, from <https://skift.com/author/athira-thoppil/>
- Wan, F., & Ren, F. (2017). The effect of firm marketing content on product sales: Evidence from a mobile social media platform. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 18(4), 288–302. http://www.jecr.org/sites/default/files/18_4Paper1.pdf
- Wijaya, C. O., Wijaya, S., & Jaolis, F. (2025). The influence of social media content on attitude, destination image and intention of female Muslim travelers to visit halal destinations: Comparison between UGC and FGC. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 16(2), 402–427. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-08-2023-0235>
- Xiang, Z., Du, Q., Ma, Y., & Fan, W. (2017). A comparative analysis of major online review platforms: Implications for social media analytics in hospitality and tourism. *Tourism Management*, 58, 51–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.001>
- Yezli, S., Yassin, Y. M., Awam, A. H., Attar, A. A., Al-Jahdali, E. A., & Alotaibi, B. M. (2017). Umrah. An opportunity for mass gatherings health research. *Saudi Medical Journal*, 38(8), 868–871. <https://doi.org/10.15537/smj.2017.8.20124>
- Yoo, K.-H., Gretzel, U., & Zach, F. (2011). Travel opinion leaders and seekers. In R. Law, M. Fuchs, & F. Ricci (Eds.), *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2011* (pp. 525–535). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7091-0503-0_42
- Yuan, Y., Chan, C.-S., Eichelberger, S., Ma, H., & Pikkemaat, B. (2022). The effect of social media on travel planning process by Chinese tourists: The way forward to tourism futures. *Journal of Tourism Futures*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-04-2021-0094>
- Zakari, N. M. A., Alhaiti, A., Ousman, M., et al. (2025). Health services in Saudi Arabia during Hajj pilgrimage. *Nurse Care Open Access Journal*, 11(2), 64–73.
- Zeng, B., & Gerritsen, R. (2014). What do we know about social media in tourism? A review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 10, 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2014.01.001>
- الديوان الوطني للحج والعمرة. (2020). دفتر شروط تنظيم العمرة الخاص بوكالات السياحة والسفر لموسم 1441هـ/2020م. الديوان الوطني للحج والعمرة، <https://onpo.dz/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/V2.pdf>
- كيموش، إ. (2025، 19 مارس). ألف تذكرة لعمرة رمضان.. وهذه تفاصيل رحلات "الجوية الجزائرية". الشروق أونلاين، تم الاسترداد يوم 15 أفريل من الموقع <https://www.echoroukonline.com/33> ألف-تذكرة-لعمرة-رمضان-وهذه-تفاصيل-رحلات الجوية الجزائرية