Cultural influences on online experiences, relationship quality, and customer engagement: A comparative study between Kuwait and Portugal

Influencias culturales en las experiencias en línea, la calidad de las relaciones y la vinculación con el cliente: un estudio comparativo entre Kuwait y Portugal

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Abstract

This paper investigates the interplay between online experiences, relationship quality, and customer inspiration in shaping customer engagement, focusing on two culturally distinct markets: Kuwait and Portugal. This study employed a quantitative research design using structured online surveys administered through Qualtrics panels service. Two distinct panels were used to collect data from general consumers in Portugal and Kuwait. The final sample comprised 240 valid responses from Portugal and 210 from Kuwait. The findings highlight significant cultural differences. Entertainment is a universally important aspect of online experiences, but informativeness is more critical in Kuwait, while social presence holds more importance in Portugal. Mediation analysis reveals that relationship quality (RQ) mediates the relationship between online experiences and engagement in Kuwait, emphasising the role of relational bonds in collectivist cultures. In contrast, customer inspiration serves as a consistent mediator across both contexts, with stronger effects in masculine cultures such as Kuwait. The results advance theoretical frameworks by integrating cultural dimensions and provide actionable insights for marketers to design culturally sensitive online strategies. The study underscores the importance of tailoring

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la interacción entre las experiencias *online*, la calidad de la relación y la inspiración del cliente en la configuración del *customer engagement*, centrándose en dos mercados culturalmente distintos: Kuwait y Portugal. El estudio empleó un diseño de investigación cuantitativo mediante encuestas *online* estructuradas administradas a través del servicio de paneles de Qualtrics. Se utilizaron dos paneles diferenciados para recopilar datos de consumidores generales en Portugal y Kuwait. La muestra final estuvo compuesta por 240 respuestas válidas de Portugal y 210 de Kuwait. Los resultados ponen de manifiesto diferencias culturales significativas. El entretenimiento constituye un aspecto universalmente relevante de las experiencias *online*, aunque la capacidad informativa resulta más crítica en Kuwait, mientras que la presencia social tiene mayor importancia en Portugal. El análisis de mediación revela que la calidad de la relación media la relación entre las experiencias *online* y el *engagement* en Kuwait, lo que resalta el papel de los vínculos relacionales en culturas colectivistas. En cambio, la inspiración del cliente actúa como un mediador constante en ambos contextos, con efectos más intensos en culturas más masculinas como la kuwaití. Los resultados enriquecen los marcos teóricos mediante la integración de dimensiones culturales y ofrecen recomendaciones prácticas para

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engagement approaches to cultural contexts, offering implications for theory development and practical applications in global marketing.

Keywords: Online experiences, customer engagement, relationship quality, customer inspiration.

que los profesionales del *marketing* diseñen estrategias *online* culturalmente sensibles. El estudio subraya la importancia de adaptar los enfoques de *engagement* al contexto cultural, aporta implicaciones para el desarrollo teórico y para las aplicaciones prácticas en el *marketing* global.

Palabras clave: experiencias online, *customer engagement*, calidad de la relación, inspiración del cliente.

Introduction

In an increasingly digitalised world, understanding how online interactions translate into customer engagement has become a central concern for both scholars and practitioners (Hollebeek et al., 2021) Customer engagement is no longer merely a source of differentiation but has emerged as a core strategic mechanism through which firms build enduring relationships and foster consumer loyalty (Li & Han, 2021). Loyalty, reflected in repeat purchasing and brand advocacy, represents a critical intangible asset that directly underpins firm profitability and sustainable growth (Frasquet et al., 2024). Within this context, digital platforms constitute primary interfaces between firms and customers, shaping relational outcomes by composing a growing number of online interactions across multiple touchpoints (Elia et al., 2024). These interactions form the components of the broader digital customer experience, which includes sensorial, affective, cognitive, relational, and behavioural responses that unfold across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages (Kandil et al., 2024; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As customer sojourns increasingly cross diverse channels and media, the complexity of managing meaningful online experiences increases, reinforcing the centrality of engagement in contemporary marketing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Loureiro et al., 2020). Digital platforms are key touchpoints between firms and their customers, fostering interactions that can significantly impact loyalty, advocacy, and purchasing behaviour (Elia et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on customer engagement, limited attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which online experiences foster engagement across culturally diverse contexts. In particular, the processes that explain how online experiences are transformed into engagement outcomes remain insufficiently understood beyond single country settings. Prior research recognises customer engagement as a critical determinant of firm performance in digital environments, especially in the context of e-commerce and online services (Utami et al., 2021). Firms that successfully design engaging online experiences are better positioned to retain customers and stimulate positive word of mouth (Bilro et al., 2019). However, much of the extant literature adopts a culturally homogeneous perspective, implicitly assuming that the drivers and consequences of engagement operate uniformly across markets. This assumption is increasingly problematic given the global nature of digital platforms and the cultural heterogeneity of online audiences.

Existing studies identify key dimensions of online experience, such as entertainment, informativeness, and social presence, as important antecedents of customer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2021). Complementary research highlights relationship quality and customer inspiration as explanatory mechanisms that can transmit the effects of experiences into engagement related outcomes (Adhikari & Panda, 2019; Saha & Mukherjee, 2022). However, these research streams have largely evolved in parallel, offering limited insight into how these mediating processes operate jointly, or how their relative importance may vary across cultural contexts. Cultural frameworks suggest that consumers in collectivist cultures may place greater emphasis on trust, commitment, and relational bonds, whereas consumers in more individualistic cultures may be more responsive to internally driven motivational states such as inspiration.

69

The absence of cross-cultural empirical evidence constrains theory development and limits the practical relevance of engagement models in global digital markets.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines the mediating roles of relationship quality and customer inspiration in the link between online experiences and customer engagement, drawing on data from two culturally distinct countries, Kuwait and Portugal. Beyond cultural differences, these countries represent contrasting digital market environments. Portugal reflects a relatively mature European digital market characterised by high internet penetration, established e-commerce practices, and widespread consumer familiarity with online platforms. Kuwait, in contrast, represents a rapidly developing digital market characterised by high mobile penetration, the accelerated adoption of digital services, and distinctive patterns of online consumption. Together, these contexts provide a meaningful setting to examine whether engagement mechanisms are robust across different configurations of cultural values and digital market maturity. Accordingly, this research addresses two central questions. First, how do online experiences influence customer engagement across culturally distinct markets? Second, how do relationship quality and customer inspiration mediate this relationship, and to what extent do these mediating effects differ across cultural contexts?

This study contributes to the customer engagement literature in several ways. First, it integrates relationship quality and customer inspiration into a single explanatory framework, clarifying their distinct and complementary roles in translating online experiences into engagement outcomes. Second, by adopting a cross-cultural perspective, it demonstrates that the mechanisms underlying engagement are not culturally invariant. The findings show that relationship quality plays a stronger mediating role in Kuwait, while its influence is attenuated in Portugal. In contrast, customer inspiration emerges as a robust mediator across both contexts, with a stronger effect in the more masculine cultural setting. Collectively, these insights extend existing engagement theories by explicitly incorporating cultural dimensions and offer actionable guidance for firms seeking to design effective online engagement strategies in culturally diverse markets.

Literature review

Customer experience

Customer experience represents customers' conscious and subconscious perceptions while consuming goods or services (Wagner et al., 2013). Advances in mobile technology and its widespread consumer acceptance compel firms to reshape their interaction and service delivery features in order to provide an enhanced online user experience. Klaus (2013, p. 445) defines the experience of online customer service as "the mental perception of customers of interactions with the value proposition of an online company." These mental perceptions, in turn, generate a set of outcomes, including benefits, emotions, judgments, and intentions. Existing literature claims that experience is the extent to which a website provides consumers with resourceful and helpful information (Bleier et al., 2019). Hence, consumers may view the company's social media profiles, use their smartphones to visit its websites and use their laptops to browse e-commerce sites at different times. Consequently, the customer's online experience involves every contact point (i.e., social networks, websites, and applications) that the customer utilises to interact with the company (Borges et al., 2023; Kandil et al., 2024). The acceptance and widespread use of mobile devices have made these goods and services more accessible and affordable for customers.

Online experience combines diverse components associated with cognitive, affective, social, and sensorial perceptions. Informativeness, the cognitive component, refers to the information and data provided to the customer by the webpage. Informativeness represents the functional aspect of the experience (Verhoef et al., 2009). The affective component, referred to as entertainment (Bleier et al., 2019), relates to the fun and enthusiasm customers derive from shopping on the website. The social

component, social presence, relates to the sense of human contact and sociability conveyed by the webpage (Darke et al., 2016). The social component contributes to developing positive emotions and loyalty (Cyr, 2013). Sensory appeal constitutes "the representational richness of a mediated environment as defined by its formal features" (Steuer, 1992, p. 81). The aesthetic aspects of websites comprise sensory appeal, and as with the other three dimensions, it influences purchase intentions and decisions (Elder et al., 2017).

Online customer engagement

Customer engagement is a term that has gotten increasing attention in the marketing literature. Customer engagement is recognised as a "psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms, as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained" (Bowden, 2009, p. 65). Existing literature conceptualises engagement as a multi-dimensional process that can vary in cognitive, emotional, and behavioural intensity (Bilro & Loureiro, 2020; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Using a relational marketing approach, Kumar and colleagues define customer engagement as the attitude, level of interaction, and behaviour between customers and the organisation (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). The growth of social media has empowered consumers, enabling them to communicate, share, and engage with organisations and each other. Today, the voice of consumers alone has the potential to either build or damage a brand or organisation's reputation (Rust et al., 2021).

Customer engagement on social media can be revealed in different ways and can be defined as any online action a customer undertakes concerning a business (Santini et al., 2020). Online engagement includes subscriptions, purchases, likes, shares, comments, blogs, or other social media interactions. A straightforward form of online customer engagement occurs when an individual interacts with an organisation online, such as by visiting a company's social media account or website (Bilro et al., 2019). Companies aim to impel traffic to their digital presence and, more importantly, retain customers on their websites for extended periods (Dolan et al., 2016). Organisations can achieve this by offering entertaining content and encouraging participation in surveys, promotions, or giveaways. Social media interactions require companies to consistently update posts designed to attract new customers and retain existing followers. Consequently, customers contribute by liking, commenting, and sharing. This type of engagement is crucial as it provides valuable and cost-free feedback (Bilro & Loureiro, 2023). Additionally, it enhances brand awareness, enabling businesses to track conversations regarding their brand and interfere when necessary (Bazi et al., 2020; Wang & Lee, 2020). Through social media, businesses offer customers a direct platform for contact, facilitating immediate and efficient responses to inquiries. This connection allows organisations to engage with customers on a more personal level, making them feel valued through special promotions or offers (Lim & Rasul, 2022).

The literature frames customer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept with various definitions involving multiple aspects of business and communication (Utami et al., 2021). For the current study, we adopt the four dimensions proposed by Kumar and Pansari (2016): customer purchases (continuing to purchase products from the company), customer referrals (customers attracting other customers), customer social influence (customers' impact on social media), and customer knowledge sharing (customers actively helping companies improve products through feedback). Online engagement can be a response to an online experience (Prentice et al., 2019). Features of websites or other online interfaces can drive customers to engage and actively contribute to companies (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Thus, we hypothesise that:

- H1: Online experience positively influences customer engagement.

Online relationship quality

Relationship quality (RQ) is a vital concept in business-to-customer relationships, increasingly gaining attention from both theoretical and practical perspectives (Itani et al., 2019; Marques et al., 2022). As online channels mature and competition intensifies, the challenge and cost of attracting new customers continue to increase. RQ can be defined as "an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship, conceptualised as a composite or multi-dimensional construct capturing the different but related facets of a relationship" (Palmatier et al., 2006, p. 138). Within this study, RQ represents the overall evaluation of the strength of the relationship between buyers and sellers.

Despite extensive literature on RQ, ambiguity remains regarding the dimensions that constitute this higher-order construct. Nevertheless, three core components–trust, commitment, and satisfaction–consistently achieve consensus in the literature (Antwi, 2021; Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2023). While some scholars test and analyse these dimensions independently, existing studies suggest that online relationship quality should be treated as a multi-dimensional, aggregated construct (Brun et al., 2016; Hennig-Thurau, 2000; Palmatier, 2008). This approach reflects the interrelated nature of these dimensions and consumers' difficulty in distinguishing between them.

According to social exchange theory, the dynamics between partners in a relationship depend on the experiences during the exchange process (Anderson & Narus, 1984; Emerson, 1976). This theory emphasises that partners (e.g., customers and companies) evaluate the costs and benefits of the relationship during their interactions. Relationships are inherently interpersonal, built on reciprocity, interdependence, trust, commitment, and relational norms (Lambe et al., 2001). Therefore, the quality of the relationship, coupled with the exchange experience during online transactions, can significantly influence customer engagement. Customers are more likely to actively make purchases, provide feedback, and encourage others to purchase when the exchange experience benefits them (Itani et al., 2019; Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

Based on this understanding, it is proposed that RQ mediates the relationship between online purchase experiences and customer engagement. The following hypothesis is therefore suggested:

- H2: Online relationship quality positively mediates online experience and customer engagement.

Customer inspiration

Inspiration in marketing incorporates distinct goals, receivers, and sources, requiring a domain-specific conceptualisation and measurement (Böttger et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for the inherent satisfaction it provides, driven by the desire for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is incited by the pursuit of separable outcomes. Inspiration bridges the gap between the deliberation phase (i.e., goal setting) and the implementation phase (i.e., goal striving) of goal pursuit (Gollwitzer, 1990). While the intent to inspire customers should be central to marketing efforts, inspiration has received limited attention in prior research. Therefore, our study takes a relevant step by integrating inspiration into online experiences and management practices.

Similar to the research on customer satisfaction in the 1980s, this work aims to stimulate academic study and provide companies with innovative approaches to enhance customer experiences. Firms can develop and market solutions that improve everyday shopping experiences and foster longer and more valuable customer relationships. Inspired customers offer a novel pathway for businesses to increase demand, encourage behaviours, and build loyalty. Inspiring shopping experiences may create superior moments during consumption (Frasquet et al., 2024).

Customer inspiration, as defined in this study, applies to "consumption-related goals such as purchasing, donating, or engaging with a brand" (Böttger et al., 2017, p. 118). Inspiration comprises two components: being inspired

by (stimuli or evocation to action) and being inspired to (intrinsic motivation to achieve a consumption-related goal) (Thrash et al., 2010). For example, a customer may feel inspired to purchase or donate to a cause. This construct uniquely predicts significant marketing outcomes, such as exploratory and purchasing behaviour. Customer inspiration is evoked by interactions with external sources, such as using websites or other online interfaces to explore and purchase products (Thrash et al., 2014). Based on this, we hypothesise that:

■ H3: Customer inspiration positively mediates online experience and customer engagement.

Moderation effect of national cultures

National culture has long been recognised as a critical contextual factor shaping consumer attitudes, motivations, and behavioural responses, particularly in cross national research. Early work by Schwartz (1992, 1994) conceptualises culture as a system of shared values that guide perceptions of what is desirable, distinguishing societies along value dimensions such as embeddedness versus autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony. These dimensions capture fundamental societal orientations regarding individual autonomy, social order, and the relationship between individuals and their social and natural environment. Complementing this perspective, the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004) extends cultural analysis by examining how societal values and practices influence leadership, organisational behaviour, and social interactions. The GLOBE framework identifies nine cultural dimensions, including institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and performance orientation, offering a nuanced distinction between cultural values and enacted practices across societies.

Building on these foundations, Hofstede's cultural framework (Hofstede, 2001, 2011) remains one of the most widely adopted approaches due to its empirical applicability. The framework conceptualises national culture through six core dimensions. Power Distance reflects the extent to which unequal distributions of power are accepted and legitimised within a society. Cultures high in power distance tend to favour hierarchical structures and authority, whereas low power distance cultures emphasise equality and participative decision making. Uncertainty Avoidance captures the degree to which individuals feel threatened by ambiguity and unstructured situations. High uncertainty avoidance societies rely more heavily on formal rules and risk reducing mechanisms, while low uncertainty avoidance cultures display greater tolerance for ambiguity and openness to change (Hofstede, 2011).

Individualism describes the extent to which personal autonomy and self-interest prevail over collective responsibility and group cohesion (Hofstede, 1991, 2011). In this regard, Kuwaiti culture can be characterised as more collectivist than Portuguese culture, where social ties, group loyalty, and relational obligations play a more central role in guiding individual behaviour. Such differences suggest that consumers in Kuwait may place greater emphasis on the quality of relationships established with companies, including in online environments. Motivation towards achievement and success reflects the degree to which competitiveness, ambition, performance, and material success are valued relative to cooperation, modesty, and quality of life (Yeganeh, 2025). Cultures scoring high on this dimension place strong emphasis on success and recognition as key social drivers. Kuwait tends to score higher on motivation towards achievement and success than Portugal, indicating a stronger cultural orientation towards performance and accomplishment. This orientation may act as an intrinsic motivational force that stimulates more active consumer engagement, particularly in digital and e-commerce contexts where individual initiative and goal-oriented behaviour are relevant.

Long Term Orientation refers to a society's temporal focus, distinguishing cultures that emphasise perseverance and future oriented adaptation from those oriented towards tradition and short-term outcomes. Finally, Indulgence captures the extent to which societies permit the gratification of basic human desires related

to enjoyment and pleasure, contrasting cultures that encourage leisure and wellbeing with those that emphasise restraint, self-control, and social duty (Hofstede, 2001, 2011).

Collectively, these cultural frameworks provide a robust theoretical basis for examining how national culture moderates the relationships between online experiences, relational mechanisms, and customer engagement. Specifically, the stronger collectivist orientation of Kuwait suggests that relationship quality may have a stronger influence on customer engagement in this context compared to Portugal. At the same time, Kuwait's higher motivation towards achievement and success may increase the role of internal motivational states, such as customer inspiration, in driving engagement behaviours. These distinctions underscore the importance of embedding customer engagement models within their broader cultural value systems rather than assuming cultural uniformity across digital markets. Based on these cultural distinctions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

■ H4: The mediation effect of online relationship quality in the relationship between online experience and customer engagement is higher for Kuwait than for Portugal.

■ H5: The mediation effect of customer inspiration in the relationship between online experience and customer engagement is higher for Kuwait than for Portugal.

The proposed conceptual model can be seen in Figure 1.

Methodology

For this study, we recruited our participants using the 'online research panels & samples' services provided by Qualtrics. By utilising the panels supplied by this platform, we aimed to ensure the quality of the participants in our study. Qualtrics guarantees this by offering access to a wide range of respondents across different geographies, customisation and segmentation, control over the authenticity and quality of responses verified by Qualtrics' mechanisms, and the integration of these panels with the research platform (data collection). The researchers did not pay the respondents directly. The panels are purchased from Qualtrics as a whole, and this company manages the relationship with the participants, particularly regarding payments.

Data collection was conducted using two distinct Qualtrics panels, one targeting

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model
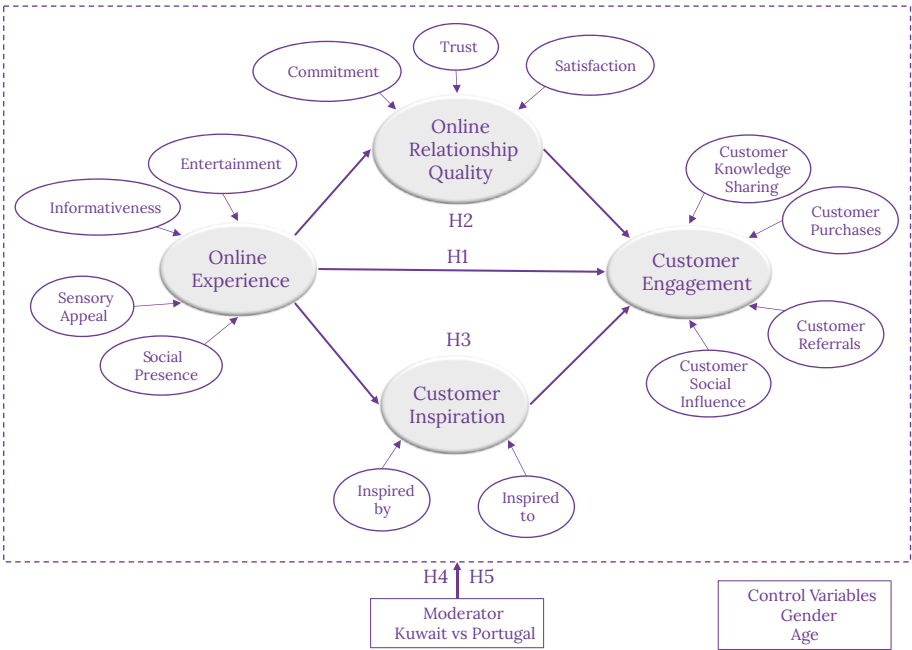
respondents in Portugal and the other targeting respondents in Kuwait. The use of professional online panels allowed us to implement consistent recruitment procedures and quality control mechanisms across both contexts, including screening criteria, attention checks, and minimum completion time thresholds, thereby enhancing data reliability. While the resulting samples are non-probabilistic and not intended to be statistically representative of the broader national populations, they are appropriate for theory testing and comparative analysis. Portugal and Kuwait were selected because they exhibit meaningful differences on key Hofstede cultural dimensions that are theoretically relevant to the proposed model, particularly individualism (Kuwait: 28; Portugal: 59) and motivation towards achievement and success (Kuwait: 45; Portugal: 31) (Hofstede, 1991, 2001, 2019). The samples comprised general Kuwaiti and Portuguese consumers with prior experience in online searching and purchasing, ensuring that respondents were familiar with the digital contexts examined in the study and were suitable for testing the hypothesised relationships.

The questionnaire was developed using well-established scales to measure the constructs outlined in the proposed model, along with a section capturing socio-demographic variables. Initially prepared in English, the questionnaire was translated into Portuguese and Arabic. Back-translation was employed to ensure that the translated versions accurately represented the original content (Sekaran, 1983).

To minimise common method bias, several measures were taken: items within constructs were designed to reduce potential bias, and items from the same construct were positioned non-contiguously within the questionnaire. A pre-test was conducted with eight participants–four Portuguese and four Kuwaiti citizens with online purchasing experience–through personal interviews to ensure the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire wording.

Following these steps, the final questionnaire was launched. After eliminating inconsistencies and extreme multivariate outliers, Qualtrics provided 210 completed responses from Kuwait and 240 from Portugal. The sample profiles are detailed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Online experience was measured as a second-order construct using a multi-dimensional scale incorporating four dimensions: entertainment, informativeness, sensory appeal, and social presence, based on the framework set forth by Bleier et al. (2019). Online relationship quality was assessed through three constructs–trust, commitment, and satisfaction–adapted from Itani et al. (2019). Customer inspiration was measured using two dimensions ("inspired by" and "inspired to"), following the approach of Böttger et al. (2017). Finally, customer engagement was evaluated through four dimensions: knowledge sharing, purchases, referrals, and social influence, based on Kumar and Pansari (2016). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, capturing respondents' levels of agreement with the statements.

Results

The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis followed a two-stage approach, involving the assessment of the measurement model and the evaluation of the structural model. This procedure is consistent with established guidelines for PLS based analysis (Hair et al., 2022). At the first order construct level, the reliability and validity of the measures were assessed by examining item reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. As reported in Table 3, all Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, and composite reliability values were above 0.80, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Wetzels et al., 2009). Convergent validity was confirmed, as all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.50 for both the Kuwaiti and Portuguese samples (see Table 3).

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. In line with Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs, as shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 1. Sample profile for the Kuwaiti respondents

Gender		%	Age		%	Education		%
Female	94	44.8	18–24	60	28.6	College graduate	74	35.2
Male	116	55.2	25-34	58	27.6	Doctorate (PhD, MPhill, DBA, MD)	14	6.7
Total	**210**	**100**	35-44	38	18.1	High school Graduate	18	8.6
			45-54	36	17.1	Less than high school	4	1.9
			55-64	18	8.6	Master's degree	46	21.9
			Total	**210**	**100**	Professional degree	16	7.6
						Some college but no degree	38	18.1
						Total	**210**	**100**

Table 2. Sample profile for the Portuguese respondents

Gender		%	Age		%	Education		%
Female	120	50.0	18–24	28	11.7	College graduate	59	24.6
Male	120	50.0	25-34	62	25.8	Doctorate (PhD, MPhill, DBA, MD)	8	3.3
Total	**240**	**100**	35-44	73	30.4	High school Graduate	59	24.6
			45-54	51	21.3	Master's degree	48	20.0
			55-64	23	9.6	Professional degree	39	16.3
			> 65	3	1.3	Some college but no degree	27	11.3
			Total	**240**	**100**	**Total**	**240**	**100**

Furthermore, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015), confirming discriminant validity across both samples (Tables 6 and 7).

At the second order construct level, formative measurement models were assessed by examining indicator weights, their statistical significance, and potential multicollinearity among indicators. All formative indicator weights were statistically significant at p < 0.001, providing strong support for the contribution of the first order dimensions to their respective second order constructs. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). All VIF values were well below the threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2022), indicating that collinearity did not pose a concern at the formative measurement level (see Tables 8 and 9).

The structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, effect sizes (f²), and the predictive power of the model. Statistical significance was assessed using a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples (Hair et al., 2011). The results for the Kuwaiti and Portuguese samples are reported in Tables 8 and 9, respectively. For the Kuwaiti sample, online experience had a significant direct effect on customer engagement (β = 0.295, p < 0.001), as well as strong effects on relationship quality (β = 0.732, p < 0.001) and customer inspiration (β = 0.832, p < 0.001). Both relationship quality (β = 0.327, p < 0.001) and customer inspiration (β = 0.320, p < 0.01) exerted significant effects on customer engagement, supporting all hypothesised relationships. In contrast, while the Portuguese sample exhibited significant effects of online experience on customer engagement (β = 0.381, p < 0.001), relationship quality (β = 0.769, p < 0.001), and customer inspiration (β = 0.721, p < 0.001), the direct path from relationship quality to customer engagement was not significant (β = 0.094, p = 0.132). Customer inspiration, however, remained a strong predictor of customer engagement (β = 0.402, p < 0.001).

Predictive accuracy and relevance were assessed using R² and Q² values. The model demonstrated strong explanatory power, accounting for 73.5% of the variance in customer

Table 3. Measurement model: Kuwaiti and Portuguese sample

Second Order Construct	First Order Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Kuwaiti sample					
Online Experience	Entertainment	0.904	0.906	0.933	0.776
	Informativeness	0.908	0.909	0.942	0.845
	Sensory Appeal	0.827	0.828	0.897	0.743
	Social Presence	0.862	0.864	0.916	0.784
Online Relationship Quality	Trust	0.844	0.846	0.928	0.865
	Satisfaction	0.856	0.856	0.933	0.874
	Commitment	0.836	0.837	0.924	0.859
Customer Engagement	Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.908	0.908	0.936	0.784
	Customer Purchases	0.875	0.877	0.914	0.727
	Customer Referrals	0.897	0.899	0.929	0.765
	Customer Social Influence	0.859	0.861	0.904	0.703
Customer Inspiration	Inspired by	0.926	0.928	0.944	0.772
	Inspired to	0.939	0.940	0.954	0.805
Portuguese sample					
Online Experience	Entertainment	0.880	0.881	0.918	0.737
	Informativeness	0.896	0.896	0.935	0.828
	Sensory Appeal	0.838	0.839	0.903	0.756
	Social Presence	0.940	0.942	0.962	0.893
Online Relationship Quality	Trust	0.901	0.901	0.953	0.910
	Satisfaction	0.916	0.917	0.960	0.923
	Commitment	0.811	0.820	0.913	0.840
Customer Engagement	Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.931	0.932	0.951	0.829
	Customer Purchases	0.907	0.916	0.935	0.782
	Customer Referrals	0.913	0.914	0.939	0.794
	Customer Social Influence	0.909	0.912	0.936	0.785
Customer Inspiration	Inspired by	0.936	0.937	0.951	0.797
	Inspired to	0.931	0.933	0.948	0.784

Note. AVE–Average Variance Extracted.

Table 4. Discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Kuwaiti sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Entertainment	0.881												
2.Informativeness	0.484	0.919											
3.Sensory Appeal	0.568	0.626	0.862										
4.Social Presence	0.429	0.586	0.612	0.886									
5.Trust	0.593	0.615	0.607	0.511	0.930								
6. Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.432	0.560	0.555	0.538	0.534	0.886							

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
7.Commitment	0.453	0.586	0.509	0.549	0.759	0.635	0.927						
8. Customer Purchases	0.758	0.506	0.587	0.467	0.746	0.608	0.559	0.853					
9. Customer Referrals	0.584	0.524	0.614	0.635	0.678	0.593	0.569	0.720	0.874				
10. Customer Social Influence	0.469	0.544	0.604	0.573	0.602	0.669	0.638	0.598	0.742	0.838			
11.Inspired by	0.518	0.614	0.689	0.651	0.633	0.627	0.608	0.607	0.691	0.668	0.879		
12.Inspired to	0.567	0.689	0.708	0.703	0.621	0.535	0.632	0.594	0.729	0.692	0.790	0.897	
13.Satisfaction	0.592	0.543	0.522	0.417	0.847	0.461	0.692	0.700	0.599	0.533	0.534	0.559	0.935

Table 5. Discriminant validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Portuguese sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Entertainment	0.858												
2.Informativenes	0.672	0.910											
3.Sensory Appeal	0.565	0.584	0.869										
4.Social presence	0.463	0.452	0.636	0.945									
5.Trust	0.639	0.63	0.531	0.436	0.954								
6. Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.350	0.316	0.499	0.611	0.301	0.911							
7.Commitment	0.621	0.577	0.55	0.544	0.673	0.487	0.917						
8.Customer Purchases	0.723	0.602	0.51	0.386	0.734	0.255	0.694	0.884					
9.Customer Referrals	0.521	0.449	0.536	0.611	0.474	0.625	0.619	0.522	0.891				
10. Customer Social Influence	0.482	0.391	0.54	0.641	0.307	0.755	0.569	0.360	0.786	0.886			
11.Inspired by	0.562	0.466	0.572	0.598	0.432	0.582	0.591	0.417	0.595	0.661	0.892		
12.Inspired to	0.553	0.472	0.523	0.56	0.524	0.512	0.665	0.535	0.550	0.570	0.675	0.885	
13.Satisfaction	0.696	0.659	0.515	0.374	0.793	0.262	0.703	0.797	0.457	0.322	0.399	0.480	0.961

engagement in the Kuwaiti sample and 63.9% in the Portuguese sample. All Q^2 values were positive, confirming predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs (Fornell & Cha, 1994). In addition to indicator level collinearity checks, multicollinearity among predictor constructs in the structural model was explicitly assessed using VIF values reported in Tables 10 and 11. For both the Kuwaiti and Portuguese samples, all VIF values among predictor constructs remained below the conservative threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2022), indicating that collinearity did not bias the estimation of structural relationships. This confirms the robustness of the path coefficient estimates and supports the validity of the structural model results.

Mediation effects were examined using the Variance Accounted For (VAF) approach, which quantifies the proportion of the total effect that is transmitted through the mediators. A VAF value between 20% and 80% indicates partial mediation, while values below 20% suggest the absence of meaningful mediation. As reported in Table 12, both relationship quality (VAF = 0.448, $p < 0.001$) and customer inspiration (VAF = 0.474, $p < 0.001$) partially mediated the relationship between online experience and customer engagement in the Kuwaiti sample. In contrast, for the Portuguese sample, relationship quality did not exhibit a significant mediation effect (VAF= 0.159, $p = 0.130$), whereas customer inspiration emerged as a significant partial mediator (VAF = 0.432, $p < 0.001$).

Overall, these results reveal clear cross-cultural differences in the mechanisms through which online experiences translate into

Table 6. Discriminant validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT): Kuwaiti sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Entertainment													
Informativeness	0.533												
Sensory Appeal	0.654	0.721											
Social Presence	0.480	0.657	0.727										
Trust	0.681	0.704	0.725	0.590									
Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.476	0.617	0.641	0.607	0.610								
Commitment	0.520	0.673	0.613	0.640	0.803	0.731							
Customer Purchases	0.815	0.563	0.686	0.530	0.818	0.679	0.653						
Customer Referrals	0.648	0.578	0.714	0.719	0.778	0.656	0.655	0.811					
Customer Social Influence	0.532	0.615	0.714	0.663	0.708	0.757	0.754	0.685	0.845				
Inspired by	0.568	0.669	0.789	0.727	0.719	0.685	0.695	0.671	0.760	0.750			
Inspired to	0.613	0.744	0.804	0.775	0.695	0.577	0.712	0.651	0.793	0.769	0.844		
Satisfaction	0.676	0.615	0.619	0.478	0.814	0.522	0.817	0.811	0.683	0.622	0.600	0.621	

Table 7. Discriminant validity Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT): Portuguese sample

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Entertainment													
Informativeness	0.757												
Sensory Appeal	0.653	0.672											
Social Presence	0.508	0.491	0.715										
Trust	0.717	0.701	0.607	0.473									
Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.387	0.346	0.566	0.651	0.331								
Commitment	0.731	0.675	0.670	0.631	0.783	0.568							
Customer Purchases	0.807	0.666	0.574	0.409	0.812	0.274	0.798						
Customer Referrals	0.580	0.495	0.612	0.659	0.522	0.677	0.724	0.566					
Customer Social Influence	0.534	0.428	0.619	0.692	0.334	0.822	0.668	0.383	0.861				
Inspired by	0.619	0.509	0.643	0.636	0.471	0.622	0.685	0.447	0.643	0.716			
Inspired to	0.609	0.515	0.591	0.595	0.571	0.549	0.764	0.576	0.593	0.616	0.716		
Satisfaction	0.775	0.728	0.584	0.402	0.813	0.285	0.810	0.812	0.498	0.346	0.431	0.518	

customer engagement, highlighting the contingent role of relationship quality and the more universal relevance of customer inspiration.

Discussion

This study contributes to the understanding of customer engagement in online environments by presenting four second-order formative constructs. These constructs, involving different aspects of the online experience, are valuable in shaping customer engagement in Kuwait and Portugal. While all indicators of online experience contribute to the formation of the construct in both countries, cultural nuances affect their relative importance. Specifically, entertainment and informativeness exhibit higher weights in Kuwait, whereas entertainment and

Table 8. Structural results Kuwait

	Beta	f 2	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Hypothesis
Direct Effect								
Online experience -> Customer Engagement	0.295	0.087	0.079	3.712	0.000	0.134	0.442	H1: supported
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality	0.732	1.153	0.043	17.166	0.000	0.648	0.811	H2: supported
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration	0.832	2.241	0.023	35.750	0.000	0.781	0.874	H3: supported
Relationship Quality -> Customer engagement	0.327	0.182	0.084	3.874	0.000	0.162	0.483	H4: supported
Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.320	0.116	0.094	3.409	0.001	0.136	0.494	H5: supported
Specific Indirect Effect								
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality -> Customer Engagement	0.239		0.060	3.974	0.000	0.122	0.352	
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.266		0.079	3.362	0.001	0.113	0.416	
Total Effect								
Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.320		0.094	3.409	0.001	0.136	0.494	
Relationship Quality -> Customer Engagement	0.327		0.084	3.874	0.000	0.162	0.483	
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration	0.832		0.023	35.750	0.000	0.781	0.874	
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality	0.732		0.043	17.166	0.000	0.648	0.811	

	Beta	f 2	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Hypothesis
Online Experience -> Customer Engagement	0.801		0.027	29.792	0.000	0.745	0.848	
	R2	Q2						
Customer Inspiration	0.691	0.701						
Relationship Quality	0.533	0.723						
Customer Engagement	0.735	0.545						

Second Order Construct	First order Construct	Correlation	Weight	t-value	VIF
Online Experience	Entertainment	0.789	0.359	18.138	1.544
	Informativeness	0.825	0.312	20.037	1.901
	Sensory Appeal	0.852	0.283	18.628	2.193
	Social Presence	0.787	0.277	14.327	1.801
Relationship Quality	Trust	0.948	0.378	36.842	2.948
	Commitment	0.927	0.350	31.924	2.513
	Satisfaction	0.922	0.358	35.440	2.626
Customer Inspiration	Inspired by	0.879	0.522	40.285	2.950
	Inspired to	0.790	0.534	40.683	2.776
Customer Engagement	Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.835	0.296	24.643	2.151
	Customer Purchases	0.847	0.278	23.665	3.049
	Customer Referrals	0.891	0.309	28.147	2.457
	Customer Social Influence	0.871	0.278	22.159	2.983

social presence are more influential in Portugal. These findings highlight the universal relevance of the entertainment features (Kukar-Kinney & Close, 2010), which provoke fun and enthusiasm for shopping across both cultures. However, informativeness (the provision of product and company information (Verhoef et al., 2009) is particularly significant in Kuwait, emphasising the significance of information-rich online interactions in this context.

The three components of relationship quality (RQ) exhibit balanced contributions to the construct in both countries, while the customer inspiration index also shows consistency across contexts. Among the indicators of the customer engagement index, customer knowledge sharing and customer referrals emerge as the most impactful dimensions in both Kuwait and Portugal. This finding suggests that customers in both countries are highly proactive in encouraging others to purchase and providing feedback regarding products and firms, consistent with prior research on customer engagement behaviours (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

Table 9. Structural results Portugal

Relationship	Beta	f 2	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval		Hypothesis
Direct Effect								
Online experience -> Customer Engagement	0.381	0.126	0.081	4.689	0.000	0.230	0.539	H1: supported
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality	0.769	1.449	0.025	31.011	0.000	0.722	0.815	H2: supported
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration	0.721	1.085	0.035	20.593	0.000	0.655	0.794	H3: supported
Relationship Quality -> Customer engagement	0.094	0.010	0.062	1.509	0.132	-0.033	0.215	H4: not supported
Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.402	0.210	0.065	6.216	0.000	0.270	0.511	H5: supported
Specific Indirect Effect								
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality -> Customer Engagement	0.072		0.048	1.524	0.128	-0.025	0.164	
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.290		0.046	6.357	0.000	0.194	0.366	
Total Effect								
Customer Inspiration -> Customer Engagement	0.402		0.065	6.216	0.000	0.270	0.511	
Relationship Quality -> Customer Engagement	0.094		0.062	1.509	0.132	-0.033	0.215	
Online Experience -> Customer Inspiration	0.721		0.035	20.593	0.000	0.655	0.794	
Online Experience -> Relationship Quality	0.769		0.025	31.011	0.000	0.722	0.815	
Online Experience -> Customer Engagement	0.744		0.036	20.669	0.000	0.668	0.811	
	R2	Q2						
Customer Inspiration	0.520	0.654						
Relationship Quality	0.592	0.718						
Customer Engagement	0.639	0.531						
Second Order Construct	*First order Construct*	Correlation	Weight	t-value	VIF			
Online Experience	Entertainment	0.846	0.364	22.296	2.013			
	Informativeness	0.821	0.281	23.496	2.060			
	Sensory Appeal	0.833	0.267	21.129	2.143			
	Social Presence	0.774	0.309	18.548	1.730			
Relationship Quality	Trust	0.910	0.367	38.349	3.055			

Relationship	Beta	f 2	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Bias Corrected Confidence Interval	Hypothesis
	Commitment	0.876	0.365	31.308	2.464		
	Satisfaction	0.923	0.373	38.047	2.264		
Customer Inspiration	Inspired by	0.892	0.559	26.074	2.228		
	Inspired to	0.675	0.533	31.282	2.096		
Customer Engagement	Customer Knowledge Sharing	0.835	0.321	24.024	2.507		
	Customer Purchases	0.788	0.212	10.561	2.386		
	Customer Referrals	0.907	0.334	31.762	2.237		
	Customer Social Influence	0.914	0.333	27.410	2.212		

Table 10. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) among predictor constructs Kuwait

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1- Customer engagement																	
2–Entertainment				1,544													
3–Informativenes				1,901													
4–Online experience	4,374												3,319			2,201	
5–Sensory appeal				2,193													
6–Social presence				1,801													
7–Trust																4,948	
8–Customer knowledge sharing	2,151																
9–Commitment																2,513	
10–Customer purchase	3,049																
11–Customer referrals	3,457																
12–Customer social influence	2,983																
13–Customer inspiration	4,172																
14–Inspired by														2,95			
15–Inspired to														3,776			
16–Online relationship quality	2,822																
17–Satisfaction																3,626	

Table 11. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) among predictor constructs Portugal

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1- Customer engagement																	
2–Entertainment				2,013													
3–Informativenes				2,06													
4–Online experience	3,69												2,087			2,46	
5–Sensory appeal				2,143													
6–Social presence				1,73													
7–Trust																3,055	
8–Customer knowledge sharing	2,507																
9–Commitment																2,464	
10–Customer purchase	3,386																
11–Customer referrals	3,237																
12–Customer social influence	4,212																
13–Customer inspiration	2,675																
14–Inspired by												2,228					
15–Inspired to												2,096					
16–Online relationship quality	4,279																
17–Satisfaction																3,264	

Table 12. Mediation analysis, VAF

	VAF		p
Kuwait	0.448	Relationship Quality	0.00015
	0.474	Inspiration	0.00070
Portugal	0.159	Relationship Quality	0.12995
	0.432	Inspiration	0

The results also provide significant insights into the mediating roles of relationship quality and customer inspiration in the relationship between online experience and customer engagement. In Kuwait, relationship quality significantly mediates this relationship, as evidenced by a VAF value of 44.8%. This supports H4 in the Kuwaiti sample and aligns with the principles of the social exchange theory (Anderson & Narus, 1984). The quality of the online relationship fosters satisfaction, confidence, and commitment, encouraging Kuwaiti customers to actively engage by recommending products, providing feedback, and making repeat purchases. On the other hand, in Portugal, relationship quality does not serve as a significant mediator (VAF = 15.9%), indicating that its role is less pronounced in this cultural context. This disparity may arise from Kuwait's collectivist cultural orientation, which places greater emphasis on interpersonal trust and relational bonds compared to Portugal.

Customer inspiration, on the other hand, acts as a robust mediator in both countries, with VAF values of 47.4% in Kuwait and 43.2% in Portugal. These findings support H5 across both cultural

contexts and align with the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The intrinsic motivation generated by inspiration amplifies the effects of online experiences, resulting in heightened customer engagement. However, the higher VAF in Kuwait suggests that inspiration plays a slightly more prominent role in this market, possibly reflecting the stronger emphasis on success-oriented behaviours characteristic of its more masculine culture.

The cultural context profoundly influences the mediation effects of relationship quality and customer inspiration. The greater significance of relationship quality in Kuwait may be attributed to its collectivist orientation, where relational bonds and trust are integral to customer engagement. In contrast, Portugal's more individualistic culture diminishes the relative importance of relationship quality as a mediator. Similarly, the masculine cultural orientation in Kuwait, which prioritises success and achievement, enhances the impact of customer inspiration in motivating engagement.

Conclusions

Theoretical and managerial implications

This study enhances the understanding of customer engagement in online environments by identifying the roles of online experience, relationship quality (RQ), and customer inspiration across two culturally distinct markets: Kuwait and Portugal. The findings emphasise that cultural context significantly shapes how these constructs interact to drive customer engagement, offering both theoretical contributions and practical insights.

First, this study extends existing theories by demonstrating the mediating roles of relationship quality and customer inspiration in culturally diverse contexts. It highlights the importance of integrating cultural dimensions, such as individualism and motivation towards achievement and success, into models of online customer engagement. Second, the findings confirm that customer inspiration serves as a universal mediator of engagement, while relationship quality is more context dependent. This

suggests that future research should investigate the interplay between cultural values and relational constructs in online environments. Finally, by applying the self-determination theory and the social exchange theory, the study underscores how intrinsic motivation (inspiration) and relational dynamics (relationship quality) operate in different cultural settings to influence engagement.

Our findings also offer several actionable implications for managers designing digital customer experiences across culturally diverse markets. In collectivist and achievement-oriented contexts such as Kuwait, companies should place strong emphasis on cultivating high-quality online relationships. This involves designing digital interfaces and communication strategies that signal trustworthiness, reliability, and long-term commitment (e.g., personalised account dashboards, loyalty programmes that reward continued engagement, or follow-up communications after purchase). In such contexts, relational continuity instead of transactional efficiency should guide digital experience design.

By contrast, in more individualistic and less achievement-driven contexts, such as Portugal, relational mechanisms appear to play a lesser role in motivating engagement. Hence, managers may benefit from prioritising experiential and hedonic elements of the online environment. Enhancing social presence through interactive features such as live chat, community forums, or social media integration can humanise the digital interface and foster engagement without relying heavily on relational depth. Similarly, incorporating engaging content, dynamic visuals, and immersive storytelling can increase attention and stimulate active participation (e.g., short videos, interactive product demonstrations, or gamified elements).

Across both cultural contexts, customer inspiration emerges as a robust and universal driver of engagement, underscoring the strategic importance of inspirational content in digital marketing. Managers should design content that activates aspirational goals and motivates action. This may include showcasing customer success stories, highlighting pathways for personal or

professional improvement through product use, or communicating brand narratives that emphasise progress, achievement, and self-development. In achievement-oriented cultures such as Kuwait, inspirational messaging that aligns with themes of success, performance, and advancement is likely to be particularly effective. In contrast, in contexts such as Portugal, inspiration may be more strongly driven by creativity, self-expression, or experiential enrichment, suggesting the need for culturally calibrated inspirational cues. More broadly, our results suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to digital engagement is unlikely to be effective in global markets. Managers should adopt a modular approach to online experience design, in which core functional elements are standardised, while relational, experiential, and inspirational components are adapted to cultural orientations.

From a policy perspective, the findings also carry implications for regulators and public institutions concerned with digital market governance and consumer protection. As trust and relationship quality play a critical role in shaping engagement, policymakers should encourage transparency standards, data protection practices, and clear communication of consumer rights in digital environments. Strengthening regulatory frameworks around online privacy, platform accountability, and fair digital practices can indirectly support engagement by reinforcing consumer confidence in digital interactions. Moreover, public agencies and industry associations can support organisations, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, by promoting best-practice guidelines for culturally sensitive digital design and the responsible use of inspirational and persuasive content. Such initiatives can contribute to more inclusive, trustworthy, and sustainable digital marketplaces.

Limitations and future research

While this study offers substantial contributions to the marketing literature, it also has limitations that provide opportunities for further research. First, this study employed a panel sample that could benefit from a larger size for more robust results. The reliance on a convenient sampling panel may have introduced potential biases, limiting the generalisability of the findings. Second, this study examined only two cultural contexts. While meaningful insights were obtained, the findings may not be generalisable to other cultures, limiting the ability to understand broader cultural influences. Third, the research focused on relationship quality and customer inspiration as mediators but did not investigate other potential mediators or moderators. This restricts the scope of the proposed model.

Future studies should aim to include larger and more diverse interviewee pools, containing a broader age range and other demographic characteristics. This would enhance the depth and applicability of the qualitative findings. Subsequent research could use larger panel samples and employ probabilistic sampling techniques to improve representativeness and mitigate biases in the quantitative analysis. Extending the study to include additional cultural settings would provide valuable cross-cultural insights, enabling a deeper understanding of how cultural values moderate customer engagement mechanisms.

Future research could also explore other mediators, such as brand attachment, perceived value, or trust, as well as potential moderators such as personality traits, emotional variables (e.g., playfulness, pleasure, enjoyability), and cognitive variables (e.g., dominance, thinking styles). Additionally, future research could focus on incorporating longitudinal designs to help track changes in online experiences and customer engagement over time, providing insights into the durability and evolution of these relationships. Finally, testing the model in diverse industries and market segments could improve its applicability and relevance across various business contexts.

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