The Influence of Personality on Motivations: Comparing Uses and Gratifications of Social Media Users in the United States and Kuwait

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Social media platforms dominate popular communication. However, few studies have examined how culture impacts social media users, and even fewer have compared them with students in the United States. Based on the uses and gratification approach, this study examines the frequency and motivations of use of four social media platforms—Facebook, Twitter (rebranded as X in July 2023), Instagram, and Snapchat—among social media users in the United States and Kuwait. This study offers insight into social media users' motivations in two distinct cultural contexts, with a specific focus on how personality may impact their motivations. Findings show that Kuwaiti students used Twitter mostly

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for information, while U.S. students used it mostly for entertainment. Both U.S. and Kuwaiti users preferred Facebook for social connections and used Instagram and Snapchat primarily for entertainment.

Keywords: social media, comparative research, uses and gratifications, U.S. social media use, Kuwait social media use, personality traits, social media motivation

Social media platforms dominate popular communication. Studies examining users' motivations for social media have examined the characteristics of users in terms of race, age, gender, and the characteristics of the medium. Based on the uses and gratification (U&G) approach, this study provides further analysis by examining the role of personality characteristics in social media users' motivations in Kuwait and the United States. Additionally, the current study adds a comparative element to shed light on how individuals in distinct cultures may exhibit different motives for using social media.

Dimitrova and Matthes (2018) explained that most social media studies focus on one country, which is problematic because of the lack of knowledge of the contextual and cultural factors that drive content and media effects. By collecting data from a democracy, the United States of America, and a constitutional monarchy, Kuwait, the current study examines individuals who exist in environments with varying levels of media freedom. At the time the study began, Freedom House, an organization that evaluates freedoms—including media freedom around the world—ranked Kuwait as "partially free" and the United States as "free" (Freedom House, 2023a, 2023b). This difference can be explained by the United States' lengthier and richer history of guaranteeing freedom of the press at the constitutional level, dating back to the 18th century. This study offers insights into students' social media use in these two contexts, particularly about how personality may impact their motivations.

Theoretical Framework

Individual motivations to use various social media platforms are examined thoroughly from the U&G perspective because this perspective focuses on the characteristics of users (Shin, 2011). Many U&G studies focus on the motivations for accessing communication technologies (Grace-Farfaglia, Dekkers, Sundararajan, Peters, & Park, 2006), while others focus on content—such as faith-based content (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017), reality television (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, & Stitt, 2003), or specific user type (Stevens, Gilliard-Matthews, Dunaev, Woods, & Brawner, 2017). Few studies have examined how cultural forces shape individuals' motivations to use media, and when they do, they primarily focus on Europe, Asia, and the United States (Chang, Lee, & Kim, 2006; Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006; Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005).

To be clear, some studies have linked motivations for social media use to research on media effects. For example, Perugini and Solano (2021) found that motivations, such as searching for information and maintaining personal relationships, are related to varying levels of emotional, social, and personal well-being (Perugini & Solano, 2021). Still, Rubin (2002) cites Windahl (1981) as distinguishing between the two research traditions by noting that "a media-effects researcher 'most often looks at the mass communication process from the communicator's end,' whereas a uses researcher begins with the audience member"

(Windahl, 1981, p. 176). Although there are theoretical similarities between the two traditions, the media effects are outside the scope of this study.

When U&G has been employed to examine social media, studies have typically focused on one or more specific platforms (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012). Among the motivations for social media use is self-presentation, which refers to the need to show aspects of oneself to others to manage relationships, among other reasons (Leung, 2013; Punyanunt-Carter, De La Cruz, & Wrench, 2017). Self-presentation has been documented as a motivation for taking selfies (Al-Kandari & Abdelaziz, 2018) and using Instagram (Al-Kandari, Al-Sumait, & Al-Hunaiyyan, 2017), among other social media uses.

Information and learning motivations are also referenced as motivations for social media use. The information motivation for social media use relates to the use of social media to follow developments in world affairs (Young, 2013). Evidence suggests that this need is documented among both U.S. and Korean social media users (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011). Learning motivations refer to the desire to observe with the intention of benefiting from others' experiences and have been shown to be a common motivation on platforms such as Snapchat (Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2017).

In addition to the motivations mentioned, social connection, self-expression, and entertainment are among the further documented motivations for the use of various social media platforms. Social connection refers to the motivation to stay in touch with friends and family and is known to be a motivating factor in the use of platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Similarly, self-expression refers to the need to communicate, with research indicating that Snapchat has been effective in facilitating nonverbal communication among teenagers (Waddell, 2016). Lastly, entertainment motivations refer to the need to have fun or relax (Leung, 2013), with platforms such as YouTube and Facebook fulfilling such motivations (Leung, 2009). Based on this, the literature has clearly outlined six distinct motivations for social media use that are relevant: self-presentation, information, learning, social connection, self-expression, and entertainment.

Big Five Personality Traits and Media Use

Psychologists have found five reliable dimensions of personality: extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and openness (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). Each dimension can be viewed as a bipolar scale, with two extremes between which individual tendencies exist (Barnes, Mahar, Wong, & Rune, 2017). These psychometrics are widely accepted, although criticisms are available (Gosling et al., 2003). Unlike personality constructs that are construed as positive (i.e., character strengths) or negative (i.e., narcissism), the Big Five are considered neutral (Harzer, Bezuglova, & Weber, 2021). The Big Five have been examined in relation to motivations for social media use—including the degree to which individuals share information on Facebook (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Furthermore, a higher score in agreeableness and a lower score in emotional stability are associated with a higher frequency of viewing online cat content (Myrick, 2015). Similarly, those who score high on openness are more likely to enjoy the aesthetics involved in violent media content (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). Next, we summarize each dimension in relation to the U&G framework.

Extraversion refers to the degree to which one is sociable, talkative, active (Gosling et al., 2003), and warm (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). Those with higher extraversion scores are more likely to use various Facebook features, such as chat and comments (Ryan & Xenos, 2011), or attend movies to fulfill social

needs rather than to observe their contents (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). At the opposite end of the scale, introverts tend to be more reserved and shyer (Gosling et al., 2003). Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) found that introverts were more likely to use social networking sites to develop trust and emotional kinship rather than to track distant, weak relationships.

Conscientiousness is a dimension that measures the degree to which one is dependable and organized, as opposed to being spontaneous and careless (Sims, 2017). Individuals with low scores in conscientiousness are less likely to express negative opinions of others online (Stoughton, Thompson, & Meade, 2013). Other studies have concluded that more conscientious individuals are less likely to engage in social networking behavior online, except when it is related to searching for information or communicating with friends (Barnes et al., 2017).

Neuroticism is the degree to which one is anxious, moody, and easily stressed (Gosling et al., 2003). An individual who scores low on neuroticism is characterized by being confident and relaxed (Gosling et al., 2003). Since individuals with high scores in neuroticism experience more anxiety and nervousness, it is logical, then, that studies show they use media, such as television, as a stress reliever (Galauner, Pettey, Beatty, Rudd, & Atkin, 2011). Agreeableness is a dimension that measures the degree to which one is helpful and compassionate versus the degree to which one is competitive and interested in oneself (Sims, 2017). One who scores less on agreeableness would be less trusting, cooperative, or generous (Gosling et al., 2003). High scores on agreeableness negatively correlate with the extent to which one likes violent genres of media (Krcmar & Kean, 2005), while lower scores are positively related to expressing negative opinions of others online (Stoughton et al., 2013).

Finally, openness measures the degree to which one is curious, reflective, deep thinking (Gosling et al., 2003), and adventurous (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). One who is low in openness would be more conventional (Gosling et al., 2003), while one who scores high in openness would likely score high in active-empathic listening behaviors (Sims, 2017) or enjoy the aesthetics of violent media (Krcmar & Kean, 2005).

Comparing Kuwait and the United States

Few studies have comparatively examined the motivations for using social media in both the United States and a Middle Eastern nation. For example, Dashti and Yateem (2018) found that 3- to 5-year-old children in Kuwait were more likely to use cell phones and iPads to access YouTube, among other video-based platforms, than in the United States. In a content analysis of Instagram pages of banks listed on Kuwait's Stock Exchange, Al-Kandari et al. (2019) found that the promotion of senior management on Instagram is consistent with "undemocratic, top-down and non-Western contexts" (p. 8). Clearly, there are differences in social media use across the two cultures on both organizational and individual levels. The current study adds to the current understanding of how cultural forces may nuance U&G research by examining how personality factors affect individual social media use in vastly different cultures.

Kuwait is an Arab Gulf state that distinguishes itself from its neighbors because of the freedoms it affords women (Herb, 2002). According to the World Economic Forum's (2024) Global Gender Gap Index 2024 rankings, which measure factors related to policies, customs, and cultural practices that impact women's educational, health, and economic achievement outcomes, among other measures (p. 11), Kuwait's economy profile ranks 131 of 146 countries (World Economic Forum, 2024, p. 227). Unlike most

Middle Eastern nations, Kuwait has a partially free media system (Selvik, 2011) and is known for its unusual outspokenness on social media platforms such as Twitter (Aladwani, 2015; Graham et al., 2013).

Historically a parliamentary monarchy, Kuwait is part of a group of oil-rich Middle Eastern nations, often perceived positively in American public opinion polls (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). This economic prosperity has, in turn, enabled the adoption of new and trendy communication technologies among Kuwait's citizens (Al Nashmi, Cleary, Molleda, & McAdams, 2010; Wheeler, 2006). As a result, most Kuwaitis access a wide variety of media content produced globally (Wheeler, 2006); however, they generally support some types of censorship for cultural reasons—such as pornography (Kaposi, 2014). As an Arab nation with a collectivist culture, it is one of the few in the Middle East with a partially free press. By 2023, the number of media freedoms afforded to Kuwaitis further declined, according to Reporters Without Borders (2023).

In comparison, the United States guarantees freedom of the press in the first amendment to its constitution. A representative democracy, the U.S. Constitution focuses on individual liberties. Individuals in the United States are less interdependent on one another culturally in comparison. The United States is rated "free" in Freedom in the World 2023, Freedom House's annual study of political rights and civil liberties worldwide (Freedom House, 2023b).

Beyond these similarities and differences, there are some key points worth making. While the United States is the most religious, wealthy, Western, and democratic country (Domke & Coe, 2010), Kuwaiti students score more highly on both religious beliefs and religiosity (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2012). Although some critics argue that the United States is becoming less religious, the NORC at the University of Chicago (2021) shows that most Americans either believe in religion and are spiritual or do not believe in a religion but are spiritual. In fact, Fahmy (2018) shows that Americans are generally more devout than citizens in other Western democratic contexts—as demonstrated by higher weekly religious service attendance and prayer. While the official language in Kuwait is Arabic, Dashti (2015) argues that it "is definitely the most important language in the country" (p. 28). Although the United States does not have an official language, English is the most common language for official purposes, followed by Spanish. While the United States has its legislative body and elected president, the Kuwaiti people have a meaningful legislative body and monarch (Crystal, 1995). Despite these differences, the two countries are rich and technologically advanced.

This comparison is useful because it allows us to examine intercultural communication in nations that enjoy press freedom. Although this information sheds light on the contextual aspects of social media use in both countries, a void remains in examining how these cultural environments affect individual values about the use of the four social media platforms. The current study aims to partially fill this gap by examining individual differences in motivation and use of social media.

Motivations for Social Media Use

Studies exploring social media have generally focused on a particular platform (Al-Kandari et al., 2017) or have compared multiple platforms (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Hughes et al., 2012). When a U&G approach is used, the amount of engagement with a particular medium is typically quantified in terms of frequency and intensity (Alhabash & Ma, 2017) or media exposure (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The current study examines the frequency and motivations behind the use of four social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

The Pew Research Center (2018) reported high adoption of Snapchat among U.S. adults. Among Snapchat users aged 18–24 in the United States, 82% use the platform daily (Pew Research Center, 2018). Although only 27% of the U.S. population used Snapchat, this proportion increased to 68% among adults aged 18–29. In the Gulf region of the Arab world, the percentage of Internet users who use Snapchat is 51% in Saudi Arabia, 46% in the United Arab Emirates, and 34% in Qatar (Dennis, Martin, Lance, & Hassan, 2019). In comparison, Snapchat users constitute a smaller portion of Internet users in Levantine and North African parts of the Arab world: 32% in Jordan, 18% in Lebanon, 12% in Egypt, and 10% in Tunisia (Dennis et al., 2019). Less is known about Snapchat users in Kuwait, however.

Instagram is an important visual and social medium in both the United States and Kuwait. The Pew Research Center (2018) reports that over a third of American adults accessed Instagram daily in 2017, with a 7% increase since 2016. Out of the 22 Arab countries examined, Kuwait has the fifth largest share of Instagram users in the Arab world (Salem, 2017).

Different motivations have been documented in relation to different platforms. For example, users report a greater ability for self-expression with 10-second videos on Snapchat because of their reliance on nonverbal communication to make a point (Waddell, 2016). Relatedly, Snapchat users also reported a positive mood associated with the use of the platform, indicating that it fulfills entertainment needs, according to Punyanunt-Carter et al. (2017), in addition to Facebook, YouTube, and Wikipedia users, who similarly report entertainment motives as well (Leung, 2009).

Researchers have also distinguished between visual and text-based social media (Al-Kandari & Abdelaziz, 2018; Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2017). Social media that facilitates visual communication through photographs or videos enables users to express themselves through facial expressions and other nonverbal cues that are otherwise unavailable (Waddell, 2016). However, these online nonverbal communication cues and gender roles have been shown to vary, along with the general adoption of these new technologies (Chinn & Fairlie, 2007; Yee, Bailenson, Urbanek, Chang, & Merget, 2007). Some of the social media platforms that facilitate these visual photo-sharing features include Instagram and Snapchat.

Although the impact of social media and selfies on visual culture has been explored (Murray, 2015), few studies have explored the extent to which individual personality traits are associated with motivation for social media use in two distinct world cultures: the United States and Kuwait.

Research Questions

This study examined how openness and other personality traits affect the use and gratification of social media in the United States and Kuwait. Based on theoretical concepts related to the influence of personality on motivation, this study examined two research questions:

RQ1:   *What are the motives for using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat by American and Kuwaiti university students?*

RQ2:   *Which factors (demographics, five personality traits, and frequency of social media use) best predict the various motives for using Instagram and Snapchat by American and Kuwaiti university students?*

Methods

Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected from undergraduate students at two universities, including a large research university in the southeastern United States and a private university in Kuwait. Of the total 974 respondents, 528 (54%) were from the United States and 446 (46%) were from Kuwait. They responded to the Qualtrics survey online during the first two weeks of October 2017. Participants were recruited from among students enrolled in different mass communication courses. Some students voluntarily and anonymously responded to the online questionnaire, while others received extra credit for doing so, depending on the instructors' preferences. The questionnaire was made available in English and Arabic. Although the Kuwaiti private university offers English-language education, many students responded to the Arabic version of the survey.

Measurement

Six motives for using Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat were designated as the outcome variables in this study. The questionnaire included the social media use of motivational items from Alhabash and Ma (2017). Students expressed agreement/disagreement with statements exploring the motives of self-presentation, information, learning, entertainment, opinion expression, and social connection using five-point Likert scales ranging from "Strongly agree" coded as 5 to "Strongly disagree" coded as 1. Table 1 (see next page) includes a list of the motive variables and their respective statements.

Table 1. Statements Used to Measure Motives for Using Social Media.

Motives for Using Social Media	Statements
Self-Presentation	Inform people about myself.
	Get others to know about me.
Information	Follow recent news.
	Know about new developments.
Learning	Learn beneficial things.
	Benefit from the experiences of others.
Entertainment	Be entertained
	Amuse myself
Opinion Expression	Express my opinion.
	Comment on what I see and read.
Social Connection	Stay in touch with others.
	Socially connect.

I use (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat) to…
Response Options: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

The motive variables ranged from 1 to 5. Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alphas and descriptive statistics for each motive by social media platform. The motive variables all have good to excellent internal consistency

as measured by Cronbach's alpha scores, which is not surprising given this is a set of established measures. The average motive scores are remarkably similar across countries, although U.S. students have the highest scores for the entertainment motive, whereas Kuwaiti students have the highest scores for social connection.

Table 2. Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Motives for Using Social Media, by Country With U.S. Students (n = 528) Indicated by U.S. and Kuwaiti Students (n = 446) Indicated by K.

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat
Self-Presentation				
US	0.92	0.87	0.89	0.89
	(*M* = 2.52, *SD* = 1.20)	(*M* = 3.48, *SD* = 1.09)	(*M* = 4.03, *SD* = 0.90)	(*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.00)
K	0.86	0.94	0.89	0.90
	(*M* = 2.96, *SD* = 1.03)	(*M* = 2.85, *SD* = 1.18)	(*M* = 3.36, *SD* = 1.09)	(*M* = 3.92, *SD* = 1.01)
Information				
US	0.88	0.90	0.89	0.91
	(*M* = 4.02, *SD* = 0.87)	(*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 1.01)	(*M* = 2.99, *SD* = 1.15)	(*M* = 3.02, *SD* = 1.25)
K	0.81	0.90	0.86	0.86
	(*M* = 4.08, *SD* = 0.79)	(*M* = 3.11, *SD* = 1.24)	(*M* = 4.11, *SD* = 0.84)	(*M* = 3.76, *SD* = 1.08)
Learning				
US	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.69
	(*M* = 3.52, *SD* = 0.99)	(*M* = 3.31, *SD* = 0.94)	(*M* = 3.25, *SD* = 1.01)	(*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 1.06)
K	0.70	0.93	0.80	0.81
	(*M* = 3.94, *SD* = 0.82)	(*M* = 3.19, *SD* = 1.26)	(*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 0.86)	(*M* = 3.87, *SD* = 0.99)
Entertainment				
US	0.97	0.93	0.88	0.94
	(*M* = 4.39, *SD* = 0.79)	(*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 0.91)	(*M* = 4.48, *SD* = 0.59)	(*M* = 4.55, *SD* = 0.61)
K	0.79	0.92	0.83	0.82
	(*M* = 4.02, *SD* = 0.87)	(*M* = 3.43, *SD* = 1.13)	(*M* = 4.33, *SD* = 0.72)	(*M* = 4.46, *SD* = 0.67)
Opinion Expression				
US	0.85	0.80	0.67	0.74
	(*M* = 2.71, *SD* = 1.14)	(*M* = 2.70, *SD* = 1.07)	(*M* = 3.07, *SD* = 1.09)	(*M* = 2.82, *SD* = 1.17)
K	0.77	0.83	0.78	0.73
	(*M* = 3.58, *SD* = 1.03)	(*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 1.16)	(*M* = 3.35, *SD* = 1.12)	(*M* = 3.69, *SD* = 1.06)

Social Connection				
US	0.89	0.86	0.83	0.87
	(*M* = 3.27, *SD* = 1.13)	(*M* = 4.20, *SD* = 0.80)	(*M* = 4.30, *SD* = 0.75)	(*M* = 4.60, *SD* = 0.72)
K	0.87	0.88	0.91	0.89
	(*M* = 3.47, *SD* = 1.12)	(*M* = 4.06, *SD* = 0.92)	(*M* = 3.97, *SD* = 0.98)	(*M* = 4.27, *SD* = 0.80)

Table 3 features a list of the personality dimensions and their respective statements. The responses for each dimension were averaged across statements; therefore, the personality dimension scores ranged from 1 to 5.

Table 3. Statements Used to Measure Personality Dimensions.

Personality Dimensions	Statements
Stem Question	*I consider myself as someone who…*
Agreeableness	Is careless about others' emotions (R)
	Sympathizes with others' feelings
	Is not interested in other people's problems (R)
	Feels others' emotions
Extraversion	Is outgoing, sociable
	Tends to be quiet (R)
	Is talkative
	Is shy, inhibited (R)
Conscientiousness	Likes order
	Can be careless (R)
	Organized
	Tends to be disorganized (R)
Neuroticism	Worries a lot
	Is emotionally stable, not easily upset (R)
	Has frequent mood swings
	Remains calm in tense situations (R)
Openness	Prefers change
	Is curious about many different things
	Is reserved toward what is new (R)
	Prefers work that is routine (R)

Response Options: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

This study included three sets of predictor variables. The first were dimensions of the Big Five Personality Inventory, the second were demographics, and the last were the frequency of using Instagram and Snapchat. The Big Five Personality Inventory consists of asking students to agree/disagree with a series of statements describing personality characteristics in terms of five dimensions (agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness).

Table 4 shows Cronbach's alphas and descriptive statistics for each personality dimension by country. Since the Cronbach's alpha scores for openness were especially low for the Kuwaiti sample, they were dropped from further analyses for both countries to maintain comparability.

Table 4. Personality Dimensions Reliability and Descriptive Statistics by Nation

	Cronbach's Alpha	*M*	*SD*
U.S. Students (n = 528)			
Agreeableness	0.73	2.92	0.41
Extraversion	0.89	3.25	0.34
Conscientiousness	0.79	3.34	0.39
Neuroticism	0.73	3.34	0.43
Openness	0.63	3.30	0.42
Kuwaiti Students (n = 446)			
Agreeableness	0.80	3.21	0.40
Extraversion	0.70	3.24	0.43
Conscientiousness	0.72	3.08	0.45
Neuroticism	0.61	3.34	0.52
Openness	0.33	3.53	0.49

The demographic variables included gender, age, and years of education in university. Respondents employed the following categorical options to report on their frequency of social media use: "I do not use it" coded as 0, "Rarely" 1, "Sometimes" 2, "Very often" 3, and "Always" as 4. Criticized for being vague, this scale has been used in Arab media research (Al-Kandari & Abdelaziz, 2018; Al-Kandari, Melkote, & Sharif, 2016; Al-Shohaib, Al-Kandari, & Abdulrahim, 2009). Given that the perception of time is a cultural construct (Alon & Brett, 2007), this scale was used for our study.

To further assess the measurement quality of the motive outcome variables and the personality predictor variables, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The model fit indices for the models are shown in Table 5. CFA has several measures to assess model adequacy. First, the CFI (comparative fit index), and second, the TLI (Tucker-Lewis index), both of which indicate an adequate fit when they are greater than 0.9. Third, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) measures how closely the model reproduces data patterns, and a value indicates a good fit if less than 0.05. For more about CFA, see Brown (2015). Based on the results of the CFAs for motive variables by social media platform, TLI and CFI values are greater than 0.9, indicating a good model. The *RMSEA* = 0.07 for all media platforms, additionally indicating acceptable models. All the models fit well for the motive variables; however, the overall personality model is not particularly good based on the TLI and CFI values being less than 0.9 and the *RMSEA* = 0.09, which indicates a poor model. As such, we include each personality dimension separately,

acknowledge this as a limitation of this study, and proceed with multiple regression analysis to see how personality affects motives for using social media.

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analyses for Motives and Personality.

		TLI	CFI	RMSEA
U.S. Students (*n* = 528)				
Motives to Use	Twitter	0.95	0.97	0.05
	Facebook	0.96	0.98	0.04
	Instagram	0.94	0.97	0.06
	Snapchat	0.97	0.98	0.04
Personality		0.77	0.82	0.11
Kuwaiti Students (*n* = 446)				
Motives to Use	Twitter	0.94	0.96	0.06
	Facebook	0.95	0.97	0.1
	Instagram	0.97	0.97	0.06
	Snapchat	0.95	0.97	0.07
Personality		0.71	0.76	0.08

Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 6 shows a comparison of the sampled students' demographic and media use variable values for the United States and Kuwait. In the United States, more students were female (72%), whereas this was the opposite for Kuwaiti students (61% male). The ages of the two samples are remarkably similar, with mostly younger students as expected (M = 22.9). However, the number of years at university is quite different, with U.S. students reporting fewer years than Kuwaiti students. Appendix A provides more detailed, descriptive information about the respondents.

Table 6. Means of Social Media Use by Country.

	Kuwait Students (*n* = 446)	U.S. Students (*n* = 528)	*t* test	*p* value	df
Frequency Facebook	2.54	4.55	−31.921	<0.001	974
Frequency Twitter	2.56	3.22	7.598	<0.001	974
Frequency Instagram	2.00	1.87	−2.1377	0.033	974
Frequency Snapchat	1.62	1.81	2.7907	0.005	974

While the use of Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are extremely high in the United States and Kuwait, Facebook has only been used by 25% of Kuwaiti students compared with use by 93% of students in the United States. Looking more deeply at the frequency of specific platform use, the values ranged from 1 (never used it), 2 (rarely use it), 3 (sometimes use it), 4 (very often use it), to 5 (always use it) for students in both countries. The mean values show the level of use by the average student in each country.

In the United States, students use Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat a bit more than sometimes, but use Facebook a bit less than sometimes. However, in Kuwait, the frequency of use varies across all four platforms, with Facebook used least between the rarely and sometimes levels.

In other words, social media users in both nations have different platform preferences. However, this information does not reflect personality or individual factors. Next, the study examines the Big Five personality factors. Quintelier (2014) called upon the study of this personality test to examine individuals' political consumption behavior. While that variable was operationalized differently in her study, the current study proposes examining social media use as a means of consuming political information, particularly given the varying contexts in which individuals exist.

The first research question compares motivations for social media use across cultures. Referring back to Table 2, the motives for social media use in the U.S. sample were as follows: Self-presentation mean scores were highest for Instagram, information motivations were highest for Twitter, learning motivations were highest for Twitter, entertainment motivations were highest for Snapchat, opinion expression motivations were highest for Instagram, and social connections were highest for Snapchat. For the Kuwaiti sample, self-presentation was highest for Snapchat, information motivation was highest for Instagram, learning motivation was highest for Instagram, entertainment was highest for Snapchat, opinion expression was highest for Snapchat, and social connection was highest for Snapchat.

The second research question questions which personality factors are related to the motivation to use social media. Table 7 addresses this question, and the multiple regressions are explained in the section below.

Multiple Regressions

Table 7 shows the results of 32 regressions that demonstrate the relationship between social media gratification and personality. There are four dependent variables (self-presentation, information, learning, and entertainment indices) separated by the two countries and the four social media types. Since there are so many multiple regressions, we applied the False Discovery Rate correction, which was developed by Benjamini and Hochberg (1995). This correction method is commonly used for correcting p values in multiple testing situations, and corrections appear when there is an asterisk. The estimates shown in this table are the unstandardized regression coefficients. The regression models showed very few statistically significant relationships between personality and motivations to use social media in either country or across social media types.

After correction, there were exactly six statistically significant relationships: four pertain to self-presentation gratification and two pertain to entertainment gratification. Specifically, for Kuwaiti students using Facebook, women have lower self-presentation indices than men by almost one point (−0.74) on the five-point scale. Higher extraversion indices are associated with higher self-presentation indices for Kuwaiti students using Instagram (0.40). Among U.S. students using Instagram, women have higher self-presentation indices than men by approximately a quarter of a point (0.28). For U.S. students using Snapchat, higher extraversion indices are associated with higher self-presentation indices (0.43). Higher conscientiousness indices for U.S. students using Facebook are associated with higher entertainment indices (0.40). Lastly, for U.S. students using Instagram, women have higher entertainment indices than men by approximately a quarter of a point (0.22).

Table 7. Multiple Regressions of Motives for Use on Personality and Control Variables by Country and Social Media Type.

Twitter	Self-Presentation Index		Information Index		Learning Index		Entertainment Index	
Country: Kuwait	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value
Agree Index	0.32	0.02	0.13	0.21	−0.02	0.83	0.13	0.25
Extraversion Index	0.05	0.67	−0.18	0.07	0.12	0.24	0.12	0.27
Conscientiousness Index	0.19	0.11	0.03	0.77	−0.01	0.90	0.01	0.91
Gender	−0.26	0.02	−0.07	0.42	−0.02	0.79	0.07	0.46
Twitter								
Country: U.S.	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value
Agree Index	0.09	0.59	0.01	0.95	0.13	0.33	−0.15	0.13
Extraversion Index	0.19	0.28	−0.17	0.19	−0.05	0.73	0.01	0.96
Conscientiousness Index	−0.14	0.38	0.00	0.97	0.03	0.84	0.01	0.88
Gender	−0.27	0.04	−0.09	0.34	−0.08	0.46	−0.07	0.42
Facebook								
Country: Kuwait	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value
Agree Index	−0.47	0.10	−0.11	0.72	−0.31	0.34	−0.33	0.25
Extraversion Index	0.38	0.12	−0.19	0.49	−0.08	0.77	0.08	0.73
Conscientiousness Index	0.34	0.13	0.13	0.60	0.10	0.69	0.03	0.90
Gender	−0.74	0.03	−0.22	0.34	−0.23	0.33	−0.28	0.19
Facebook								
Country: U.S.	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value
Agree Index	−0.04	0.72	0.04	0.72	−0.08	0.43	−0.11	0.27
Extraversion Index	0.06	0.68	0.24	0.09	0.20	0.11	0.09	0.46
Conscientiousness Index	0.18	0.15	0.14	0.27	0.09	0.44	0.40	**0.02**
Gender	0.21	0.06	−0.17	0.14	0.06	0.51	0.21	0.02
Instagram								
Country: Kuwait	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value	Estimate	*p* value
Agree Index	0.04	0.79	−0.14	0.16	−0.16	0.13	0.03	0.76
Extraversion Index	0.40	0.00	0.01	0.89	0.10	0.31	−0.02	0.82

	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value
Conscientiousness Index	0.14	0.25	−0.10	0.27	0.01	0.91	−0.05	0.51
Gender	−0.11	0.32	0.24	0.00	0.23	0.01	0.13	0.09
Instagram								
Country: U.S.	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value
Agree Index	0.00	0.98	−0.12	0.37	0.00	0.99	−0.12	0.08
Extraversion Index	0.24	0.04	0.28	0.06	0.19	0.15	0.13	0.09
Conscientiousness Index	0.02	0.81	0.22	0.09	0.05	0.64	0.06	0.36
Gender	0.28	0.04	−0.14	0.23	−0.05	0.65	**0.22**	**0.01**
Snapchat								
Country: Kuwait	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value
Agree Index	−0.16	0.21	0.21	0.12	−0.06	0.61	−0.13	0.13
Extraversion Index	0.28	0.02	−0.06	0.60	0.17	0.13	0.09	0.25
Conscientiousness Index	0.15	0.20	0.04	0.72	−0.13	0.23	−0.01	0.89
Gender	0.19	0.06	0.24	0.03	0.16	0.13	0.14	0.04
Snapchat								
Country: U.S.	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value	Estimate	p value
Agree Index	−0.10	0.37	0.09	0.51	0.08	0.48	−0.05	0.48
Extraversion Index	0.43	0.04	0.34	0.04	0.19	0.17	0.16	0.04
Conscientiousness Index	0.07	0.52	0.12	0.42	0.07	0.56	0.00	0.98
Gender	0.09	0.37	0.05	0.72	0.02	0.83	0.16	0.01

Bold estimates are statistically significant at the 0.05 level after correction by False Discovery Rate (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).

Discussion

The findings of this study were divided into two sections, each relating to one of the two research questions. The first research question examined American and Kuwaiti university students' motives for using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. A confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the six motivations for Kuwaiti and American students to use the four social media platforms were an acceptable model. The six underlying structures demonstrate that different motivations are related to the use of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. These differences in means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2 for both samples.

These results are worth discussing for several reasons. First, our study confirms that the motivations for media use are related to the richness of each medium (Al-Kandari et al., 2017). These unique qualities can be used to satisfy individual needs (Punyanunt-Carter et al., 2017). Our findings show that these individual needs are shaped by factors at the cultural level.

Collectivism is a cultural factor that affects cultural communication styles (Merkin, 2015), and Kuwait has been shown to be more collectivistic than the United States (Al-Kandari & Abdelaziz, 2018). Under this condition, it makes sense that U.S. users are more likely to use social media for entertainment motivations, as Kuwaiti students may find other outlets for their entertainment needs because of the collectivist nature of society (Al-Kandari et al., 2017).

Würtz (2005) explains that collectivistic cultures are more likely to engage in high-context communication, which incorporates parts of the physical and situational aspects of the conversation into the meaning conveyed by the communication. This finding is one plausible explanation for the finding that Kuwaiti students were motivated by information needs on two platforms, while American students were motivated to use only one platform to satisfy information needs. This finding is particularly interesting because the two platforms are visual in nature: Instagram and Snapchat.

Intercultural communication scholars describe the extent to which one protects oneself in relation to others' selves. This term, referred to as "facework," has been studied in various cultural contexts (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2015, p. 528). However, the motivation for self-presentation on social media has not yet been discussed in relation to this cultural difference. Given that self-presentation motivations differ in social media use among Kuwaiti and American students, future researchers should examine how they apply in this context.

Another possible explanation could relate to the characteristics of the media ecosystem, as previously mentioned, in relation to the media freedom rankings by Freedom House. At the time of the study, *Reporters Without Borders* ranked freedom in nations based on economic, political, social, legislative, and security indicators. While the United States was ranked as 44 in 2021, 42 in 2022, and 45 in 2023, Kuwait was ranked as 105 in 2021, 158 in 2022, and 154 in 2022. This difference could explain why Kuwaiti

students' use of Twitter for information and learning needs is higher than that of American students. Furthermore, these structural reasons may contribute to the different motivations for media use.

The second research question examined the impact of personality and demographic traits on the motivations for the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat by American and Kuwaiti university students. Table 7 shows 32 multiple regressions that allow us to examine the personality and demographic factors that predict each sample's motivation to use social media in different social environments. This means that an individual's agreeableness score did not influence motivations for using social media. This is a departure from the expectation that individuals may acquiesce more in less democratic contexts. Acquiescence is a process by which an individual agrees with statements that may contradict their actual opinions (Javeline, 1999), indicating their willingness to report true opinions. Norms prevalent in East Asian cultures emphasize politeness to the point that researchers asking questions must be trained to phrase questions in specific ways (Wong, Rindfleisch, & Burroughs, 2003). While explaining that agreeableness does not necessarily make individuals polite, and vice versa, Whitworth (2005) notes that agreeableness is related to politeness. How different cultures valued politeness did not impact individual motivations in the two samples. Furthermore, Miller and Ko (2015) pointed to a trend whereby some controversial Twitter messages are met with legal punishments, which could also explain some of the acquiescence. Still, agreeableness as a personality construct did not differ even when considering the different cultural and legal environments in which students were motivated to use social media.

As for extraversion, Kuwaiti students were more likely to use Instagram, while U.S. students were more likely to use Snapchat. This may be related to trends relating to the popularity of different platforms across the country. Dennis et al. (2019) showed that Snapchat and Instagram's popularity has changed over time in seven Middle Eastern countries, although the data set did not include Kuwait. Meanwhile, Alhabash and Ma (2017) found that U.S. students reported the highest use intensity for Snapchat and Instagram. The results also show that U.S. students with higher conscientiousness scores were more likely to use Facebook for entertainment.

Finally, gender influenced the students' motivations to use the four social media platforms in both samples. This is likely related to the different gender roles influencing students in the United States and Kuwait. Prior research has shown that Kuwaiti women are more likely than men to have private Instagram accounts (Al-Kandari et al., 2017). Mir and Paschyn (2018) examined the trend that females were less likely to be visible in Qatari documentaries than males because of the concept of symbolic annihilation, which describes how the exclusion of women affects children's perceptions of their value in society. Our results show that gender differences in social media use across cultures are an area for future researchers to explore.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current study is not without its limitations. First, the current study explored only the motivations for users to access Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Other visual social media platforms were excluded, such as Pinterest, TikTok, and YouTube. Furthermore, the current study gathered data from only one university per country. There are limitations to the generalizability of a sample that is not nationally representative. Despite these limitations, the current study adds to the understanding of how personality factors may influence the use of visual social media platforms. Moreover, comparing samples

from two vastly different cultures allows researchers to assess the influence of culture on personality and the U&G framework while accounting for personality differences.

The current study examines data from an Arab nation, which is a population that future researchers should continue to study—particularly as relevant to social media use in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Future researchers should compare the differences between the motivations for the use and gratification of social media users in a greater number of world regions. By engaging in cross-cultural comparisons, future researchers can expand the current understanding of motivations for social media use at the individual, cultural, and national levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers insights into how personality characteristics may impact the motivations of social media users in two distinct cultural contexts—a democracy, the United States of America, and a monarchy, Kuwait. Based on the U&G approach, we analyzed the role of personality characteristics in social media users' motivations in Kuwait and the United States by examining the frequency and motivations of four social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter (rebranded as X in July 2023), Instagram, and Snapchat.

The study findings lead to three key conclusions with important implications. First, Kuwaiti students used Twitter mostly for information, while U.S. students used it mostly for entertainment. Second, both U.S. and Kuwaiti students mostly used Facebook for social connections. Third, U.S. and Kuwaiti students primarily used Instagram and Snapchat for entertainment. Cultural differences signify how individuals use social media, shaping their motives and behaviors. Using a U&G theoretical approach, this study enhances our understanding of how personality traits significantly influence people engaging with social media platforms in the United States and Kuwait. Understanding these dynamics can enhance our comprehension of social media user motivations across cultures.

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Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics for U.S. and Kuwaiti Students (N = 974).

Variables	U.S. Students (*n* = 537)	Kuwaiti Students (*n* = 468)
Sex:		
Women	387 (72%)	182 (39%)
Men	150 (28%)	286 (61%)
Age in Years:	19-40 (*M* = 22.9)	19-44 (*M* = 22.9)
University Education:		
Less than 1 year	211 (40%)	23 (5%)
About 1 year	83 (16%)	23 (5%)
2 years	87 (16%)	70 (16%)
3 years	87 (16%)	133 (30%)
4 or more years	60 (12%)	197 (44%)
Language used for Survey:		
Arabic	0 (0%)	324 (69%)
English	537 (100%)	144 (31%)
Social Media Platform Use:		
Twitter	398 (74%)	385 (82%)
Facebook	502 (93%)	117 (25%)
Instagram	511 (95%)	425 (91%)
Snapchat	505 (94%)	426 (91%)
Social Media Use Frequency:		
Twitter	0-4 (*M* = 3.22)	0-4 (*M* = 4.55)
Facebook	0-4 (*M* = 2.54)	0-4 (*M* = 2.55)
Instagram	0-4 (*M* = 3.25)	0-4 (*M* = 3.12)
Snapchat	0-4 (*M* = 3.35)	0-4 (*M* = 3.50)