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## **Social Media Effects: Arab Readers, Writers, and Instagram**

Afra Atiq Juma Faraj Nasib

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United Arab Emirates University  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

**SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTS: ARAB READERS, WRITERS, AND  
INSTAGRAM**

Afra Atiq Juma Faraj Nasib

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

Under the Supervision of Professor Badreya Al Jenaibi

April 2020

### **Declaration of Original Work**

I, Afra Atiq Juma Nasib, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled “*Social Media Effects: Arab Readers, Writers, and Instagram*”, hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Professor Badreya Al-Jenaibi, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published, or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this dissertation.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 14 May, 2020

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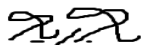
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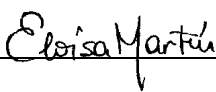
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## Abstract

This dissertation discusses the intersection of social media, particularly Instagram, Arab writers, and Arab readers in terms of social media effects. It examines the phenomenon of using social media in the literary ecosystem from both a user and producer perspective. The research is based around a theoretical framework of the uses and gratifications theory and the Gatekeeping theory. These theories are used to which understand Arab readers' choice of platform, motivations, and attitudes. Furthermore, the perspectives of Arab writers are investigated, through the theories, leading to a holistic understanding of the Arab literary ecosystem. The main objective of this dissertation is to explore the current changes in the Arab literary ecosystem in relation to Instagram and identify key challenges facing Arab writers. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Specifically, the parallel convergent method was applied, whereby quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously. Quantitative data was collected through surveys, answered by 312 and analyzed through SPSS. Additionally, qualitative data was obtained via 30 interviews, and analyzed through thematic analysis. The methodology of the study reflects the dual nature of Instagram. The study suggests that Arab readers are motivated to use Instagram as a medium to consume literature for various, and unique, reasons. In addition, Instagram lends itself to Arab writers, who through their own motivations, are using the platform for their writings. This study sheds light on the Arab literary ecosystem in relation to Instagram. It leads to a big picture understanding of the social media Instagram, and Arab readers and writers.

**Keywords:** Instagram, Arab literary ecosystem, Social media, Arab writers, Insta-writers.



## Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

### تأثيرات التواصل الاجتماعي: العلاقة بين القراء و الكتاب العرب و موقع الانستغرام

#### الملخص

تناقش هذه الأطروحة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي و القراء و الكتاب العرب. و تركز الدراسة على علاقة الانستغرام بالبيئة الأدبية العربية من منظور المنتج و المستخدم. و يستند البحث على إطار نظري من "uses and gratifications theory" و "Gatekeeping theory". هذه النظريات معتمدة على فهم اختيار القراء العرب لمنصات القراءة و دوافعهم و مواقفهم تجاه القراءة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم دراسة وجهات نظر الكتاب العرب من خلال النظريات ، مما يؤدي إلى فهم أعمق للساحة الأدبية العربية و مكوناتها بشكل أكثر شمولاً. الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الرسالة هو استكشاف التغيرات الحالية في البيئة الأدبية العربية فيما يتعلق بالانستغرام و تحديد التحديات التي تواجه الكتاب العرب. تستخدم هذه الدراسة نهجاً مختلطاً باستخدام الأساليب الكمية و النوعية على حد سواء ، و طبقت طريقة "Parallel Convergent design" حيث تم جمع و تحليل كل البيانات في وقت واحد. تم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال الاستبيانات التي جابوب عليها 312 قارئاً عربياً و تم تحليلها من خلال برنامج "SPSS" كما تم الحصول على البيانات النوعية من خلال مقابلة 30 كاتب عربي و تحليلها بطريقة "thematic analysis". تشير هذه الدراسة إلى أن القراء العرب يستخدمون الانستغرام كوسيلة للقراءة لأسباب مختلفة وخاصة بهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن موقع الانستغرام مفيد للكتاب العرب الذين لديهم دوافعهم الخاصة لاستخدامه لنشر كتاباتهم. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على البيئة الأدبية العربية فيما يتعلق بالانستغرام وتوفر فهماً أوسع للعلاقة بين وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي القراء و الكتاب العرب.

**مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية:** الانستغرام، الساحة الأدبية العربية، التواصل الاجتماعي، كتاب العرب، كتاب الانستغرام.

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## Dedication

*To Mom and Baba*

*To my families, near and far*

*In loving memory of those lost, but never forgotten*

*To all the dreamers, past, present, and future*

## Table of Contents

Title .....	i
Declaration of Original Work .....	ii
Copyright .....	iii
Advisory Committee .....	iv
Approval of the Doctorate Dissertation .....	v
Abstract .....	vii
Title and Abstract (in Arabic) .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
Dedication .....	x
Table of Contents .....	xi
List of Tables.....	xiv
List of Figures .....	xv
List of Abbreviations.....	xvi
Glossary .....	xvii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Overview .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	3
1.3 Outline of the study.....	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	6
2.1 Background .....	6
2.2 The foundations: The World Wide Web and Web 2.0.....	6
2.3 Defining social media .....	7
2.4 Internet and the Arab world .....	8
2.4.1 Arab public sphere .....	8
2.5 Instagram.....	10
2.5.1 Instagram and visual culture .....	11
2.5.2 Instagram in the Arab world.....	12
2.6 Instagram and the literary ecosystem .....	12
2.7 The evolution literacy .....	14
2.8 Evolution of the book.....	15
2.9 The evolution of reading .....	16
2.10 Self-publishing .....	16
2.11 Publishing in the Arab world .....	17
2.11.1 Digital publishing in the Arab world.....	18
2.12 Current trends and challenges in publishing .....	19

2.13 Self-published author and the citizen author.....	20
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework .....	21
3.1 Uses and gratification theory .....	21
3.1.1 Uses and gratification and technology .....	23
3.1.2 Uses and gratification and Arab society.....	24
3.1.3 Criticisms of uses and gratification theory.....	24
3.2 Gatekeeping theory .....	25
3.2.1 Gatekeeping theory in the literary ecosystem .....	27
3.3 Summary of the theoretical framework .....	27
Chapter 4: Methodology .....	29
4.1 Introduction .....	29
4.2 Research methods overview.....	30
4.3 Mixed methods approach .....	32
4.3.1 Mixed methods research design .....	35
4.3.2 Parallel convergent mixed methods approach.....	35
4.4 Philosophical Foundation.....	37
4.5 Ethical considerations .....	38
4.6 Pilot study .....	38
4.7 Quantitative data collection and analysis .....	40
4.7.1 Survey questions .....	41
4.7.2 Quantitative data collection.....	43
4.7.3 Quantitative data analysis.....	43
4.8 Qualitative data collection and analysis .....	43
4.8.1 Qualitative data analysis.....	46
4.9 Data integration .....	46
4.10 Summary: Methodology .....	46
Chapter 5: Results .....	48
5.1 Overview .....	48
5.2 Quantitative results.....	49
5.3 Demographic characteristics of respondents.....	49
5.4 Respondents' usage of Instagram.....	50
5.4.1 Usefulness of Instagram features to respondents .....	51
5.4.2 Respondent's overall satisfaction with Instagram.....	52
5.4.3 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram .....	53
5.4.4 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to gender .....	55
5.4.5 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram and following Arab writers according to age? .....	55
5.4.6 Respondents following writers on Instagram.....	57

5.4.7 Respondents following Arab writers on Instagram.....	58
5.4.8 Respondents' reasons for following writers on Instagram.....	58
5.4.9 Respondents' reading habits.....	60
5.4.10 Struggles faced by Arab writers .....	61
5.4.11 Suggestions for challenges faced by Arab writers .....	61
5.5 Qualitative findings.....	62
5.5.1 Qualitative data analysis (research themes) .....	63
5.5.2 The intersection of literature and social media .....	64
5.5.3 Genre fluidity and emerging formats .....	66
5.5.4 Summary of the intersection of literature and social media theme .....	67
5.5.5 The modernization of Arab "writer" .....	67
5.5.6 Summary of the modernization of Arab "writer" theme.....	70
5.5.7 Need for community among Arab writers.....	70
5.5.8 Using Instagram as a way to connect with writers and readers .....	72
5.5.9 Summary of need for community among Arab writers' theme.....	73
5.5.10 Diversity of Arab writers.....	73
5.5.11 Summary of diversity of Arab writers' theme .....	74
5.5.12 Challenges .....	75
5.5.13 Content-specific challenges.....	75
5.5.14 Publishing-specific challenges .....	76
5.5.15 Summary of challenges facing Arab writers theme .....	77
Chapter 6: Discussion .....	78
6.1 Overview of study .....	78
6.2 Implementation and implications of communication theory .....	87
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	90
7.1 Concluding thoughts .....	90
7.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research .....	92
References .....	93
Appendix .....	101

## List of Tables

Table 1: Scholarship on the impact of technology on the book industry.....	15
Table 2: Number of visitors to Arab book fairs in 2018.....	18
Table 3: Research phases, based on Polit and Beck (2004).....	30
Table 4: Research objectives.....	31
Table 5: Research questions.....	32
Table 6: Sections of quantitative survey .....	39
Table 7: Types of questions in quantitative survey.....	41
Table 8: Interview questions for self-identified Arab writers.....	45
Table 9: Demographic characteristics of respondents .....	50
Table 10: Hours spent on Instagram by participants.....	51
Table 11: Usefulness of Instagram features to participants .....	52
Table 12: Overall satisfaction of participants with Instagram .....	53
Table 13: Statistical Model of Proportional Scaling.....	53
Table 14: Means and S.D of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram .....	54
Table 15: Means, standard deviation and t-test.....	55
Table 16: Means and standard deviations for the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to age.....	55
Table 17: One Way ANOVA per age .....	56
Table 18: One Way ANOVA results per region .....	56
Table 19: Results of LSD test for post comparisons according to region .....	57
Table 20: Participants' who follow writers.....	58
Table 21: Participants following Arab writers .....	58
Table 22: Participants' reasons for following writers on Instagram.....	59
Table 23: Participants' time spent reading.....	60
Table 24: Participants' preferred reading mediums .....	60
Table 25: Research themes.....	64
Table 26: The production of literature .....	69
Table 27: Publishing specific challenges .....	76
Table 28: Challenges faced by Arab writers relating to Instagram.....	77
Table 29: Data collection and analysis of the study.....	79
Table 30: Objectives of the research.....	80
Table 31: Research questions of the study .....	81
Table 32: Interviewee motivations to use Instagram .....	85

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Parallel convergent design.....	36
Figure 2: Skip logic of the survey .....	42



## **List of Abbreviations**

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
RQ	Research question
RO	Research objective
M	Mean
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
LSD	Least significant difference
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
SD	Standard deviation

## Glossary

Arab	Person considered to be, ethnically, from one or more of the 22 Arab states
Digital platform	Digital space that is accessible and free; where content can be shared, re-shared, and communities can be formed
Literary ecosystem	Refers to all elements of the literature sector. This includes but is not limited to writers, publishers, readers, readership and literary agents

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview**

Social media spreads far and wide. It is not uncommon to find scholarship on social media and its relation to disciplines of great variety. In 2020, there are an estimated 7.75 billion people in the world, an internet penetration rate of 67%, and 3.8 billion people are described as “active social media users” (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2020, p. 8). In the Middle East, there is a population of 258.8 million, a 70% internet penetration rate, and 182.1 million active social media users (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2020, p. 21).

This dissertation studies the intersection of social media in the Arab world and the literature sector. This research takes a topical and analytical approach to understand the topic further. It looks at the connection between literature and social media through both writers’ and readers’ perspectives as this is reflective of the duality of the nature of social media. In this phenomenon, both sides must be studied. It is important to study writers because, as Shaitly (2014), writes of best-selling author Paulo Coelho, “Writing means sharing. It's part of the human condition to want to share things-thoughts, ideas, opinions” (para. 1). It is important, also, to study readers in order to understand the consumers of written work and to understand the literary sector as a whole.

This research has three main objectives:

- To explore the current changes in the Arab literary ecosystem in relation to Instagram, through the application of the uses and gratifications, and Gatekeeping theories.

- To examine gratifications associated with Arab readers and writers who use Instagram and Arab writers from both perspectives.
- Identify key challenges faced by Arab writers.

This research examines the gratifications sought, distribution of content, gatekeeping of Arab writers and readers through their use of Instagram, and the changes Instagram has brought to the Arab literary ecosystem. The methodology lays out the rationale of the research along with the relevance of the topic, outlines the chosen research questions, and further develops the literature review. This research is both quantitative and qualitative, therefore, it includes elaboration on the survey and interview methods, the subsequent procedures for collecting their information, the chosen participants, data compilation, and data analysis.

It begins with an evaluation of literature and overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the uses and gratifications and Gatekeeping theories. Moreover, it explores the notions of the Arab public sphere, gatekeeping, social media and publishing in the Arab world. The researcher uses a mixed-method methodology which used both qualitative and quantitative techniques for a sample size of 312 Arab self-identified readers who use Instagram, and a sample of 30 self-identified Arab writers to answer the following research questions:

- What are the gratifications sought Arab readers through Instagram use and are these gratifications significantly related to age and gender?
- What are the motivations and for Arab writers using Instagram as a platform for their written work?
- How has Instagram affected the Arab literary ecosystem?

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Social media has shifted the way many industries operate and how consumers choose to interact with those industries. It has revamped the way media is received, used, and distributed. The global book market and literary sector have not been immune to these changes. The publishing industry is going through changes and shifting from print towards digital (Kawatu, 2018), and large numbers of writers and poets are turning to social media, specifically Instagram, “Social-media poets, using Instagram as a marketing tool, are not just artists, they’re entrepreneurs” (Hill and Yuan, 2018).

Despite this, research that has been done to understand this trend from the perspective consumers and producers of written work have focused on statistics of books sold and types of platforms used. In addition, according to Hviid (2019), the launch to Amazon’s Kindle “triggered a dramatic change in the book industry” (p. 3). Despite accessibility of the mobile-based platform, Instagram, internet connectivity, high mobile penetration, there is little research done on the link between consumers and producers in relation to the way Instagram is affecting the literary sector on the whole.

## **1.3 Outline of the study**

Chapter one establishes the setting for this study through providing a brief introduction coupled with relevant background information, in order to give an overview of the circumstances of the study. Chapter two, focuses on the literature review, in which current and past literature pertaining to this study are evaluated and synthesized. The literature review is divided into two main parts. The first part begins

with the technological aspects of the internet through to the social media and its impact on the literary ecosystem. Thus, setting the groundwork for discussing social media and, specifically, Instagram.

Moreover, the second part of the literature review is focused on the literary aspects of the study, focusing on the evolution of reading, the book, and literacy. This section of the literature review discusses the publishing industry and the shifts that lead to the phenomenon of writers choosing digital platforms in the Arab region. In addition, the section examines how Instagram has set the stage for becoming a popular medium for writers. This lays out a foundation for the necessity of researching how Arab writers and their audiences utilize Instagram.

Then, Chapter three states the theoretical framework of this study. This is a combination of the uses and gratification (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973) and Gatekeeping theory (Lewin, 1947). This serves to support the study through analysis of previously conducted studies and identifying the main gratifications derived from media usage, with special emphasis on the Arabian Gulf countries and Arab region. Additionally, literature on the Gatekeeping theory and its relation to the global literary ecosystem is examined.

Chapter four outlines the methodology for this study. This chapter begins with the research aims and research questions, which lead into an overview of research methods. In this chapter, the researcher provides a rationale for choosing a mixed-methods approach and elaborates on how these methods suit the research questions, and support the overarching research objectives. It includes an outline of the methods used for data collection and the subsequent procedures undertaken during data analysis.

Chapter five contains the results of the data obtained during the phases of this study. In order to best represent the results, this chapter shows the results using a combination of visual figures and text. Additionally, the results section states the quantitative results and data analysis, and qualitative results and data analysis.

The discussion of the research is put forth in Chapter six. It begins with the interpretation of the results to answer the main research questions. In this chapter, both strands of results are merged to produce a clearer picture of the topic. Furthermore, the implementation of theories is stated in the chapter. The last chapter of the research is Chapter seven, which sums up the conclusion of the study, states the limitations, and makes recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Background**

Following the previous chapter, which outlined the relevant background information, this chapter discusses significant literature and previous studies. This study sits on the intersection of social media and the Arab literature ecosystem. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first is a review relevant literature on the progression of social media, specifically Instagram. The second section puts context to the study by shedding light on related topics such as literacy, publishing, and social media. Due to the novelty and newness of the topic, this section highlights literature on related topics in a global and context.

### **2.2 The foundations: The World Wide Web and Web 2.0**

The World Wide Web is a key method of disseminating and searching information (Shkapenyuk and Suel, 2002). It has become “popular source that is easily available, reachable and accessible at low cost, provides quick response to the users and reduces burden on the users of physical movements” (Bharamagoudar, 2012). According to Brügger (2016), the intersection between the Web and social media can be conceptualized into “three waves” (p. 1064). Brügger (2016) points out that the first wave highlights the development of social media in conjunction with the Web and the ability to add content. The second wave sees social media attaching to the Web through mobile technology, particularly via camera and touchscreen capabilities. Moreover, the third wave is the introduction of social media designed to, specifically, be used with smartphones. Examples of this are the applications Instagram and Snapchat. This development is due to two elements, software and technological hardware such as



smartphones (Brügger, 2016). The internet is altering the kinds of data available, as well as how it is found and distributed (Marsh and Rajaram, 2019). This notion is particularly important when discussing social media and its impact. The development of Web 2.0 has gone from a repository of information to interaction, connectivity and collaboration (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon, 2011). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 is a contemporary method by which the World Wide Web is utilized and, in which, content is ever-changing through collaboration.

### **2.3 Defining social media**

It is pertinent to define the parameters of what social media means, as there are many different perspectives and scholars have used various methods to describe what social media is and, explain its function. In fact, social media has introduced its own lexicon. These are terms that have become commonly used on a daily basis and are considerably recognizable (Kilyeni, 2015). It is not uncommon to hear buzzwords like community, exchange, digital, and online networking at the mention of social media. Social media can be defined by seven main characteristics (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre, 2011):

- Identity
- Conversations
- Sharing
- Presence
- Relationships
- Reputation
- Groups

Standage (2013), defined social media, as information acquired from others through social connections which, consequently, facilitates discussion and generates communities. In contrast to Standage, who does not specifically consider the internet to be an integral part of social media, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) expand on this angle. Their characterization of social media encompasses content, form, and quantity. They illustrate that social media is user-generated content made possible through a technological and philosophical base of O'Reilly (2009) Web 2.0 and exchanged via multiple internet-based applications. Bearing this in mind, social media can be considered both a function and extension of the internet itself.

## **2.4 Internet and the Arab world**

According to recent data by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2020), internet usage is, and has been, on the rise all over the world, as overall internet users are approximately 4.54 billion users (p. 33). The Arab world follows this trend. In fact, mobile shared views in the Arab region leaped by approximately 50% between 2011 and 2015 (Dubai Press Club, 2016). It is noteworthy to mention that there is a mobile broadband penetration of 175% within the Arabian Gulf countries.

### **2.4.1 Arab public sphere**

Many factors, including a shift to digitization, internet availability and mobile technology have transformed the Arab public sphere. The Arab world is experiencing a new kind of Arab sphere (Lynch, 2012). Although the events of the Arab spring have produced new scholarship on the region, this is not a new occurrence (Abbott, 2016). Abbot (2016) argues, “scholars emphasize the relevance of expanding media and

telecommunications sectors and their transformative effect on economic conditions at the domestic level and the regional level since the 1990s” (p. 366).

Contrastingly, Lynch (2015) suggested that since social media utilizes “sustained engagement, the dissemination of ideas and information, and the negotiation of new narratives. Ideas, images, and networks moved easily across multiple platforms” (p. 344), it should be seen in relation to the public sphere.

The original public sphere concept, developed by Habermas , was limited by its tilt towards European men, and by peaceful times, as stated by Kraidy and Krikorian (2017). The essence of the new Arab public sphere is the presence of debate, idea exchange, identity claims, and political claims. The space carved out for these discussions has been greatly aided by technology and social media. However, according to Lynch (2012) the space alone was not solely responsible for the creation of the sphere. He states that,

The rise of a new Arab public sphere was facilitated by new technologies, but the new media only became a public sphere through the emergence of new kinds of debates, identity claims, and political trends which evolved within those new spaces. Technology, in other words, was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of a new public sphere (para. 7).

In the journal article *The Revolutionary public sphere: the case of the Arab uprisings*, Kraidy and Kirkorian (2017) point out the inadequacies of current literature on the Arab public sphere, including multiple theories. They state that although social media has been examined in many ways since the Arab spring, the focus of research has been on the advent of technology and misses the mark on representation.

The authors hold that a focus on social media as a tool is only half of the story of understanding communication in times of change and revolution. According to Kraidy and Kirkorian (2017), and in order to fully understand communication in times of change, importance must be given to how people chose to represent themselves on the social media platforms. The authors hold that there is not one Arab public sphere, in fact, there are many that overlap in a variety of ways. Warner (2002) states in *Publics and Counter publics*:

The idea of a public, unlike a concrete audience of any polity, is text-based - even though publics are increasingly organized around visual and audio texts. Without the idea that texts that can be picked up at different times and in different places by otherwise unrelated people, we would not imagine a public as an entity that embraces all users of that text, whoever they might be (p. 51)

In questioning the validity of Arab public sphere discourse, although some theories have taken into account social media, they do not account for unstable times and follow a ‘normative ideal’ as opposed to “actual practice” (Kraidy and Kirkorian, 2017, p. 2).

## **2.5 Instagram**

Instagram, launched in 2010, has become one of the world’s leading social media platforms. Currently, Instagram has 928.5 million users, 50.9 percent of who are female, compared to 49.1% of male users (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2020, p. 124). In terms of technology, Instagram allows users to push content onto multiple channels with minimal taps, live stream video, video, and pictures that stay accessible for 24 hours and then disappear on Instagram Stories. These features all contribute to a unique user experience and gives Instagram a competitive edge in the market of

social media applications. Constine (2018) states that Instagram, as an application, has three main parts that account for user loyalty. These characteristics are the regular profile feed of pictures, short-lived stories, and direct messaging. In that vein, Constine (2018) writes on Instagram and Snapchat:

While both Instagram and Snapchat have let people privately send other people's posts to friends as private messages, Snapchat lacks a way to embed other Stories or Discover content in your Story. Snapchat may have pioneered the Stories format, but Instagram has been rapidly iterating with features like Super Zoom and Highlights to extend its user count lead over the app it cloned (para. 6).

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Another contributing factor to Instagram's prominence is mobile technology. The launch of Instagram overlapped with the launch of Apple's iPhone 4. This is consistent with the third wave described by Brügger (2016), which discusses media created specifically for use with a mobile platform.

### **2.5.1 Instagram and visual culture**

Omnicores (2020) reports that there are more than 100 million photos posted to Instagram each day. Photos have become an important way of communication and a study of user engagement with photos conducted by Bakhshi, Shamma, and Gilbert (2014) show that photos with faces raise comment and likes engagement by 38% and 32%, respectively (p. 996). Despite being used to test the human element in pictures,

the results shed light on the impact of visual culture. It is in line with the study of Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati (2014) which found that 46.6% photos in their surveyed dataset can be categorized as “selfies” and “friends” and 24.2% categorized as self-portraits (p. 597). This is helpful in understanding Instagram’s popularity, as one of the defining features of Instagram is its visual nature.

### **2.5.2 Instagram in the Arab world**

From the time of its launch, Instagram has witnessed a swift, upward, increase in total global users (Alkhowaiter, 2016). Worldwide, Instagram has more than 900 million users (We Are Social and Hootsuite, 2020), 10% of which are in the MENA region in 2018 (Arabian Gazette, 2018). The Arab world, in particular, observed the effects of social media in “attitudes and behaviors of people” (Wally and Koshy, 2014, p.2). In the Arab world, the popularity of Instagram has been steadily growing, particularly in the Arabian Gulf Countries (Arabian Gazette, 2018). This is due to a number of reasons. The Arab Media Outlook (2016) points out that an upwards trend “of media consumption on social networks and the growing popularity of short-form video content is driving a culture of media snacking across the region” (p. vi).

### **2.6 Instagram and the literary ecosystem**

The intersection between media outlets and writers is not a new one. However, as technology and audience preferences change, writers need to adapt to new platforms. In a 2016 article Purnama and Davis (2016) advocate such an adaptation. Their case rests on the example of John Green’s book *The Fault in Our Stars*, which soared to the top of the best seller lists of both Amazon and Barnes and Noble half a year before actual the book was published. Purnama and Davis (2016) attest that this

pre-publication success is attributed to Green's use of social media. According to them, Green was able to harness the power of Tumblr, Twitter and YouTube by promising fans to autograph all advanced pre-orders of his book. They, also, found that the interaction between authors and their readers online share emotional interaction which can fuel the publishing industry:

The more emotion readers show online, the more they interact with others about the books. And the more interaction, the greater the success of the books. This creates a snowball effect, driven by high levels of social media engagement among YA readers, that has helped drive the growth of the category as a whole (para. 15).

The claim is supported by the 2014 study which concluded, through an analysis of more 10,000 posts on Facebook and Twitter, that social media does in fact contribute positively to the sale of books (Criswell and Canty, 2014). As the publishing industry develops and the popularity of social media increases, so has the number of citizen authors.

Eckstut and Sterry (2010) note that citizen authors have two defining characteristics. The first is the dream of having a book well-published. Secondly, it is the will to make that dream happen along with the drive to peruse it unrelentingly. Additionally, this could be a parallel between what Johnson (2017) states, to describe the citizen author as those who "actively bypass the traditional gatekeepers of the industry by writing, sharing, and promoting their work directly within the global village" (p. 136).

## 2.7 The evolution literacy

The understanding of literacy, as a concept, has expanded to encompass more meanings than were previously stated in relevant literature. Freebody (2007) illustrates various perspectives of the definition of literacy, starting with the 1957 definition from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) definition. This approach explains literacy, not in the presence of what it is, but in its absence. In essence, it set the parameters of what was considered literacy by setting a definition for illiteracy. This means that if illiteracy was applied to those who could not read and write, then literacy encompassed those who could. However, by the middle of the 1970s the practice and use of this classification had changed (Freebody, 2007). To that end, Hiebert (1991) wrote,

For some time now, a new perspective on literacy, and the learning processes through which literacy is acquired, has been emerging. This new perspective does not consist of old ideas with a new name, but rather it represents a profound shift from a text-driven definition of literacy to a view of literacy as active transformation of texts. In the old view, meaning was assumed to reside primarily within text, whereas, in the new view, meaning is created through an interaction of reader and text (p. 1).

Literacy has expanded in both teaching and practice, from a view of being able to read and write, to a more holistic perspective (Doyle, Te Riele, Stratford, and Stewart, 2017). In a more contemporary context, literacies that arrived with the post-typographical era are the result of two distinct research areas; one which examines the effect of new technology on language and literacies and the other studies the concept of multi-literacies.



## 2.8 Evolution of the book

The discussion around the impact of technology on the various aspects of the book industry is not a recent one as evidenced by the works in (Table 1). However, the changes in the literary sector and the development of technology and platforms necessitated the re-examination of the definition of the term “book” in order to accommodate these evolutions.

Table 1: Scholarship on the impact of technology on the book industry

Author	Title
Paul, 1988	The impact of new technology on the distribution of books and journals
Burns, 1997	Publishers and technology: Face to face
Lewis, 2002	Print-on-demand or short run digital printing: A new technology for publishers
Carreiro, 2010	Electronic Books: How Digital Devices and Supplementary New Technologies are Changing the Face of the Publishing Industry
Johnson, 2019	What is a Book? Redefining the Book in the Digitally Social Age

Audio, print, digital, social media, formats of books, and writers should all be taken into account when establishing a contemporary definition of the “book” (Johnson, 2019). Previous definitions of the term rested on the book’s physicality and characteristics. Kovač, Phillips, Weel, and Wischenbart (2019) trace the progression of book identifiers starting with the 1964 UNESCO definition, “A book is a non-

periodical printed publication of at least 49 pages, exclusive of cover pages, published in the country and made available to the public” (para. 17).

Although Kovač et al. (2019) state, that in 1967, the introduction of the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) simplified cataloguing, they propose a new definition of a book, borrowing from the UNESCO definition, “A book is a non-periodical printed or digital publication primarily designed to be read” (para. 35). There exists an interesting connection between the older definition of a book being made available to the public, and the proposed contemporary definition of a book being produced with the intention of being read. These two elements together create a premise for how using Instagram for writers can be interpreted.

## **2.9 The evolution of reading**

If a book is a publication meant to be read, as Kovač et al. (2019) put it, then it stands to reason that the meaning of what it is to read should also be examined. To write and to read do not have set definitions and parameters, as they no longer designate monolithic processes (Ferreiro, 2000). As such, reading is a multi-sensory and multi-layered process. It is useful to think of reading along the lines of several dimensions, these dimensions are ergonomic, attentional, cognitive, emotional, phenomenological, socio-cultural, and evolutionary (Mangen and van der Weel, 2016).

## **2.10 Self-publishing**

Self-publishing, as a concept and practice is not particularly a modern phenomenon or a sign of the times. Johnson (2017) reminds us that self-publishing was a practice as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where authors not only disrupted the

publishing model in place through their publishing choices, but also challenged the notion of the book and the writer.

Digitization has helped the feat of self-publishing, bringing down costs and expenses associated with book publishing. Hviid et al. (2019) point to these costs, citing John James Audubon's book *The Birds of America* which was funded through crowdsourcing. According to Hviid et al. (2019), "creative and fortunate authors may always have been able to get around the gatekeeping publishers" (p. 21). According to the Arab Media Outlook (2016), global platforms which facilitate self-publishing and offer print on demand services have been on the rise and let authors bypass conventional publishing gatekeepers.

## **2.11 Publishing in the Arab world**

It is difficult to ascertain the position of the Arab book market, "it should be noted that there are no cross-regional statistics kept with regard to book sales. Consequently there are no widely-accepted best seller lists" (Schwartz, Helmus, Kaye, and Oweidat, 2009, p. 6). A lack of in-depth information and shared language have lead the Arab countries to be thought of as a "single publishing market" (Babczonek, 2017). On the other hand, Abou-Zeid (2013) states that, there is a lack of a central book sales tracking mechanism and, "The figures that circulate are always fragmentary, taken from various sources, and impossible to check; their liability depends on the authority of the speaker" (p.2). In spite of this, there is a growing book market in the Arab world, especially among young people. As reported in the Arab media outlook (2016), 27% of youth (age 18-24) in the MENA region consider e-books an important source of information, compared to 23% of adults. Another indicator of a robust book market is the footfall at regional book fairs and conventions

in the Arab region. Table 2 shows the number of visitors to book fairs in Arab countries in 2018.

Table 2: Number of visitors to Arab book fairs in 2018

Book fair	Country	Visitors in 2018
Cairo International Book Fair	Egypt	2.5 Million
Sharjah International Book Fair	United Arab Emirates	2.4 Million
Algiers International Book Fair	Algeria	1.7 Million
Muscat International Book Fair	Oman	800,000
Casablanca International Book Fair	Morocco	520,000
Qassim Book Fair	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	375,000
Bahrain International Book Fair	Kingdom of Bahrain	220,000
Alexandria Book Fair	Egypt	60,000
Note. Data for visitors to Arab book fairs from The New Publishing Standard (Williams, 2018)		

Table 2 suggests that despite a lack of reliable statistics of book sales, there is a healthy literary landscape and significant interest in literature in the Arab world.

### 2.11.1 Digital publishing in the Arab world

Publishing in the Arab world has its own unique set of challenges. One such challenge faced by the Arab publishing industry is a demand for content and lack of readership (Cuthbert, 2018). Al Qasimi (2011), states that one of the main challenges facing the Arab publishing industry is distribution. Sherif, (2015, as cited in Trentacosti (2015), concurs and stated:

In general, we have a huge distribution problem. We have the potential of 400 million people around the Arab World who read and speak the same language. We could easily have a great amount of readers but the problem is we can't reach them (para. 5).

Publishing through digital platforms does allow writers to reach larger audiences more efficiently. Digital publishing is a low-cost and high impact option for independent writers, which enables them to reach wider audiences (Rean, 2011). Another challenge that comes with publishing in the Arab world is formatting functionality, "Most e-book readers do not provide right-to-left functionality, and that's only if they get away with displaying Arabic characters in the first place" (Abdel-Rahman, 2012, para. 10). In the context of the Arab world, in an article discussing digital publishing and its effect on the Arab world, Al Qasimi (2011) states that, "geographical and cultural diversity" create a complex Arab print industry (p. 338). Moreover, Al Qasimi outlines that the main common difficulties facing the Arab publishing industry are, distribution, censorship, and piracy.

## **2.12 Current trends and challenges in publishing**

It is undeniable that the digital revolution has altered the state of publishing and as a result, publishers have adopted e-publishing (Carreiro, 2010). According to Williams (2017), much of the focus concerning the impact of technology and the digital revolution has been centered around e-books, however e-books are but a single element of the digital revolution. Williams added that, social media is a key driving force of the "Global New Renaissance" (para. 5).

The arrival of Amazon Kindle support for right to left text Arabic language text, Arabic-specific e-readers like Hekayh, self-publishing portals such as Kotobna,

and online publishers contribute to what the Dubai Press Club, (2016) calls, an e-commerce channel with potential. It becomes increasingly apparent that the Arab world, with its young population and internet penetration rate, is shifting towards digital publishing. Additionally, a rise in visual culture and Instagram popularity will help pave the way for this.

### **2.13 Self-published author and the citizen author**

Johnson (2017) is very clear about the concept of the departure of terminology, from self-published author to citizen author drawing on Felton's (2014) comments on the definition of a self-published author (Felton, 2014):

Keeping in mind Felton's understanding of a self-published author, I am moving away from the term 'self-published author' and embracing 'citizen author' The place these citizen authors are writing is on the digital social platforms that are available as apps, websites, forums, etc. The timeline coincides with the advent of digital technology and social platforms, while the relationships that are formed in the global village at the point of disruption serve to connect readers and writers outside the traditional publishing model (p. 132).

Johnson's observations fit the current state of authors who have turned to social media to host their written work. There is a growing interest in this phenomenon, especially in relation to Instagram.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

### **3.1 Uses and gratification theory**

The Uses and gratification theory was introduced by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973). The theory tries to lay the groundwork for understanding user end motivations for choosing certain platforms of communication. According to Katz et al. (1973), the audience is “the audience is conceived as active” (p. 15). The uses and gratifications approach views the audience as active, meaning that they actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or gratifications that satisfy their personal needs. The theory is dynamic and contrasting to the traditional communication theories that describe how users interact with media.

Media consumption falls within two varied, and widespread, categories; these are content provided by certain mediums and the experience afforded by those mediums (Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade, 2004). According to Stafford, the uses and gratification theory creates a backdrop for understanding the underlying explanation of why users go to digital market places. The same principle can be used to understand why people use social media. The theory is helpful in studying social media because of its focus on the consciousness of users in making their choices to consume media.

A central assumption of the uses and gratification theory is that the audience is active while consciously, and knowingly, chooses the media they consume according to their individual needs (Wu, Wang, and Tsai, 2010). These needs are not stagnant, as scholars such as Whiting and Williams (2013) identified needs previously undiscussed in the beginning stages of the uses and gratification theory (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). In a 2016 study, Gruzd et al. (2016) state that a uses and gratification

perspective is one in which active media users select and utilize media to meet their individual needs. This was a conclusion drawn after completing their study of 333 participants to understand how instructors in higher education use social media. Their conclusion fuels the notion that individuals using the same media may do so for different reasons, and with different motivations.

Musa, Ismail, and Azmi (2015) identified main contributing factors that illustrate consumer motivation using social media. The most prominent of these factors is social interaction. The researchers highlight the role social media plays in creating a space for public discussion and social interaction, which functions much like an online forum or public sphere. This conclusion is formed within the uses and gratification framework and based on data collected by Whiting and Williams (2013), and Popoola (2014). One of the defining parameters that distinguishes the study of Whiting and Williams (2013) is, aside from being applied to social media and emphasizing an approach that separates in great detail the types of users of social media, categorically separating social media users. The Whiting and Williams (2013) study which found that 32% of sampled respondents use social media to survey others. The study was moderately sized and surveyed just over 100 participants, the majority of whom, were under the age of 25. Therefore, the results are not unexpected as they showed the main gratification of social media, presumably among young people, is socialization and personal relationships. On a separate, but not unrelated, note the study opens up space, upon the recommendation of the researchers, for more insights into the uses and gratification theory.

The uses and gratification theory postulates that individuals have their own needs and motivations for choosing to use various media channels. Furthermore,



scholarship on the theory has assumed that the choice of media consumption results out of perceived usefulness of the media by the each individual (Reinhard and Dervin, 2009). As a result, the theory does not assume a set of previously determined motivational factors, it allows the motivations and attitudes to be determined through collected data (Gruzd et al., 2016). It is this flexibility that allows the theory to lend itself as the underpinning theoretical framework for this study.

### **3.1.1 Uses and gratification and technology**

The uses and gratifications theory can be successfully used to explain motivations, gratifications, and usage patterns across social media platforms. For example, among a sample of 322 adult Egyptians, a link was found between demographic variables and sought gratifications from social media through analysis of quantitative data retrieved over a two month period (Elhadidi, 2018). Elhadidi found that Facebook caters to all types of needs of the sampled population. Additionally, Facebook and Twitter showed the highest usability not present with other platforms.

However, the theory also has many other applications beyond the traditional scope and framework of media consumption and their platforms. Some studies have shown that gratifications can have social significance. This is evident in the motivation analysis of loneliness among Japanese midlife and older adults. This study showed that participants, who used mobile phones for social reasons, exhibited less levels of loneliness compared to participants who used mobile phones as pastimes, who exhibited higher levels of loneliness (Wang, Matz-Costa, Miller, Carr, and Kohlbacher, 2018).

### **3.1.2 Uses and gratification and Arab society**

The development of Web 2.0 afforded users the opportunity to “participate in the production of knowledge” (Elhadidi, 2018, p. 1). Likewise, Elhadidi states that social media is tied to social connectivity, and that a key area for future research is the relationship between information and privacy of users. Women are more likely to have private social media accounts than men (Al-Kandari, Al-Sumait, and Al-Hunaiyyan, 2017). Instagram allows users to consume and create content while being gatekeepers and distributors of content (Al-Kandari et al., 2017). Contrastingly, Shen and Mohammed (2010) concluded that in the UAE both females and males who use Facebook showed similar usage patterns. “Gender has a moderating effect on the link between usage and self-presentation” (Al-Jabri, Sohail, and Ndubisi, 2015, p. 662), this was concluded from their empirical study of 281 Saudi Twitter users. Social media platforms are capable of overcoming and altering cultural norms (Al-Kandari et al., 2017). Al-Kandari et al. (2017) examined the capacity of culture to illustrate the utilization of Instagram in Arab countries with high social media usage. Contrasts between genders are still present due to “traditions and social customs” (p. 274).

### **3.1.3 Criticisms of uses and gratification theory**

Some scholars have criticized the uses and gratification theory. The theory has been criticized for being overly functionalist and behaviorist (McQuail, 2010). Moreover, the much of the scholarship on the theory has been concluded using self-reported methods. This raises questions of reliability and validity. Additionally, methods employed by the uses and gratifications theory are dependent on interpreting audience lifestyles and rather than behaviors (Rosenstein and Grant, 1997). It is,

therefore, possible that the literature on the theory has largely overlooked habits and other related data. Given the abundance and new types of media platforms, this assumption by Rosenstein and Grant (1997) is not a far point of departure research conducted nearly a decade later. Diddi and LaRose, (2006) argue that when given a host of choices of media, the users rely on habitual patterns instead of recurring active media choices. The uses and gratifications theory assumes that the audience's choice to consume certain media is fueled by a rational view of the audience's needs and their expectation that certain types of media will gratify those needs (Katz et al., 1973). By extension this an assumption that individuals are self-aware and rational when choosing media.

### **3.2 Gatekeeping theory**

The Gatekeeping theory was coined by Lewin in 1947. Fleming (2005) states that the “omnipresence” of power indicates that everyone is subject to the mechanisms and implications (p. 46). Lewin's student, David Manning White was the first to apply this theory to the media when he analyzed the subjective factors that influenced a newspaper editor's gatekeeping decision making (DeJuliis, 2015). Shoemaker and Vos point out:

Gatekeeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day, and it is the center of the media's role in modern public life. People rely on mediators to transform information about billions of events into a manageable subset of media messages...this process determines not only which information is selected, but also what the content and nature of messages, such as news, will be. (2009, p. 1)

The theory of gatekeeping deals with information on two fronts; hierarchy and accessibility. Essentially, the theory discusses the control of information as it gets disseminated through “gates”. These gates are guarded by “gatekeepers”, who decide which information gets passed through the gates and which information does not pass (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Shoemaker and Vos (2009) argue that during this decision-making process, power rests with gatekeepers in relation to those on the opposite side of the gate. Researchers have been applying the gatekeeping theory to different disciplines and heavily investing into research on the theory in its relationship to media and communications. Mostly, the theory has been used understand the reasons for the filtering of news stories (Stevenson and Josefy, 2019). According to Shabir, Safdar, Imran, Mumtaz, and Anjum (2015), gatekeeping operates on multiple levels which include:

- Individual
- Routine practice
- Social institution
- Society/ideology

The internet has posed challenges to the traditional gatekeeping theory, flipping the unidirectional power structure since user generated content can be readily produced and distributed (DeJuliis, 2015). By extension of this principle it can be assumed that social media, by virtue of its nature, operates in a similar way with regards to gatekeeping.

### **3.2.1 Gatekeeping theory in the literary ecosystem**

Much like the rise of citizen journalists in the Arab world during the events of the Arab spring in 2011, citizen authors are demonstrating the inversion of the gatekeeping model in action. The move of citizen authors within the literary ecosystem through social media is creating change patterns in the literature sector. Gillmor (2006) writes, “technology has given us a communications toolkit that allows anyone to become a journalist at little cost and, in theory, with global reach. Nothing like this has ever been remotely possible before” (p. xii). Furthermore, Johnson (2017) states of the citizen author:

The citizen author disrupts the discourse of the book by challenging the hierarchy of the traditional publishing model and introducing new elements of power that are situated within the relationship between the citizen author, the reader, and the publisher (p. 132).

Hviid, Izquierdo Sanchez, and Jaques (2019) describe the order of the traditional publishing industry as a linear process from the publisher to the reader. Hviid et al. (2019), argue that, traditionally throughout the centuries, publishers were the gatekeepers of the industry, by being the bridge between the writer and the readers. It is important to note that although other elements have changed in the ecosystem over the years, such as literary agents, the basic hierarchy has remained the same.

### **3.3 Summary of the theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on two theories. The first is the uses and gratifications theory, which will be used to answer the research questions and understand the motivations of Instagram use by Arab readers and writers. The

second theory is the Gatekeeping theory, which serves as context for shedding light on the workings of the literature ecosystem in the Arab world.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents information on the methodology, by which, both quantitative and qualitative were utilized in this study. The chapter starts off with a general overview of research methods in relation to the research objectives and questions. The next section discusses a more in-depth account of mixed methods research and the chosen research design, which is the Parallel Convergent design. Subsequently, the philosophical basis and rationale of the study are discussed. Finally, the procedures for quantitative and qualitative data collection and, following, analysis are listed. The chapter concludes with a brief recap.

This chapter expands on the researcher's chosen methods, procedures, and modes of analysis used to answer the research questions and achieve the overall research objectives. Therefore, this chapter describes in detail the researcher's chosen methods, tools, population sample, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

The main theoretical underpinnings of this research are the uses and gratifications theory and Gatekeeping theory, which will be used as a base to further understand the gratifications obtained by Arab readers and writers through their use of Instagram. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for both collection and analysis of the data. The main purpose of this study is to shed light on the intersection of Instagram and the Arab literary ecosystem. In order to accomplish this, the researcher chose a mixed methods approach.

## 4.2 Research methods overview

Research methodology is an organized approach to solving a research problem, however, the approach is not limited to the techniques used as the logic behind choosing these techniques should also be considered (Walliman, 2011). Polit and Beck (2004), cited in Whittmore and Melkus (2008), state that researchers can use different techniques to gather and analyze data to answer the research questions. They, also, argue that research can be divided into five distinct phases. These phases are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Research phases, based on Polit and Beck (2004)

Research phase	Description
Conceptual phase	Formulating the clinical problem, reviewing the literature, and determining the research purpose
Design and planning phase	Selecting a research design, developing study procedures, determining the sampling and data collection plan
Empirical phase	Collecting data and preparing data for analysis
Analytic phase	Analyzing the data and interpreting the results
Dissemination phase	Communicating results to appropriate audience

Note. Reprinted from “Designing a Research Study”, by Whittemore and Melkus, 2008, The Diabetes Educator, 34, p. 202. Copyright 2008 by The Diabetes Educatory.

Research methods, generally, fall into three broad categories (Kothari, 2004):

- Quantitative research methods
- Qualitative research methods
- Mixed research methods



It is essential for any research to have a solid methodology to stand on, which acts as a guide throughout the research process (Kothari, 2004). The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between Arab writers, readers, and Instagram from both perspectives. This study has three main and overarching objectives outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Research objectives

Research objectives	
Objective 1	To explore the current changes in the Arab literary ecosystem in relation to Instagram
Objective 2	To examine gratifications associated with Arab readers and Arab writers' use of Instagram from both perspectives
Objective 3	Identify key challenges faced by Arab writers

Objectives of research are used to gain fresh perspectives on various topics being studied, in order to answer research questions, as illustrated by (Kothari, 2004). In turn, research questions can be answered through the application of different methods. Research objectives overarch and guide the research process, in terms of clearly stating what the goals of the study are and framing the backdrop for the research questions. With this in mind, there are three main research questions for this study outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Research questions

Research questions	
RQ 1	What are the gratifications sought by Arab readers through Instagram use and are these gratifications significantly related to gender and region?
RQ 2	What are the motivations for Arab writers using Instagram as a platform for their written work?
RQ 3	How has Instagram affected the Arab literary ecosystem?

Research centers around questions and inquiry pursuing the answers to inquiries (Mukherji and Albon, 2018). Bisman (2010) argues that, in good research, the research questions inform the methods. This study employs three main research questions, which were designed to be used with a mixed methods approach. The first research question has a quantitative nature, while the second research question leans more towards the qualitative side of inquiry. The third, and final, question combines both quantitative and qualitative forms.

### 4.3 Mixed methods approach

This research uses a mixed-methods approach to allow for maximum exploration into the topic. The field of mixed methods research has grown substantially during the last decade. Mixed methods, as a research approach, has been used in various combinations in a wide array of disciplines (Fetters and Molina-Azorin, 2017). After analysis of Webscience, Scopus, and Inspec, it was concluded that there were 350 recent published studies which employed the use of mixed methods (Almeida, 2018).

A mixed methods approach is not merely a combination of quantitative and qualitative processes. Rather, mixed methods research uses integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods to produce one study (Molina-Azorin, 2016). The central aim of mixed methods research, according to Cresswell and Clark (2018) is to illuminate a broader understanding of the research problem through both qualitative and quantitative methods, which is more than the result of the methods used individually. Fetters and Freshwater (2015) argue that a defining characteristic of mixed methods is integration. Additionally, Molina-Azorin (2016) explains that, “The issue is to produce a whole through integration that is greater than the sum of the individual qualitative and quantitative parts” (p. 37). Mixed methods theory introduced creative practice within fields which in which conventional theory created limitations (Greene, 2008). Moreover, mixed methods research has become recognized as an important technique, along with qualitative and quantitative methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007). They also assert that, “Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm, along with qualitative and quantitative research” (Johnson, et al., 2007, p. 129). Kendall (2014) suggests that questionnaires could show patterns in large sample sizes and that interviews shed light on mind-sets, ideas and actions. Echoing this, Harris and Brown (2010) observe that questionnaires and interviews, when used as research methods, have “differing and possibly complementary strengths and weaknesses” (p. 2).

Mixed method approaches allow for thinking along, and in between, the qualitative and quantitative ends of the spectrum and it opens the floor for discussion at the “radical middle” (Onwuegbuzie, 2012, p. 4). A mixed methods approach allows

for a wider view of the research at hand. It is a common approach in the social sciences. Mixed methods is utilized when a research approach, either qualitative or quantitative, is unable to provide adequate outcomes. According to (Almeida, 2018), a distinct advantage of mixed methods is that the used methods compensate for each other's individual disadvantages. Therefore, the methods work in tandem to produce strong and rich research. Therefore, to fully understand the impact that Instagram has on the Arab literary ecosystem, it was chosen to use both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The mixed methods approach is a flexible approach in which the researcher can combine different techniques and appropriate resulting research questions and, moreover, moreover, this approach also allows for greater creativity and more in-depth questions (Johnson et al., 2004). In addition, a mixed methods approach can expose hidden areas in research that would not have otherwise appeared with the use of just one single approach (Bartholomew and Brown, 2012). In a nutshell, a mixed method approach lends itself to this study as the core underpinning of the research is studying the intersection of Instagram on the Arab literary ecosystem from multiple angles and mixed method research is “multiple ways of making sense of the world” (Greene, 2007). Building on this knowledge and in order to obtain a rich in-depth and insightful amount of data, the researcher decided to use the interview method and the survey method. Due to the complimentary nature of both methods and the fact that the researcher will examine motivations of Arab writers, these methods will work together to produce a clear picture.

#### **4.3.1 Mixed methods research design**

Mixed methods research approaches differ with regards to the time when data is collected and analyzed. For example, sequential explanatory research design means that quantitative data is acquired and analyzed first and then qualitative data is collected and analyzed, with the results being integrated at the end. Conversely, when using sequential exploratory designs, qualitative data is collected and analyzed before quantitative data is collected and analyzed. Using a process of elimination, the researcher concluded that due to the unexplored areas of the research, time constraints, and overall objectives, neither the sequential exploratory or explanatory designs were suitable for this study. Therefore, the research design that was most applicable to this study was the Parallel Convergent method.

#### **4.3.2 Parallel convergent mixed methods approach**

The research design for this study is the parallel convergent research design. It is noteworthy to mention that the parallel convergence design has been assigned many names throughout the years such as, concurrent triangulation, triangulation design, convergent parallel design, and convergent design (Creswell and Clark, 2018). This design is defined as a mixed methods research approach that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell and Clark, 2018). It is characterized by the simultaneous data collection and analysis of both types, as illustrated in Figure 1.

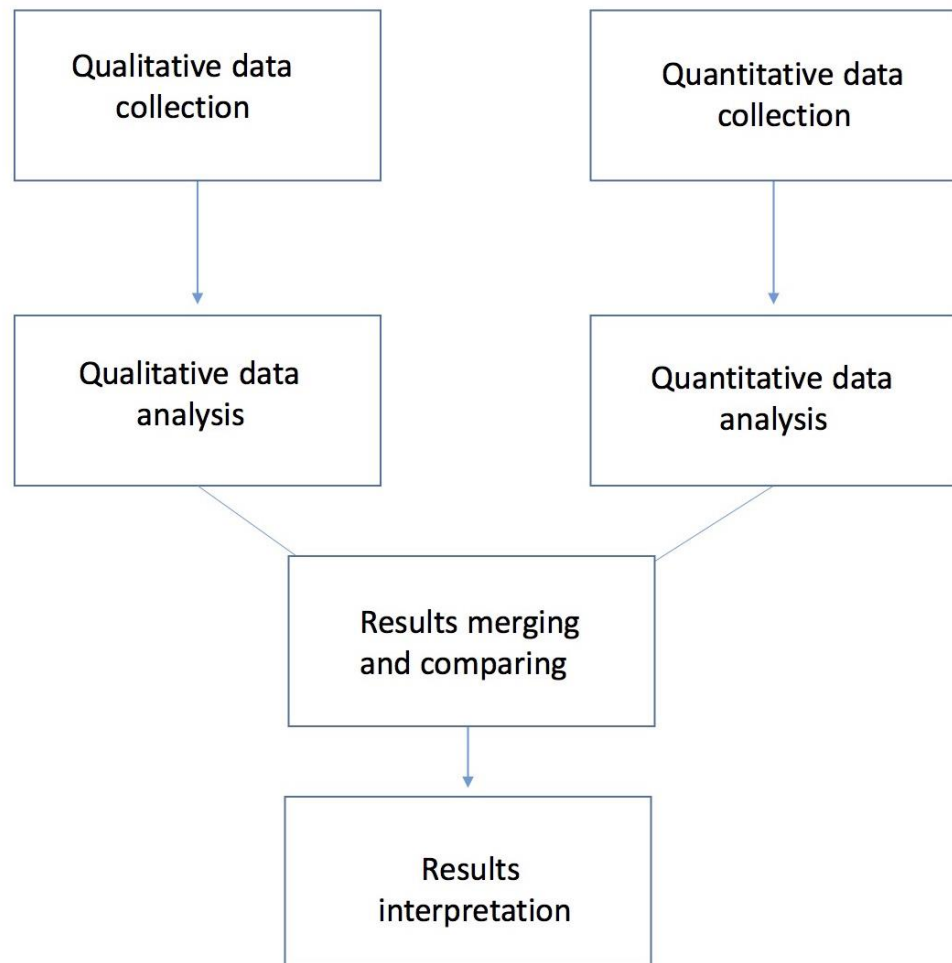


Figure 1: Parallel convergent design

According to Creswell and Clark (2018), the convergent mixed methods design is a well-known mixed methods design with multiple facets. In this model, all the data is collected at the same point in time. Morse (1991) argues that the function of the parallel convergent design is to, “obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (p. 122). This, in turn, leads to a greater understanding of the research.

Another objective of this design is to synthesize both types of data, which run parallel. This is in order to “develop a more complete understanding of a phenomenon, and comparing multiple levels within a system” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 77).

For the purposes of this study, which intends to examine the changes within the literary ecosystem through Arab writer and reader perspectives; the convergent parallel design is well-suited to this purpose as it allows the bridging of data and synthesis of information from multiple viewpoints.

The variation of the convergent parallel mixed methods design used in this study is the Parallel-databases variant. An example of this method in action is a study conducted by Feldon and Kafai (2008). This variation of the convergent design utilizes independently analyzed databases and, subsequently, integrates them during the discussion phase of the research.

#### **4.4 Philosophical Foundation**

Pragmatism is a primary philosophy of mixed method research (Johnson et al., 2007). Likewise, pragmatism is well placed to work in tandem with the convergence parallel design, due to its pluralistic nature. According to Crotty (1998), there are four components of research. These elements are epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. Following Crotty's line of thought, the parts of this study are pragmatism, uses and gratifications theory and Gatekeeping theory, mixed methods (specifically convergent parallel design), and survey and interviews.

Additionally, this study also follows a criteria set out by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) for pragmatism, which are using both quantitative and qualitative methods, an emphasis on the research questions, and avoidance of the binary relationship between post-positivism and constructivism.

In summary, the pragmatism research paradigm is ideal to use with the parallel convergence research design. The advantage of pragmatism is that it is multi-faceted

and can work with multiple methods and techniques, which is the premise of this study's mixed methods approach.

#### **4.5 Ethical considerations**

This study received ethical approval from the UAE University research office and was conducted according to its guidelines and policies. Approval was granted through an online procedure after submitting the necessary forms and paperwork.

#### **4.6 Pilot study**

The researcher began with a brief pilot study and then proceeded to collect and analyze data. True to the parallel convergence method, after the pilot study, the researcher began quantitative and qualitative data collection, then analyzed each dataset independently, and ended with merging results and overall interpretations.

Prior to beginning the study, it was necessary to set the stage for the following phases. The researcher carefully reviewed relevant literature and based on findings regarding the uses and gratifications theory and Gatekeeping theory, created a survey to collect data. The survey was based on previous quantitatively motivated surveys that examine user gratifications sought by users for media consumption. It is worthy to note that special emphasis was given to studies relating to the Middle East and Arab world at large (Al-Kandari et al., 2017; Whiting and Williams, 2013; Al-Menayes, 2015; Stafford et al., 2004).

The survey was then written up and formatted using Google Forms. Google forms was chosen to host the survey as it allows design flexibility, effective tracking of responses, as well as statistical information from responses. Additionally, the researcher set up a special email to better utilize and synchronize the survey process



across Google platforms for a seamless experience. The survey contained a total of 18 and 8 questions, which were grouped into 5 sections (Table 6).

Table 6: Sections of quantitative survey

Section	Section title
1	General usage of Instagram
2	Instagram utilization and satisfaction
3	Motivations for using Instagram
4	Writers and Instagram
5	Demographic information

The types of questions in the survey were mainly multiple choice and multiple response questions. However, in order to collect information on respondents' perceptions of challenges facing Arab writers and the solutions to solve them, the researcher added two long response questions. The survey was then distributed to 30 Arab users of Instagram who were recruited at a literary event.

The purpose of this was to gauge their responses and receive their feedback on ease of filling out the survey, overall design, logical flow of the questions, and general user experience. The surveys were completed on the spot and feedback was noted shortly after. Overall feedback from the pilot study were positive, however some comments were made about the order and wording of some of the questions. These comments were noted and upon review by the researcher's dissertation advisory committee, the necessary changes were made to the survey.

#### **4.7 Quantitative data collection and analysis**

The survey method provided an adequate way to collect data from respondents on their usage of Instagram, reading habits, motivations to follow writers, and their opinions on the challenges faced by Arab writers. Since the main method of data collection exploring the uses and gratifications theory is built upon self-reporting (Gao and Feng, 2016), the survey method is an ideal tool to use. This is due to the fact that surveys are easily distributed and user-friendly.

The survey was conducted in English. Invitations to participate in the survey were distributed via email and face-to-face at prominent literary salons, centers, and events. The survey was also distributed through snowball means as some of the respondents passed it on to their contacts. For survey email distribution, the survey was hosted on Google Forms. The researcher decided to employ a self-administered online survey as it is convenient to use in instances where there are various geographic locations to cover. The survey was distributed with a cover note specifying the parameters of the study, the anonymity of their identities and confidentiality of their details, should they provide any, and noted relevant approvals.

A total of 350 surveys were distributed to Arab readers of both genders, living within the Arab world or outside of it, to ensure enough data for quantitative analysis. The data was gathered using a variety of question types, each serving their own purposes for later analysis. Out of the 350 distributed surveys, 312 were considered usable for this study. Furthermore, a sample of 30, self-identified Arab writers, who use Instagram to post their written work, were recruited through referrals to take part in the qualitative portion of the study. These writers were chosen on account of their activity on Instagram, their self-identification as writers in their Instagram biographies,

activity and membership in the literary community, account engagement, and use of the hashtags #Arabwriter, #من كتاباتي (translated as my writings), and #Instawriter.

Since the number of followers on social media has been proven to be irrelevant in favor of engagement, and engagement cannot be calculated by an external party who does not have access to other's accounts, consistency became the main metric for choosing the writers. Each of the writers posted original content at least twice per month in the last year. It should be mentioned that some of the writers came through referrals.

#### 4.7.1 Survey questions

This survey utilized five different types questions. The kinds of questions and their matching positioning in the survey can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Types of questions in quantitative survey

Question type	Corresponding survey questions
Five point Likert scale	6, 7
Multiple response	3, 5, 10, 12
Open ended (long paragraph)	13, 14
Multiple choice	1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17
Short answer	18

In reference to the usage of the Likert scale, research utilizing self-reporting and the uses and gratifications theory leans heavily on the Likert scale. The scale was

“initially developed this method as a way of measuring attitudes about particular groups, institutions, or concepts” (Józsa and Morgan, 2017, p. 8).

Therefore, the Likert scale is an ideal choice for this type of research inquiry, as it can accurately determine attitudes and motivations in a quantifiable manner. According to Michalopoulou (2017), the Likert scale is used to assess psychometric characteristics and are typically numbered from 1 to 5 on a linear scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Taking into account preferences and multi-literacies of technology, when evaluating the preferred reading mediums, a multiple-response approach was used. The survey, also, used skip logic with questions to maximize efficiency (Figure 2).

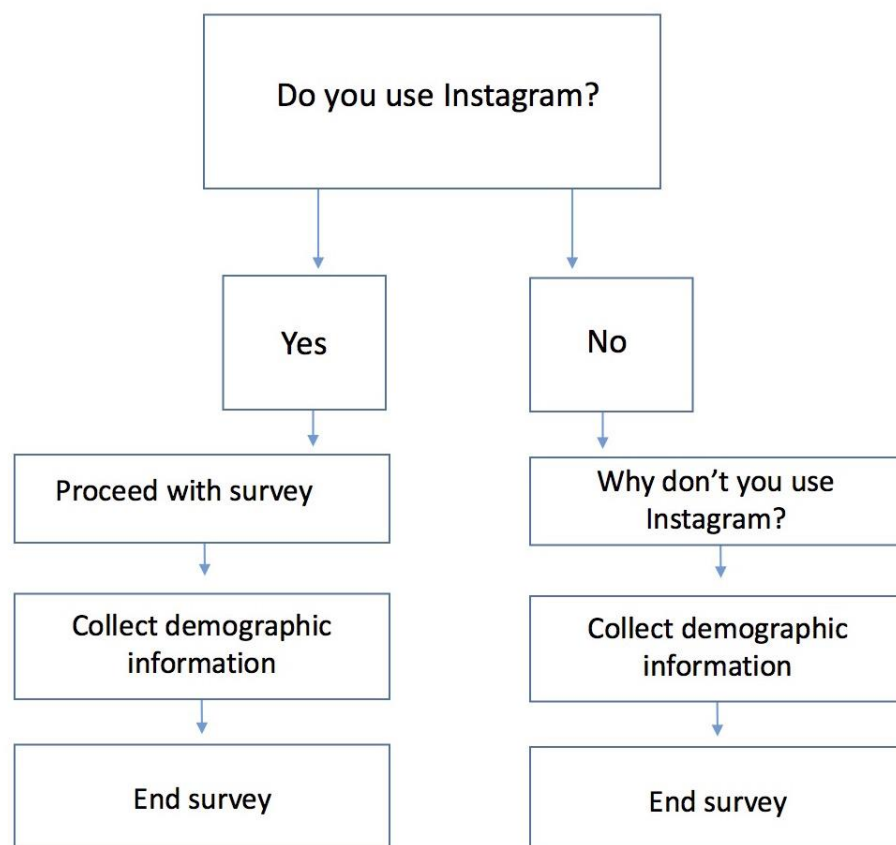


Figure 2: Skip logic of the survey

#### **4.7.2 Quantitative data collection**

After collection, the data was extracted from google forms and transferred to SPSS version 25. Further testing was carried out to eliminate missing and unusable data. This resulted in 312 usable surveys out of 350 surveys in total. Following this, the data was then separated into variables and given labels and weighted values (See Appendix A for full list of questions).

#### **4.7.3 Quantitative data analysis**

Data analysis for quantitative data was done through SPSS 25 by way of calculating frequencies, descriptive statistics, factor analysis and independent t-tests tests. Responses to questions 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, and 17 were coded as multiple choice questions, along with demographic question responses questions. Additionally, answers to questions 3, 5, 10 and 12 were multiple response questions which were coded as “ticked” and “not ticked”. Additionally, a 5 point Likert scale was used for questions 6 and 7, based on the literature of the uses and gratifications theory to evaluate gratifications sought by users and behavior. Responses to these questions were given values of 1 to 5 for a scale of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The last two questions not entered into SPSS, as their intention was to collect information that can be used alongside the qualitative results during data integration.

#### **4.8 Qualitative data collection and analysis**

The researcher used structured with open-ended questions to allow interviewees the freedom to elaborate on certain points. Curry, Nembhard and Bradley (2009) recommend 20-30 interviewees, if they are full

of information and knowledgeable in the research field. Bearing this in mind, the researcher selected 30 Arab writers, who use Instagram to post their written work, for the interviews in the qualitative portion of the study. These self-identified writers were asked a set of 13 questions following an interview fashion. The interviews were conducted online during a two-month time period, from April to June 2019. The interview questions are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Interview questions for self-identified Arab writers

Question numbers	Interview questions
1	What made you join Instagram?
2	What are the specific features of Instagram that motivate you to use it for your writing?
3	When posting your work online, to what extent worry about plagiarism and intellectual property theft?
4	Do you think that Instagram is changing the way literature is being produced?
5	Do you write specifically for the internet or do you upload copies of your printed work?
6	How has Instagram and social media in general affected your writing career?
7	To what extent do you think the Arab readers have benefited from Instagram?
8	Do you use the Instagram to connect and interact with other readers and writers?
9	The rise of Instagram writers and Instagram poets has created conversations in the publishing and literary world - what are your thoughts on this?
10	What are the main challenges that Arab writers face?
11	Do you think Instagram can address these changes?
12	Do you think that Instagram affects the definition of what it means to be a writer?
13	Is there anything else you wish to say about Arab writers, Instagram, Arab readers, the publishing scene or any other related topic?
(N=30)	

Due to geographical and time limitations, the interviews were conducted online by way of open-ended paragraph questions, contact information of the researcher was provided to the participants in case of follow-up concerns or inquiries. All participants

were informed of the confidentiality of their contributions. Due to the social stigma attached to being a writer, the participants requested to remain anonymous.

#### **4.8.1 Qualitative data analysis**

Data collected from the interviews was collected through Google forms and compiled in a microsoft word document. Responses were then sorted into separate sections, and each respondent was given an identifying code number from 01 to 30, to ensure anonymity. The researcher then combed through all the responses to eliminate any unnecessary, irrelevant, or unusable information from within the answers. Once this process ended, the researcher began code the data with the thematic analysis approach. As the data was coded again and again, the researcher began to meticulously look for apparent themes within the texts and categorize them into broader overarching concepts, which would answer the research questions.

#### **4.9 Data integration**

The Convergence Parallel method is built on the intention of data combination at the end of the study. Therefore, data integration begins following both the quantitative and qualitative data collection, and analysis. Here, the researcher uses both datasets of results to answer the research questions and relate them to the general research objectives. This is done through a side by side results interpretation, as suggested by Creswell (2017).

#### **4.10 Summary: Methodology**

This study falls under the category of mixed methods research. There are different types of mixed-methods research, however using multiple data collection and



analysis techniques produces research that is multi-faceted and in-depth. Research methods complement and support each other in this type of research. Specifically, the Parallel Convergence research design was chosen for this study. It involves simultaneously collecting quantitative and qualitative data, analyzing them separately, and merging the data in the research discussion. For this study, the quantitative portion is a survey distributed to 312 Arab readers to understand their Instagram usage habits, and then statistical data analysis. The qualitative section is based on interviews with 30 Arab writers about their experience in using Instagram as a literary tool; and the data analysis is thematic analysis. Data integration will shed light on the literary ecosystem as a whole and achieve the research objectives.

## **Chapter 5: Results**

### **5.1 Overview**

While the previous chapter outlined the relevant methodology, methods, and relevant theoretical underpinnings, this chapter discusses the findings of this study. Due to the use of the parallel convergent design, both the quantitative data and qualitative data were collected independently from each other. In addition, the data was analyzed separately, each with its own relevant procedures. This was done with the intention of integrating both datasets in the following discussion chapter.

Creswell and Clark (2018) state that, “Data analysis in mixed methods research consists of analyzing separately the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the qualitative data using qualitative methods” (p. 203). Therefore, this study applied two types of methods, survey data collection and interview data collection for quantitative and qualitative processes, respectively. The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to present descriptive results, relationships, and correlations. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, during which information was collapsed, coded, and then sorted into broad themes presented as research themes.

This chapter is divided into two sections, the first of which presents the quantitative survey results. These results are shown in a mixture of visual representation and text-based explanations. The second section illustrates the qualitative interview results and thematic analysis.

## **5.2 Quantitative results**

Quantitative research is built upon measurability (Kothari, 2004). Walliman (2011), points out that, “Two features distinguish quantitative research: the use of precise measurement, and the use of quantities expressed as numbers capable of being analyzed by statistical methods or other computational methods” (p. 230). It is for these reasons that SPSS was chosen to analyze the results of the distributed survey. After the raw data was collected, the data preparation process revealed that some of the responses were unusable. As a result, those responses were removed from the final data set. The final dataset, after preparation and elimination of unusable data, resulted in 312 responses that were usable.

The participants, who self-identified themselves as Arab readers were each asked a series of questions, and sub questions, which included their demographics, Instagram usage, gratifications sought through using Instagram, favorite features of Instagram, reading habits, and reasons for following writers on Instagram. Moreover, these participants were asked to identify the challenges faced by Arab writers and propose solutions for these challenges.

## **5.3 Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Table 9 presents a complete list of respondents’ demographic characteristics in terms of gender, age and region.

Table 9: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent %
Gender	Male	189	60.6
	Female	123	39.4
Age	19-25	170	54.5
	26-35	106	34.0
	36-45	22	7.1
	46-55	7	2.2
	older than 55	7	2.2
Region	Arabian gulf	190	60.9
	North Africa	43	13.8
	Levant	73	23.4
	East Africa	6	1.9

It is evident from Table 9, that 60.6% of respondent are male and 39.4% are female. Additionally, 54.5% of the respondents are of the age of 19-25 years, 34% are between 26-35, 7.1% are between 36-45 years old. A total of 4.4% are older than 46 years old. Moreover, 34% of them are from the Arabian Gulf, 13.8% are from North Africa, 23.4% are from the Levant, and 1.9% are from east Africa.

#### **5.4 Respondents' usage of Instagram**

The purpose of this study to investigate the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram, the results of the study are presented as follows:

Table 10: Hours spent on Instagram by participants

Time	Frequency	Percent %
Less than one	76	24.4
1-3 hours	148	47.4
4-5 hours	74	23.7
6-8 hours	2	0.6
More than 8	12	3.8
Total	312	100

In Table 10, a rather high percentage (47.7%) of Arab readers spend between (1-3) hours on Instagram per day, then (24.4%) spend less than one, (23.7%) spend (4-5 hours), (3.8%) spend more than 8 hours, and (0.6%) spend (6-8 hours).

#### **5.4.1 Usefulness of Instagram features to respondents**

Table 11 shows that 81.31% of respondents find the most useful feature of Instagram to be the ability to post, share, and like content, followed by (60.20%) Instagram stories. A total of 48.7% find the visual aspect of Instagram of use to them. The ability to archive and contain all photos in one place (45.4%) and Instagram explore (44.7%) showed similar levels of usefulness to respondents. The ability to use and search hashtags was useful to 40.5% of the respondents, while 33.6% cited the ability to have a private account useful. The least useful features to the respondents were comments (33.6%), the ability to mute others' accounts (22.4%), and Instagram live (14.5%).

Table 11: Usefulness of Instagram features to participants

Instagram features	Frequency	Percent % of (312)
The ability to post, share content	247	81.30
Private account	123	40.50
Ability to mute	68	22.40
The ability to use and search hashtags	128	42.10
The comments	102	33.60
Instagram Live	44	14.50
Instagram Explore	136	44.70
Instagram Stories	183	60.20
Photos in one place	138	45.40
The visual aspect of Instagram	148	48.70

Table 11 shows that 81.31% of respondents find the most useful feature of Instagram to be the ability to post, share, and like content, followed by (60.20%) Instagram stories. A total of 48.7% find the visual aspect of Instagram of use to them. The ability to archive and contain all photos in one place (45.4%) and Instagram explore (44.7%) showed similar levels of usefulness to respondents. The ability to use and search hashtags was useful to 40.5% of the respondents, while 33.6% cited the ability to have a private account useful. The least useful features to the respondents were comments (33.6%), the ability to mute others' accounts (22.4%), and Instagram live (14.5%).

#### 5.4.2 Respondent's overall satisfaction with Instagram

Table 12 shows that (25.3%) of the Arab readers strongly agree with how Instagram provides them with the things they are looking for, (42%) agree, (22.4%) neither agree or disagree, (9.3%) are disagree, while only (1%) of the Arab readers

strongly disagree with how Instagram provides them with the things they are looking seeking.

Table 12: Overall satisfaction of participants with Instagram

Features	Frequency	Percent %
strongly disagree	3	1.0
disagree	29	9.3
neither agree or disagree	70	22.4
agree	131	42.0
strongly agree	79	25.3

#### 5.4.3 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram

To answer this question, means and standard deviations of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram were calculated. The researcher used the statistical model of proportional scaling in order to classify the means of the attitudinal scale as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Statistical Model of Proportional Scaling

Means	Degree
1.00 - 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.67	Moderate
3.68 - 5.00	High

Table 14 shows the mean, standard deviation and importance level of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram. The means of items ranged between

(3.23-4.06), compared to the general mean value of (3.63). It is observed that the highest mean was for the statement " I use Instagram for entertainment" with a mean of (4.04), and a standard deviation of (0.78). The lowest mean was for the statements "I use Instagram for relaxation and/or stress relief" and "I use Instagram to engage in conversations and discussions" with a value of (3.23) and a standard deviation of (1.18, 1.22). In general, it appears that the importance level of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram was moderate.

Table 14: Means and S.D of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram

Rank	No.	Item	Mean	SD	Mean level
1	2	I use Instagram for entertainment	4.06	0.779	High
2	1	I use Instagram to fill up my time, especially when I am bored	4.04	0.99	High
3	5	I use Instagram to find creative inspiration	3.81	0.989	High
4	6	I use Instagram to connect and interact with my friends and family	3.71	1.034	High
5	4	I use Instagram to stay updated/informed on current trends and events	3.66	1.123	Moderate
6	8	I use Instagram to express myself/thoughts/feelings	3.33	1.183	Moderate
7	7	I use Instagram for relaxation and/or stress relief	3.23	1.178	Moderate
8	3	I use Instagram to engage in conversations and discussions	3.23	1.221	Moderate
Total			3.63	0.65	Moderate



#### 5.4.4 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to gender

Table 15 shows that there were no significant differences at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to gender.

Table 15: Means, standard deviation and t-test

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	Sig.
Gender	male	189	3.60	0.629	-1.21	310	0.227
	female	123	3.69	0.670			

#### 5.4.5 Motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram and following Arab writers according to age?

Means and standard deviations for the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to age as shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Means and standard deviations for the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to age

Variable	Category	Mean	SD
Age	19-25	3.60	0.66
	26-35	3.63	0.63
	36-45	3.85	0.57
	46-55	3.80	0.88
	older than 55	3.77	0.40

Table 16 shows that there were noticeable differences in the means of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to age. In order to find out

if these differences are significant, a One Way ANOVA test was conducted, as clarified in Table 17.

Table 17: One Way ANOVA per age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.595	4	0.40	0.96	0.43
Within Groups	128.175	307	0.42		
Total	129.770	311			

Table 18 shows that there were noticeable differences in the means of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to the region, and to find out if these differences are significant, a One Way ANOVA test was conducted as clarified in Table 18.

Table 18: One Way ANOVA results per region

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.421	3	1.474	3.621	0.014*
Within Groups	125.349	308	0.407		
Total	129.770	311			

Table 19 shows that there are significant differences at ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the means of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to the region, where

F was (3.62) with significance less than (0.05). To identify the significance of these differences, an LSD test was utilized for post comparisons as seen in Table 19.

Table 19: Results of LSD test for post comparisons according to region

Variable	Levels	Means	Arabian gulf	North Africa	Levant	East Africa
Region	Arabian gulf	3.55	-	(-0.214) (0.048*)	(-0.195) (0.027*)	(-0.577) (0.03*)
	North Africa	3.76	(0.214) (0.048*)	-		
	Levant	3.74	(0.195) (0.027*)		-	
	East Africa	4.13	(0.577) (0.03*)			-

Table 19 indicates that the existence of statistically significant differences of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to the region for the benefit of Arabian gulf region compared to the other regions.

#### 5.4.6 Respondents following writers on Instagram

Table 20 shows that (68.3%) of the Arab readers follow writers on Instagram, while (31.7%) do not follow them.

Table 20: Participants' who follow writers

Category	Frequency	Percent %
Yes	213	68.3
No	99	31.7

#### 5.4.7 Respondents following Arab writers on Instagram

Table 21 shows that (55.8%) of the Arab readers follow Arab writers on Instagram, while (44.2%) do not follow them.

Table 21: Participants following Arab writers

Category	Frequency	Percent %
Yes	174	55.8
No	138	44.2

#### 5.4.8 Respondents' reasons for following writers on Instagram

Table 22 shows that (69.2%) of the Arab readers follow writers on Instagram because they enjoy their content. Followed by (62.1%) of Arab readers because their work inspires them, (51.2%) It is a quick and easy way to stay updated with them without having to go through websites and newsletters, (50.2%) It is an easy way to access literature and writers, (49.3%) I want to learn from them, (47.4%) Instagram allows me to see writers' lives and work behind the scenes, (35.5%) Following writers on Instagram helps me with my own writing, (30.3%) It makes me feel like part of a

community, (26.5%) Instagram makes me feel closer to writers, (25.6%) It allows me to feel like I am part of their events, despite not being there physically.

Table 22: Participants' reasons for following writers on Instagram

Features	Frequency	Percent % out of (312)
I really enjoy their content	146	69.2
Their work inspires me	131	62.1
It is a quick and easy way to stay updated with them without having to go through websites and newsletters	108	51.2
It is an easy way to access literature and writers	106	50.2
I want to learn from them	104	49.3
Instagram allows me to see writers' lives and work behind the scenes	100	47.4
Following writers on Instagram helps me with my own writing	75	35.5
It makes me feel like part of a community	64	30.3
Instagram makes me feel closer to writers	56	26.5
It allows me to feel like I am part of their events, despite not being there physically	54	25.6

### 5.4.9 Respondents' reading habits

In Table 23, a rather high percentage (40.4%) of Arab readers spend between (2-4) hours on reading per week, then (28.5%) spend less than one hour, (17.3%) spend (5-7 hours) per week, (13.8%) spend more than 8 hours per week.

Table 23: Participants' time spent reading

Time	Frequency	Percent (%)
less than 1 hour	89	28.5
2-4 hours per week	126	40.4
5-7 hours per week	54	17.3
more than 8 hours	43	13.8
Total	312	100.0

Table 24: Participants' preferred reading mediums

Features	Frequency	Percent % out of (312)
Books	228	74.0
E-books	114	37.0
Audio books	68	22.1
Magazines	35	11.4
Newspapers	33	10.7
Websites	180	58.4

Table 24 shows that (74%) of the Arab readers prefer the books to use for reading. Followed by (58.4%) of websites, (37%) of E-books, (22.1%) Audio books, (11.4%) magazines, (10.7%) newspapers.

#### **5.4.10 Struggles faced by Arab writers**

When asked about the struggles faced by Arab writers, a number of respondents pointed to publishing challenges, particularly in relation to quality control, access to resources, and marketing. One respondent stated,

Marketing and reach; most likely the publishers who underestimate writers and use their names to make more money than the share the author is making. We, also do not have enough international platforms to talk about Arabs' publications. We need more journals and literary platforms for this being out there (Respondent #211, 2019).

Another respondent noted that the publishing industry lacks criteria for quality control, "I believe that not a lot of people take modern Arab writers seriously, only because of the fact that there aren't any criteria for publishing houses (Respondent #17, 2019). The publishing industry was critiqued by third and fourth respondents:

- Publishing houses are not accessible. Marketing is not being done for books. (Respondent #3, 2019)
- They do not have enough resources and access to funding to publish their work. That's why many writers have turned to self-publishing and online publishing through social media (Respondent #4, 2019)

#### **5.4.11 Suggestions for challenges faced by Arab writers**

On the subject of solutions to the challenges faced by Arab writers, many respondents suggested activities that would engage readers and writers:

- Though it can be exhausting at times, modern technology has made it possible for many creators to feature their work through different

means and outlets, and it also provides networks of people sharing similar interests and helping one another, so writers can resort to publish their work digitally and/or work on building a fan-base which will help them land future book deals.

- Give reading a more important status in society and introduce programs to get young people interested in it. Create platforms for local authors to meet and network, and Literary Awards and Literature Events for local authors.

Language, specifically promoting readership and writing in Arabic, was another solution proposed by the respondents:

- Read more Arabic books. Interact more with writers
- Promote reading through movies and Arabic TV shows. When they start showing stars that are reading it might influence. Or if a star starts a reading book club
- To promote Arabic books more. And to translate the Arabic books to other languages in order to help the authors sell their story in whatever language

### **5.5 Qualitative findings**

For the qualitative portion of this study, and in order to gain a more complete perspective of the literary ecosystem, 30 Arab writers were interviewed on their thoughts and writing experiences in relation to Instagram.



### **5.5.1 Qualitative data analysis (research themes)**

The group of writers interviewed for this study was made up of 30 Arabs who identify themselves as writers. Moreover, these individuals use Instagram to post their written works. They were interviewed via email to gather their thoughts, experiences and opinions about the connection between Instagram and the Arab literary sector. Their insights are useful in supporting the research objectives and mixed methods interpretation.

The interviewees drew on their individual experiences of Instagram as a creative platform, as well as their motivations to use, and continue using the application. Additionally, they reflected on the social, cultural, and factors that have had an impact in shaping those experiences. These different experiences yielded rich information and valuable insights into the research topic. The interviews were coded into broad categories and then coded for a second time and third time. After the third cycle for coding, the data was organized into coded themes, which are listed in Table 25.

Table 25: Research themes

Research theme	Sample
1) The intersection of literature and multimedia	I also always like posting a photo related to my poem/story , and that is literally what Instagram is about (Interviewee #27, 2019)
2) Modernization of “writer”	Anyone can be a writer (Interviewee #13, 2019)
3) Community virtual and direct social factors	Anyone can be a writer (Interviewee #13, 2019)
4) Challenges	Arab writers face a set of challenges that are unique to the region (Interviewee #25, 2019)
5) Flaws in publishing industry	We lack a proper publishing infrastructure that supports writers to grow their writing (Interviewee #18, 2019)
6) Diversity	Instagram has made the literature community more diverse and added more voices (Interviewee #8, 2019)

### 5.5.2 The intersection of literature and social media

Instagram has multiple features that could be useful to writers, which vary from technical features of the platform to aesthetic enhancing features. This emerged from the data as the theme, intersection of literature and multimedia. The interviewees described the functionalities that facilitated easy dissemination, and creation, of their work. Interviewee #9 specified this about the explore page of Instagram, “the explore page has actually been a great creative inspiration, especially when it comes to finding writers (poetry and otherwise) and finding prompts to help get those creative juices flowing” (Interviewee #9, 2019).

Additionally, they expressed how Instagram allowed them create cross-genre content. Most interviewees expressed that they did not initially join Instagram to use the application to further their writing, but have since used it for that purpose. Interviewee #2 reported that they joined Instagram to “be part of the social media revolution” (Interviewee #2, 2019). Interviewee #5 argued that they initially joined Instagram to share photography but, eventually, began to use Instagram to share their written works. In fact, many interviewees illustrated how the visual nature merges with their written content and create new genres in, and of, themselves (Interviewee #5, 2019).

This is evident in the words of Interviewee #27, who reported that they regularly post photos related to their stories and poems and “that is literally what Instagram is about” (Interviewee #27, 2019). Furthermore, Interviewee #18 noted:

I like that writers have another outlet to publish their work, especially when they record parts of the story by voice, video or capture it through a picture. this allows the audience to engage with the writer and the content which was a rare occasion previously (Interviewee #18, 2019)

Instagram has changed the style of writing for a few writers. In the case of two interviewees, who stated that they write specifically for Instagram as they considered themselves to be an Insta-writer (Interviewee #30, 2019). Interviewee #13, very enthusiastically, noted that when they write, they “do it for the ’gram” (Interviewee #13, 2019). Interviewee #23 found a middle ground and stated that they write for sharing on Instagram and through other means, but mainly for Instagram (Interviewee #23, 2019).

### 5.5.3 Genre fluidity and emerging formats

It can be suggested that Instagram has created a new way for writers to display their work, given them capabilities for different format options, and allowed the audience to interact with the content in multiple ways. It can, also, be assumed that this genre fluidity appeals to writers. Interviewee #26 expressed this sentiment, “For example, poetry is now accepted as short, alignment can be done visually, and it can accompany a specific picture or not, or the type font itself is artistic” (Interviewee #26, 2019). There was consensus among the interviewees that Instagram has benefitted both the literature field and Arab readers through discovery, engagement, and accessibility.

On the technical side, most interviewees, 22, agreed that Instagram has aided their work to reach a wider audience. A main function of social media is the ability to share content and connect with others, so Instagram fits the bill in that respect. Interviewee #1 points out that although Instagram did not directly affect their writing career, it did afford them interesting contacts (Interviewee #1, 2019).

Posting content via Instagram is a convenient option with sizable benefits for writers, which could include publishing opportunities. Interviewee #26 points out that, “the western approach has taken Instagram as a discovery platform, the Middle East seem to prefer the traditional approach” (Interviewee #26, 2019).

Interviewee #20 hopes to use Instagram, specifically through the sponsored post and hashtag function, to reach a wider audience and to “post parts of my already published work in hope to promote it and to meet a better publisher who would want to publish my next work” (Interviewee #20, 2019).

#### **5.5.4 Summary of the intersection of literature and social media theme**

In a nutshell, the interviewees cited different reasons for joining Instagram. These reasons include, trendiness, curiosity, a place to share photos, and an interest in aesthetics. However, for the interviewees, Instagram and its features quickly lent themselves to becoming a platform for uploading writings. The interviewees discussed their opinions on the way their written work can be blended with other functions of Instagram to create new forms of literature. These new forms have become acceptable among the younger age demographics. Although some writers did not join Instagram with the intention to use it for their written work, the writers managed to create new genres and Instagram has helped these writers reach wider audiences.

#### **5.5.5 The modernization of Arab “writer”**

Multiple interviewees referred to a more contemporary concept of being a writer, due in part, to social media. The interviewees demonstrated different perspectives on the meaning of being a writer. Some, for example in the instance of Interviewee #27, believe that Instagram is a platform and does not define or redefine being a writer:

No. Instagram is merely a platform that helps provide a place to showcase your work, it is like a bookstore or a library, incapable of affecting the definition of what it means to be a writer as that is variable from each writer to another (Interviewee #27, 2019)

Others, understand the concept of being a writer to be more fluid, as explained by Interviewee #12, “You do not have to publish a book or be a columnist to say you are a writer anymore” (Interviewee #12, 2019). Moreover, some writers expressed their thoughts about how the essence of being a writer does not change with a change

of platform, “No, not really. A writer has always been and will always be someone who uses the written word to communicate ideas. The platform doesn’t (and shouldn’t) change that” (Interviewee #9, 2019).

Internal features of Instagram were also mentioned. Sponsored posts and account verification are two features of Instagram that help writers reach their target audiences without having a published book, as was previously the case:

Traditionally to be a writer you have to have a physical book, now Instagram can verify your Instagram account as a writer and I know many people who make money out to that, they publish their work on Instagram and offer workshops so people can write like them, especially with the freedom to post your work as a sponsored advertisement (Interviewee #15, 2019)

However, not all interviewees agreed with this concept as writing is an old medium and Instagram is just a different format. Focusing on poetry, Interviewee #13 stressed that Instagram is a modern format for an old literature form. However, interviewee #2 acknowledges the duality of the phenomenon, “In good and bad ways. We have talented writers being recognized but then we have lack luster people who claim the title of writer but they really aren’t” (Interviewee #2, 2019)

While the interviewees agree that there has been modernization of the notion of being a writer, they do not delegitimize Instagram writers. It is noteworthy to mention that this genre has become popular, and revitalized, particularly with the younger demographic of audience. “The art of writing was diminishing and a lot of the youth didn’t think it was enjoyable, it helped it expand further in generations” (Interviewee #4, 2019). This theme is echoed in the sentiments of Interviewee #20:

This push towards digital publishing is new and the traditional publishing industry in this part of the world doesn't acknowledge it but the writers themselves, specially the younger ones are going with it (Interviewee 20, 2019).

While the interviewees agree that there has been modernization of the notion of being a writer, they do not delegitimize Instagram writers. It is noteworthy to mention that this genre has become popular, and revitalized, particularly with the younger demographic of audience. “The art of writing was diminishing and a lot of the youth didn’t think it was enjoyable, it helped it expand further in generations” (Interviewee #4, 2019). In keeping with the literature about the changing definitions within the literary ecosystem, the interviewees were asked for their thoughts the effect of Instagram on the production of literature. Their opinions are laid out in Table 26.

Table 26: The production of literature

Interviewee I.D	Comments
Interviewee #1	Yes! Especially the length, it's usually shorter to draw in readers (Interviewee #1, 2019)
Interviewee #14	Yes! It is bite size now. More writers means more content which means more diversity (Interviewee #14, 2019)
Interviewee #21	No, it has not changed the way literature is produced (Interviewee #21, 2019)

Responses fell into two categories. The first, that Instagram has not fundamentally changed the way literature is produced. The second, is that Instagram has facilitated the production of a new kind of, bite-sized and easily digestible, kind of literature.

### **5.5.6 Summary of the modernization of Arab “writer” theme**

In summary of this theme, it becomes apparent that the interviewees have acknowledged a shift that Instagram has brought to the concept of being a writer. This is due, particularly, to the notion of that Instagram has made audiences and distribution of writings easier and more accessible. The interviewees, also, mentioned the role that the application underscores within the literature community but were divided on the extent of this impact.

### **5.5.7 Need for community among Arab writers**

On the topic of community responses from interviewees all echoed the need and effects of community. One aspect of this is to have a sense of community with creative and likeminded individuals, as was the case of Interviewee #27.

By that token, Interviewee #9 expressed that they wanted to “be part of a creative community, meet people who share a love of literature and art, and to inspire and be inspired” (Interviewee #9, 2019). Twenty-three interviewees reported that learning and development through online, communities and connecting with other writers was important in their use of Instagram:

Writers group such as Untitled Chapters, Jaf Ink, Sekka and Sail. It helped connect me to writing Groups who I can submit my work to and get professional opinion from people who studied literature or that are in the field like Untitled Chapters, Jak Ink, Sekka and Sail (interviewee #19, 2019)

Although Interviewee #1 stated that Instagram gave them the opportunity to gain feedback on their writing from other writers and readers from around the globe (Interviewee #1, 2019). This sentiment was reported multiple times, which leads to



the inference that learning from other writers is important to Arab writers. Interviewee #15 credits Instagram with providing a platform to connect with “like minded colleagues and people who are interested in leaving comments that can help me enhance my writing” (Interviewee #15, 2019). This shows not only a hunger to learn and hone their skills, but also to pay those skills forward. On that note, Interviewee #18 provides mentorships for younger writers through Instagram (Interviewee #18, 2019). Through this connectivity, writers are growing and forming their own networks of readers and writers.

There is a deep, emotional component to Arab writers using Instagram. Aside from connections with other writers on a professional and artistic level, there exists a profound level emotional support in the online writing communities that goes beyond sharing a common craft. Many writers seek solace and inspiration in these creative communities, as pointed out by Interviewee #26, “the craft is still challenging, but to know that other writers are going through it is comforting” (Interviewee #26, 2019).

Moreover, Interviewee #29 stated, “it also gave me validation and acknowledgement and kept me energized to continue writing” (Interviewee #29, 2019). Another point that was made regarding these communities was the level of trust. When asked if they worried about plagiarism when posting their written work online, Interviewee #30 stated, “I trust that I will be warned through my following” (Interviewee #30, 2019).

On the social front, several writers appreciated the privacy afforded to them by Instagram. The anonymity allows them to post their writing without “fear and judgment”, as Interviewee #13 pointed out. Instagram, also, provides a platform that can shield the writers from “issues with the society specially when writing about taboo

or socially unacceptable topics in this part of the world” (Interviewee #15, 2019). In the same vein, Interviewee #14 stated that writers face criticism for writing because it is not a “fancy hobby or career” (Interviewee #14, 2019)

Clearly there are underlying social factors that have played a part in motivating Arab writers to use Instagram for their work, one of which could be an unfavorable writing environment and lack of support. Interviewee #10 stated that a big challenge faced by Arab writers is “Negative comments and high, unproductive, criticism” (Interviewee #10, 2019).

#### **5.5.8 Using Instagram as a way to connect with writers and readers**

When prompted on whether they use Instagram as a tool for interaction between readers and writers, the interviewees’ answers fell into three categories:

- Yes, I use Instagram to connect with other readers and writers  
(76.6%)
- No, I do not use Instagram to connect with other readers and writers  
(16.6%)
- I, sometimes, use Instagram to connect with other readers and writers  
(6.6%)

The majority of interviewees (76.6%) explained that they used Instagram as a means to connect with readers and writers, compared to 16.6% of interviewees who stated that they did not use the application for this type of interaction. Surprisingly, only 6.6% of interviewees expressed using Instagram for interaction with readers and writers on an occasional basis. This suggests that Instagram provides an element of

interaction within like-minded individuals, which further supports the theme of a need to have a sense of community.

#### **5.5.9 Summary of need for community among Arab writers' theme**

To sum up, it is obvious that community plays a key role in the lives and work of the interviewees. The interviewees' responses circulated between two types of community; the physical community, and the online community of like-minded and creative individuals. These communities can be a source of encouragement or discouragement for the interviewees. Most interviewees, 76.6%, reported using Instagram as a means to connect with other writers and readers, which suggests that Instagram is an essential way to communicate with the online community. Moreover, social factors affect the choice of the interviewees use of Instagram. These factors include, privacy and the ability to post written work anonymously, an unfavorable social environment that stifles creativity, and a longing to belong. Online communities of writers provided support for the interviewees, as well as a safe space to create and express.

#### **5.5.10 Diversity of Arab writers**

All the interviewees agreed that Instagram has added to the diversity of literature, although to varying degrees. In terms of benefit to readers, there were multiple facets of this argument. For example, Interviewee #2 pointed out, "I think it exposed them to more writers from the Arab world that are not traditionally published or not writing in the generic Arabic genres" (Interviewee #2, 2019). This addresses the previously pointed out issue of literature distribution in the Arab world and also the challenges of publishing in different genres.

Moreover, according to Interviewee #12, “With Instagram they are now exposed to different kinds of writing, different languages, new information in a quick way” (Interviewee #12, 2019). It is clear that the writers discussed different aspects of diversity, given the wide range of definitions that the term evokes. In the case of Interviewee #15, the diversity afforded to the literature industry means that there are diverse ideas on the same subject:

I like how diverse Instagram has allowed the industry to be. I love seeing people with walks of life holding a book and posting it. it allows people from different walks of life to share their thoughts about the same body of work. (Interviewee #15, 2019)

Interviewee #23 expressed a sentiment through drawing on experience as a writer on Instagram, “Writing on Instagram gave me the opportunity to share my words which people see and not my disability. My wheelchair doesn’t matter on Instagram, just my words” (Interviewee #23, 2019). Instagram has given the writers space to express themselves and, most notably, added to the voices of Arab literature.

#### **5.5.11 Summary of diversity of Arab writers’ theme**

Overall, it may be said that diversity has been a major outcome of Arab writers using Instagram to post their written works. This is due to accessibility of new volumes of written work, which the audience can read via Instagram. New voices, multiple languages, and written work that would otherwise be unheard are now available to a wider audience. In turn, this creates a more inclusive literary ecosystem. All the interviewees, without exception, reported diversity as a positive outcome for the literature community.

### **5.5.12 Challenges**

In regard to challenges faced by the interviewees, two sub themes were generated based on the findings of the interviews:

- Content-specific challenges
- Publishing-specific challenges

Content-specific challenges are challenges that are related all areas of content production and distribution. The publishing-specific sub-theme includes the opinions of the interviewees on the publishing industry.

### **5.5.13 Content-specific challenges**

These findings indicated that most of the interviewees, 27, worried to varying degrees about plagiarism of their written works. Additionally, 6 of interviewees noted that they had taken steps to avoid plagiarism as a precautionary measure:

There is always a worry but I do like that when you post something there is a time stamp associated with it that will prove that I have posted this prior to anyone who steals it and posts it anywhere else (Interviewee #2, 2019)

Another interviewee pointed out that they had taken steps to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism, “I can personally do certain measures to make sure my direct work is not plagiarized like adding watermark” (Interviewee #12, 2019). There was discontent among interviewees about the type of algorithm used by Instagram, which poses a distribution challenge to the interviewees. Furthermore, on the technical side to help with content distribution, Interviewee #5 suggested that, “Instagram should segment its current algorithm to support its creators” (Interviewee #5, 2019).

#### 5.5.14 Publishing-specific challenges

On the topic of challenges faced by Arab writers, the interviewees had differing opinions, however a number of responses centered around the publishing industry, literary professionals, and content production Table 27.

Table 27: Publishing specific challenges

Interviewee I.D	Comments
Interviewee #9	Not having enough exposure, I think, for the most part. Also choosing what dialect/how formal the writing should be. Do you write in your local dialect and risk alienating those who wouldn't really understand or relate, or do you take the traditional route and risk sounding too formal and stilted? (Interviewee #9, 2019)
Interviewee #2	Limitation is what the Arab publishing industry offers. At the moment the Arab publishing industry is only concerned about the publishing house and not the writer. There is no quality control on what is published and what isn't as well as anyone with money can get published. It's all about the money and not the talent. There is no transparency between the publisher and the author as well as the lack of an agent (Interviewee #2, 2019)
Interviewee #5	Competing with western writers backed up by proper publishing agencies (Interviewee #5, 2019)
Interviewee #30	Publishing model is not clear, and requires the writer to provide financially (Interviewee #30, 2019)

Another interviewee stated that quality control could be compromised in favor of social media following:

I while it has opened doors to many capable writers, I do not like that certain writers/poets who are average are getting book deals because of the number of followers they have rather than have their work properly evaluated and edited (Interviewee #16, 2019)

Interviewee #17 noted, “It can by getting people to speak out and address how backwards the Arabic publishing industry is as well as the demand for it to change” (Interviewee #17, 2019), which implies that Instagram can be used as a vehicle to drive change in the Arab publishing industry.

#### 5.5.15 Summary of challenges facing Arab writers theme

In a nutshell, the challenges faced by Arab writers with regards to Instagram can be divided into two broad, but different, categories. These categories are outlined in Table 28.

Table 28: Challenges faced by Arab writers relating to Instagram

Type of challenge	Examples
Content-specific challenges	Plagiarism and intellectual property issues, Instagram algorithm, exposure
Publishing-specific challenges	Lack of publishing infrastructure, quality control, outdated publishing practices

Although these challenges seem complex, the interviewees looked to the future with a sense of curiosity, and some looked to it with optimism. For the interviewees, Instagram has opened up a world of communication and collaboration, which could drive change in the regional publishing industries.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

### **6.1 Overview of study**

This chapter presents the discussion of the study. To begin with, the chapter recaps the previous chapters through summaries. This chapter begins with relisting the research aims which overarch the study and uses them as a guiding thread to present the results obtained. The results are, then, explained in the context of research in the field and theoretical understandings. The second chapter of this study is the methods chapter. This chapter lays out the chosen, and most suited, research methods of the research. Since this study is a mixed methods study, it employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The philosophical underpinning of this study is pragmatism and the research design is the parallel convergence design. In this, particular type of research design, both the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed simultaneously, before being merged through interpretation in the discussion section.

Next, the results of the quantitative and qualitative results of the study are presented side by side in order to present a synthesized, and complete, scenario of the research topic. After discussing and interpreting the results, the significance of the study, limitations and implications for future research are identified.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a brief summary. The progression of the study is as follows: The study began with a brief introduction and literature review. The literature review is composed of three main parts. The first of which discusses the progression of Web 2.0 through to social media, and then Instagram. The second part of the literature review examines the evolution of literature, literacy and the book. The third, and final, section of the literature review discusses the intersection of social



media and the literature sector. Furthermore, the data was collected and examined in the following ways (Table 29):

Table 29: Data collection and analysis of the study

Data type	Data collection Method	Data Analysis technique
Quantitative data	Surveys distributed to 350 Arab readers who use Instagram, final dataset, N=312	Descriptive statistics and mean comparison via SPSS
Qualitative data	Structured interviews with 30 Arab writers	Thematic analysis

The researcher focused on both quantitative and qualitative research methods to create a complete picture of the research topic, since there is scarce scholarship on it. Surveys were distributed through referrals and in spaces of literary interest within the UAE. The interviews were conducted online, during which time the researcher compiled detailed notes, memos, and retained a research diary. The interviewees requested anonymity, which the researcher obliged and they were given the contact details of the researcher in case of follow up concerns or inquiries.

The next chapter shows the results which are divided into visual representation and statistical analysis of collected quantitative data, and themes extracted from collected qualitative data.

The literature ecosystem in the Arab region is one of complexity. Issues such as distribution, publishing infrastructure, and social factors have contributed to writers taking their craft to Instagram. Many Arab writers face challenges in securing

publishing deals and general support for their written work. Global success of writers who were discovered via social media, or began their writing careers on Instagram have gained prominence in recent years.

It is well documented that social media is double sided, relying on both consumers of content, producers of content, and the interaction that happens between the them. Building on this concept, this study examined the specific motivations of Arab readers using Instagram, alongside the motivations of Arab writers using Instagram to publish their written works. Through the identification of these motivations, this study, paints previously unstudied picture of the literary ecosystem in the Arab world in relation to the changes created by this phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to understand the Arab literary ecosystem through perspectives and motivations of both Arab readers and writers. From the outset, three objectives were sought. These are listed in Table 30:

Table 30: Objectives of the research

Objective 1	To explore the current changes in the Arab literary ecosystem in relation to Instagram, through the application of the uses and gratifications perspective
Objective 2	To examine gratifications associated with Arab users/readers of Instagram and Arab writers from both perspectives
Objective 3	Identify key challenges faced by Arab writers

The research aims served as a thread to guide the study. Each objective was reached through different means. The first research objective RO1 was achieved

through examination of previous research and quantitative research methods. The second and third research objectives (RO2, RO3) were reached through simultaneous data analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. For this study, the research paradigm applied was pragmatism. Pragmatism was well-suited to be applied to this study, as a paradigm, due to its multi-faceted and flexible nature. Moreover, pragmatism resolves the restrictions imposed on research by other paradigms. Thus, allowing the researcher to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, analysis, and approaches within the same study. For this study, there are three main research questions to be answered (Table 31). These questions are answered using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, previously published scholarship, and theories.

Table 31: Research questions of the study

RQ 1	What are the gratifications sought by Arab readers through Instagram use and are these gratifications significantly related to gender, and region?
RQ 2	What are the motivations for Arab writers using Instagram as a platform for their written work?
RQ 3	How has Instagram affected the Arab literary ecosystem?

In summary, the main findings of this study are:

- Arab readers use Instagram for a variety of sought gratification. The most prolific gratifications are, entertainment, to pass the time, social interaction, and creativity
- Arab writers' motivations for using Instagram are a direct response to

their need for community and for creativity. They sought to be part of a community of like-minded individuals.

- Instagram has affected the Arab literary ecosystem in different ways. The first of which is that it has allowed a greater number of voices to be heard due to ease of use and accessibility. Secondly, it has created new genre fluidity at the intersection of text and multimedia features. Third, it has allowed writers to be writers regardless of publishing a physical book. Finally, it has created a space where the art of writing is inclusive, community based, and not dependent on gatekeepers of the publishing industry.

In order to address RQ1, and to understand the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram, quantitative data was analyzed through a survey based on gratifications previously published in research. A previous study by Whiting and Williams (2013) proposed new gratifications specific to social media and, according to their study, the top four gratifications for social media usage were:

- Social interaction
- Information seeking
- Pass time
- Entertainment

For this study, the researcher used a comparison of means via the Statistical Model of Proportional Scaling indicated that none of the gratification factors registered as “low”, and those that registered as “high” were close in ranking. The factors ranking as “high” are the following:

- Entertainment (M= 4.06): I use Instagram for entertainment
- Time filler (M= 4.04): I use Instagram to fill up my time, especially when I am bored
- Inspiration (M= 3.81): I use Instagram to find creative inspiration
- Social interaction (M= 3.71): I use Instagram to connect and interact with my friends and family

According to Popoola (2014), social media functions as a space for discussion and social interaction. Moreover, this notion is supported by Lynch (2015), who argues that new media works as a public sphere due to “new kinds of debates, identity claims, and political trends which evolved within those new spaces” (para. 7), and that technology is necessary for facilitation but not the sole circumstance for a contemporary public sphere. This can account for the high mean (M= 3.71) of the social interaction gratification extracted from this study. Moreover, the study of Al-Kandari et al. (2017) used to factor analysis to conclude that entertainment, information seeking, and social connections were some of the most prominent reasons why Arab users took to Instagram.

In this study, the researcher yielded similar patterns of motivation for usage Instagram amongst the sample of Arab readers. Additionally, the researcher used a Likert scale to gather the answers to this part of the survey and a comparison of respective of means to determine significance. The results indicated that the top four, highest ranked, reasons why Arab readers use Instagram were the same as the same gratifications as the Whiting and Williams (2013) and the Al-Kandari et al. (2017) study.

The second part of RQ1 deals with the differences across motivations, in relation to gender. Statistically, Instagram has a narrow difference in the number of female and male users (We are Social and Hootsuite, 2020), however this does not mean that motivations do not differ amongst both genders. In this study, a t-test revealed that  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ , which means that there is no significant difference in gender of Arab readers using Instagram, across the motivations:

- Female Arab readers who use Instagram (M= 3.60, SD= 0.629)
- Male Arab readers who use Instagram (M= 3.69, SD, 0.670)

These, particular, results suggest that gender does not play a significant role in the motivations of Arab readers to use Instagram overall. The findings of this study relate to those of Shen and Mohammed (2010), which did not find a statistically significant difference of motivations of female and male users of social media usage.

In terms of regional motivations, the analysis indicates that after performing a one-way ANOVA test, there is a statistically significant difference in Arab reader motivations by region at,  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  in the comparison of means of the motivations behind Arab readers using Instagram according to the region where F was (3.62) with significance less than (0.05). An LSD test showed the most significant difference for the Arabian Gulf region. This is unsurprising since the Arabian Gulf countries have a significantly higher rate of Instagram usage than the rest of the Arab world, comparatively. This also falls inline with the basic premise of the uses and gratifications theory which states that motivations are individualistic (Wu et al., 2010; Grudz et al., 2016).

RQ2 asks what are the motivations for Arab writers using Instagram as a platform for their written work. To address this question, it is necessary to revert to the main idea of the uses and gratifications theory. This theory states that users have certain needs, which they seek to gratify, through media consumption and the assumption that those needs will be gratified through specific media (Katz et al., 1973). The findings in relation to RQ2 show this to be true. The motivation of Arab writers to use Instagram, despite not initially intending to be used as a medium for posting their writing, arose from creative needs, frustration with the regional publishing industry, and needs for a creative outlet and community. These needs can be translated into motivations to use Instagram by writers. They can be seen in the interviewees' responses (Table 32).

Table 32: Interviewee motivations to use Instagram

Data type	Data collection Method
Creative and social needs	Interviewee #9 joined Instagram “to be part of a creative community, meet people who share a love of literature and art and to inspire and be inspired” (Interviewee #9, 2019)
Publishing needs	Interviewee #20 uses Instagram to “post parts of my already published work in hope to promote it and to meet a better publisher who would want to publish my next work” (Interviewee #20, 2019)

Following a factor analysis, Sheldon and Bryant (2016), found that creativity is a factor for the use of Instagram. This motivation was not previously discussed in scholarship. However, the findings of this study are reflective of this category of motivation, which Sheldon and Bryant describe as, “defined as showing off one's skills

and finding people who have similar interests” (p. 93).

To answer RQ3, both quantitative and qualitative findings were and integrated. The main subject of this research question is to shed light on how Instagram has affected the literary ecosystem. This is in terms of how it has affected the production and consumption of literature. Since some interviewees cited writing specifically for Instagram, it can be assumed that this is reflective of Brügger (2016) 3<sup>rd</sup> wave, where content is produced specifically for a digital platform.

Results from the survey show that writers face challenges of distribution of their work, however Instagram has eliminated the middleman and allowed the writers to produce and distribute their content easily. Moreover, these results follow Johnson’s (2017) argument for citizen authors bring authors who, “actively bypass the traditional gatekeepers of the industry by writing, sharing, and promoting their work directly within the global village.” (p. 136). Instagram has not fundamentally changed how literature is written, (Interviewee #21, 2019). However, Instagram has produced new genre fluidity through multimedia capabilities.

Though it can be exhausting at times, modern technology has made it possible for many creators to feature their work through different means and outlets, and it also provides networks of people sharing similar interests and helping one another, so writers can resort to publish their work digitally and/or work on building a fan-base which will help them land future book deals (Survey respondent #23, 2019).

This is not a novel idea to use social media to post literature, however unlike twitter novels, for which the New York Public Library received commendation, these writers are not uploading work meant for print. They are creating new ways to display



and distribute their writings through meshing textual elements with aesthetics and videos, while making the content accessible to the general public and reaching audiences like never before.

The issue of diversity in literature is one of multiple debates. However, it was clear from the writers included in this study that Instagram added positively to the diversity of the literary community. “More writers, means more content which, means more diversity” (Interviewee #14, 2019). This diversity is not merely in terms of social demographics, but in terms of languages, genres and ideas. It has created a more inclusive environment for readers and writers, which is encapsulated in the words of one interviewee who proclaimed, “my wheelchair doesn’t matter on Instagram. People see my words and not my disability” (Interviewee #23). It has transcended identity politics and, to an extent, brought voices from the periphery to the center of the field.

## **6.2 Implementation and implications of communication theory**

This study is based on a foundation of three theories. These theories are the uses and gratifications theory and the Gatekeeping theory. Both theories worked together to support the research questions and frame the results.

The uses and gratifications theory states that the audience of media mediums are active and consciously choose the media they consume based on their individual needs (Wu et al., 2010). The researcher found a connection between this aspect of the theory and data collected from the interviews. In which, the interviewees stated using Instagram to fill specific creative and social needs. This theory has multiple applications within different media platforms and social media. Moreover, the users chose specific types of platforms according their perceived usefulness and their needs

(Reinhard and Dervin, 2009). This relates to the findings of the study, in the case of Interviewee #27, Instagram fulfills their needs through the ability to merge pictures with poetry on a regular basis (Interviewee #27, 2019). The individualism of motivations can be seen in the contrast between interviewees, where motivations differ from person to person. For example, “post parts of my already published work in hope to promote it and to meet a better publisher who would want to publish my next work” (Interviewee #20, 2019). Another assumption of the uses and gratifications theory is the individualistic nature of motivations. This aspect of the theory was applicable to the study at hand, as the interviewees cited different motivations for using Instagram, and the respondents of the survey had varying degrees of agreement when presented with a list motivations for using Instagram.

The final theory applied to this study is the Gatekeeping theory. The premise of this theory is that there is a process that controls the dissemination of information to the public. In the case of social media, since users are both consumers and producers of content, they are creators, distributors, and gatekeepers at the same time (Al-Kandari et al., 2017). According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), the gatekeeping not only dictates which information gets distributed, it also controls the nature of messages.

In the case of the literature ecosystem, traditionally, the publishing industry acted as a gatekeeper. By the criteria of the theory, there is a direct connection between the theory and the findings of the study. Both the interviewees and participants in the survey reported that Instagram is a way to bypass the traditional gatekeeper of the literature sector. This connects with Johnson’s (2017) arguments on the citizen author and gatekeeping, in which the author disrupts the hierarchy of the publishing industry.

This is evident in the words of interviewee #15, “Traditionally to be a writer you have to have a physical book, now Instagram can verify your Instagram account as a writer” (Interviewee #15, 2019). Additionally, “Anyone can be a writer” (Interviewee #13, 2019). This disruption, through Instagram, suggests that the publishing industry was functioning as a gatekeeper and, in fact, there was a power relationship between publishers and writers. This connects with the notions of Shoemaker and Vos (2009) on power dynamics. Moreover, going around the gatekeepers has resulted in a more diverse and inclusive literary ecosystem, which has a more even distribution of literary power.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1 Concluding thoughts

What can be gained from this study? The literature ecosystem in the Arab region is undergoing profound changes. These changes come at the heels of the access to technological infrastructure, and an increase in broadband and internet penetration, and accessibility of social media. It is noteworthy to mention, that these technologies play a facilitating role in the shifts in the literature sector, and are not solely responsible for them.

Arab readers' motivational patterns with Instagram show that the main reason for them using Instagram are entertainment, to fill up their time, and social interaction. These motivational patterns are not significantly related to gender. However, they are significantly related to regions. Given the statistical differences in Instagram usage in different regions of the Arab world, this outcome was not unexpected. For example, a high percentage of the population using Instagram in the Arabian Gulf countries, compared to other Arab countries with a lower rate of Instagram usage would be expected to contribute to significant differences.

Arab writers began using Instagram for motivations such as curiosity and trendiness. This usage evolved to become a platform for uploading their written works. On a social level, a lack of support from their surrounding communities and a desire to belong to a creative community of like-minded individuals was a strong motivational factor leading to the Arab writers to use Instagram as writers. Frustration with the publishing structure and practices in the Arab world lead the writers to turn to Instagram to distribute their work.

The usage of Instagram by Arab readers and writers is contributing to the Arab literary ecosystem, in terms of, power dynamics. It is not necessary for Arab writers to have a published physical book to fulfill the criteria of being a writer. In fact, this study shows that the term Arab writer has been modernized due to the accessibility that Instagram provides. It should be mentioned that the writers have concerns about intellectual property, but risk these concerns becoming reality in order to publish their work online. Instagram has greatly diversified the Arab literature scene. Arab writers using Instagram have managed to contribute in more genres, cross-genres, languages, content, and voices than was previously the case. These writers are reaching wider audiences and exposing Arab readers to a new variety of literary voices. They have even created literary communities to house these voices.

Theories such as the uses and gratifications theory have proved, through this study, to be applicable to Arab readers and writers. The uses and gratifications theory, specifically, explains that motivations are based on conscious decisions to satisfy individual needs. This was shown to be the case in this study. The researcher believes that it was these social factors that played the biggest role in Arab writers choosing to use Instagram as a platform, and also, to an extent, the Arab readers.

The Arab readers, also, reported that they following writers on Instagram, mostly, because they enjoy their content and it makes them feel like they are part of a community. Therefore, the need for community is an overarching connection between Arab readers and writers using Instagram. Additionally, the challenges facing Arab writers could be addressed through Instagram.

## **7.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research**

There is no study completely void of limitations, as it is the nature of research to always create space for improvement. This study had limitations that can be remedied in future studies. First, this study used a total of 8 gratifications extracted from previous studies, however only four proved to be significant (through statistical analysis). These results are significant but not exhaustive. Future studies could utilize comprehensive lists of gratifications specific to social media, as this study used a list of gratifications for both retrieved from studies across mediums. Factor analysis could be used, in the future, to determine these underlying factors.

Secondly, the survey was distributed to a moderately sized sample population and the results are not utterly generalizable. Future researchers could consider using a wider sample. Moreover, this study asked about differences in motivations in gender and region. While the demographics for Instagram usage are fairly well documented, there is still much more to discover with regards to demographics in future research. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see motivations compared to other social media platforms and across other creative mediums. For example, musicians and sound cloud vs artists on Pinterest. Mixed methods studies are pertinent in this endeavor. This study used a parallel convergence method but future research could include sequential exploratory or explanatory models.

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## Appendix

### Survey Questions

1. Do you consider yourself a reader?
2. Do you use Instagram? (if yes, skip to question4) (if no, skip to question 3)
3. Why do not you use Instagram?
  - a. Instagram is boring
  - b. Instagram is not relevant to me
  - c. Instagram is not user friendly
  - d. I prefer other social media platforms
  - e. Other, please specify
4. On average, how much time to you spend on Instagram per day?
  - a. Less than one hour
  - b. 1-3 hours
  - c. 4-5 hours
  - d. 6-8 hours
  - e. More than 8 hours
5. Which features of Instagram do you find the most useful to you? (Please check all that apply)
  - a. The ability to post, share, and like content
  - b. The ability to have a private account
  - c. The ability to mute other's accounts
  - d. The ability to use and search hashtags
  - e. The comments
  - f. Instagram live
  - g. Instagram explore

- h. Instagram stories
  - i. The ability to have all of my photos in one place
  - j. The visual aspect of Instagram
6. In general I am satisfied with how Instagram provides me with things I am looking for
- a. Strongly Agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neither agree or disagree
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
7. Please rank the following statements according to your opinion and experience using Instagram
- a. I use Instagram to fill up my time, especially when I am bored
  - b. I use Instagram for entertainment
  - c. I use Instagram to engage in conversations and discussions
  - d. I use Instagram to stay updated/informed on current trends and events
  - e. I use Instagram to find creative inspiration
  - f. I use Instagram to connect and interact with my friends and family
  - g. I use Instagram for relaxation and/or stress relief
  - h. I used Instagram to express myself/thoughts/feelings
8. Do you follow writers on Instagram?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
9. Do you follow Arab writers on Instagram?
- a. Yes



- b. No

10. Why do you follow writers on Instagram (please check all that apply?)

- a. Their work inspires me
- b. I want to learn from them
- c. I really enjoy their content
- d. It is an easy way to access literature and writers
- e. It is a quick way to stay updated with them without having to go through websites and newsletters
- f. Instagram allows me to see writers' lives and work behind the scenes
- g. Instagram makes me feel closer to writers
- h. It allows me to feel like I am part of their events, despite not being there physically
- i. Following writers on Instagram helps me with my own writing
- j. It makes me feel like part of a community

11. On average, how much time do you spend reading per week?

- a. Less than 1 hour
- b. 2-4 hours
- c. 5-7 hours
- d. More than 8 hours

12. What medium do you prefer to use for reading? (Please check all that apply)

- a. Books
- b. E-books
- c. Audio books
- d. Magazines
- e. Magazines

- f. Newspapers
- g. Websites and online content

13. In your opinion, what are the struggles and challenges facing Arab writers?

14. In your opinion, what are your recommendations to solve these challenges?

15. How old are you?

- a. Younger than 18
- b. 19-25
- c. 26-35
- d. 36-45
- e. 46-55
- f. Older than 55

16. What is your gender?

- a. Female
- b. Male

17. Which region are you from?

- a. Arabian Gulf (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen)
- b. North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Libya, Mauritania)
- c. Levant (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Palestine)
- d. East Africa (Somalia, Djibouti)