

# **Culturally-Aware Motivation for Smart Services: An Exploratory Study of the UAE**

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## **Abstract**

The adoption of smart services could be challenging despite the benefits they can offer in terms of ubiquity and intelligence. The main reason for that is the relatively difficult administration of the services on smart phones and the availability of other options including the in-person and desktop services. However, the design of smart services could be more proactive and attract users' adoption through the use of persuasive and motivational techniques. These techniques should be culturally-sensitive. This paper reviews the use of Cialdini six principles of influence in the cultural context of UAE, and it assesses how they should be used to increase the adoption of smart services. As a method, we conducted in-depth interviews with ten experts in various domains; including marketing and customer services; in the UAE. We report on the potential and the adverse effects and identify context specific factors of the use of these principles in the context of the UAE aiming to give the management of software-based motivation a starting point for their design and evaluation.

**Keywords:** Persuasion Quality, Culture-







transparency will likely have a negative effect on the motivation to accept an offer. This appears to confirm Colesca's [11] findings, who stated that transparency in the provision of e-government services increases the trust between citizens and government. That means that the experts confirm that providers in the UAE, in Colesca's case governments in general, will gain trust through transparency, and offers will be accepted more willingly by customers.

*Offer:* This factor is linked to the perceived quality of the good or service as discussed earlier. However, it refers to the relationship that the customer establishes with a provider if an offer is perceived as qualitatively good. The customer will more likely consider new offers if the quality of previous offers were perceived as good.

*Trust:* Related to the previous point is the trust relationship the customer has with a provider. If this trust relationship is disturbed, the customer will be less likely to accept offers. This attitude may result from the UAE's thriving economy and the subsequent high average income which has been persisted for more than 30 years [12].

### 3.2 Scarcity

Scarcity related to motivation through the limitation of specific offers. This limitation may be time-bound, but it could also be related to a customer's performance in completing a challenge or a lottery draw. Additionally, the scarcity concept and its degree of influence could vary from customer to another, depending the perceived value of the offer which could be monetary or quality values [14].

The experts highlighted several challenges which were categorised into six factors influencing the element of scarcity in the context of UAE customer motivation. These factors are competition, social recognition, uniqueness, secondary nature, exclusivity, and negativity.

*Competition:* Scarcity may result in an adverse effect. For instance, if a customer never gets the chance to get an offer, it may actually result in rejecting a product or service altogether. In fact, scarcity may result in customers feeling insulted by being omitted from offers.

*Social Recognition:* The social impact of limited offers may be motivational in the context of the UAE. Customers may receive offers if they recruit more customers. That would result in limiting the offer to those who recruit, but it may result higher adoption of a good or service.

*Uniqueness:* The uniqueness of a good or service may motivate customer in the UAE to adopt a good or service. Uniqueness may result in customers feeling

effectiveness, profile, lifespan, secondary nature, age, lifetime, personalisation, vision, patriotism, and objectivity.

*Effectiveness:* All experts agreed that this technique is one of the most influential in the UAE. The society and culture recognises individuals who contributed to the growth of the country. According to the experts these respected individuals with *authority*, it will help a marketing campaign.

*Profile:* According to the experts the background of the individual with authority does not have to match what they promote for the motivation to be effective.

*Lifespan:* The experts stated that in their experience the authority of individuals promoting a good or service will be longer effective than they would be in other markets.

*Secondary Nature:* If a good or service has been accepted by potential customers, an authority may only have a secondary influential effect on the motivation to accept an offer. That would mean that providers need to be aware of this secondary limited nature if the authority element.

*Age:* The age of the customers to be targeted will influence which individual would be effective to motivate and persuade.

*Lifetime:* It may be advantageous if an individual accepted as authority is not too tightly coupled with a good or service since the lifetime of the individual may not be too long. Lifetime may not necessarily be the biological lifetime; it could also

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Age

### **3.4 Commitment and Consistency**

Customers can be committed to a specific provider, and as long as the service they receive matches their expectations and quality definition, then it is likely that the customers will keep using the service. That means that the customers will be self-motivating themselves to stay with a provider. In other words, this element relates to the consistency for the provided service and the expected commitment from customers once the provider triggered their needs. The experts argued that this element could work efficiently in .145 TD [(-13(n)5( .145 T64 0 Td [(s)3( )-12(w)10(i)ll b)-7(e)0(i)l5 TDEJ -0



### **3.5 Social Proof**

The element of social proof relates to the confirmation of impressions and perceived correct behaviour based on the observed reactions of peers. The experts identified proactivity, provability, openness and frankness, similarity, age, duality, disappointment and uniqueness as factors that need to be considered in the context of the UAE.

*Proactivity:* The experts stated that proactivity in providing information to potential customers may be beneficial since customers may have limitations gathering this information by themselves. However, this factor needs to be considered with the related factor of openness and frankness.

*Provability:* Due to the availability of customer reviews and opinions on social media providers may have to prove that their goods and services are what they state they are. Customers may actively investigate if providers' claims are true.

*Openness and Frankness:* As indicated earlier UAE citizens appear to appreciate openness and clarity about shortcomings of goods and services. When social proof contradicts the information given by the providers, this may be detrimental to the motivation and persuasion of customers to accept an offer.

*Similarity:* It appears that citizens in the UAE do seek social proof from individuals from similar social groups. That means providers' messages can be tailored to these groups. However, this can have a negative impact if the targeted social groups do not match potential customers.

*Age:* It appears that younger customers are willing to search for social proof on social media or online resources. Older generations appear to be content with being served simple direct communication.

*Duality:* Social proof can impact on offered goods and services positively and negatively. Trust relationships can be extended or diminished by social proof.

*Disappointment:* While social proof may entice potential customers to use a good or service, it may also lead to disappointment when expectations are not met.

*Uniqueness:* Since customers in the UAE appear to prefer tailored goods and services, the fact that a large number of other customers use these goods and services may negate the impact of social proof. That means communicating social proof needs to be considered carefully.

### **3.6 Likability**

This element of the motivational and persuasion model refers to being motivated by individuals who target customers know or like. The experts influence, respect,



A survey of customer attitudes towards smart services will be undertaken to see if the factors highlighted by the experts are relevant. The findings of the analysis of this survey will then be contrasted with an investigation into potential preconceptions about UAE customers as exhibited by smart service providers not familiar with the market in the UAE.

## 5.0 References

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