

# Compliment Responses on Social Media: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract**—This systematic review was completed to examine studies on compliment responses on social media, focusing on studies published between 2014 and 2024. The analysis aims to understand how people react to compliments on online social platforms, spot important themes and patterns, and investigate the social and psychological effects of these exchanges, which are the objectives of the analysis. Relevant data was gathered by exploring Scopus and Web of Science databases. An initial search of primary research from 2014 to 2024 identified 68 studies related to the topic. Following a thorough review of abstracts and the removal of duplicates, 12 studies were selected for detailed analysis. The results show that users on various social media platforms use a variety of response strategies, which are influenced by social norms, cultural background, and self-esteem. Reciprocal compliments, self-deprecating comments, and expressions of gratitude are typical response patterns. The analysis also demonstrates how compliment responses influence people's mental health and interpersonal connections; positive reactions can boost self-esteem, while dismissive or negative reactions may have unfavorable consequences. In addition, it was clear that there were cross-cultural differences, with cultural norms and values influencing differences in response styles and motivations. The review points out gaps in existing literature, especially the need for additional studies on the psychological effects of compliment interactions over the long term and the impact of platform-specific features.

**Index Terms**—compliment response, social media, cross-culture, response strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has completely changed communication by facilitating global information sharing and instantaneous interaction. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Airbnb are also utilized for business promotion, professional networking, and socializing. Social media is now an essential tool for establishing and preserving relationships, both personal and professional, due to its seamless integration into daily life (Ellison et al., 2007).

In social interactions, compliments are essential because they convey admiration, gratitude, and reinforcement for one another. They contribute to the development of mutual respect and stronger social ties (Herbert, 1990). The quality of these interactions can be greatly impacted by how people react to compliments. While evasive or negative responses can cause misunderstandings and erode social ties, positive responses frequently strengthen social ties and increase self-esteem (Pomerantz, 1978).

Due to the distinct nature of online interactions—which lack the non-verbal cues inherent in face-to-face communication—it is imperative to comprehend how people react to compliments on social media (Walther, 1996). Social media's asynchronous format gives users the freedom to carefully consider their responses, which could result in distinct social dynamics from face-to-face interactions (Sanmas et al., 2024). By examining these answers, one can gain an understanding of the social and cultural norms that control digital communication and develop conflict-resolution techniques that foster constructive relationships.

The consequences of how people respond to compliments on social media are not limited to one area. Effective compliment responses in interpersonal communication can strengthen social ties and promote a feeling of community (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015). Positive responses to compliments from customers can increase customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in marketing (Hudson et al., 2016). Positive reinforcement via social media interactions can increase self-esteem and foster a supportive online community, while negative interactions can exacerbate stress and anxiety from the standpoint of mental health (Twenge, 2000).

Comprehending compliment responses on social media carries numerous significant consequences. Understanding compliment responses on social media is a multifaceted issue that carries significant implications for interpersonal communication, cultural expression, and social dynamics (Bolton et al., 2013). Research indicates that the nature of

compliment responses can vary widely across different cultures and social contexts, particularly in digital environments. The strategies employed in responding to compliments can reveal deeper sociolinguistic dynamics (Yu, 2005). For example, in various cultures, including Indonesia and Iran, responses to compliments often involve strategies that downplay the compliment or shift the focus back to the compliment giver (Moghaddam, 2019; Mokoginta, 2023). In Indonesian culture, a significant number of responses involve no acknowledgment or disagreement, indicating a tendency to deflect praise (Mokoginta, 2023). Similarly, Persian speakers often attach a downgrading strategy to their acknowledgment of compliments, suggesting that compliments are frequently viewed as politeness strategies rather than genuine expressions of appreciation (Morady Moghaddam, 2019; Pour & Zarei, 2016). This reflects a more accepted trend that responding to compliments is not only to acknowledge the compliments, but also to make society more harmonious, make people's communication smoother and reduce ambiguity.

**Individual Communication:** Giving thoughtful answers to compliments strengthens ties between people and promotes a feeling of belonging (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015).

**Marketing:** Responding positively to compliments from customers can increase customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Hudson et al., 2016). Companies can strengthen their customer relationships and use social media as an effective tool for brand promotion by managing online compliments well.

**Mental Health:** While negative interactions on social media can exacerbate stress and anxiety, positive reinforcement can increase self-esteem and foster a supportive online community (Twenge, 2000).

The primary objective of this systematic review is to comprehensively examine the existing literature on compliment responses on social media. The review aims to:

1. Summarize strategies and behaviors: Analyze common strategies and behaviors in compliments responses across various social media platforms and different groups.
2. Understand Influencing Factors: Explore the cultural, social, and individual factors that influence how people respond to compliments on social media. Identify the current changes in compliments responses and cross-cultural variations.
3. Evaluate Psychological and Social Impacts: Examine how various response strategies affect people's mental and social well-being.

Although the amount of research on social media interactions is increasing, there are not many thorough studies that concentrate on how people react to compliments in various platforms and cultural contexts. Studies that have already been conducted tend to focus on platforms or demographic groups, which leaves gaps in our knowledge of the larger trends and factors that influence compliment responses in the digital age. Therefore, this review seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant strategies used in responding to compliments on social media across different platforms and cultural contexts?
2. What factors mainly influence the choice of compliment response strategies on social media?
3. What suggestions can be made for future research on compliment responses on social media?

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a systematic review approach, a scientific method for collecting insights within a specific research field while helping future studies identify gaps and trends in past and present research. To ensure a structured and transparent review process, the authors followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as recommended by Page et al. (2021). Using this standard, the authors outlined the eligibility criteria, sources of information, data collection methods, key data points, and the process of result synthesis. The review examined publications indexed in reputable and well-regarded journals to provide an overview of the response strategies adopted by users across various social media platforms, shaped by factors such as self-esteem, social norms, and cultural background. Among the aspects focused on is the effect of compliment responses on users' mental health and social relationships.

### A. Selection Criteria

Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) were selected as the primary sources for information retrieval due to their advanced search capabilities and stringent quality control of articles. Additionally, these databases were chosen for their reputation as leading indexing platforms in the academic community.

### B. Systematic Review Process

#### (a). Identification

The initial stage of this review, known as the identification phase, was conducted in 2024. This process involved determining keywords for information retrieval, which were then transformed into search strings. These search strings were applied in both databases to locate relevant articles for the review. A summary of the search strings is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
SEARCH STRINGS USED IN THE IDENTIFICATION PHASE OF THE REVIEW

Databases	Search string
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (compliment AND response AND ("social media" OR "social network" OR Facebook OR Twitter OR Instagram OR TikTok))
Web of Science	compliment (Topic) and response (Topic) and "social media" OR "social network" OR Facebook OR Twitter OR Instagram OR TikTok (Topic)

(b). *Screening (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)*

The screening process was then conducted to establish the inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting articles in this review. The first criterion was the publication year, requiring articles to be published between 2014 and 2024. This timeframe was chosen as it represents the most recent decade of research trends, particularly relevant to the study of social media, which has continuously evolved. Hence, the significance of earlier research articles is limited.

TABLE 2  
CRITERIA FOR INCLUDING AND EXCLUDING STUDIES

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Timeline	2014 to 2024	2013 and earlier
Language	English	Non-English
Document Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Non-peer-reviewed articles
Focus	Responses to compliments on social media platforms.	Offline compliment interactions or general social media use without a specific focus on compliment responses
Population	Research involving individuals using social media platforms	Research that does not involve actual users of social media platforms or focuses on non-human subjects
Relevance	Related to themes of response strategies, psychological and social impacts, or cultural differences	Not related to themes of response strategies, psychological and social impacts, or cultural differences

(c). *Eligibility*

In the initial phase, 68 documents were collected from the Scopus (34) and Web of Science (34) databases using the search strings listed in Table 1. Subsequently, a manual screening was conducted to assess document eligibility by identifying and removing duplicates based on their titles. This process excluded 17 documents, resulting in 51 documents for further evaluation.

Subsequently, one document that was not published in English was excluded, reducing the count to 50 papers. Following this, 16 documents were removed as they were not full journal articles, leaving 34 documents for further analysis.

Three of the remaining 34 articles were taken out as these articles were published before 2014, leaving 31 more articles for the next screening stage. Then, 7 more articles were excluded because platforms in their studies are unrelated to social media, leaving 24 articles for the final screening stage. In the final stage, 12 articles were excluded because they reported studies that involved only the exploration of 'compliment' and not the study of 'compliment response'. Table 3 below provides a summary of the screening process for selecting articles eligible for this review:

TABLE 3  
THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR DETERMINING ELIGIBLE ARTICLES FOR THIS REVIEW

Criteria for Exclusion	Excluded Articles	Remaining Articles
Duplicate articles across databases	17	51 (from the initial 68 articles)
Non-English language documents	1	50
Documents that are not complete journal articles	16	34
Documents that are not published after 2014	3	31
Articles on studies that are not related to social media	7	24
Articles on studies that explored "compliment" ONLY	12	12 (The total number of articles selected for review)

Figure 1 below provides an overview of the study's methodology:

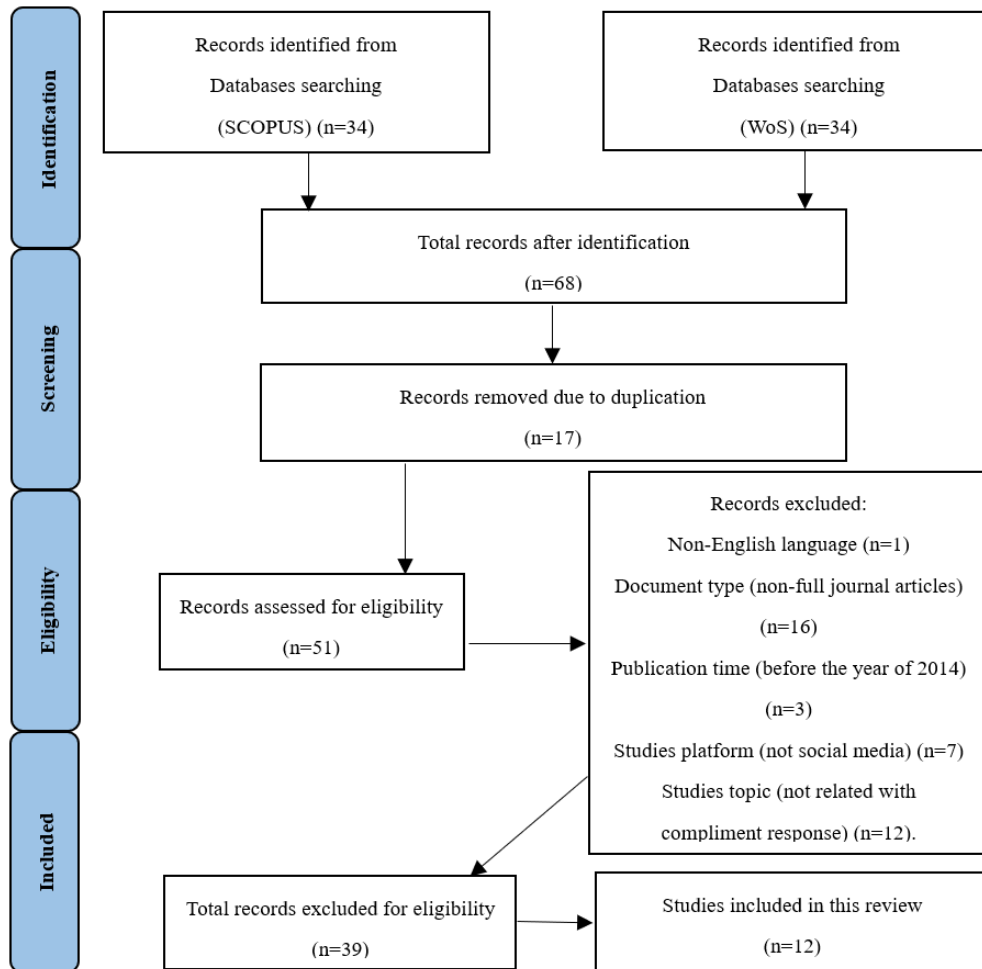


Figure 1. The Methodology of the Study

### III. RESULTS

#### A. Study Characteristics

Twelve studies that investigated social media compliment reactions that were published between 2014 and 2024 were included in the review. Numerous geographical locations, including the US, Iran, China, Belgium, Malaysia, and Algeria, were the sites of the study. There was great variation in the methodologies used, including mixed-method, qualitative, and quantitative techniques. Participants offered a wide spectrum of perspectives on complement reactions in digital communication, from celebrities and social media users to college students and EFL learners.

#### B. Main Themes and Findings

##### (a). Types of Compliment Responses

###### Acceptance Strategies

**Appreciation Tokens:** "Thank you" and other basic phrases were the most often observed responses in all of the investigations. This strategy was popular among Facebook users (Placencia et al., 2016), Airbnb hosts (Cenni, 2023), and Iranian EFL students (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015).

**Return Compliments:** Both Chinese-English bilinguals and Iranian EFL learners were observed to return the favor to preserve social harmony (Eslami & Yang, 2018).

###### Non-Acceptance Strategies

**Self-Deprecation:** Minimizing one's accomplishments to project humility; this is a common practice among some Western users and Iranian EFL learners (Cenni, 2023; Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015).

**Reassignment:** Turning the compliment around on someone else or attributing achievement to outside forces, as seen in bilingual Chinese and English Airbnb hosts (Cenni, 2023; Eslami & Yang, 2018).

###### Neutral or Evasive Responses

**Ignoring the Compliment:** More typical in online conversations where it's socially acceptable to respond silently (Placencia et al., 2016).

**Using Humor:** Humor was used in online English chat conversations to deflect the compliment without explicitly

rejecting it (Morady Moghaddam, 2019).

#### Non-Verbal Responses

'Likes' and Emojis: Nonverbal reactions, such as "Likes" and emojis, were common on Facebook in particular, and offered a practical means of acknowledging compliments without having to respond verbally (Placencia et al., 2016).

#### (b). *Motivations and Influences*

Cultural factor: Iranian response strategies were heavily influenced by the cultural values of modesty and politeness, which resulted in the frequent use of tokens of appreciation and the avoidance of self-praise (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015; Eslami et al., 2015).

Platform characteristic: Diverse response behaviors were encouraged by different social media platforms. For example, compared to the more casual Facebook responses, Airbnb hosts responded more formally and appreciatively (Cenni, 2023; Placencia et al., 2016).

Individual factor: Higher self-esteem individuals were more likely to take compliments directly, whereas lower self-esteem individuals frequently turned to self-deprecation (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015).

Gender factor: There were clear gender differences: male participants were more likely to use humor or reassignment, while female participants were more likely to accept compliments (Yusof & Hoon, 2014).

#### (c). *Psychological and Social Impact*

Particularly among Facebook users and Airbnb hosts, positive responses to compliments increased the recipients' sense of self-worth and fostered a positive self-image (Cenni, 2023; Placencia et al., 2016). Users felt more connected to one another and more like a community when they received reciprocal and appreciative responses (Cenni, 2023; Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015).

Meanwhile, the compliment responses sometimes have a negative impact. Particularly for Iranian EFL students and celebrities, the expectation of responding suitably to compliments caused social pressure and anxiety (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015; Yusof & Hoon, 2014). Since digital communication lacks non-verbal cues, compliment responses may be misunderstood, which could result in misunderstandings or social tension (Cenni, 2023; Eslami & Yang, 2018).

#### (d). *Patterns and Trends*

The review (Placencia et al., 2016) indicated that although longitudinal studies were not included, the conventions and practices surrounding compliment responses on social media are changing, with a growing usage of non-verbal responses such as 'Likes' and emojis. Notable variations were noted amongst cultural settings. For example, bilinguals who spoke both Chinese and English used more evasion and reassignment on Renren than on Facebook, which reflects larger cultural differences (Eslami & Yang, 2018).

The majority of studies found that acceptance strategies were widely used, despite cultural differences. This suggests that social harmony is a universal tendency that is maintained in digital interactions. More studies on non-Western cultures are required, especially in Arab societies, as well as studies spanning age groups and populations other than students (Eslami et al., 2015). Future studies could examine how social norms and increased exposure to digital communication affect compliment response strategies over time (Morady Moghaddam, 2019). A deeper understanding of the impact of platform-specific norms on response strategies can be gained through comparative research across various digital platforms (Cenni, 2023). Understanding the wider effects of digital communication on social norms and politeness techniques can be gained by looking into compliment responses in diverse cultural contexts (Dendenne, 2021). To learn more about how people modify their compliment response techniques when interacting digitally across cultural boundaries, more research is required.

## IV. DISCUSSION

The results of 12 studies that were carried out between 2014 and 2024 are summarized in this systematic review, which looks at how people react to compliments on social media in various linguistic and cultural contexts. The findings shed light on many prevalent techniques and intentions underlying compliment reactions, as well as their effects on psychology and society.

### A. *Gaps in the Current Literature on Compliment Responses on Social Media*

There are still some gaps in our knowledge about how people react to compliments in social media, despite the substantial amount of research on interactions on these platforms. First, the scant attention paid to non-Western cultures is one notable omission. There is a dearth of thorough research on other non-Western societies, despite studies examining compliment responses in contexts such as Chinese-English bilinguals (Eslami & Yang, 2018) and Iranian EFL learners (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015). This restriction makes it more difficult for us to comprehend how larger cultural factors affect digital communication.

Second, lack of long-term research that measures how compliment response behaviors evolve. Most of the research that has already been done only gives an overview of current practices. It does not look at how these behaviors change over time as a result of social norm changes and prolonged exposure to digital communication (Morady Moghaddam, 2019). The stability and adaptability of response tactics in the face of shifting digital environments would be better

understood with the use of longitudinal data.

Third, a deficiency exists in comparative studies that examine variations among different social media platforms and diverse populations because the literature currently in publication frequently concentrates on individual platforms or demographic groups. While extensive analyses of responses on Facebook and Airbnb have been conducted, for instance (Cenni, 2023; Placencia et al., 2016), fewer studies have contrasted these results with data from other platforms, such as Twitter or Instagram, or a range of age and professional backgrounds.

There is also a lack of research on the psychological effects of compliment responses. There is little information on the possible drawbacks of receiving compliments, such as worry or stress from feeling under pressure to reply correctly, despite some studies emphasizing the benefits of compliments on social bonding and self-esteem (Cenni, 2023). It is essential to comprehend these effects to create strategies that support mental health in digital interactions.

Lastly, additional study is required to determine how platform-specific characteristics affect how people respond to compliments. Distinct affordances and constraints offered by various platforms can influence communication behaviors in different ways (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Some platforms, for example, may allow for more thoughtful responses due to their asynchronous nature, while others may require responses to be brief due to character limits, which may compromise the sincerity and depth of the responses.

#### *B. Generalizability of Findings to Other Contexts*

The review's conclusions offer insightful information about how people respond to compliments on social media, but it's important to exercise caution when extrapolating these conclusions to other situations. Even though the widespread use of appreciation tokens and acceptance strategies seems to be a trend that is consistent across different platforms and cultural contexts, individual preferences and behaviors can differ greatly.

The response strategies are significantly shaped by the cultural context. For instance, to preserve modesty, Iranian EFL students frequently use self-deprecation and reassignment, which reflects larger Iranian cultural norms (Dehkordi & Chalak, 2015). In a similar vein, Western platforms like Facebook employ nonverbal cues like "Likes" and emojis more frequently than others (Placencia et al., 2016). These cultural nuances imply that, without considering the underlying cultural norms and values, findings from one cultural setting might not be directly applicable to another.

The generalizability of findings is also influenced by the type of social media platform. Compared to more casual platforms like Facebook or Instagram, platforms like Airbnb, which are focused on business and professional interactions, encourage more formal and appreciative responses (Cenni, 2023). The characteristics and intended application of a platform can greatly influence the dynamics of communication, influencing how compliments are offered and accepted.

Response behaviors can also be influenced by demographic variables like age, gender, and professional background. While older users might prefer more conventional verbal acknowledgments, younger users might be more skilled at using non-verbal responses like emojis. Studies reveal that women are more likely than men to accept compliments, suggesting that gender differences also play a part (Yusof & Hoon, 2014).

In conclusion, the review's conclusions offer a solid framework for comprehending compliment responses on social media, but applying them to different situations necessitates giving careful thought to demographic, platform-specific, and cultural considerations. Subsequent investigations ought to endeavor to bridge these lacunae and augment the applicability of results in various contexts. This method will help develop strategies for encouraging positive interactions in a variety of digital environments and contribute to a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of digital communication.

## V. CONCLUSION

This review examined 12 studies on compliment responses on social media. It was revealed that acceptance strategies, particularly appreciation tokens like showing thanks and the use of emojis, are the most common responses across various platforms and cultural contexts. Positive interactions and social harmony are maintained by using these strategies (Cenni, 2023; Placencia et al., 2016). Because each social media platform has a different communication dynamic, they encourage different kinds of responses. In line with the commercial nature of the platform, Airbnb hosts, for instance, responded more professionally and gratefully, while Facebook users tended to respond more often with non-verbal cues like "Likes" and emojis (Kavada, 2010). Additionally, cultural norms significantly shape response strategies. The West directly and generously expresses its happiness and sorrow, while other countries have their cultural values such as modesty and low profile, which lead to their people's response to others' praise being different (Mao et al., 2023). Positive reactions to compliments build social ties, boost self-esteem, and foster a positive self-image. However, the pressure to reply correctly can cause social anxiety, and miscommunication via digital means can result from the absence of non-verbal clues (De Wolf et al., 2014). According to the review, compliment response conventions and practices on social media are changing. And the shift towards more effective and subtly expressive forms, indicated by the growing use of nonverbal responses. Therefore, future studies could examine how social norms and increased exposure to digital communication affect compliment response strategies. Deeper insights into the impact of platform norms and cultural values on response strategies can be obtained by conducting comparative research across various cultural contexts. A thorough knowledge of compliment responses in various contexts can be fully realized in specific cultures and age groups.

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