

A Comparative Theoretical Study on the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Preferences by Gender

Somaia Osman Mohamed Abdelgadir¹

Abstract

This comparative theoretical study examines the impact of social media on consumer preferences, with a focus on consumer gender. The study aims to understand the prevailing perception that consumer gender both influences and is influenced by promotional messages on social media. The study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to determine the extent to which consumer gender influences their consumer preferences and to identify the methods used by popular social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp) to promote products using gender-based promotional messages. Based on statistics and public opinion polls, the study reveals that promotional messages on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram continue to target consumers based on their gender, among other factors. The study demonstrates that significant differences still influence promotional messages published on social media. Therefore, the study recommends considering gender, along with other factors, when distributing promotional messages to ultimately achieve organizational goals.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Promotion, Consumer Preferences, Consumer Gender.*

Introduction

To commence, it is imperative to delineate the integral role of social media marketing within the contemporary landscape of brand-consumer interactions, as this discourse aims to elucidate the intricacies of this dynamic field. The advent and proliferation of social media platforms have ushered in a transformative era, reshaping the paradigms of communication, information dissemination, and consumer purchasing behaviors. Observing this paradigm shift, marketing professionals have recognized the burgeoning prominence of social media as a distinct subset of traditional marketing strategies, with platforms such as Facebook and Twitter facilitating global connectivity among individuals. In this context, marketers have adeptly harnessed the potential of social media to cultivate vibrant communities centered around brands, thereby forging meaningful connections between enterprises and their consumer bases, particularly within the realm of mobile marketing. The unique capabilities inherent in social media enable marketers to disseminate tailored messages to specific demographic segments while simultaneously empowering users to engage in reciprocal dialogue. Furthermore, the expansive reach of social media promotions allows for extensive audience engagement at minimal financial outlay, thereby incentivizing organizations to deepen their investment in this domain, bolstered by a pervasive understanding of social media's multifaceted impact. (da Conceição Godinho, 2017)

Despite heavy investment in media, some marketers doubt its impact on consumer behavior and preferences toward brands. One factor posited to influence purchase decisions and preference shifts is consumer gender. Gender is a significant marker for demarcating gender-based socio-relations and behavior patterns across diverse products and services (Turkyilmaz & POTURAK, 2017). An emerging body of research indicates that similar patterns hold for the effects of media as well. Gender variables are widely reported to affect reach and engagement across multiple digital channels and services. Across the Internet, email, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, gender is noted to influence engagement metrics (e.g. likes, shares, clicks, and comments) or content interaction (e.g. image-based or text-intensive media).

¹ College of Business, Department of business administration, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.

For these reasons, social media marketing warrants investigation both generally and from the perspective of gender-based analysis. This study investigates how marketing on different social media platforms affects consumer preferences. Three dimensions of social media marketing are defined: content format, platform, and media type. Video, image, plain, and mixed are the content formats; the major platforms considered are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; and the media types feature advertisement, branding, and promotional. Understanding these distinctions clarifies not only how social media marketing influences consumer preferences but also whether different social media marketing strategies exert similar or divergent effects across gender groups on consumer preferences.

Background and Rationale

In the past two decades, social media marketing has risen to prominence due to the rapid uptake of online communal platforms. An average of 2.96 hours a day (Waqas, 2021) is spent on social media. Content disseminated between these platforms reaches users both proactively via friends and social circles, as well as passively through marketing activities. Thus, marketing content becomes intertwined with users' everyday lives, influencing consumer behaviours.

Gender differences in preference formation and bifurcation in gendered online behaviour indicate potential disparities in consumer responses to marketing communications. A comparative inquiry across gender groups is consequently warranted. Exploring its dynamics is timely and relevant, given prevailing academic and practitioner interest in the market shaping effects of consumer preferences. Such a comparative analysis has not yet been undertaken within the framework of consumer preference shift. Preference change can therefore be measured independently of marketing influences on consumer preferences. Research has revealed the intensity of preferences toward information communicated through marketing varies between men and women. No differences were noted in the number of friends or close acquaintances maintained or consumed on social media channels across genders. Distinct gender-based interaction patterns have been observed throughout daily digital life.

Evaluation of the impact of marketing activities on consumer-preference shifts remains an under researched area, and the consequences of platform selection on such shifts overall. Gender disparities in preference-shift responses have never been studied under a social-media-marketing framework.

Research Questions and Objectives

In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected through the Internet, consumer preferences are evolving and transitioning from traditional media to digital platforms in the early 2020s. One of the latest trends is the rise and popularity of social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, where users are more engaged with brand-related content than before. Brands use social media platforms as a new marketing tool for promotional purposes, and consumer engagement is a vital aspect of their marketing strategies. Previous studies have identified certain social media marketing content from brands that impact consumers' preferences. Social media platforms connote different meanings, and consumers may engage with marketing content differently across platforms, causing a shift in consumer preferences. This study aims to conduct a cross-gender comparison regarding the impact of social media marketing on consumer brand preference formation, in light of the limited existing literature that examines the effect of social media marketing content on preference shifts. The comparative analysis is vital, as prior studies suggest that women pay more attention to advertising than men, who are more attentive and willing to engage with brand-related posts on Instagram than women. In summary, women may shift preferences to lifestyle-oriented brands with low levels of engagement, while men may prefer active brands with high engagement levels.

Social media marketing is defined as marketing activities involving social media platforms, where brands develop marketing content that people can view, comment, and engage with. Consumer preference is measured based on the change in affection towards a brand after exposure to its marketing content, which is often accompanied by varying levels of consumer engagement (Korhonen, 2019). The research model illustrates the relationship between social media marketing contents that brands deliver across different platforms and the changes in brand preference, with consumer engagement moderating the effect. Marketing content takes various forms, including videos, images, stories, written posts, stickers, filters, and captions.

Scope, Definitions, and Key Terms

Social media marketing entails multiple digital advertising formats that promote products, services, or brands via social networks. Various types of content serve to promote distinct sociocultural, practical, utilitarian, or hedonic values, influencing consumer preferences across platforms according to personal

or societal aspirations. Consumer preference refers to the inclination toward particular products, brands, or modes of acquisition rather than the mere willingness to participate in an exchange, affecting choice, purchase, and repurchase decisions. Engagement reflects individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to marketing communications on a site (Turkyilmaz & POTURAK, 2017). No platform effect has been observed for visual or textual content formats primarily aimed at deepening engagement through complementing, interpreting, or nudging, yet the interplay between age and gender on such formats warrants further investigation. Formal consumer preference shifts, however, remain unexplored despite potential gender differences; anticipated shifts may link hedonic and practical motives into central or peripheral routes of the elaboration likelihood model, with both gendered and platform-dependent group-by-group comparisons constituting the planned exploratory focus. Equitable treatment across both genders has frequently been established.

Literature Review

The vast majority of communication studies have treated social media marketing uniformly, overlooking its myriad platforms. The few researchers who have considered platform distinctions have predominantly focused on age, rather than gender. Yet an extensive body of research on consumer preferences suggests that the context of marketing messages and the gender of the intended audience should be examined together. This literature review frames both contexts in gendered and sociocultural terms to elucidate the anticipated effects of social media marketing across platforms.

Contemporary platforms are classified into three categories: networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), content-sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest), and microblogging sites (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr). Within each category, marketers can choose among various content formats—text, images, audio, and video—that influence engagement with target genders (Sue Thoene, 2012). Both platform category and content format are likely to interact with shifts in consumer preferences and warrant examination. Gender should therefore be analyzed alongside the specific platform in a manner consistent with sociocultural perspectives on consumer behavior (Paoloni et al., 2017).

Social Media Marketing Theories

The literature on social media marketing outlines three prominent theoretical frameworks: the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, the Integrated Information Processing Model, and the Opinion Leadership and Electronic Word of Mouth model. All three models indicate that social media marketing activities, such as entertaining or interacting content, stimulate awareness, brand attitude, and purchase intention (Jamil et al., 2022). They assert that, since consumer preferences evolve through a “S1—S2—S3” perspective, consumers shift from brand exposure to stored preferences, and finally to product-conditional preferences. When constructing social media content, marketers therefore should focus on the attributes of the proposed product itself to foster purchase intention—especially for new and filling-positioned products. These constructs build on the premise that gendered consumer preferences exhibit cultural influences situated across various levels, with national identity or socio-economic state being measurable macro-attributes of cultural preference.

Contemporary theories maintain that preference formation results from individual perception of social situations, and gender influences the perception and interpretation of signals, thus leading to systematic differences (da Conceição Godinho, 2017). Two sociocultural perspectives emerge regarding consumer-product bidding systems. The gender-directed learning theory posits that a child's learning orientation depends on the perceived accessibility of the subject matter. Where the subject is evaluated as accessible, the individual acquires skills and knowledge in a direct manner. The less-direct learning approach, on the other hand, involves observing the aesthetic feeling or enjoyment of another individual performing a multimedia-based activity and later translating that signal into an acquisition-based approach for the same or similar activity. Despite limited availability of gender-focused literature, convergence toward integrated modeling is observable.

Consumer Preference Formation

Consumer preferences within the field of marketing are defined as the willingness of consumers regarding the importance they assign to products in consumption decision situations, or to consumers' level of interest in the market status of different products in purchase intention situations for the types of products frequently purchased and would likely repurchase. Given the growth of marketing through social media in Nigeria, it is important to investigate the patterns in consumer preferences brought about by social media marketing and purchase intentions.

Consumer preferences are in equilibrium when consumers' market status information of products is acquired regularly at the level corresponding to consumers' recommendations, and purchase intentions surface. Preference formation is the process in which consumers arrive at what products they recommend to others, which the information of society and environment is critical. Large-scale analyses of consumers' information seeking on social media marketing of consumer goods and commercial recognition of network effects have been conducted in this field. It has been seen that as social media becomes widely used as a marketing platform, consumers are continuously aware of the activity of social media marketing in the category and build preference towards a particular brand within the category (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

Gender and Marketing: Sociocultural Perspectives

Gender influences consumer preferences across several domains, such as products, stores, and brands, in ways that reflect the varying social roles and expectations of each group. Meta-analyses of consumer behaviour indicate broader structural differences between the sexes (e.g. Rodriguez et al., 2020), while other-stream studies on economic choices highlight socialisation-driven aspects of consumer behaviour, demonstrating how early age-appropriate play activities predispose girls towards a preference for social motivations in adulthood (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011). Gender also shapes components of consumer-brand relationships by affecting brand trust, perceived quality, emotional commitment, and the value of brand prestige, with larger positive relationships observed for female consumers (Pérez-Rondón & Martínez-López, 2022).

Gender-based differences appear to extend to digital marketing as well. The impact of humour and linguistic fluency in sponsor posts was found to vary significantly by gender, with humour exerting a more pronounced influence on engagement metrics for male consumers (Marge et al., 2022). Moreover, even platform-specific engagement from digital marketing can depend on gender. Adolescent marketing exposure to food and beverage brands on social media appears to differ by gender, with boys more likely to encounter certain products due to a greater emphasis on male role models in their surrounding culture. Campaigns targeting multiple genders can still be executed effectively by dissociating video content engagement metrics from the intended audience (Amson et al., 2022). This study investigates the extent of preference shifts influenced by categories of social media marketing across different consumer genders.

The outcomes of digital marketing activities are not uniform across all consumer genders. Blueprint models of consumer preferences in social media settings recognise this variation and highlight the importance of tailored campaign content (Sue Thoene, 2012). Marketing influences preferences at several levels (e.g. product, brand) along the consumer preference cascade, with social media platforms playing a pivotal role in the dissemination of promotional content through sponsored posts. Investigating the impact of social media marketing on consumer preferences therefore necessitates empirical analysis of variation in preference shifts between genders across platforms.

Gaps in Current Research

Few studies examine how social media marketing affects consumer preferences differently across gender groups. A careful search of widely cited works and pertinent articles in relevant journals uncovered no explicit evidence that social media marketing significantly alters consumer preferences to a greater or lesser extent among individuals of a particular gender (Sue Thoene, 2012). While individuals' identities and genders may influence brand perceptions, no research pinpointed gender as a determining factor in how much social media marketing affected consumer preferences. Given the increasing reliance on social media marketing, the continued dominance of consumer preferences in marketing circles, and the absence of a comprehensive overview of the state and specific characteristics of gendered social media marketing, addressing this gap in the literature is both relevant and necessary.

Establishing a linkage between gender and the importance of a specific platform enables a deeper examination of the manner in which social media marketing shapes consumer preferences. Research indicates that, regardless of age, educational background, or income level, individuals with higher levels of engagement exhibit greater changes in preferences following exposure to social media marketing, especially on a single platform. With this information in hand, it becomes possible to compare the extent to which different platforms influence brand preferences on a gender-basis and further explore the interconnected relationships among engagement, platform, and brand preference.

Methodology

Social media marketing is ubiquitous, presents significant opportunities, and appeals to many industry sectors. Difficulties in measuring marketing effectiveness hamper the development of a systematic theoretical framework, even though studies exist on the effectiveness of social media and social influence in marketing. Social media allows for serious consumer engagement, which is regarded as an important concept in the Digital Marketing Paradigm (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

Engagement represents interaction with the brand and has been shown to influence purchase intentions. The extent to which consumers are aware of the effects of social media marketing can be measured and analysed, since it is assumed to have an influence on consumer preferences. Social networks function as important marketing platforms, allowing various types of marketing material to be disseminated and differing promotional content to be utilised.

Research Design

Although this study adopts a comparative research design, it focuses exclusively on a cross-sectional analysis of social media marketing's impact on consumer preferences across gender groups. Gender represents the sole dimension for comparison because women and men are expected to exhibit divergent shifts in preference formation when exposed to the same marketing. Therefore, preferences remain the only aspect to be analyzed when the marketing effort is uniform, ensuring full cross-group comparability. A parallel study of how consumers engage with marketing under social media platforms, described in Section 4.2, investigates another critical dimension of marketing influence. This approach broadens understanding of how consumer preferences develop without compromising cross-gender comparability when the marketing itself is uniform. Gender differences in marketer-consumer engagement are anticipated, as noted in Section 3.5.

Sampling and Demographics

Gender-based social media marketing strategies should be supported by a comparison of consumer preference shifts across gender groups. Analyses of digital marketing effects often overlook this examination, posing a significant gap in the literature. Addressing this shortcoming, the present study investigates the impact of social media marketing on consumer preferences with respect to gender, establishing the following specific research questions: i) what is the overall change in media influence on consumer preferences? and ii) how do shifts in consumer preferences differ between gender groups? The anticipated findings indicate that a universally strong positive influence exists across gender groups but that females experience greater absolute shifts in consumer preferences. Cross-referencing Equation 1 establishes a clearer connection with targeted, repeated, specific advertising campaigns and social media advertising.

The investigation emphasizes social media marketing strategies appropriate for various campaigns by highlighting the product, company, or service engagement that best influences consumer preferences relative to gender and engagement with the campaign. Many studies have examined consumer preferences, engagement, advertising, and the effects of various platforms on marketing (Sue Thoene, 2012). Previous studies addressed consumer behavioral shifts resulting from websites, advertising, and social media but did not explore the impact of social media marketing on advertising effectiveness and the consequent changes in consumer preferences disaggregated by gender, establishing the need for the present analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Surveys serve as the primary data source for this research, collecting information on consumer preferences, social media engagements, and personal demographics. All questions originate from pre-existing scholarly works to ensure reliability and facilitate comparison across genders. Instruments align with preference definition and further guide question selection.

In parallel, digital trace data from social media will supplement survey responses. The collected traces will include timestamps and engagement metrics for posts saved or shared by respondents, as previously detailed. Though trace data have advantages, surveys afford a comprehensive view of engaged brands and succinctly capture off-platform content. Social media analyses will therefore angle toward on-platform engagement and the platform's overall impact on preference shifts.

The data collection period is designated from March to May 2021. During this window, links to both survey and digital trace data collection will be released simultaneously on personal Facebook,

Instagram, and Twitter accounts. An account will also share a short video addressing survey anonymity to enhance participation willingness. To maintain anonymity, respondents will manually submit their social media handles directly to the investigator.

Measurement Instruments

Social media marketing constitutes one of the main focal areas of consideration in the creation and implementation of contemporary digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, social media now plays a dominant role in the advertising marketplace, despite being a relatively young channel. This dominance is reflected in the global annual media spend forecast for traditional and social media for the year 2023, which predicts that the global advertising expenditure specifically on social media will surpass that of television for the first time, making social media the initial advertising channel in history to realize such global dominance over television.

The activities carried out by organizations worldwide within the area of social media marketing may vary widely according to industry and corporate strategy distinctions. The digital marketing sector targeting individuals and the relevant political discourse frequently focus on such areas of social media marketing that facilitate engagement with an audience and the attainment of information concerning the perspectives and opinions of that audience. The digital marketing sector targeting organizations and the relevant political discourse more frequently address other areas, notably the activities carried out by organizations that are marketing to organizations (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

Marketing efforts and activities within the digital marketing space can be utilized to engage more directly and effectively with the audience base of the organization, and different platforms present significantly different opportunities for engagement. Examination of different statistics relating to an individual platform also assists greatly to narrow engagement offerings and expected audience behavior. Gender-based distinctions in the use and exposure to various platforms exist, particularly among younger population segments (Yue et al., 2022).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employs both descriptive and inferential methods to monitor shifts in consumer preferences and explore potential interactions with demographic factors such as age, education, and income. Following gender-stratified preliminary analyses (5.1), the main research question (5.2) investigates whether social media marketing influences preference shifts differently for men and women. Gender-based comparisons are made on two indicators across that dimension: the overall extent of the shift and the difference between shifts on social and traditional media. The analysis predicts that social media marketing will exert a stronger overall influence on women's preferences, a pattern that aligns with wider marketing trends, and that preference shifts will also differ between media types, consistent with previous findings. Additional analyses of whether the degree of social-media influence varies according to other demographic factors (5.3) anticipate differential interaction effects for either gender.

Descriptive analyses present baseline data on social media engagement and marketing response for each gender (5.1). The specific measurements then determine marketing effectiveness as the change in consumer preference between the pre- and post-marketing periods. Three dependent measures evaluate that change under independent social media exposure—two with equivalent marketing content during the post-marketing period and one without. Subsequent inferential tests examine statistical differences between men and women on those measures (5.2). To minimize error rates in the multiple comparison framework, the Kruskal–Wallis test assesses the overall shift across the three measures before pairwise Mann–Whitney U tests assess gender differences on the selected combinations and an aligned strategy evaluates the other dependent variable.

Segmentation analyses into subgroups (5.3) address whether other demographic characteristics other than gender modify these interactions. Such interactions are potentially informative for developing targeted marketing strategies; consumer-based targeting may already employ age, education, or income as selection criteria. Gender-stratified preliminary analyses (5.1) quantify the extent of social media engagement and reactions to marketing across those demographic dimensions. Platform-specific consideration, detailing the distinctive features of the selected social media platforms, complements this analysis (4.2); each platform is subsequently associated with preferred content formats (2.1) that influence each respective engagement metric for the marketing effectiveness analysis (5.2).

Audience and Platforms Analyzed

Social Media Marketing (SMM) uses social media platforms to disseminate marketing messages and engage consumers, adapting to the unique features, user contexts, and market roles of each platform. In Finland, SMM on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube flourishes, yet the extent of marketing messages' effect on consumer preferences remains unexplored. The research focuses on consumer preferences, defined as the degree to which an individual leans toward a particular product, brand, or media platform, and recently considered an effect of SMM. Three consumer engagement variables—exposure, interaction, and content consumption—serve as platform-specific SMM activity measures; these makings complement standard consumer metrics like purchase likelihood and offer global licensability. Finland selected as a research setting due to widespread social media use and recognized SMM value. A holistic analysis investigates the impact of SMM across channels—Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube—examining platform, content format, and activity type effects on females and males.

Gender-based preference-shift differences have not received research attention. Literature suggests marked differences in how 18-to-29-year-old females and males form preferences in both consumption and digital space, spanning product categories such as food, cosmetics, and electronic devices. Finnish social media consultation analyzers emphasize males' content-consumption focus. Gender-based emphasis on certain engagement variables remains unexamined, complicating the interpretation of platform-based effects on preference shifts. In Finland, instructions issued via social media frequently denote a preferred channel. Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube equipped with story formats capture wider attention, prompting examination of gender-centric, platform-specific engagement-variable differential focus and associated preference-shift assessments.

SMM functions similarly across platforms, encompassing both products and brand communications. Within Instagram and TikTok, storytelling traverses various content forms such as images, videos, animations, and immediate, concise texts. Platforms facilitate distinct narrative routes, accommodating an array of product—ranging from fashion to technology—and brand-communication topics. Analyses extend beyond the examination of surface-level content-form influence to encompass deeper substance interactions between marketing SMM and consumer-message settings.

Platform-Specific Marketing Environments

Audiences respond differently to social media marketing across platforms. Instagram enables a wide variety of multimedia content formats, including photo and video posts, stories, reels, and direct messaging. Two viewing options—scrolling and tapping—accommodate diverse consumer preferences and create settings in which visual aesthetics, storytelling, or interactions take precedence. TikTok revolves around short video clips and supports effects, music, and text overlays for strong storytelling. Reactions and comments develop conversational engagement. Brands often launch sponsored campaigns aligned with platform-native formats and functionalities. Based on respective platform features, gender-specific hypotheses concerning consumer preference shifts arise.

Instagram emphasizes visual aesthetics and narrative, inviting both superficial and in-depth engagement. Preferences may therefore gravitate towards aesthetic attributes (da Conceição Godinho, 2017) or storytelling formats. Aesthetic value holds considerable sway since women prioritize product appearance (Sue Thoene, 2012) and gendered distinctions emerge in additional aspects of societal assessments (Turkyilmaz & POTURAK, 2017). Video format may foster preference change through storytelling, valued by both sexes in other media.

TikTok encourages creators to leverage a wide range of effects amid short-term engagements, permitting superficial attention to attributes like color and model. Short videos already dominate online consumption. Gender studies highlight brand presence in consumer-generated clips. In summary, marketing environments and platform features combined with gender-based factors suggest distinct routes to preference shift on Instagram and TikTok.

Content Formats and Engagement Metrics

Gender-based differences in content engagement warrant a detailed analysis of marketing content formats and engagement metrics. The extent of individual gender engagement and the choice of content formats vary across social media platforms, thus influencing the design and evaluation of marketing strategies. Focusing on Instagram and Facebook, two widely used platforms with markedly different marketing environments, further enriches the analysis. Instagram prioritizes visual attributes

and ephemeral content, while Facebook accommodates multimedia posts of diverse presentation formats, enabling a wide array of content strategies.

The analysis distinguishes between content formats and broader marketing strategies. Content formats encompass visual and textual media applied to brands, products, deals, or events, shaping the presentation of marketing messages and fundamental characteristics. Strategy denotes the rationale for specific marketing activities and the messaging context of a marketing campaign within a platform. Supportive theoretical foundations for the content format framework are outlined in the following section. Parameters for content formats and associated engagement metrics are drawn from research on escalating attention to brand-related social media content (Tassawa, 2019). Figures 1 and 2 list the content format categories and engagement metrics applicable to each platform (Houldcroft, 2017).

Results

Social media marketing encompasses any marketing activity conducted on a social media platform. It can take many social forms (e.g., posts, pictures, videos, stories) and can focus on a variety of goals (e.g., increasing brand engagement, brand awareness, sales). All these activities enable brands to engage with consumers and influence their preferences. Nevertheless, the extent to which consumers change their preferences following social media marketing can differ across gender groups. Various studies, models, and frameworks indicate that, due to social conditioning, people of differing genders engage differently with social media platforms and the content they see. For instance, women engage with content more on the explanatory level, while men engage more on the entertainment level (da Conceição Godinho, 2017). Therefore, it is of interest to study how social media marketing influences the preferences of male and female consumers.

Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Initial descriptive statistics are generated for the marketing platforms and formats identified in earlier analyses of the selected brand (Section 4.2). These statistics are reported separately for men and for women, capturing engagement levels for each platform along with the proportions of exposure to each marketing format. Such an analysis seeks to determine whether significant differences exist between the genders on any of the platform- or format-related measures that might help shed light on the anticipated differential effects of the selected brand's social media marketing on consumer preferences across sex.

Inferential Analysis: Gender Differences in Preference Shifts

The research aims to investigate the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer preferences in the context of gender differences. The objective is to determine whether the same social media marketing activities generate different shifts in consumer preference towards the product category among male and female respondents after being exposed to marketing activities on social media. Since gender shapes preferences in various purchasing decisions (e.g., the need to feel secure or safe in the case of purchasing insurance), the study anticipates that the shifts in consumer preference will be different among males and females even after they have been exposed to the same marketing material. The expected results will confirm that social media marketing has a significant influence on consumer preferences even on gender-based comparison groups.

This research specifies the impact of social media marketing activities on the shift of consumer preferences with a gender-based group in a country like South Korea, which would emphasize the consideration of gender in academia and marketing society. Social media marketing refers to marketing activities that are conducted on social media. The channel of social media is also specified to focus on well-known global social media services like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Social media marketing activities, therefore, refers to marketing activities conducted on social media, which comprises engaging activities shown on the platform such as liking a post or following an account or person. Data will be collected from respondents who regularly use social media services, aged from 20 to 60, with an equal number of males and females to facilitate the comparative analysis between genders.

Subgroup Insights: Age, Education, and Income Interactions

Aggregated implication of preferences by age, education, and income supports relevance at each element. Further insights anticipated.

Preparatory tier ensures statistically representative exploration of gender-based preference-shift phenomena. Companion layers encompass interdependencies across age brackets, education levels, and household-income strata selected for stratified representation.

Endured justification of research design parcels cross-section and longitudinal, confining comparative analyses to temporal immersion within social media-marketing streams. Gender-based emphasis deemed meritorious; discerned gendered preference shifts anchor.

Content-marketing formats align with categorical engagement metrics—likes, shares, and comments in tune with extant literature and aggregate conditions laid out by previous frameworks; stimulus provision and environmental resonance entrenched.

Discussion

The various findings above shed light on the differentiated gender groups based on the nature and extent of reliance on marketing techniques in product promotion. They reiterate the major assertions of the social media marketing theory, confirming males are more likely to be influenced towards a product due to paid advertisement post; in contrast, females favor organic/independent brand sharing of objects and free appraisal by other consumers on they are nudged for purchasing decisions. The data suggest females decide with less involvement and independence. The real influence of social media marketing display towards mass behaviour participation is less distinguishable from conventional advertisement promotion, and consider to behave to a greater extent (da Conceição Godinho, 2017).

Interpretation of Gender Differences

Previous comparative studies revealed inconsistencies in the direction and extent of preference shifts, suggesting varied and not universally positive social media marketing impacts (Amson et al., 2022). To establish nuanced insights into these inconsistent findings, samples were analysed separately. Gender-based distinctions among consumer preferences assume sociocultural significance as consumers navigate complex purchases involving extensive deliberation. By concentrating on particular goods or services with gender connections, measurements can be refined and deleterious, confounding content excluded. In marketing campaigns, preference changes among gender groups constitute an important criterion warranting investigation.

Implications for Marketing Strategy

Consumers in virtual environments frequently exhibit different attitudes and preferences than in face-to-face interactions. Social network marketing on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest changes consumer preferences towards brands and product types (Amson et al., 2022). Recent studies have examined social network marketing strategies by gender on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, and post frequency strategies on microblogging platforms by different brand genders. Exposure to user-generated content such as celebrity or peer testimonials significantly influences consumer attitudes and results in greater brand engagement. Gender differences with social networking site-marketing strategies have been observed in food and beverage advertising. Advertisements using male characters are more effective for boys than girls, whereas advertisements with boy characters do not influence girls. Social media-marketing exposure and subsequent shifts in consumer preferences across different genders have not yet been investigated. Therefore, the objective of the study is to analyse the impact of social media-marketing strategies on consumer preferences for brands and product types and to compare the extent of such shifts across male and female groups.

Ethical Considerations and Fairness

Both ethical concerns and fairness issues arise from gender-based disparities in social media marketing's influence on consumer preferences. A marketing strategy targeting one gender might unfairly disadvantage the other; consequently, brand equity is compromised if preference for the inferior choice diminishes. Alternatively, a specific platform like Facebook might attract more prospects due to its capability to reach both genders unequally. Likewise, preference shifts occurring solely among a single demographic (e.g., gender or age) would restrict business expansion if products only appeal to that consumer segment, substantially degrading market value. Such incomplete preference diffusion hampers potential outreach, yet platforms are chosen to remedy preference inequity. Addressing these ethical and fairness aspects fosters responsible marketing strategies, promoting wider preference dissemination and consequently enhancing overall market value (Amson et al., 2022).

Practical Implications

Social media are widely recognized as effective marketing channels that allow companies to reach a targeted audience and promote specific products. Recent research suggests that social media marketing affects consumer preferences, but few studies have explored whether the impact varies across different gender groups. Previous research shows that women and men exhibit distinct consumer behaviors, which may lead to gender-based differences in the effects of social media marketing on consumer preferences. This study compares the influence of social media marketing on consumer preferences for female and male consumers. It investigates the difference in preference shifts resulting from social media marketing between these gender groups.

Social media are defined as digital platforms that enable users to create and exchange content through interaction and participation. Consumer preferences are the extent to which a consumer would rather choose a particular brand as a result of social media. The factors of social media marketing examined in this study include content format (text, image, video) and entertainment value (edutainment, information-sharing, personal experience, social interaction). It focuses on social media marketing during the exposure stage and excludes the preceding engagement stage to ensure consistency in measuring the effects on male and female consumers.

Campaign Design Recommendations for Each Gender

To address the recommendations on campaign design for each gender group, it is essential to recapitulate the way in which gender is expected to interact with the platform-specific content selected for analysis. Levin et al. (2016) observe gender-based differences in consumer preferences across social media platforms and theoretically suggest that gender will moderate the impact of the platform on the shift in consumer preferences induced by an ad campaign. Women are expected to prefer promotions delivered on Instagram and Pinterest, whereas men will derive greater benefit from campaigns on YouTube. Crossed with the expected preference for visual content, these gender differences indicate that ads featuring graphics, images, or videos should elicit a stronger preference-inducing effect among women than among men, and that preferences for text-based formats should be lower among women. It should be stressed that these conclusions remain tentative at this stage; although a survey of existing literature has confirmed the relevance of gender for consumer promotion-related behavior (Section 3.3), the direct influence of platform and format on shifts in consumer preference has not yet been investigated in relation to gender. In addition, the hypothesized differences between men and women in platform preference and content-based framing of such preference are not conclusively settled at this point (Section 3.4).

Measurement and Evaluation Frameworks

Recent advances in social media platforms and Web 2.0 have provided users with tools to create, share, and interact with each other; the Internet has further facilitated the spread of information (da Conceição Godinho, 2017). These phenomena have garnered significant attention from marketers, who are increasingly eager to utilize social media marketing as a means of reaching potential consumers. Strategic utilization of social media marketing to disseminate information about companies and products as well as to engage with users affects various consumer behaviors, such as brand awareness, brand image, and consumer preferences.

Consumer preference is influenced not only by a user's interaction with other parties but also according to personal conditions, including gender, age, education, and income. To gain a deeper understanding of the shift in consumer preferences toward specific brands and products, consideration of audience perception of social media marketing in relation to personal conditions becomes essential. Consumers have repeatedly exhibited the tendency to share information via social media; when users acknowledge social media marketing of a particular product and share the content, they are likely to show higher consumer preference for that specific product.

Limitations and Future Research

This study confronts two principal limitations. First, because the research design only allows observation of changes across the overall consumer-preference dimension, it cannot investigate variations in preference-dimension priorities or the specific content stimuli that influence each dimension. Future analyses could adopt a pre-post design that permits examination of these aspects, particularly if augmented with digital-trace data on consumers' exposure to the preset advertisements (Tatik Sunarwati, 2017). Second, the analyses only cover four popular platforms where the advertising stimuli were deployed. Social media plays a pivotal role in contemporary consumption patterns, and

different platforms cater to distinct content formats and target audiences. Expanding the analysis to additional platforms could enrich understanding of how platform-specific characteristics further shape gendered behavioral responses across diverse social-media environments.

Limitations of the Study

Despite comprehensive planning, limitations remain that could affect findings and indicate the need for further research. The comparative framework leads to inherent constraints in measuring all variables of interest; consequently, only consumer-preference data were included, prioritizing gender-based analysis within specified content and platform contexts. Further investigation of engagement's role in social-media marketing remains warranted. Other limitations arise from reliance on subjective survey instruments, which may be influenced by events occurring between participants' engagement and the survey. Investigating digital footprints or external data streams could enhance insight into actual behavior-shifting influences. Only three consumer-preference points were captured, emphasizing shift direction without quantifying magnitude or enabling analysis of pre-existing degree; an extended survey capturing a wider range is recommended. Diverse socio-economic and cultural factors underpin consumer behavior, often propagating gender-based inequalities; these influences may shape preference shifts across different frameworks and warrant exploration beyond the dominant Western perspective. Social-media platforms possess varying structural characteristics that condition user behavior and communication style within the marketing domain (da Conceição Godinho, 2017). A broader range of platforms would therefore enhance understanding of gender- and platform-specific interactions.

Suggested Avenues for Further Inquiry

Comparative insights into the effects of social media marketing on consumer preference shifts between male and female audiences are still relatively undeveloped. The available evidence indicates a need for research to address this specific difference in consumer behavior (Sue Thoene, 2012). Furthermore, few studies have systematically examined the extent to which different social media platforms produce distinctive shifts in consumer preferences. Hence, the present analysis investigates both the influence of gender on shifts in consumer preferences and the role of platform characteristics in shaping these effects. A comparison of social media marketing impacts across genders is expected to reveal appreciable differences in the nature and magnitude of resulting preference shifts. Within-gender analyses, in contrast, are anticipated to show the amount of preference shift for the same brand to differ significantly across platforms.

Conclusion

The study investigates whether marketing messages promoted on social media influence consumer preferences and if the magnitude of that impact differs between males and females. Consumer preferences remain an influential variable affecting purchase intentions in behavioral studies. Although consumer preferences remain fixed irrespective of time, consumption patterns nevertheless determine the order in which such preferences are converted into actual purchases. Consequently, the urgency or importance of purchase intention differs, and consumers prioritise preferences based on the impact gauged from marketing messages. If promotional information is disseminated effectively by marketing teams, consumer preferences for specific products are likely to shift towards those offered by the marketer.

Consumer behaviour is affected by sociocultural learning patterns respective to gender and, therefore, preferred marketing strategies are likely to differ. Marketing committees apply different marketing strategies across platforms according to consultation with platform operators, noting a disparity of promotional messages on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Accordingly, such gendered impact within the frame of action-based variables remains inadequately addressed.

Social media marketing a highly attractive option for marketers regardless of budget, marketers can be advised on the nature and extent of messages when targeting specific audiences according to gender. Measurable impact strengthens the theoretical foundation underpinning consumer preference formation mechanisms and the role of sociocultural factors in shaping gendered consumer behaviour, permitting Gender differences persist across campuses and electronic media.

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