



The Impact of Political marketing via Social Media on Political Participation: An Empirical Analysis in Lebanese Context

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Abstract: *This study investigates the impact of political marketing using social media in Lebanon. Furthermore, the study investigates the moderating influence of political interest on the link between political marketing via social media and political participation. The present study goals were satisfied using a quantitative survey approach based on data from 412 respondents. The study's findings claim that political marketing via social media influences political participation in Lebanon. Furthermore, the data show that political interest strengthens the link between political marketing via social media and political participation. This study added to the corpus of marketing literature by examining the influence of political marketing on political participation in a particular political setting, such as Lebanon. Furthermore, this study informs political parties about the impact of political marketing efforts via social media, allowing them to plan for the necessary steps to increase political participation.*

Keywords: *Political Marketing, Political Interest, Political Participation, Lebanon.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Political marketing is the use of marketing methods in political campaigns by political parties in order to favorably represent their followers (Newman, 2012). Political candidates will be able to consult with people on a regular basis rather than only during election seasons if technology is integrated into their political marketing operations. They will also be able to regard voters as stakeholders and include them in the formulation of political decisions, fostering a feeling of political ownership (Dean et al., 2001). Politicians and political parties have lately begun to use social media to reach out to the public on a global scale (Hong et al., 2012).



Political participation refers to an individual's or a group's active involvement in political activities, whether through selecting political leaders or influencing political decisions (Van Deth, 2015). "Any voluntary effort conducted by a person to influence a governmental or political decision" is defined as political participation (van Deth, 2014). A previous study has identified five categories of political participation: electoral, lobbying, organizational activity, contacting government officials, and violent acts (Huntington et al., 1976). Political participation is necessary and should be encouraged in order for democracy to be more meaningful (Diemer et al., 2012). Citizens' participation in political movements is critical to the health and efficacy of a nation's democracy. Because of the clear and continuing drop in political engagement in Lebanon, the topic of political participation has become essential (Thomas, 2018).

The current study adds to our understanding of the relationship between political marketing and political participation by examining the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation in Lebanon. Furthermore, this study contributes to the marketing literature by shedding light on the psychological variables that inspire political engagement and investigating the impact of political interest on the relationship between political marketing and political participation. In addition, the current research findings will assist political parties and politicians in understanding the effect of political marketing campaigns via social media on political action.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

1.1 Political marketing via social media and political participation

In political campaigns and the push for collective action, the conventional non-social interaction between governmental entities and their constituents has become less successful (Dale & Strauss, 2009). Social media facilitates the formation of such ties as well as the ability to utilize existing networks in the formation of credible and trust-based interactions (Zhang et al., 2013), hence expanding political engagement and collective action. Political parties' dissemination of freely accessible information about their candidates to voters via social media is undeniably vital to obtaining more exposure. As a result, social media provides a broader channel for political parties to share information on their candidates in ways that were previously difficult to get or apparent to others (Jarvenpaa & Tuunainen, 2013). Voters may more readily obtain information and develop genuine and trust-based connections with political parties and candidates through the use of social media, enhancing political involvement and collective action (Anim et al. 2019). Nargesian et al. (2014) cited in Khorouti (2017) investigated the effects of political marketing on public participation among Tehran residents. The study's findings show that modern tools of political marketing have a direct and significant impact on voters' public participation. In Ghana, Anim et al. (2019) investigate the links between political marketing via social media and young voters' political involvement. Their research found that the capacity of a political party or candidate to attain political engagement from Ghanaian young people is reliant on how effectively they create consumer relationships or raise awareness through social media. As a result, this article hypothesizes the following:

H1: Political marketing via social media positively influences the political participation in Lebanon

1.2 The moderating role of political interest

Political interest and involvement are the foundations of civic society. Regardless of how rationally political interest defines itself, literature depicts political interest as the basis for creating political opinion (Glenn & Grimes, 1968). The importance of political motivation in explaining whether digital media tends to foster uneven political participation cannot be overstated (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Models that ignore the role of political interest in political involvement tend to overstate the significance of the link between digital media use and political engagement (Boulianne, 2011). According to Zhang (2010), social networking sites foster political interest and encourage family and friends to join in online political conversations and debates. Consuming above-average political news and seeking information about politicians are connected with political interest (Boulianne, 2011). Political interest, according to Bimber et al. (2014), plays an essential role in moderating the link between digital media use and political engagement. Political interest was shown to positively regulate the association between digital media consumption, working for a party, and monetary donations to politicians. As a result of the previous reasoning, this article hypothesizes the following:

H2: Political marketing via social media positively influences political participation in Lebanon.

1.3 Conceptual framework

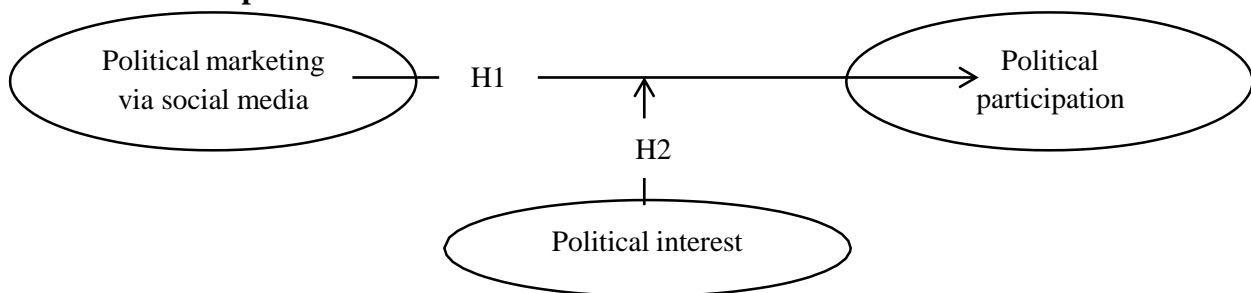


Figure1: Conceptual framework

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design and sampling

This study investigates the influence of political marketing via social media on political participation in Lebanon. Furthermore, the current study investigates the function of political interest in improving the link between political marketing through social media and political participation. A quantitative survey approach based on online and offline data collection was utilized for this aim, with structured questionnaires sent to a convenience sample of Lebanese respondents. The online data collection approach is ideal for gathering a large number of responses. Only 412 of the 800 possible participants accepted the offer to participate in the study, generating an excellent response rate of 51.1% of those invited.

2.2 Measurement instrument

The questionnaires were developed based on previous studies and were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Political



marketing via social media was assessed based on the level of remarks, posts, and advertisements via social media in addition to citizens' interaction, communication, collaboration, and feedback via twelve items based on a similar study (Anim et al., 2019). Additionally, the level of political interest was measured by four items and was adopted from the Oni et al. (2017) study. Finally, political participation measures were based on five items and adapted from earlier studies (Anim et al., 2019).

3. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Measurement model evaluation

In this study, the findings of the measuring model were evaluated by examining the Factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for all variables.

Table 1 Result of measurement model.

Construct	Items	Variable codes	Factor loadings	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
POLITICAL MARKETING	12	PM1	0.89	0.923	0.971	0.742
		PM2	0.85			
		PM3	0.84			
		PM4	0.89			
		PM5	0.78			
		PM6	0.89			
		PM7	0.77			
		PM8	0.85			
		PM9	0.89			
		PM10	0.87			
		PM11	0.9			
		PM12	0.91			
POLITICAL INTEREST	4	PI1	0.77	0.841	0.902	0.699
		PI2	0.86			
		PI3	0.95			



		PI4	0.75			
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	5	PP1	0.95	0.864	0.94 9	0.79 0
		PP2	0.93			
		PP3	0.89			
		PP4	0.87			
		PP5	0.799			

Table 1 shows that the Cronbach's alpha and the total composite reliability value of all variables were more than 0.7, above the Hair et al. (2017) criterion value of 0.7. Moreover, the average variance extracted values for each construct were also analyzed, and the results indicated that the AVE of all items was above the Hair et al. (2017) cut-off threshold of 0.5. The findings confirm the study's constructs' consistency, dependability, and convergent validity.

3.2 Hypotheses testing, and results

This study investigates the link between political marketing through social media and political participation in Lebanon. Furthermore, the current study investigates the moderating influence of political interest in order to strengthen the relationship. According to the structural model evaluation, political marketing via social media has a direct influence on political participation. Furthermore, the evaluation reveals that political interest strengthens the link between political marketing via social media and political participation.

3.2.1 Testing the direct relationship

This study proposes that political marketing via social media positively influences the individual's participation in political movements. As seen in table 2, the statistical analysis to test H1 indicated that political marketing via social media influences political participation.

Table 2 Evaluation of structural relationships

	Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
H1	PM. → PP.	0.45	0.06	2.422	0.001	Supported

Table 2 shows that there is a direct association between political marketing via social media and political participation ($\beta = 0.45$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that H1 is supported.

3.2.2 Testing the Moderating effect

This study posits that political interest might moderates the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. As shown in table 3, the statistical analysis to test H2 revealed that political interest moderates the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation.



Table 3 Moderation of political interest between political marketing via social media and political participation

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	8.19	0.953		8.59	0
	CRB	0.34	0.061	0.41	5.81	0.002
	PI*CRB	0.50	0.075	0.74	2.66	0,000
a. Dependent Variable: PP						

As seen in table 3, when political interest remained constant, the association between political marketing via social media and political participation was (β 0.34, $p = 0.002$). The interaction impact of political interest on the link between political marketing via social media and political participation, on the other hand, has improved the relationship at ($\beta = 0.50$, $p = 0.000$), confirming H2.

3.3 Discussions

The purpose of this study was to examine the link between political marketing efforts via social media and political participation in Lebanon. Furthermore, this study investigates the moderating influence of political interest on the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. According to the study's findings, political marketing through social media has a direct impact on political participation. The positive association between political marketing via social media and political participation supports a previous study by Anim et al. (2019), which revealed a positive relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation in Ghana. In this context, the researchers believe that efficient political marketing operations carried out by political parties via social media might foster political trust and satisfaction, hence increasing political involvement in Lebanon.

Besides, the study's findings revealed that political interest moderates and improves the links between political marketing via social media and political involvement. This finding is consistent with previous research by Bimber et al. (2014), which found that political interest moderates the link between digital media use and engagement in political activity over time. The researchers believe that the motivating influence of political interest might inspire individuals to participate in political discussion via social media, which then helps political parties reach individuals. Thus, political interest enhances the relationship between political marketing via social media and political engagement.



4. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

The outcomes of this investigation have far-reaching ramifications. For starters, there is currently little empirical research on political engagement (Oni et al., 2017). Furthermore, research in political marketing focuses on the use of marketing ideas in political life as well as the structural elements of political marketing. However, the effects of political marketing on understanding political behavior remain unexplored (Anim et al., 2019). As a result, the influence of political marketing on political engagement is added to the body of marketing literature in this study.

The study's conclusions are advantageous to political parties. This research helps political parties in Lebanon understand the impact of political marketing via social media on political involvement, allowing them to prepare for the necessary activities to increase political participation, which is critical for the health of Lebanese democracy. Furthermore, the findings indicated that political interest improves the relationship between political marketing via social media and participation; thus, political parties should improve individuals' political interest by providing effective promotion strategies via online media in order to gain individuals' support.

This study, like any other sort of research, has limitations. It is critical to investigate these constraints. To begin with, the current study is limited in scope due to its location in Lebanon. The findings' generalizability is dependent on the replication of the study framework in another nation. Furthermore, the convenience sample strategy utilized in this study restricts its generalizability. In future investigations, another sampling strategy may be utilized to investigate the correlations between the variables.

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