

The Impact of Occupation on Product Category Choices in Social Media Marketing

¹ Gaytri Devi, ² Dr. Divya Sahu

¹Research Scholar, ²Supervisor

^{1,2} Department of Commerce, NIILM University, Kaithal, Haryana (India)

Abstract: *The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has significantly reshaped buyer behavior, particularly in e-marketing. Social media marketing—where users can discover, evaluate, and purchase products within integrated digital ecosystems—has emerged as a dominant retail channel. This study examines the role of occupational status in shaping consumer preferences across various product categories within this context. This research investigates data from five distinct occupational groups—Students, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, and Others—against six major product categories: Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, Cosmetics & Accessories, Home Decor, Books/Stationary, and Others. The findings reveal a uniformly high preference for Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, and Books/Stationary, with high selection rates across all occupational groups, indicating these categories' universal appeal in social media marketing. In contrast, moderate but noteworthy interest in Cosmetics & Accessories and Home Decor is observed, particularly among Students and the Unemployed, suggesting that economic flexibility and lifestyle factors may influence product interest within this group. This study underscores the importance of nuanced, occupation-based segmentation strategies in digital marketing. Understanding how occupational roles intersect with product preferences enables marketers to craft more personalized, effective campaigns that align with the distinct consumption patterns evident in social media-driven retail environments. These insights are vital for businesses aiming to optimize engagement, conversion rates, and customer satisfaction in an increasingly competitive online marketplace.*

Keywords: Social Media, Occupation, Consumer Preferences

1. Introduction

The emergence of social media has transformed the marketing landscape in profound ways, giving rise to social media marketing—combination of social networking and online shopping. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter experience pivotal in shaping consumer behaviors, offering personalized experiences and influencing purchasing decisions through targeted advertisements and peer recommendations. In this dynamic environment, understanding the features those drive consumer preferences is crucial for businesses aiming to optimize their marketing strategies.

Occupation, as demographic variable, plays a important role in determining buyer behavior. It influences income level, lifestyle choices, and purchasing patterns. Previous studies have highlighted the effect of demographic factors such as age and gender on online shopping behaviors. However, there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on how occupational status affects product category preferences within the realm of social media marketing. This analysis bridges this gap by analyzing cross tabulation data that captures the preferences of different occupational groups across

various product categories in social media marketing. By examining these patterns, we seek to provide insights that can inform targeted marketing strategies, ensuring that businesses can effectively engage with diverse consumer segments based on their occupational profiles.

1.1 Social Media Marketing and buyer Behavior

Social media serves as a powerful medium for shaping consumer behavior and influencing purchasing decisions. Social marketing, which merges social networking with online commerce, utilizes platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to enable product discovery and transactions through mechanisms such as peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and targeted advertisements.

According to Hajli (2014), trust and user-generated content play a crucial role in fostering consumer intent within social marketing environments. Likewise, Liang and Turban (2011) argue that embedding social features into e-marketing platforms substantially increases consumer engagement and supports more informed decision-making.

Research also suggests that the social influence exerted through likes, shares, and comments on product-related content can significantly shape consumer perceptions and drive purchases (Shen, 2012). As consumers increasingly rely on social feedback and digital communities, the relevance of demographic factors in guiding product choices within these platforms becomes even more important.

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the influence of occupational status on consumer preferences for different product categories in the context of social media commerce. With the increasing integration of e-commerce features into platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, understanding how various occupational groups engage with product offerings has become essential for businesses and marketers. Specifically, the study aims to following research questions:

- I. To identify the most preferred product categories among social media users across different occupational groups.
- II. To analyze the relationship between occupational status (e.g., Students, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, Others) and product category preferences via social media shopping.
- III. To test statistical significance of associations between occupational status and product preferences using appropriate quantitative methods.
- IV. To provide insights for brands in developing targeted and occupation-specific strategies for product promotion and consumer engagement on social media platforms.

3. Literature Review

Occupation, as a demographic factor, influences purchasing power, lifestyle needs, and online engagement patterns. Prior studies have used various methodologies to explore consumer preferences in social marketing. Quantitative methods, including surveys and statistical analysis, are commonly employed to identify patterns across demographic groups which are given as under:

Table 1: Quantitative methods, including surveys and statistical analysis, are commonly employed to identify patterns across demographic groups

Author(s)	Year	Research Methodology	Key Findings
Hajli, N.	2014	Quantitative survey; regression analysis	Social media positively impacts consumer purchase decisions through trust and user-generated content.
Hajli, N.	2015	Structured questionnaires; SEM analysis	Social marketing constructs such as reviews and community features significantly influence online purchase intentions.

Liang & Turban	2011	Conceptual framework; literature synthesis	Proposed a foundational model for social marketing highlighting the roles of people, technology, and information.
Shen, J.	2012	Survey-based research; data analysis using SPSS	Enjoyment, social presence, and social comparison significantly affect the acceptance of social shopping websites.
Kanchan, Kumar & Gupta	2015	Descriptive research; survey of online consumers	Demographic variables, especially occupation and income, influence online product preferences; students prefer trendy items, professionals prefer utility.
Lim et al.	2016	Quantitative; Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	Occupation, income, and education impact online shopping frequency; unemployed consumers still engage in social marketing for convenience and price sensitivity.
Wang & Zhang	2012	Comparative analysis; literature review	Different demographic groups (age, gender, occupation) exhibit varied behavior toward product categories in online environments.
Mikalef et al.	2021	Mixed methods; eye-tracking study and interviews	Consumers process marketer-generated and user-generated content differently; the format and source of information influence purchase decisions on social marketing platforms.
Rashmi H. B.	2023	Survey-based research	Social media reviews and opinions significantly affect consumer purchasing decisions; the influence varies across different occupational groups.
Tiwari & Kathare	2022	Comparative analysis; surveys in Nagpur and Bhopal	Advertising influences consumption behavior differently across occupational levels; professionals are more influenced by informative ads, while students respond more to emotional appeals.
Efendioğlu, İ. H.	2022	Theoretical analysis; study on conspicuous consumption	Social media fosters conspicuous consumption, influencing purchasing intentions; individuals in certain occupations may be more susceptible to such influences due to social pressures and identity expression.
Zhang & Benyoucef	2016	Literature review; development of integrative framework	Identified factors influencing consumer behavior in social marketing, including trust, social support, and information quality; emphasized the need for tailored strategies considering demographic variables like occupation.

Key Insights from the Literature review found that occupation significantly influences consumer preferences, especially in online contexts, by shaping disposable income, lifestyle, and shopping motivations. Social media platforms amplify these effects, providing personalized and interactive shopping experiences that appeal differently to students, professionals, and unemployed individuals. Quantitative methods, particularly structured surveys and regression models, dominate research methodology in this area, allowing for pattern recognition and correlation testing across demographics. There is a research gap specifically targeting how occupation affects *product category selection* on social media—this study addresses that gap using crosstab analysis.

4. Research Methodology

- (i) **Research Design:** Present study employs a quantitative and descriptive research design to examine the relationship between occupational status plus preferred product categories on social media platforms. The objective is to identify patterns and correlations between consumers' occupational backgrounds and their buying interests across various product categories commonly promoted on social media platforms.
- (ii) **Research Approach:** A **cross-sectional survey** method was used for collecting data from a diverse section of social media users. This approach allows for the analysis of preferences at a specific point in time and is suitable for identifying associations among categorical variables such as occupation and product interest.
- (iii) **Population and Sampling:** The sample universe includes the male and females of Haryana region targeting the active users of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.) who have experience with online shopping through these channels.
- (iv) **Sample Size:** A representative sample size ($N = 600$) between the age of 18 and above was selected to ensure exactness of results.
- (v) **Sampling Technique:** A **stratified random sampling** method was used to ensure balanced representation across five occupational groups: Students, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, Others (i.e., homemakers, retired individuals)

5. Data Collected

- (i) **Online questionnaire** distributed through Google form is used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections:
- (ii) **Demographics:** Including age, gender, occupation, and frequency of social media usage.
- (iii) **Product Preferences:** Participants were asked to indicate their interest level in six product categories (Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, Cosmetics & Accessories, Home Decor, Books/Stationary, Others) when shopping via social media.

6. Techniques of Data Analysis

- (i) **Descriptive Statistics:** For summarizing demographic data and overall product preferences.
- (ii) **Cross Tabulation:** Employed to explore the relationship between occupational status and product category preferences.
- (iii) **Chi-square Tests of Independence:** Conducted to assess whether observed differences in preferences across occupational groups were statistically significant.

7. Research Hypothesis

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant association between occupational groups and the preferred categories of products purchased through social media platforms.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a significant association between occupational groups and the preferred categories of products purchased through social media platforms.

8. Data Analysis of Occupation-Based Product Preferences

This study shows the preference of different product categories for buying through social media, based on the Participants' occupations: **Student, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, and Others.**

Table 2: Product Categories Purchased via Social Media

Product Category	Responses	Percentage	Percentage of Cases
Electronics	591	17.9%	98.5%
Apparel & Footwear	596	18.0%	99.3%

Cosmetics & Accessories	481	14.6%	80.2%
Home Decor	463	14.0%	77.2%
Books/Stationery	589	17.8%	98.2%
Others	582	17.6%	97.0%

Interpretation: As per the information shown in above table 1 apparel & footwear (18.0%) is the most popular product category purchased on social media. Electronics (17.9%) and Books/Stationery (17.8%) closely follow, showing that consumers value tangible and intellectual products via these platforms. Cosmetics & Accessories (14.6%) and Home Decor (14.0%) suggest preference for visual-based shopping. Others (17.6%) reflect a diverse range of products outside these standard categories.

The cross tabulation presents how individuals from different occupational backgrounds—Students, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, and Others—prefer various product categories when purchasing through social media platforms. The product categories examined include Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, Cosmetics & Accessories, Home Decor, Books/Stationery, and Others. Each occupation shows a high level of engagement with most product categories, particularly Electronics, Apparel, and Books, all of which consistently exceed 97% preference across occupations

Table 2: The relationship between individuals' occupation and the category of products they prefer to purchase via social media marketing (SMM).

			Occupation					Total	P-value
			Student	Employed	Self-Employed	Unemployed	Others		
Category of product prefer to buy via SMM ^a	Electronics, What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	Count	63	170	135	159	64	591	0.753
		% within Occupation	98.4%	97.7%	99.3%	98.8%	98.5%		
	Apprales & Footwear, What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	Count	63	173	135	161	64	596	
		% within Occupation	98.4%	99.4%	99.3%	100.0%	98.5%		
	Cosmetic & Accessories, What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	Count	51	141	103	131	55	481	
		% within Occupation	79.7%	81.0%	75.7%	81.4%	84.6%		
	Home Decor, What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	Count	47	136	107	122	51	463	
		% within Occupation	73.4%	78.2%	78.7%	75.8%	78.5%		
	Books/Stationary,	Count	63	173	133	156	64	589	
		% within Occupation	98.4%	99.4%	99.3%	100.0%	98.5%		

	What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	% within Occupation	98.4%	99.4%	97.8%	96.9%	98.5%		
	Others, What category of products you prefer to buy through Social Media?	Count	60	168	133	160	61	582	
		% within Occupation	93.8%	96.6%	97.8%	99.4%	93.8%		
Total		Count	64	174	136	161	65	600	

Interpretation The cross tabulation presents how individuals from different occupational backgrounds—Students, Employed, Self-Employed, Unemployed, and Others—prefer various product categories while making purchase through social media platforms. The product categories examined include Electronics, Apparel & Footwear, Cosmetics & Accessories, Home Decor, Books/Stationary, and Others. Each occupation shows a high level of engagement with most product categories, particularly Electronics, Apparel, and Books, all of which consistently exceed 97% preference across occupations

- **A test of independence-** Chi-square was conducted for testing the relationship among individuals' occupation with category of products they prefer to purchase via social media marketing (SMM). The results showed p-value (Sig.) = 0.753, since the p-value is more than 0.05. Since the p-value (0.753) > 0.05, this tells there is no statistically noteworthy association between a person's occupation and the product category they prefer to buy via social media.

9. Discussion

The findings indicate that there is no significant association between a person's occupation (e.g., student, employed, self-employed, unemployed, or other) and their preference for specific product categories (e.g., electronics, apparel, cosmetics, home décor, books, or others) when shopping via social media platforms. This suggests that social media marketing appeals broadly across occupational groups, and preferences for product categories are likely influenced by other factors such as age, interests, lifestyle, or social trends — rather than one's employment status. It's also noteworthy that most product categories showed high interest across all occupational groups, particularly electronics, apparel, and books, implying that these categories enjoy universal appeal in the social media shopping environment.

10. Conclusion

The analysis reveals that social media has become a dominant and trusted platform for purchasing a wide range of products across occupational groups. Regardless of employment status, individuals are actively engaging in online shopping, especially for apparel, electronics, and educational materials. Based on the Chi-square test, there is not enough evidence to suggest a substantial relationship between a respondent's occupation and their preferred product category on social media. Therefore, we conclude that occupation and product preference via SMM are independent.

11. Recommendations

Since product preferences across occupations are statistically similar, SMM campaigns should prioritize promoting electronics, apparel & footwear, and books/stationary, as they have the highest appeal across all occupational groups. As found that **occupation is not a significant factor**, focus on **user behavior, interests, age, or online activity patterns** for more effective audience segmentation. Usage of influencer campaigns, aesthetic-based content, or seasonal promotions) to better engage

audiences for these segments home décor and cosmetics/accessories show slightly lower preference rates.

12. References

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