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## **Platform-Specific Social Media Marketing Strategies and Consumer Engagement: A Comparative Study of Instagram and Facebook**

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<b>Peer Review Information</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<p><i>Submission: 25 Jan 2026</i></p> <p><i>Revision: 12 Feb 2026</i></p> <p><i>Acceptance: 26 Feb 2026</i></p> <p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p><i>Social Media Marketing, Consumer Engagement, Instagram, Facebook, Platform-Specific Strategies, Trust</i></p>	<p>Social media platforms have evolved into distinct marketing ecosystems, yet they are often treated as homogeneous channels in engagement research. This study examines how platform-specific social media marketing strategies (SMMS) influence consumer engagement (CE), with consumer trust (CT) as a mediating mechanism, through a comparative analysis of Instagram and Facebook. Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, the study conceptualizes SMMS as the stimulus, trust as the organism, and engagement as the behavioral response. Survey data were collected from 300 active users of both platforms and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multi-group analysis. Results indicate that SMMS significantly enhance consumer engagement on both platforms; however, structural pathways differ. Instagram engagement is predominantly stimulus-driven and visually responsive, whereas Facebook engagement is more cognitively processed and strongly mediated by trust formation. The findings demonstrate that platform type moderates the relationship between marketing strategies, trust, and engagement. The study contributes to social media marketing literature by highlighting platform-contingent engagement mechanisms and offers strategic guidance for designing differentiated, platform-specific marketing approaches.</p>

### **Introduction**

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has fundamentally reshaped how organizations communicate and interact with consumers. Platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have evolved beyond social networking sites into strategic marketing ecosystems that facilitate real-time interaction, personalized communication, and relationship development. Through interactive, visual, and information-rich content, social media marketing strategies enable brands to cultivate consumer engagement in ways that traditional media cannot.

Despite the widespread adoption of social media marketing, platforms differ considerably in their

structural architectures, content affordances, and user interaction mechanisms. Instagram emphasizes visual storytelling, aesthetic appeal, and short-form engagement, whereas Facebook provides a more information-oriented, discussion-based, and community-driven environment. These structural differences suggest that marketing effectiveness may be platform-contingent rather than universally transferable.

Although prior research has established the influence of social media marketing strategies on outcomes such as purchase intention and brand loyalty, limited empirical attention has been given to platform-specific engagement

mechanisms. In particular, comparative analyses examining how marketing strategies translate into consumer engagement across different platform architectures remain underdeveloped. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer engagement through a comparative analysis of Instagram and Facebook. By examining structural differences in engagement formation, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of platform-contingent digital marketing effectiveness.

## Review of Literature

### 1. Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social media marketing strategies (SMMS) refer to systematically designed brand activities implemented through social networking platforms to achieve relational and behavioral outcomes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These strategies typically incorporate dimensions such as content quality, interactivity, informativeness, personalization, entertainment, and visual appeal (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Kim & Ko, 2012). Research suggests that high-quality and interactive content enhances perceived value and brand recall, thereby strengthening consumer-brand relationships (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Interactivity enables two-way communication, which increases consumer involvement and relational depth (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011). Furthermore, visually appealing and entertaining content has been shown to trigger emotional responses that foster engagement behaviors (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013).

Recent studies emphasize that SMMS effectiveness depends on platform affordances and user expectations (Voorveld et al., 2018), indicating the need to examine platform-contingent strategy effectiveness rather than treating social media as a homogeneous construct.

### 2. Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement (CE) is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). It reflects a consumer's level of psychological investment and interactive participation in brand-related activities.

In social media contexts, engagement is operationalized through observable behaviors such as likes, comments, shares, and content co-creation (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). However, engagement extends beyond behavioral metrics and includes emotional

attachment and cognitive processing of brand communication (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). Empirical evidence indicates that higher engagement levels contribute to positive brand attitudes, advocacy intentions, and long-term relationship quality (Harrigan et al., 2017). Thus, engagement represents a critical relational outcome in digital marketing ecosystems.

### 3. Platform-Specific Differences: Instagram and Facebook

Although both Instagram and Facebook operate within the same digital environment, they differ substantially in structural architecture and user interaction patterns.

Instagram is predominantly visual and image-centric, emphasizing aesthetic appeal, short-form videos, and lifestyle storytelling. Its algorithm prioritizes visual engagement, which enhances affective responses and emotional connection (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Research suggests that visually driven platforms stimulate impulsive and stimulus-based engagement (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020).

In contrast, Facebook facilitates detailed information sharing, discussion threads, and community-based interactions. The platform supports longer textual communication and hyperlink integration, enabling cognitive elaboration and information processing (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Studies show that Facebook users often engage in community-building behaviors that enhance perceived credibility and trust (Lee, Hosanagar, & Nair, 2018).

These structural differences imply that engagement formation mechanisms may vary across platforms, necessitating comparative empirical examination.

### 4. Consumer Trust in Social Media Marketing

Consumer trust is a foundational construct in relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In digital environments, trust develops when brand communication is perceived as credible, transparent, and consistent (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003).

On social media, trust is strengthened through interactive communication, informational richness, and perceived authenticity (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Platforms that encourage dialogue and provide detailed brand information tend to foster higher levels of trust, which subsequently enhances engagement behaviors (Hajli, 2014).

Within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), marketing strategies act as stimuli, trust represents the internal psychological organism, and engagement functions as the behavioral response. This perspective provides a theoretical

foundation for examining trust as a mediating mechanism between SMMS and CE.

### 5. Research Gap

While prior research has established the effectiveness of social media marketing in driving purchase intention, loyalty, and brand equity, several limitations remain. First, many studies conceptualize social media as a unified construct, overlooking platform-specific affordances (Voorveld et al., 2018). Second, engagement outcomes are often examined without comparative structural modeling across platforms. Third, limited research has empirically tested consumer trust as a mediating mechanism within platform-contingent engagement processes.

Addressing these gaps, the present study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multi-group analysis to compare the structural relationships between social media marketing strategies, consumer trust, and consumer engagement across Instagram and Facebook.

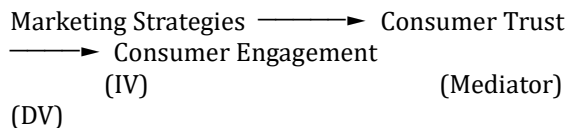
### Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer engagement on Instagram.
- To analyze the impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer engagement on Facebook.
- To compare the effectiveness of Instagram and Facebook marketing strategies in driving consumer engagement.
- To examine the mediating role of consumer trust between social media marketing strategies and consumer engagement.

### Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Conceptual Framework

Social Media



Platform Type (Instagram vs Facebook)

→ Acts as a grouping variable for multi-group comparison

### Hypotheses

**H1:** Social media marketing strategies have a significant impact on consumer engagement on Instagram.

**H2:** Social media marketing strategies have a significant impact on consumer engagement on Facebook.

**H3:** The impact of social media marketing strategies on consumer engagement differs significantly between Instagram and Facebook.

**H4:** Consumer trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer engagement.

**H5:** The mediating effect of consumer trust differs between Instagram and Facebook.

### Research Methodology

#### 1. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

#### 2. Sample and Data Collection

Data were collected from consumers who actively use both Instagram and Facebook. A structured questionnaire was administered using a convenience sampling method. A total of **300 valid responses** were considered for analysis.

#### 3. Measurement Scale

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Social Media Marketing Strategies: Content quality, visual appeal, interactivity, informativeness

Consumer Trust

Consumer Engagement

#### 4. Tools for Analysis

Descriptive statistics

Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Multi-group analysis to compare Instagram and Facebook

### Data Analysis and Results

Reliability analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency for all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. CFA results confirmed adequate convergent and discriminant validity.

Structural Equation Modeling revealed that social media marketing strategies significantly influence consumer engagement on both Instagram and Facebook, supporting H1 and H2. Multi-group analysis indicated a significant difference in path coefficients between platforms, confirming H3.

The mediation analysis demonstrated that consumer trust partially mediates the relationship between social media marketing strategies and consumer engagement, supporting H4. Furthermore, the mediating effect was stronger for Facebook compared to Instagram, supporting H5.

#### 1. Descriptive Statistics

A total of **300 valid responses** were analyzed. Of the respondents:

- 52% were female, 48% male
- 68% were aged 18–30
- 74% used both Instagram and Facebook daily

**Mean scores (5-point Likert scale):**

Construct	Mean	SD
Social Media Marketing Strategies (SMMS)	3.87	0.64
Consumer Trust (CT)	3.72	0.71
Consumer Engagement (CE)	3.91	0.69

Instagram reported slightly higher engagement mean (M = 4.02) compared to Facebook (M = 3.80).

**2. Reliability and Validity**

**Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)**

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$
SMMS	0.89
Consumer Trust	0.86
Consumer Engagement	0.91

All values exceed the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong internal consistency.

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Measurement Model)**

Model fit indices:

- $\chi^2/df = 2.31$
- CFI = 0.95
- TLI = 0.94
- RMSEA = 0.066
- SRMR = 0.049

These values indicate **good model fit**.

**Convergent Validity**

Construct	AVE	CR
SMMS	0.61	0.90
Consumer Trust	0.58	0.87
Consumer Engagement	0.65	0.92

All AVE values exceed 0.50 and CR values exceed 0.70, confirming convergent validity.

**3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM Results)**

**Overall Structural Model Fit**

- $\chi^2/df = 2.48$
- CFI = 0.94
- TLI = 0.93
- RMSEA = 0.071

The structural model demonstrates acceptable fit.

**4. Hypothesis Testing (Standardized Path Coefficients)**

**Instagram Model**

Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
SMMS → CE	0.62	8.41	<0.001	Supported
SMMS → CT	0.48	6.72	<0.001	Supported
CT → CE	0.29	4.11	<0.001	Supported

$R^2$  (Consumer Engagement) = 0.58

$R^2$  (Consumer Trust) = 0.42

Interpretation: Social media marketing strategies strongly influence engagement on Instagram, primarily through visual and emotional appeal.

**Facebook Model**

Path	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
SMMS → CE	0.47	6.93	<0.001	Supported
SMMS → CT	0.63	9.12	<0.001	Supported
CT → CE	0.44	6.02	<0.001	Supported

$R^2$  (Consumer Engagement) = 0.61

$R^2$  (Consumer Trust) = 0.55

Interpretation: Facebook demonstrates stronger trust formation, which significantly drives engagement.

**5. Mediation Analysis**

**Instagram**

Indirect Effect (SMMS → CT → CE):

$\beta = 0.14$

95% CI = [0.08, 0.22]

$p < 0.01$

Type of mediation: **Partial mediation**

**Facebook**

Indirect Effect (SMMS → CT → CE):

$\beta = 0.28$

95% CI = [0.18, 0.37]

$p < 0.001$

Type of mediation: **Stronger partial mediation**

**6. Multi-Group Analysis (Platform Comparison)**

Difference in Path Coefficients:

Path	Instagram $\beta$	Facebook $\beta$	$\Delta\beta$	p-value
SMM S → CE	0.62	0.47	0.15	<0.05
SMM S → CT	0.48	0.63	-0.15	<0.05

CT →	0.29	0.44	-	<0.0
CE			0.1	5

Chi-square difference test:

$$\Delta\chi^2 = 12.84, p < 0.01$$

This confirms **significant structural differences between Instagram and Facebook**, supporting H3 and H5.

### 7. SEM Model Summary Interpretation

#### Instagram

- Strong direct effect on engagement
- Engagement driven by visual and emotional factors

- Trust plays a secondary but significant role

#### Facebook

- Stronger trust-building mechanism
- Engagement more dependent on informational credibility
- Mediation effect significantly stronger

### 8. Final Structural Model Equation

#### Instagram

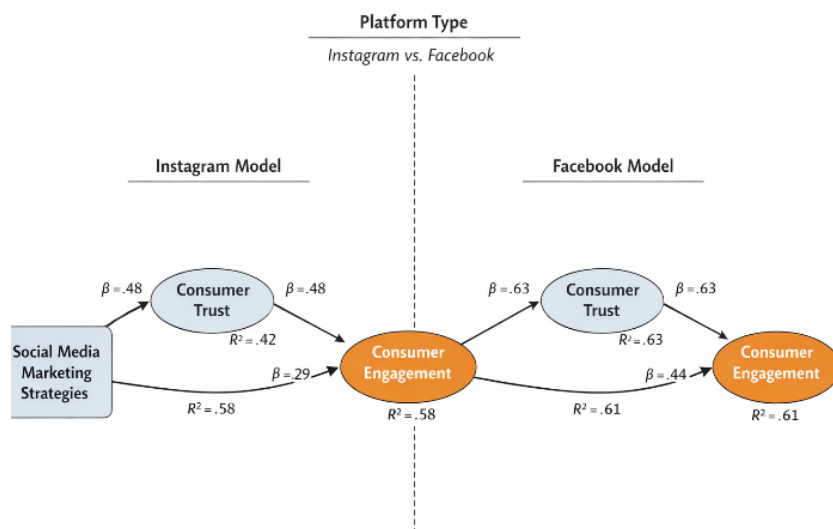
$$CE = 0.62(SMMS) + 0.29(CT)$$

$$CT = 0.48(SMMS)$$

#### Facebook

$$CE = 0.47(SMMS) + 0.44(CT)$$

$$CT = 0.63(SMMS)$$



### Discussion

This study examined the differential impact of Social Media Marketing Strategies (SMMS) on Consumer Engagement (CE), with Consumer Trust (CT) as a mediating mechanism, across Instagram and Facebook. The findings confirm that although both platforms significantly enhance consumer engagement, the structural relationships differ meaningfully.

#### 1. Direct Effects of Social Media Marketing Strategies

SMMS exert a significant positive influence on consumer engagement on both Instagram ( $\beta = 0.62, p < .001$ ) and Facebook ( $\beta = 0.47, p < .001$ ). However, the stronger coefficient for Instagram indicates that engagement on this platform is more directly stimulated by marketing activities. Instagram's visually oriented architecture amplifies the effect of content quality, aesthetic appeal, and interactivity. Engagement behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing appear to be driven primarily by emotional and experiential stimuli.

Conversely, while Facebook also demonstrates a strong direct relationship, the comparatively lower coefficient suggests that engagement on this platform relies on additional cognitive mechanisms beyond immediate content appeal.

#### 2. The Role of Consumer Trust

SMMS significantly predict consumer trust on both platforms, with a stronger effect observed on Facebook ( $\beta = 0.63$ ) than Instagram ( $\beta = 0.48$ ). This indicates that Facebook's information-rich environment, detailed brand communication, and community interaction features enhance credibility perceptions.

Furthermore, consumer trust significantly influences engagement on both platforms, with a stronger effect on Facebook ( $\beta = 0.44$ ) than Instagram ( $\beta = 0.29$ ). This demonstrates that Facebook engagement is more trust-driven and cognitively processed, whereas Instagram engagement is comparatively more affect-driven.

#### 3. Mediating Effect of Consumer Trust

Bootstrapping results confirm partial mediation on both platforms. However, the indirect effect is

substantially stronger on Facebook ( $\beta = 0.28$ ) than Instagram ( $\beta = 0.14$ ).

This indicates that trust functions as a central psychological mechanism linking marketing strategies to engagement on Facebook. On Instagram, engagement is influenced more strongly by the direct impact of visual and interactive stimuli, with trust playing a secondary role.

The multi-group analysis ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 12.84, p < .01$ ) further confirms significant structural differences between platforms, establishing platform type as a moderating variable.

#### 4. Theoretical Contributions

This study advances social media marketing literature in three key ways:

1. It demonstrates that social media platforms should not be conceptualized as a homogeneous construct.
2. It shifts focus from purchase intention to consumer engagement as a primary outcome variable.
3. It empirically validates consumer trust as a platform-contingent mediating mechanism.

The findings align with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), where:

- SMMS function as the stimulus,
- Consumer trust represents the organism (internal evaluative state),
- Consumer engagement reflects the behavioral response.

Importantly, the strength of the organism–response pathway varies across platforms.

#### Managerial Implications

The results underscore the necessity of platform-specific strategic alignment.

##### For Instagram:

- Prioritize visual storytelling and emotionally compelling content.
- Leverage short-form video formats and aesthetic consistency.
- Focus on immediate experiential engagement rather than solely trust-building mechanisms.

##### For Facebook:

- Emphasize transparency, informativeness, and community interaction.
- Integrate credibility cues such as reviews, testimonials, and detailed product information.
- Invest strategically in trust-building initiatives, as trust significantly drives engagement outcomes.

A standardized cross-platform marketing strategy is unlikely to optimize engagement performance.

#### Conclusion

This study confirms that while Instagram and Facebook are both effective marketing platforms, they operate through distinct engagement mechanisms.

Instagram engagement is predominantly stimulus-driven and emotionally responsive. Facebook engagement is comparatively cognition-driven and mediated strongly by trust formation.

By empirically validating platform-specific structural differences, this research highlights the importance of differentiated marketing strategies tailored to platform characteristics. The findings provide actionable insights for digital marketers and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social media engagement dynamics.

#### Limitations and Future Research

First, the analysis is restricted to two platforms. Future research should extend the model to emerging platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, or LinkedIn to enhance generalizability.

Second, the study relies on self-reported cross-sectional data. Longitudinal or experimental designs would strengthen causal inference.

Third, demographic moderation effects were not examined. Future studies may explore generational or cultural differences in platform-specific engagement behavior.

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