

# GENDER AND OCCUPATION IN DIGITAL MARKETING: HOW CONSUMERS PERCEIVE PROMOTION MIX FOR ENGLISH CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

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## Abstract:

**Background:** The increasing demand for English certification programs has led educational institutions to refine their digital marketing strategies to reach potential candidates effectively. However, demographic factors, such as gender and occupation, significantly influence how consumers perceive and engage in promotional content. Understanding these differences is crucial for designing targeted and effective marketing strategies in the educational sector.

**Purpose:** This study examines how gender and occupation influence respondents' perceptions of the promotion mix for an English certification program, the preferred channel for discovering certification events, and their motivation for enrolling. The research particularly explores preferences in social media usage, word-of-mouth recommendations, interactivity in official accounts, soft versus hard selling content, and the effectiveness of ads across different platforms.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative research design was employed with 500 respondents (250 male and 250 female) from different occupational backgrounds: students, freelancers, job seekers, and professionals. Data were analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to simultaneously assess the influence of gender and occupation on multiple dependent variables. Normality tests confirmed that the data met the assumptions of MANOVA analysis.

**Findings/Result:** The results reveal the following: Gender significantly influenced respondents' preference for word-of-mouth recommendations (p2) and interactive official accounts (p3), with females showing higher engagement in both; Occupation significantly affects social media preference (p1), promotional content style (p4), and the preferred channel for event discovery, with students and job seekers favoring Instagram/TikTok, whereas professionals rely more on LinkedIn and email marketing; Interaction effects (gender × occupation) were significant for preference for interactive official accounts, particularly among female students and female job seekers; No significant differences were found in ad placement preferences (p5) across gender and occupation groups.

**Conclusion:** This study highlights that gender and occupation are key determinants of digital marketing effectiveness in English certification programs. Marketing strategies should be tailored to demographic segments, with peer-driven promotions and interactive content appealing more to female audiences, while channel selection and content style should be aligned with occupational preferences.

**Originality/value (State of the art):** This study contributes to the digital marketing and education industry by providing empirical evidence on how demographic factors influence the effectiveness of promotion mix strategies. Unlike previous studies that focus solely on gender or occupation, this study examines their combined effects using MANOVA analysis, offering a more comprehensive understanding of consumer preferences in education marketing. These findings provide practical insights for marketers to develop more personalized and data-driven promotional strategies for online courses and certification programs.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, promotion mix, social media advertising, consumer behavior, english certification, gender differences

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## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, proficiency in English has become a critical asset for individuals seeking to enhance their career prospects and academic opportunities. English certification programs serve as a benchmark for assessing language proficiency, providing individuals with formal recognition of their skills. The perception of promotion strategies for these programs can significantly influence enrolment and participation rates, making it essential to understand how various demographic factors, such as gender and occupation, shape these perceptions. This research aims to explore the relationship between gender, occupation, and the perception of promotion strategies for English certification programs, utilizing MANOVA and descriptive statistics to analyze data collected from 500 respondents.

Thus, the importance of English certification cannot be overstated. According to a study by Kachru and Nelson (2018), English proficiency is not only a requirement for many job positions, but also a key factor in career advancement and professional development. As organizations increasingly operate on a global scale, the demand for employees who can communicate effectively in English has surged. Consequently, individuals are motivated to pursue English certification to enhance their employability and meet the expectations of potential employers (Baker, 2020). However, the effectiveness of promotional strategies for these certification programs may vary based on demographic factors, which warrant further investigation.

Gender and occupation are two critical variables that influence perceptions of promotional strategies. Research has shown that men and women may respond differently to marketing messages and promotional tactics (Smith & Jones, 2019). For instance, women may prioritize the social aspects of learning and certification, while men may focus more on career advancement opportunities associated with English proficiency (Lee, 2021). Additionally, individuals in different occupations may have varying motivations for obtaining English certification, which can affect their perceptions of promotional strategies. For example, professionals in customer service may view English certification as essential for career progression, whereas those in technical fields may see it as a supplementary skill (Garcia, 2022).

This research represents a state-of-the-art contribution to the intersection of digital marketing, consumer behavior, and education services by advancing the understanding of how gender and occupational differences influence perceptions of promotional strategies for English certification programs. While prior studies have examined general digital marketing effectiveness or single demographic influences, such as gender (e.g., Smith & Taylor, 2020; Hsu et al. 2022), few have simultaneously analyzed the combined role of gender and occupation in shaping responses to different elements of the promotion mix.

Moreover, this study applies Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to capture the effects across multiple dependent variables simultaneously, including perceptions of promotional content, preferred information channels, and motivational drivers. These variables offer a more holistic and statistically robust picture than the univariate approaches commonly used in similar research.

By focusing on English certification programs, this study addresses an underexplored niche within education marketing, where certification is not merely a product but a career-enhancing investment. The findings, which reveal that occupation (rather than gender) significantly influences both social media preferences and motivations, provide new insights into how educational service providers should tailor promotional strategies to specific market segments.

In doing so, this research advances the state of the art by moving beyond traditional demographic segmentation and offering a data-driven multivariate framework for understanding consumer perceptions in digital education marketing. This approach contributes both theoretically (by extending the demographic analysis in marketing research) and practically (by guiding more effective targeting strategies for educational institutions and certification bodies).

The significance of English language proficiency has grown exponentially in today's globalized world, where English serves as a lingua franca in various domains including business, education, and technology. Consequently, English certification programs have emerged as essential tools for individuals seeking to enhance their employability and academic prospects. This literature review aims to explore the perceptions of promotion strategies for English certification programs,

focusing on how gender and occupation influence these perceptions. This review also highlights the importance of tailoring English courses to meet the diverse needs of learners based on their demographic characteristics. For these reasons, this study examines several previous studies on how to tailor the promotion mix of English courses to demographic characteristics.

English certification is increasingly recognized as a critical credential in the job market. Research indicates that employers often prioritize candidates with recognized English qualifications, as these certifications are seen as indicators of a candidate's communication skills and overall competence (Baker, 2018). Furthermore, English proficiency is linked to better job performance and career advancement opportunities (Kirkpatrick, 2017). As such, individuals pursue English certification for various reasons including career progression, academic requirements, and personal development (Huang & Hsieh, 2020).

With the increasing number of English certification programs and providers, companies, especially English certification providers, must develop strategies. These strategies are developed not only to overcome the massive competition but also to communicate the products and value they offer to consumers. Companies can use various promotional tools or promotional mixes to attract potential customers and decide to purchase the product, which in this case is an English certification program.

Promotion is one of the variables in the marketing mix (McCarthy, 1991) that is popular for companies marketing products, goods, and even services. Promotion itself is the process of communicating the value and message of products in an effort to persuade consumers to be willing to accept, buy, and even influence others about the product. The willingness to buy goods or services based on satisfaction is the result of feedback from the company's promotional activities, so that companies are aware that their information and value are received by potential consumers positively.

Promotion is a variety of activities that companies can perform to communicate the advantages of their products to persuade potential customers. Therefore, marketing managers must choose the right and integrated form of promotion to produce a domino effect to increase sales volume (Gherasim et al. 2012; Ji & Ha, 2021). There are many forms of promotion,

so it is referred to as a promotion mix. The promotion mix is a communication tool consisting of elements of promotional tools used by the company; however, these tools are somehow related, so they cannot be separated. Each promotion mix is mutually supportive and complementary. Promotional activities, including advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing, aim to make potential customers feel more familiar with the brand and understand the product offered (Hersh & Aladwan, 2015; Kotler & Armstrong, 2017; Attia et al. 2018; Fikri & Lisdayanti, 2020). On the other hand, Etzel et al. (2017) stated that a promotional mix is planned to achieve the objectives of the sales program. Hence, the more attractive and integrated promotion mix is not only the purchase intention of potential customers, but also the repurchase intention of a customer.

Promotional strategies are also influenced by how women and men are motivated to obtain English certification. Studies have shown that men and women may have different motivations for pursuing English certification, which can influence their perceptions of promotional strategies (Miller & Hodge, 2019). A previous study has shown that women may prioritize certifications that enhance their employability in traditionally male-dominated fields, whereas men may focus on certifications that bolster their competitive edge in the job market (Smith & Jones, 2021).

Other than gender, studies show that there is a different perception of how professionals in the healthcare sector may view English certification as essential for effective communication with patients, whereas those in the technology sector may prioritize certifications that demonstrate technical language skills (Lee & Chen, 2022). This indicates that different professions have varying requirements for English proficiency, which can affect how individuals perceive the value of certification programmes. These findings force marketing management to tailor promotional strategies to address the specific needs and expectations of different occupational groups.

In conclusion, understanding the interplay between gender, occupation, and perception of promotion strategies for English certification programs is crucial for developing effective marketing approaches. As the demand for English proficiency continues to grow, it is imperative that educational institutions and certification bodies adapt promotional strategies to resonate with

their target audiences. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into how demographic factors influence perceptions of English certification programs, thereby informing future marketing efforts and program development.

This study employs MANOVA analysis to determine whether significant differences exist in the perception of promotion strategies, the channel through which they learn about the event, and their motivation for certification based on gender and occupation. Descriptive statistics provide a comprehensive overview of the respondents' demographics and their motivations for pursuing English certification. By examining these factors, this study highlights the importance of tailoring promotional strategies to meet the diverse needs of potential candidates, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of English certification programs.

## **METHODS**

The study used a primary source of data and involved a sample of 500 respondents selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various genders and occupations. The participants will be recruited from the participants' list of English courses and online platforms that cater to individuals seeking English certification. The inclusion criteria will require participants to be at least 15 years old and to be currently engaged in or have taken English certification.

The questionnaire will be distributed electronically to facilitate a wider reach and ensure ease of data collection. Prior to the distribution, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to refine the questionnaire and ensure clarity and reliability.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to gather information on the following variables. Demographic Information: Gender and occupation; Perception of Promotion Mix: Respondents will rate their perceptions of various promotion mixes employed by English certification programs on a Likert scale (1-5), where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement. The promotion mix attributes in this research were the most used social media (P1), preference for friends' recommendations over official accounts (P2), interest in interactive

official accounts (P3), soft selling vs. hard selling (P4), and preference for official account ads vs. social media ads (P5); Purpose of Certification: Participants indicate their primary motivations for pursuing English certification: scholarship, self-improvement, thesis defense requirements, job seeking, CPNS/ BUMN requirements, and job promotion; The channel through which they learn about the event: Participants will indicate the channel they learn about the event: Instagram ads, Tiktok ads, Twitter, Instagram influencer, tiktok influencer, tiktok official account, instagram friends' account, English course instagram account, scholarship/job opportunities account, friend's instagram account, Facebook ads, friends' WhatsApp status, and WhatsApp status of the English course.

This research examines how gender and occupation influence respondents' perspectives on the promotion mix for an English course's certification program, focusing on five key aspects: (P1) the most-used social media platform, (P2) preference for friends' recommendations over official accounts, (P3) interest in official accounts that actively interact with followers, (P4) preference for soft selling over hard selling content, and (P5) interest in products advertised on official accounts versus Instagram/TikTok/Facebook ads. Additionally, this study investigates the preferred channel for discovering certification events and the motivation to take certification.

The research was conducted with 500 respondents (250 females, 250 males) from various occupational backgrounds, including students, freelancers, job seekers, and professionals. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and general trends. Furthermore, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed to examine differences in perceptions based on gender and occupation. This statistical method allows for the simultaneous comparison of multiple dependent variables across groups, providing deeper insights into how these demographic factors collectively shape respondents' promotional preferences and decision making regarding English certification programs.

Drawing on prior studies that highlight the influence of demographic factors on consumer perceptions in digital marketing (Kapoor et al. 2020; Hsu et al. 2022), this study posits that both gender and occupation shape how individuals perceive and respond to promotional

strategies for English certification programs. Specifically, we hypothesize the following.

- H1: There is a significant gender difference in respondents' perceptions of the promotion mix (P1–P5).
- H2: There is a significant difference in respondents' perceptions of the promotion mix (P1–P5) based on their occupation.
- H3: There is a significant difference in the preferred channels for discovering English certification events based on gender.
- H4: There is a significant difference in the preferred channel for discovering English certification events by occupation.
- H5: There is a significant difference in motivation to obtain English certification based on gender.
- H6: There is a significant difference in motivation to obtain English certification based on occupation.

H7: There is an interaction effect between gender and occupation such that their combined influence significantly shapes respondents' perceptions of the promotion mix, event discovery channel, and certification motivation.

Digital marketing for educational services, particularly English certification programs, has become increasingly reliant on social media and online promotional strategies. According to Promotion Mix theory (Kotler et al. 2019), consumer responses to advertising, personal recommendations, and content strategies are shaped by demographic and social factors. In this context, the two critical demographic variables were gender and occupation. The framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.

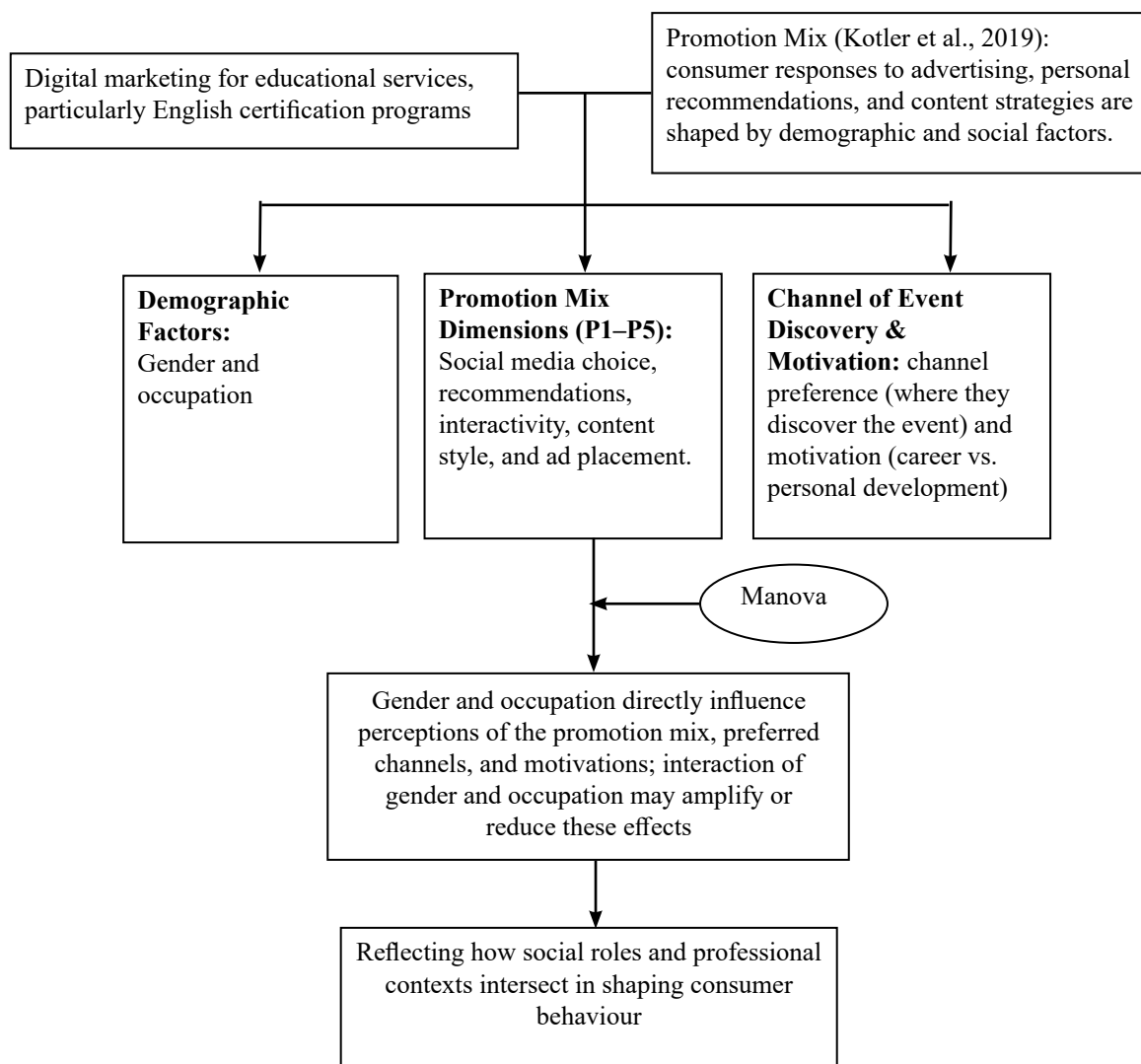


Figure 1. Research Framework

Therefore, this framework assumes that gender and occupation directly influence perceptions of the promotion mix, preferred channels, and motivations. Furthermore, their interaction may amplify or reduce these effects, reflecting how social roles and professional contexts intersect in shaping consumer behavior.

## RESULTS

This study examined the influence of gender and occupation on respondents' perspectives regarding the promotion mix of an English certification program, the channel through which they learn about the event, and their motivation to take the certification. A total of 500 respondents, comprising 250 males and 250 females, were categorized into four occupational groups: students, freelancers, jobseekers, and professionals. Data were analyzed using Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

### Normality Test

A normality test was conducted to ensure that the data followed a normal distribution, a prerequisite for MANOVA analysis. The results confirmed that all the variables met the assumption of normality, as shown in Figure 2.

### MANOVA Results

A MANOVA test was performed to assess the effects of gender and occupation on the five dimensions of promotion mix perception (P1-P5), the channel used to discover the event, and the motivation for taking the certification. The key findings are summarized in Table 1.

The analysis shows three key findings: the effect of occupation, gender, and the interaction of gender and occupation with the perception of promotional mix. Occupation affects the perception of the promotional mix of English certification programs. Significant effects were found on P1 (most-used social media platform) ( $p < 0.01$ ) and P4 (soft selling versus hard selling preference) ( $p < 0.05$ ). This finding can be interpreted as meaning that students and job seekers

relied more on Instagram and TikTok, whereas professionals favored LinkedIn and Facebook. This also shows that freelancers and professionals showed a higher preference for soft selling than students and job seekers. Occupation also significantly affected the preferred channel for learning about certification events ( $p < 0.01$ ). Students predominantly learned about events via social media, whereas professionals relied on email newsletters and corporate partnerships.

The findings also show that gender significantly influenced P2 (preference for friends' recommendations over official accounts) ( $p < 0.05$ ) and had a significant impact on P3 (interest in interactive official accounts) ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates females show a stronger preference for peer recommendations and prefer more engaging interactions. Meanwhile, there were no differences in how gender perceived P1 (most-used social media), P4 (soft selling vs. hard selling), or P5 (preference for official account ads vs. social media ads) ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The interaction effect of gender and occupation was also tested using MANOVA. A significant interaction effect was found for P3 (interactive official accounts) ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that female students and female job seekers found interactivity more important than their male counterparts. However, interaction effects did not influence P1, P2, P4, P5, or event discovery channels ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The results indicate that gender and occupation play crucial roles in shaping respondents' perceptions of promotional strategies for English certification programs. These findings align with those of previous studies that highlight the role of demographic factors in digital marketing engagement (Smith & Taylor, 2020; Chen et al. 2021).

This study confirms that women are more likely to trust peer recommendations over official advertisements, supporting the argument that word-of-mouth marketing is more effective for female audiences (Johnson & Liu, 2019). Additionally, the preference for interactive content aligns with the finding that women engage more with brands that provide two-way communication on social media (Hsu et al. 2022).

Tests of Normality							
	GENDER	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
P1	FEMALE	.200	250	<,001	.848	250	<,001
	MALE	.206	250	<,001	.852	250	<,001
P2	FEMALE	.173	250	<,001	.887	250	<,001
	MALE	.145	250	<,001	.890	250	<,001
P3	FEMALE	.159	250	<,001	.879	250	<,001
	MALE	.186	250	<,001	.890	250	<,001
P4	FEMALE	.176	250	<,001	.882	250	<,001
	MALE	.163	250	<,001	.881	250	<,001
P5	FEMALE	.153	250	<,001	.876	250	<,001
	MALE	.154	250	<,001	.879	250	<,001
CHANNEL	FEMALE	.114	250	<,001	.938	250	<,001
	MALE	.115	250	<,001	.941	250	<,001
REASON	FEMALE	.194	250	<,001	.897	250	<,001
	MALE	.161	250	<,001	.906	250	<,001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Figure 2. Normality Test using SPSS

Table 1. Test of between-subject test

Variables	Occupation			Gender			Gender X Occupation		
	MS	F	Sig.	MS	F	Sig.	MS	F	Sig.
P1	15.634	14.714	<0.001	0.236	0.222	0.638	0.669	0.629	0.597
P2	1.213	0.608	0.610	12.654	11.713	<0.001	0.419	0.210	0.889
P3	3.455	1.730	0.160	14.454	12.346	<0.001	7.023	2.958	0.032
P4	12.552	13.710	<0.001	0.065	0.031	0.860	0.889	0.432	0.730
P5	5.137	2.441	0.064	0.309	0.147	0.702	0.876	0.417	0.741
CHANNEL	27.683	11.670	<0.001	1.128	0.096	0.757	0.979	0.084	0.987
REASON	3.905	0.334	0.801	0.009	0.004	0.948	0.774	0.387	0.762

The strong occupational effect of social media usage suggests that marketing strategies should be tailored accordingly. Professionals' preference for LinkedIn aligns with prior studies that emphasize platform specialization in digital marketing (Kapoor et al. 2020). Moreover, the inclination of freelancers and professionals toward soft selling strategies supports existing research showing that these groups respond better to value-driven content than to direct sales (Kotler et al. 2019).

### Managerial Implication

The findings of this study provide several important insights for the marketing of English certification programs. First, the significant effect of occupation on

both social media usage and certification motivation demonstrated that a "one-size-fits-all" strategy is ineffective. Students and job seekers are more immersed in visual and entertainment-oriented platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, suggesting that campaigns targeting them should emphasize accessibility and relatability. In contrast, professionals gravitate toward LinkedIn and formal networks, reflecting their interest in career advancement, credibility, and industry recognition.

Another key implication is the importance of the engagement style. The tendency of female respondents to value interactive communication suggests that two-way engagement can build stronger connections with this segment, which is in line with prior

research highlighting gendered differences in digital engagement. Furthermore, the variation in motivational drivers career entry for students/job seekers versus career advancement for professionals highlights the necessity of motivation-based message-framing. This indicates that promotional content must not only reach the right channel, but also resonate with the underlying aspirations of each segment.

Finally, our findings underscore the need for integrated marketing communication (IMC). As respondents rely on different discovery channels, marketers must ensure consistency across platforms while still tailoring tone and content to specific demographics. Institutions should therefore view certification promotion not merely as advertising but as relationship-building, where credibility, authenticity, and personalization are the foundations of long-term engagement.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

This study highlights that gender and occupation significantly influence the effectiveness of promotional strategies in English certification programs. A more targeted digital marketing approach based on these demographic factors can improve the engagement and conversion rates. Future studies should expand this scope by including more diverse respondent profiles and testing additional marketing variables.

### **Recommendations**

Based on these insights, several actionable strategies can be proposed for institutions and marketers to promote English certification programmes. First, campaigns should be designed with a segmented approach: students and job seekers can be achieved more effectively through Instagram and TikTok, with strategies such as micro-influencer collaborations, peer testimonials, and gamified referral schemes; professionals, on the other hand, should be targeted via LinkedIn campaigns, corporate partnerships, and value-driven content, such as webinars or expert whitepapers. Second, institutions should strengthen interactivity by ensuring that official social media accounts are

responsive and engaging while also cultivating user-generated content and online communities (e.g., alumni groups or peer networks) that extend engagement beyond initial registration. Third, event promotion should adopt a multichannel strategy, with universities embedding promotions in academic portals for students, while professionals are reached through HR departments, industry associations, and email newsletters.

Fourth, motivational customization is crucial: campaigns aimed at students and job seekers should emphasize employability and competitiveness, whereas campaigns for professionals should highlight global certification standards and career advancement opportunities. To operationalize this, institutions can use personalized marketing campaigns, such as segmented email strategies and AI-based recommendation systems, to deliver more relevant content. Finally, long-term sustainability requires collaboration between educational providers, companies, and policymakers, including financial incentives such as scholarships or employer sponsorships, alongside continuous feedback mechanisms and analytics to refine campaigns in real-time.

While this study provides insights into gender and occupation-based preferences, future research should explore additional variables, such as income level, educational background, and cultural influences. Moreover, qualitative research can be conducted to gain deeper insights into the underlying motivations behind these preferences (Lee & Park, 2023).

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