



# THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL MARKETING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: A MEDIATED MODERATION THROUGH POLITICAL EFFICACY AND POLITICAL INTEREST

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## Abstract

*This study explores the influence of political marketing activities via social media including customers' relationship building and visibility on political participation in Lebanon. Moreover, the study examines the mediating effect of political efficacy and the moderating effect of political interest on the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. A Quantitative survey method was used to achieve the current research objectives based on data derived from 412 respondents. The findings of this study indicate that customers relationship building and visibility via social media are positively associated with political efficacy but not with political participation. Additionally, political efficacy fully mediates the relationship among these variables and political participation. The findings also reveal that political interest moderates the relationship between these variables and political participation. This study adds to the body of marketing literature the impact of political marketing on political*



*participation in a unique political environment such as Lebanon. Moreover, this study guides both political marketing and political candidates about the influential factors of political participation in order for them to plan for the required actions to enhance political participation.*

**Keywords:** Customer relationship building, visibility, political efficacy, political interest, political participation

### 1- Introduction

Political participation is required and should be promoted for democracy to be more meaningful (Diemer et al., 2012). The health and effectiveness of a nation's democracy depends on citizens' involvement in political movements. People are often seen to be more politically active in their participation in political life when they trust in their capabilities to influence political decisions (Reichert, 2018). In essence, people are more likely to engage in political activity, such as joining political groups, sharing their opinions, and voting, if they feel more connected to their representatives (Strömbäck, 2008).

Political marketing refer to the application of marketing techniques in political campaigns by political parties with the goal of favorably representing their supporters (Newman, 2012). By incorporating technology into political marketing activities, political candidates will be able to regularly consult with voters rather than just during election times. They will also be able to consider voters to be stakeholders and involve them in the creation of political decision, which will encourage a sense of political ownership (Dean et al., 2001). Politicians and political parties have recently started utilizing social media to reach out to the public worldwide (Hong et al., 2012).

Previous studies have demonstrated that a variety of factors can explain political participation. These factors include: political interest (Gabriel, 2004; Oni et al., 2017), perceived congruence (Kusumorani et al., 2019), political marketing via social media (Anim et al., 2019), political efficacy (Reichert et al., 2018), personality traits (Hatemi et al., 2015) and individual resources (Verba et al., 1995). Recent study also investigates the effect of political efficacy as a mediator in explaining the link between political marketing campaigns on social media and political participation (Anim et al., 2019).

Globally, political participation has been continuously falling from year to year (Fang, 2011). Numerous arguments are made by academics to explain the factors of the fall in political participation (Shapland, 2015; Hajjar, 2018; Anim et al., 2019). Due to the obvious reduction and ongoing decline in the level of political participation in Lebanon, the issue of political participation has become critical (Thomas, 2018). Numerous scholars have been motivated by this issue to examine the factors influencing political participation in the Lebanese environment (Hajjar, 2018; Saud et al., 2020). Thus, the goal of this research is to examine the impact of



political marketing campaigns via social media on citizen political participation in Lebanon. Moreover, this research investigates the mediate impact of political efficacy and the moderating impact of political interest on the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation.

The current study advances knowledge of the link between political marketing and political participation in Lebanon; it contributes to better understanding political participation by analyzing the mediating role of political efficacy and the moderating role of political interest between the relationship of political marketing via social media and political participation. Furthermore, this study adds to the marketing literature by shedding light on the psychological factors that motivate political participation through investigation the role of political interest on the participation in political movements. Besides, this research employs social capital theory, interest theory, and self-efficacy theory. Thus, the findings of this study provide support for validating these theories. Additionally, the majority of research on political marketing has been done in western countries (Boulianne, 2015). In contrast, just a small amount of research was conducted in developing countries such as Lebanon. Therefore, the current study closes the gap in literature and examines the impact of political marketing via social media on political participation in Lebanese context.

In essence, the findings of the present research will support political parties and politicians figure out what motivates people to engage in political action. Furthermore, this research will provide both political parties and candidates' better understanding of the effects of political marketing campaigns on citizens' political participation. According to the study's findings, political parties will have a better knowledge about citizens' political efficacy and political interest in Lebanon and how these factors affect political participation.

Previous studies revealed that political interest and political efficacy are among the most significant antecedents of citizens' political participation (Reichert et al., 2017; Oni et al., 2017; Baber, 2020). Anim et al. (2019) revealed that customer relations building and visibility via social media influence citizens' political participation. However, all of these studies have pointed out that there is a need for further empirical research to fully comprehend the interactions of the various variables that mediate or moderate the relationships between predictor variables and citizens' political participation. This study extends Anim et al.'s (2019) research by analyzing the moderating effect of citizen's political interest on the link between political marketing via social media and citizens' participation in political life.

## **2- LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**



## 2.1. Political Participation

Political participation refers to a person's or a group's active involvement in the political movements, whether by selecting political authorities or by affecting the political decision (Van Deth, 2015). Political participation is described as "any voluntary activity undertaken by a person to influence a governmental or political decision" (van Deth, 2014). Previous research has identified five different types of political participation; these types encompass electoral, lobbying, organizational action, contacting governmental officials, and violent activities (Huntington et al., 1976). Electoral action includes voting, contributing to campaigns, and engaging in activities organized by political parties. People engage in lobbying in order to exert pressure on governmental officials over matters that have a significant public impact. Participating in an organization with the goal of influencing the government's decision-making is an example of organizational action. Contacting governmental officials is distinct from lobbying in that it seeks to benefit only one individual or a part of people. Violent activities are attempts to influence political decision-making by using physical force against people and property.

## 2.2 Theories in the context of political participation

The research model is developed based on three theories: social capital theory (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994), and interest theory (Dewey, 1913). *First*, according to interest theory, pleasure and curiosity are two positive affective traits that combine with focused attention and judgment of worth and personal relevance to produce good affective reactions and cognitive engagements (Hidi et al., 2006). Thus, the condition of interest is desirable and should be pursued because being interested is frequently accompanied by pleasant emotions and a sense of involvement, which could motivate individuals to perform actively. This study adopts the interest theory to elucidate the link between political interest and participation in political movements. *Second*, social capital theory is concerned with the resources made accessible to people as a result of connections within and between social networks (Lin, 2001). The resources are networks of affiliation, trust, and norms that characterize any group that regularly assembles for a common goal (Kim et al., 2016). Networks of social connection have also been linked in social capital literature to people's and cooperatives' performance (Lin, 2001). Gil de Ziga et al. (2012) stress that network utilization is essential for civic and political participation. This study utilizes social capital theory to explain the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. *Third*, self-efficacy theory is crucial in order to analyze the role political efficacy in political participation. Self-efficacy describes those who are confident in their capacity to carry out certain tasks (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy theory is a key factor in determining how people



behave (Sherer et al., 1982). The current study employs self-efficacy theory to explicate the link between political efficacy and participation in political movements.

### **2.3 The Relationship Between Customer Relationship Building Via Social Media And Political Participation.**

Customer relationship building is the activities that aim to develop and manage the relationships between the existing and the new customers (Anim et al., 2019). Dale et al. (2006) argue regarding political campaigns that the conventional non-social interaction between governmental entities and their constituents has become less successful. In contrast, the use of social media allows the formation of such ties along with the possibility to utilize existing networks in the formation of credibility and trust-based partnerships (Zhang et al., 2013). Similarly, Pang's (2018) revealed that social media on mobile platforms has created a new space for political engagement, which increases political expression among people, encourages the sharing of political information and access to it, and encourages people to engage in offline political movements. Social media is a simple tool that influences the political process, which allows political parties to communicate, interact, inspire voters, and improve their political knowledge (Eijaz, 2013), cited in (Tufail et al., 2015). According to Anim et al. (2019), political party or candidate's capacities to win supporters depends on how well they develop client relationships or obtain prominence on social media, hence raising political engagement and group activities. Therefore, this study posits the following hypothesis:

*H1. There is a positive relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation in Lebanon.*

### **2.4 The Relationship Between Customer Relationship Building Via Social Media And Political Efficacy**

Social media platforms have a substantial effect on both internal and external political efficacy and promote genuine political involvement. BorhanEddine (2020) indicated that social media use for political purposes has a favorable impact on people's political relationships development and enhances their political efficacy. Ahmad et al. (2019) claim that online political activities influence user political efficacy. In a similar vein, Anim et al. (2019) show that customer relationship building via social media boosts voters' political efficacy and influence their participation in political activities.

*H2. There is a positive relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political efficacy in Lebanon.*

### **2.5 The Relationship Between Visibility Via Social Media And Political Efficacy.**



Visibility reflects the brand's capability to develop public awareness, presence, and voice (Anim et al., 2019). The efforts made by people to gain political knowledge via social media play a central role in developing their internal political efficacy and enhancing their participation in political activities (Delle Carpini et al., (1996); Shen et al., 2009). Tufail et al. (2015) found that using social media to acquire political awareness is positively associated with end users' political efficacy. Ahmad et al. (2019) indicated that social media is an essential platform that informs users about political issues and enhances their political efficacy. Kushin et al. (2010) reported that visibility via social media impacts end users' political efficacy. Besides, Anim et al. (2019) revealed that visibility via social media influences voters' political efficacy. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H3. There is a positive relationship between visibility via social media and political efficacy in Lebanon.*

## **2.6 The Relationship Between Visibility Via Social Media And Political Participation**

Visibility has an impact on how much effort people must make to obtain information (Treem et al. 2012). According to Treem et al. (2012), visibility may be the most effective method for getting information about a certain issue into customers' subconscious minds. Therefore, it is unquestionably crucial for political parties to make information about their candidates freely accessible to citizens through the use of social media in order to increase visibility. Previous studies have shown that gaining political knowledge can enhance individual participation in political activities (Delli et al., 1996; Oesterreich, 2003; Howe, 2006). For Chen et al., (2016), political information received by political parties significantly affected political engagement. Anim et al. (2019) indicated that gaining visibility via social media would make it simpler for individuals to get information and create relationships with political parties and politicians, hence boosting political engagement. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H4. There is a positive relationship between visibility via social media and political participation in Lebanon.*

## **2.7 The Relationship Between Political Efficacy and Political Participation**

Citizen's political efficacy influences their participation in political life (Almond et al., 1989). Numerous studies have revealed that political efficacy affects individual political participation (Almond et al., 1989; Verba et al., 1995). According to Dalton (2004), people are engaged in political life when they believe that their political activities would benefit them in



some way and that doing so would raise their quality of life. By the same token, if people believe that they are powerless to affect the political process, they will not take part in political life and will view it as a time-wasting activity (Armigeon, 2007). Hence, based on the above review, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*H5. There is a positive relationship between political efficacy and political participation in Lebanon.*

## **2.8 The Relationship Between Political Interest and Political Participation**

Political interest can be realized as one of the motivating factors that might lead to political behavior (Reichert, 2018). Political interest includes individual perceptions and feelings about the political process (Hidi et al., 2004). According to Gabriel (2004), political interest is strongly associated with unconventional political participation more than other types of participation in political movements when compared to internal political efficacy. Likewise, Reichert (2013) explored the factors that affect lawful political activities among Turkish immigrant students. The researcher revealed that the political interest of the students was the most influential predictor of lawful political activity. Previous studies have discovered that political interest has a strong impact on the participation in political movements (Almond et al., 1963; Quintelier et al., 2011). Based on the above review, the following hypothesis was proposed:

*H6. There is a positive relationship between political interest and political participation in Lebanon.*

## **2.9 Political Efficacy as A Mediator**

Political efficacy is the people's confidence in influencing the political process (Wen et al., 2013). Recent research has claimed that youth's political efficacy is significantly influenced by the use of social media, which influences their political involvement. Additionally, prior research indicated that political efficacy served as a mediator between social media use and political participation. In essence, political efficacy encourages young voters to engage in political life and to maintain their relationships with candidates and politicians (Anim et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2019).

Reichert (2016) investigated the role of internal political efficacy in mediating the relationship between obtaining political knowledge and political involvement. Reichert (2016) asserted that political efficacy mediated the link between acquiring political knowledge and participating in political life. According to Levy (2013), even customer relationship building and visibility have an impact on political engagement; a person or voter is more inclined to participate in political activities if they have a high degree of political efficacy. According to Anim et al. (2019), political efficacy mediates the link between customer relationship building



and visibility via social media and political participation. Thus, based on the above review, the following hypotheses were proposed:

*H7a. Political efficacy mediates the relationship between customer relationship building and political participation in Lebanon.*

*H7b. Political efficacy mediates the relationship between visibility and political participation in Lebanon.*

### **2.10 The Moderating Role Political Interest**

Political interest is associated with a citizen's desire to learn about public and political issues. (Zhang et al., 2009). Glen et al. (1968) indicated that political interest is the foundational element of political ideology. According to Riezebos et al. (2011), political interest is a crucial influential factor of political participation. For Li et al. (2017), online political discussion mediates the link between information seeking and online political participation. Besides, offline political discussion also mediates the relationship between information seeking and offline political participation. Maamari et al. (2014) showed that the communication between politicians and young individuals via social media in Lebanon influences young individuals' political interests. Bimber et al. (2014) investigate the moderating influence of political interest on political participation across time using data from the British Election Study (BES) for the elections of 2001, 2005, and 2010 after utilizing British Election Study data. They found that people who were less likely to utilize the internet for political information were less engaged in political movements, while those who were more interested were more likely to vote. Additionally, they showed that regular internet use for political information encourages those who are less engaged in political movements to vote. According to the mentioned review, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

*H8. Political interest moderates the relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation in Lebanon.*

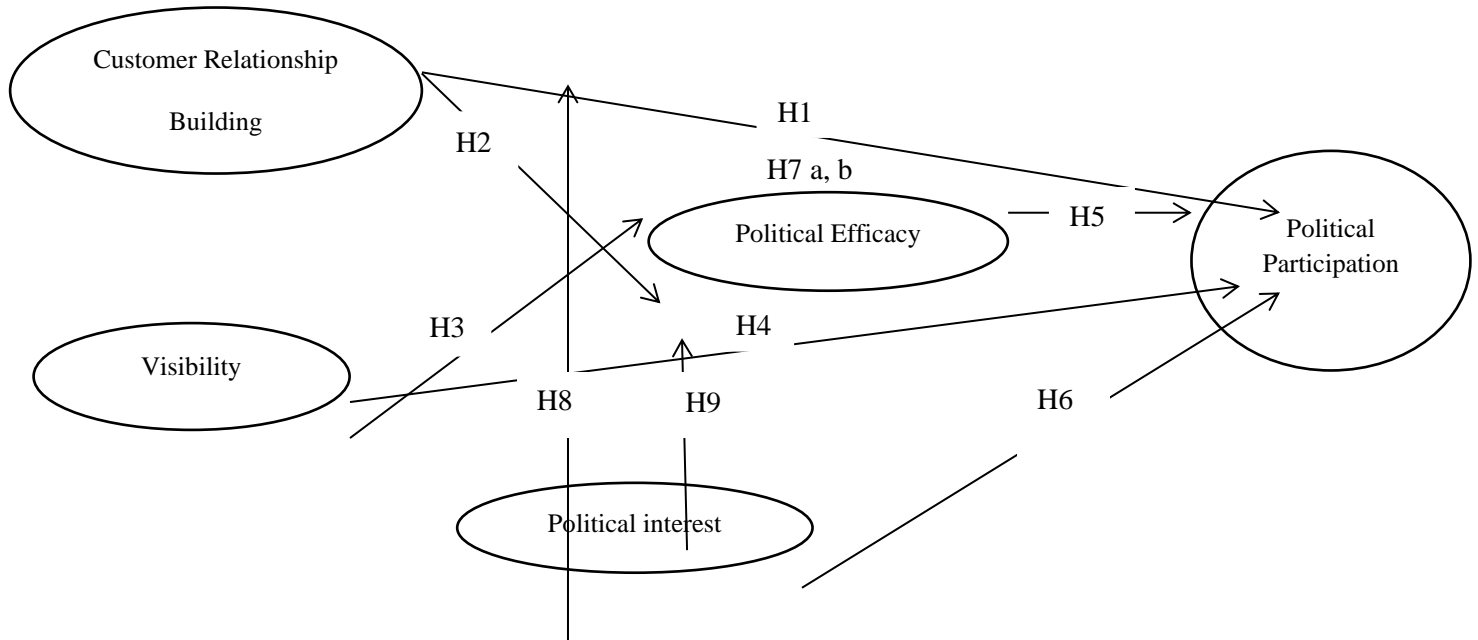
*H9. Political interest moderates the relationship between visibility via social media and political participation in Lebanon.*





### 3- Conceptual framework

Figure1: Conceptual framework



Source: Anim et al., (2019) and adjusted by the researchers

### Research Methodology

#### 4. Research design and sampling

This research analyses the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation in Lebanon. Moreover, the current research explores the mediating effect of political efficacy and the moderating role political interest in enhancing or explaining the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. For this purpose, a quantitative survey method was used based on online and offline data collection was done via distributing structured questionnaires to a convenience sample of Lebanese respondents. The online data collection method is appropriate to obtain a large number of respondents. Only 412 of the 800 potential participants accepted the invitation to take part in the study, yielding a good response rate of 51.1% of the total invited participants.



## **4.2 Measurement Instrument**

The questionnaires were developed based on previous studies (Table 1), and were answered by a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The survey was first distributed to expert researchers in order to get their opinion about the instruments' validity. The survey was then adjusted based on their recommendations. Customers' relationship building was measured based on the level of citizens' interaction, communication, collaboration, and feedback via six items based on similar studies (Trainor, 2012; Anim et al., 2019). Visibility was assessed by the level of remarks, posts, and advertisements via social media using six items used from recent studies (Treem et al., 2012; Anim et al., 2019). Likewise, political efficacy was based on five items and adapted from similar studies (Kushin et al., 2010; Anim et al., 2019). Additionally, the level political interest was measured by four items and was employed from the Oni et al. (2017) study. Finally, political participation measures were based on five items and adapted from earlier studies (Van Deth, 2015; Anim et al., 2019).



Constructs	Items	Source
Customer Relationship Building	The political parties in Lebanon engage people through social media channels	Trainor, (2012); Anim et al., (2019)
	The political parties in Lebanon try to build some sort of relationships with peoples through social media platforms	
	I personally communicate with political candidates through social media	
	The political parties in Lebanon use social media channels to advertise their candidates personally to citizens	
	The political parties in Lebanon engage with citizens through social media to get information about them	
	Day in, day out, I can easily voice out my problems to political parties in Lebanon through social media	
Visibility	Most of the political messages I see on social media makes me aware of certain political parties existence in Lebanon	Treem et al., (2012); Anim et al., (2019)
	I always come across pictures, logos, sounds etc. of political parties in Lebanon on the social media	
	Political parties in Lebanon use social media to make themselves known to citizens	
	Most projects embarked on by various political parties are aired on social media to give them awareness	
	Through social media messages, I'm able to know the mission, vision and aspirations of some political parties in Lebanon	
	The political parties are very active on numerous social media platforms which give them wider visibility	
Political efficacy	I consider myself well qualified to join any of the political parties in Lebanon having had knowledge about them via social media	Kushin et al., (2010) Anim et al., (2019)
	I feel that I have a say over who becomes in the authority in Lebanon via political messages I read on social media	
	I think that I am better informed about political parties than most people do via social media	
	I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing Lebanon via the political messages I read on social media	
	I think I have the right to voice out my opinion regarding the bad practices political parties engage in during the search for political power	
Political Interest	I love to discuss political issues with friends/people around me.	Oni et al. (2017)
	I like to give opinions on political issues.	
	I like to participate in the discussion of political issues.	
	I am generally interested in political issues.	
Political Participation	I have participated in a political demonstration organized by some political parties through social media	Van Deth (2015) Anim et al., (2019)
	I have posted or shared a photo/video/link about some political parties on social media at least once	
	I have contributed to a political discussion about some political parties on social media at least once	
	I have replied a tweet or a post about some political parties on social media at least once	
	I have joined or left a political group for some political parties on social media	



### 5- Data analysis and results

The respondents' demographic data, including their gender, marital status, age, income, and educational level, were described in (Table 2) using frequency analysis in SPSS. Additionally, structural equation modeling was used to examine the gathered data as well as test the research hypotheses. The data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS version 26 program.

**Table 2**

Respondents' demographic profile

Attribute	Value	number	percentage
Gender	male	176	42.70%
	female	236	57.30%
	Total	412	100.00%
Marital status	single	160	38.80%
	married	230	55.80%
	divorced	22	5.30%
	widow	0	0.00%
	Total	412	100.00%
Age	18-25	114	27.70%
	26-35	144	35.00%
	36-45	120	29.10%
	46-65	30	7.30%
	Above 65	4	1.00%
	Total	412	100.00%
Income	Less than 100\$	132	32.00%
	From 100\$, less than 300\$	110	26.70%
	From 300\$, less than 500\$	96	23.30%
	From 500\$, less than 1000\$	16	3.90%
	From 1000\$, less than 5000\$	48	11.70%
	Above 5000\$	10	2.40%
	Total	412	100.00%
Education	Primary school	8	1.90%
	Secondary school	92	22.30%
	Bachelor	198	48.10%
	Diploma	50	12.10%
	Master's degree	28	6.80%



	PhD or DBA	36	8.70%
	Total	412	100.00%

Out of 800 customers, 412 successfully completed the survey, representing 51.5 percent of the total population. Table 2 shows the findings of descriptive statistics of respondents' demographic data, with 57.3 percent of respondents being female and 42.7 percent being male. Married respondents made up 38.8% of the total, while single respondents made up 52.9%. The plurality of respondents (35%) were between the ages of 36 and 45, followed by respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 (29.1%), then respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 (27.7%), and respondents between the ages of 46 and 65 (7.3%). Those that were above the age of 65 years represented only (1%) of that total. Furthermore, the income profile shows that less than \$100 and between \$100 and \$300 made up the bulk of respondents' incomes, or 58.7% of all respondents. Lastly, the majority of respondents (48.1%) had a bachelor's degree, followed by those with secondary education (22.3%) and those with a diploma (12.1%).

### 5.1 Measurement model evaluation

The results of the measuring model were assessed in this research by analyzing the Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for all components.

**Table 3**

Result of measurement model.

Construct	Items	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
CRB	6	0.837	0.850	0.502
VIS	6	0.907	0.907	0.620
RQ	9	0.972	0.973	0.799
PE	5	0.91	0.915	0.686
PI	4	0.962	0.962	0.862
PP	5	0.937	0.938	0.752

As presented in table 3, the Cronbach's alpha and the total composite reliability value of all the variables were greater than 0.837 and 0.850, respectively, exceeding the Hair et al. (2017) threshold value of 0.7. The average variance extracted values for each construct were also investigated in this study, and the findings revealed that AVE varied from 0.502 to 0.862, which is above than the cut-off level of 0.5. The results thereby ensure the consistency, dependability, and convergent validity of the study's constructs.



**Table: 4**  
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Measure	Estimate	Threshold	Interpretation
Chi-square	1270.52	--	--
DF	424	--	--
Chi-square/DF	2.99	Between 1 and 3	Acceptable
CFI	.904	Between 0 and 1	Acceptable
SRMR	.034	<0.08	Acceptable
RMSEA	.074	Between 0.05 and 0.1	Acceptable
GFI	.813	Between 0 and 1	Acceptable

This research additionally investigated the components' of confirmatory factor analyses (Table 4). The fit measurements met the allowed cut-off requirements, as shown in Table 4, and the CFA findings gave a good match with the data.

## 5.2 Hypotheses testing, and results

This study analyzes the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility via social media and political participation in Lebanon. Moreover, the present research explores the mediating effect of political efficacy and the moderating impact of political interest in order to explain or enhance the relationship. The direct and indirect relationships among the variables are provided in Table 5. The structural model assessment estimates that customer relationship building and visibility have no direct effect on political participation. However, political efficacy fully mediates the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility via social media, and political participation. Moreover, the assessment indicates that political interest moderates the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility via social media and political participation.



**Table 5**  
Structural relationships and hypotheses testing

	Relationship	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
H1	CRB. → PP.	-.035	.067	-.524	.600	Not Supported
H2	CRB. → PE.	.151	.059	2.559	.011	Supported
H3	VIS. → PE.	.339	.048	6.998	***	Supported
H4	VIS. → PP.	.031	.058	.528	.597	Not Supported
H5	PE. → PP.	.602	.075	7.988	***	Supported
H6	PI. → PP.	.159	.034	4.637	***	Supported
H7. a	CRB→PE→PP	.123	.058	3.412	.012	Supported
H7. b	VIS→PE→PP	.324	.044	3.013	.013	Supported

P\*\*\*= $\leq 0.001$

The results indicate that there is no direct relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation ( $\beta$  -.035,  $p=.600$ ); thus H1 is rejected. Customer relationship building has a positive relation with political efficacy ( $\beta$ .151,  $p =.011$ ), which supports H2. H3 is also supported as visibility has a positive relationship with political efficacy ( $\beta$  .339,  $p \leq 0.001$ ). In contrast, visibility has no relationship with political participation ( $\beta$  .031,  $p= .597$ ); therefore, H4 is rejected. Besides, political efficacy has a positive relationship with political participation ( $\beta$  .602,  $p \leq 0.001$ ); therefore H5 is supported. Additionally, the results indicate that political interest ( $\beta$  .159,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) has a positive relationship with political participation; thus, H6 is supported.

### 5.2.1 Testing the Mediating Relationships

The first stage was to see if the predictor variables (customer relationship building and visibility) adequately explained the mediator variable (political efficacy). In addition, the second phase determines whether the mediator variable (political efficacy) substantially influences the criterion variable (political participation). The final phase is to analyse whether the predictor variables explain the criterion variable with or without the mediator variable. As indicated in Table 5, the direct effects of customer relationship building and visibility on political efficacy are supported. Similarly, political efficacy has a positive relationship with political participation. Besides, as indicated in Table 5, the mediation analysis indicates that customer relationship



building on political participation through the mediator (political efficacy) was significant (0.123,  $p = 0.012$ ). This means that political efficacy fully mediates the relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation, thus supporting H7a. Similarly, as shown in Table 5, the mediation analysis shows that visibility via social media on political participation via the mediator (political efficacy) was significant (.324,  $p = .013$ ). This means that political efficacy fully mediates the relationship between visibility and political participation, thus supporting H7b. These results reveal that there is only an indirect relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation in Lebanon.

### 5.2.2 Testing the Moderating Relationships

This study posits that political interest might moderates the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility via social media and political participation. As shown in table 6, the statistical analysis to test H8 and H9 revealed moderate impact of political interest on the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility and political participation.

**Table 6**

Moderation of political interest between customer relationship building and political participation

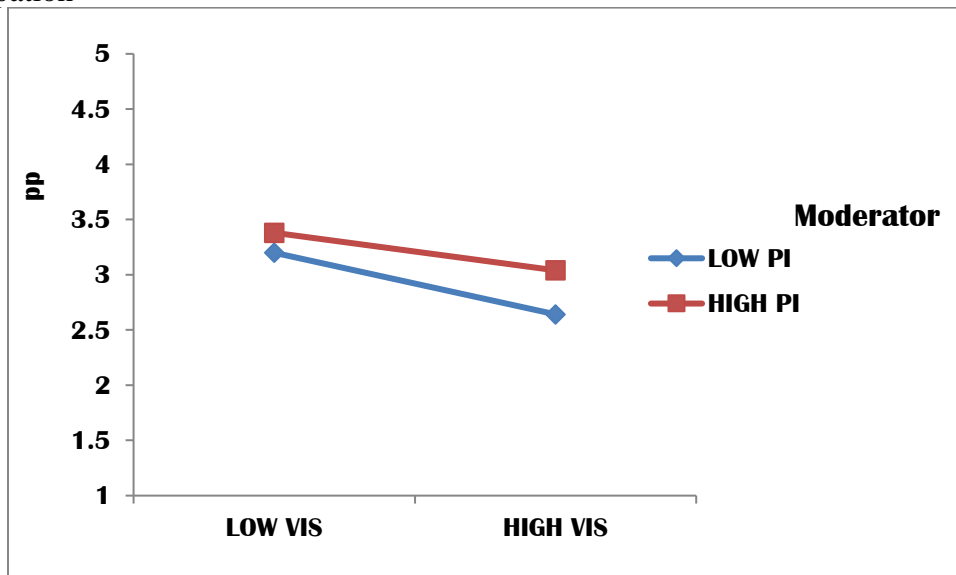
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.19	0.953		8.59	0
	CRB	-0.186	0.061	-0.139	-3.036	0.003
	PI*CRB	0.037	0.002	0.74	16.169	0,000
a. Dependent Variable: PP						

The relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation when political interest remain constant was ( $\beta -0.186$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ). However, the result of the interaction effect of political interest on the relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation has dampen the negative relationship at ( $\beta 0.037$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), thus supporting H8.





**Figure 2**  
Moderating effect of political interest on the relationship between visibility and political participation



Customer relationship building via social media and political interest has a statistically significant impact on political participation. But because the moderation analysis was substantial, a straightforward slope analysis was carried out as recommended by Frost's (2019). The outcome is shown in Figure 2. The political participation in customer relationship building was located within high and low political interest using a straightforward slope.

**Table 7**

Moderation of political interest between visibility and political participation

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.619	0.969		7.862	0
	VIS	-0.127	0.06	-0.099	-2.103	0.036
	PI*VIS	0.034	0.002	0.723	15.392	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: PP

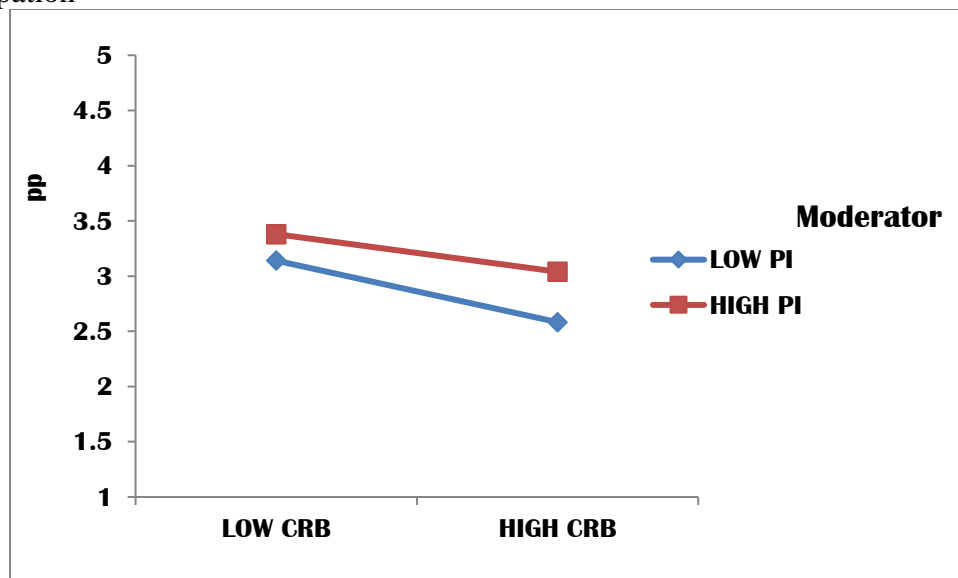
As shown in table 7, the relationship between visibility via social media and political participation when political interest remain constant was ( $\beta$  -0.127,  $p$  =0.036). However, the result of the interaction effect of political interest on the relationship between visibility via social



media and political participation has dampen the negative relationship at ( $\beta$  0.034,  $p = 0.000$ ), supporting H9.

**Figure 3**

Moderating effect of political interest on the relationship between visibility and political participation



Visibility via social media and political interest has a statistically significant impact on political participation. The outcome is shown in Figure 3. The political participation in visibility level was located within high and low political interest using a straightforward slope.

## 6- Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between political marketing activities via social media, including customer relationship building and visibility that are conducted by political parties on political participation in Lebanon. Further, this study addresses the mediating effect of political efficacy on the relationship between the examined political marketing activities and political participation. In addition, this study also explores the moderating effect of political interest on the relationship between the examined variables and political participation.

The findings of this study stated that customer relationship building via social media has no direct effect on political participation. The negative relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation opposes previous study by



Anim et al. (2019) that found a positive relationship between customer relationship building via social media and political participation. In this context, the researchers believe that the failure of customer relationship building via social media to promote political participation in Lebanon might be due to the lack of trust Lebanese citizens have in their political parties, especially since these parties haven't kept previous promises towards citizens. The findings also indicate that customer relationship building via social media influences political efficacy. The positive association between customer relationship building and political efficacy supports previous studies (Anim et al., 2019; Borhan-Eddine, 2020) that found a positive relationship among these variables. The researchers consider that the positive association between customer relationship building and political efficacy might be a result of citizens' and political parties' interaction. Political parties build their relationships with citizens by inspiring them to participate in political life through their efforts to discuss the importance of citizens' participation in changing the current political situation. Thus, these efforts could increase the level of citizens' political efficacy.

Besides, the findings of this study also indicated that there is a positive relationship between visibility via social media and political efficacy. This finding is consistent with previous studies that argued visibility via social media influences political efficacy (Anim et al., 2019). The researchers suggest that the positive relationship between visibility and political efficacy is caused by the supply of political messages by political parties, which increases citizens' political knowledge and, in turn, their political information efficacy. Further, the current study revealed that there is no direct relationship between visibility via social media and political participation. This finding opposes previous study by Anim et al. (2019) that found a positive relationship between visibility via social media and political participation. The researchers assume that the negative relationship between visibility via social media and political participation might be due to citizens' resistance to anything related to political marketing in Lebanon. More specifically, citizens in Lebanon resist political advertisements that are related to political parties, as they perceive that all political parties' messages are slogans, respectively, utilized only at election times and will never be applied.

Likewise, the findings of this study stated that there is a positive relationship between political efficacy and political participation. This finding is in line with previous studies that revealed a positive relationship between political efficacy and political participation (Almond et al., 1989; Almond & Verba, 1989; Verba et al., 1995). The researchers consider that the positive relationship between political efficacy and political participation is related to the assumption that if individuals have confidence about the appropriateness of a behavior, they will perform it, and the same goes for political behavior. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that there is a positive relationship between political interest and political participation. This finding supports other studies that argued political interest influences political participation (Almond & Verba, 1963; Gabriel, 2004; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2011,



Oni et al., 2017). The researchers suggest that the positive relationship between political interest and political participation is instigated by the force of interest in stimulating individuals' behavior. Moreover, the researchers believe that individuals with high political interests are usually politically active. Thus, individuals with high political interest could participate in political movements more than others.

In addition, the results of the current research confirmed that political efficacy is a crucial antecedent to participate in political movements. The findings of this research also showed that political efficacy mediates the relationship between the customer relationship building, visibility via social media and participation in political life. This finding is consistent with recent study by Anim et al., (2019) that argued political efficacy mediates the association between customer relationship building, visibility and political participation. The researchers deliberate that political participation is influenced by an individual's political efficacy, which is triggered by the frequent political messages and political knowledge, supported by political parties. However, the political marketing campaigns via social media haven't influenced political participation. Thus, there is only an indirect relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation. Finally, the findings of this study indicated that political interest moderates and enhances relationships between customer relationship building, visibility via social media and political participation. This finding is in line with a previous study by Bimber et al. (2014) that indicated political interest moderates the relationship between the use of digital media and participation in political activities across time. The researchers assume that the moderating effect of political interest on the relationship between customer relationship building, visibility via social media and political participation is accomplished through the motivating effect of political interest on individuals to take part in political movements.

## **7. Implications**

### ***7.1 Theoretical implication***

This study's findings have a wide range of implications. First, there is currently a dearth of empirical studies on political participation (Oni et al., 2017). In essence, political marketing research mainly focuses on the application of marketing principles in political life and the structural characteristics of political marketing. However, the consequences of political marketing in explaining political behavior are still lacking (Anim et al., 2019). Therefore, this study adds to the body of marketing literature the impact of political marketing on political participation in a unique political environment such as Lebanon. In addition, the self-efficacy, interest, and social capital theories are the foundations of the current investigation. The finding of this study provides empirical support to validate those theories. More specifically, the findings of this study support Dewey (1913) interest theory which stated that individuals' behavior depends on their interest and curiosity towards something.



Moreover, the results of this study support Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory, which indicated that people's belief in their own abilities is the foundation for engaging in a certain action. Additionally, the results of this study contradict the argument of Gil de Ziga et al. (2012) regarding social capital theory which pointed out that the network usage is crucial for civic and political involvement. Finally, this study expanded previous literature that investigated the impact of political marketing via social media (Anim et al., 2019). This study adds to Anim et al., (2019) conceptual framework, the moderating role of political interest on the relationship between political marketing via social media and political participation.

### ***7.2 Practical implications***

The findings of this study are beneficial for the government and political parties. The findings revealed that political participation is related to political efficacy, which acts as a mediator between the relationship of customer relationship building and visibility via social media and political participation, and also related to political interest, which strengthens the relationship between the examined predictors and political participation. First, this research assists government in Lebanon to comprehend the factors that influence political participation in order to plan for the required actions to enhance political participation, which is essential for maintaining the health of Lebanese democracy. Second, the findings stated that political efficacy and political interest are the most crucial antecedents of political participation; therefore, political parties should improve individuals' political efficacy and political interest by providing effective strategies through good communication tactics in order to gain individuals' support. Third, the current research reveals that political marketing activities alone are unable to explain political participation. Thus, rather than focusing on election time to communicate and interact with individuals, political parties are advised to implement multiple and daily strategies focusing on establishing, developing, and maintaining relationship with people in order to restore confidence and build positive image.

### ***7.3 Limitation and future research***

This study has limitations, just like any other type of research. It is important to examine these restrictions. First off, the current study is restricted in breadth by the fact that it is done in Lebanon. The generalizability of the findings depends on the replication of the study framework in another country. Second, the convenience sample method used in this study limits its capacity to be generalized. Another sampling method may be used in future studies to examine the relationships between the variables. *Third*, this study investigates the political marketing factors via social media including: "customer relationship building and visibility" on political participation. However, other social factors such as social trust, and social norms also could affect the political participation. Thus, future research should shed light on the social factors that might affect political participation. *Finally*, this research investigates the mediating impact of political efficacy and the moderating role of political interest. In contrast, other variables may contribute in mediating or moderating the relationship between political



marketing and political participation such as political satisfaction, political trust and personality traits. Future studies are recommended to explore the mentioned factors to overcome the current study limitations.



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