



“A Content Analysis Of Social Media Behavior Among Male And Female Users”

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Abstract

Social media sites serve as important venues for behavioral display and self-expression. The current study uses content analysis to look at and contrast how male and female users behave on social media. The study focuses on how social media posts reflect engagement patterns, emotional tone, visual representation, and the type of content posted. A structured coding sheet was used to assess a chosen number of posts from male and female user accounts using a quantitative content analysis method. The results show significant gender-based variations in interaction behavior, visual presentation, and content preferences. By providing insights into how male and female users visually and textually build their social media behavior, the study advances media and gender studies.

Keywords: Content Analysis, Social Media Behavior, Gender Differences, Visual Representation, Digital Media

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the types of content that male and female users share on social media.
2. To find patterns of behavior in postings made by both male and female users.
3. To assess how male and female social media users are represented both visually and textually.
4. To look at how male and female users interact with content.

i. Introduction

Social media's rise has significantly altered how people interact, communicate, and express who they are in modern society. Social media platforms allow users to interact digitally across geographic boundaries, participate in social networking, and produce and distribute information. Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is a collection of web-based services that enable the production and sharing of user-generated content and expand upon the conceptual and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0. Social media has thus grown to be a powerful tool influencing people's behavior and interpersonal connections.

Photographs, videos, captions, and interaction elements like likes, comments, and shares are just a few examples of the different types of content that reflect social media behavior. These components serve as instruments for self-presentation, enabling people to create and express their identities in virtual spaces. Boyd and Ellison (2007) claim that social networking sites are crucial platforms for researching behavioral patterns because they give users a place to express social ties and show themselves to others.

From the standpoint of visual communication, social media material is an effective tool for creating meaning. In order to effectively communicate emotions and social messages, visual components including composition, color, face expression, and symbolic representation are essential. According to Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, people create and control their impressions in social situations. This idea is particularly relevant in online settings because users actively select their information for public consumption.

One important factor affecting social media behavior is gender. The ways that male and female users portray themselves, communicate, and express their emotions are frequently different. According to studies on gender and communication, men frequently exhibit instrumental and activity-oriented communication patterns, whereas women typically communicate in more expressive and relational ways (Eagly, 1987). Because behavioral characteristics are ingrained in shared information on social media platforms, these distinctions are becoming more apparent.

Although survey-based methods are used in many current research to analyze social media usage, these methods rely on self-reported data, which might not always accurately reflect behavior. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis offers a methodical and objective research approach for analyzing observable media content and finding patterns in it. Content analysis enables researchers to examine gender-based behavioral differences as they naturally arise in digital settings by examining the social media posts of male and female users.

As a result, the current study uses content analysis to look at how male and female users behave on social media. The study attempts to find differences in content type, visual representation, emotional tone, and engagement behavior by examining a subset of social media posts. By providing empirical insights into how social media behavior is formed and depicted across genders, this study advances the fields of media studies, gender studies, and visual communication.

ii. Review of Literature

Therefore, the current study examines the behavior of male and female users on social media by content analysis. By analyzing a subset of social media posts, the study looks for variations in content type, visual representation, emotional tone, and engagement behavior. This study contributes to the fields of media studies, gender studies, and visual communication by offering empirical insights into how social media activity is produced and portrayed across genders.

Social networking sites were studied by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as venues for social interaction and self-presentation. According to their research, people actively create their online personas through shared

content and profile details. Instead of using self-reported data, the study offers a theoretical framework for analyzing social media behavior using observable content.

The self-presentation theory of Goffman (1959) has been widely used in online settings. His approach has been modified for social media by a number of academics, who propose that users carefully select postings to control impressions in front of online audiences (Hogan, 2010). This viewpoint is in favor of using content analysis to look at how social media posts' linguistic and visual components reflect certain behavioral patterns.

Social science research has long addressed gender variations in communication behavior. According to Eagly (1987), social roles have an impact on men's and women's behavioral patterns, resulting in variations in expressive and instrumental communication methods. Digital communication, including social media exchanges, also exhibits these gender-based behavioral patterns. There are discernible variations in posting behavior and engagement patterns, according to studies on gender and social media content. According to Guo et al. (2018), male users are more inclined to post activity-oriented and informative content, whereas female users are more likely to share more intimate and emotionally expressive content. Their results demonstrate the importance of gender as a crucial factor in research on social media behavior.

Scholarly interest has also been drawn to visual representation on social media. According to Highfield and Leaver (2016), visual components like selfies, filters, and aesthetics are essential to how people express themselves on social media sites like Instagram. Gender effects presentation styles and visual choices, according to their study, which highlights the significance of visual communication analysis in social media research.

A popular methodological tool in media studies for analyzing patterns and meanings in communication content is content analysis. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a useful technique for examining social media behavior since it enables researchers to methodically and impartially analyze media texts. Content analysis has been used in earlier research to successfully identify representational patterns and behavioral trends across various user groups.

iii. Research Methodology

The current study uses a quantitative content analysis approach to look at how male and female users behave on social media. A methodical and impartial approach to study, content analysis is used to examine communication material and spot reoccurring themes in media texts. Since this approach concentrates on analyzing visible social media material rather than self-reported data, it is suitable for the study. The descriptive and comparative research design aims to compare the differences between male and female users as well as characterize behavioral patterns exhibited in user-generated content.

Because of its widespread use and emphasis on visual communication, Instagram was chosen as the study's platform. 100 Instagram postings from 40 public profiles, comprising 20 male and 20 female users, made up the sample. Purposive sampling was used to choose the profiles, guaranteeing that only public and frequently active accounts were included. Five recent posts from each profile were examined, yielding fifty posts from male users and fifty posts from female users. The unit of analysis was a single Instagram post.

A standardized coding sheet created especially for the study was used to gather data. Variables like content topic, visual presentation, emotional tone, caption style, and interaction indicators were all incorporated in the coding sheet. The other characteristics were considered dependent variables, and gender was considered the independent variable. In order to determine the similarities and differences in the social media behavior of male and female users, the data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and comparison analysis.

Because the study only used publicly accessible material, user anonymity and adherence to ethical research criteria were guaranteed.

Theoretical Framework

Goffman's Theory of Self-Presentation (1959), which describes how people control impressions by selectively presenting information in social encounters, serves as the foundation for this study. To convey a desired identity to their audience, users purposefully choose their photographs, descriptions, and emotional clues on social media. This theory is strongly supported by the study's findings, which show that female users engaged in more visual and emotional curation using smiling expressions, filters, and expressive captions, while male users displayed controlled and assertive self-presentation through neutral facial expressions and minimal visual enhancement. As a result, Instagram serves as a virtual "front stage" where users deliberately project socially acceptable gender identities via verbal and visual interactions.

iv. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In order to investigate social media behavior among male and female users, the current study performed a quantitative content analysis of 100 Instagram posts. In order to find gender-based behavioral variations represented in submitted content, the analysis concentrated on content themes, visual representation, emotional tone, and engagement behavior.

1. Gender-wise Posting Behavior

Male users contributed 54% of all posts, while female users contributed 46%, according to the gender distribution of posts. Despite the little difference, it implies that male users in the chosen sample shared content a little more frequently. This result is consistent with past research showing that male users publish more frequently in public content spaces, especially for activity-based and professional posts. From a behavioral standpoint, the frequency of posts on social media platforms themselves indicates comfort with public visibility and confidence in one's self-presentation.

Table 1
Gender-wise Distribution of Instagram Posts (N = 100)

Gender	Number of Posts	Percentage
Male	54	54%
Female	46	46%
Total	100	100%

2. Analysis of Content Themes by Gender

A significant difference was observed in the **type of content themes** shared by male and female users.

Male users predominantly posted:

- Selfies
- Travel-related visuals
- Family-oriented content
- Professional or work-related posts

These themes indicate a tendency toward **individual-centric and achievement-oriented representation**, where the focus is on personal experiences, mobility, and status projection.

Table 2

Distribution of Content Themes by Gender

Content Theme	Male	Female
Selfie	10	7
Group	7	11
Lifestyle	5	4
Professional	7	6
Travel	9	6
Family	8	4
Motivational	8	8

Female users, in contrast, showed a higher frequency of:

- Group photographs
- Relational and socially embedded visuals

This suggests that female users emphasize **social connection, relationships, and collective identity** in their content. Motivational content was equally represented by both genders, indicating shared interest in inspirational messaging irrespective of gender.

This pattern supports **Eagly's Social Role Theory**, which argues that gender roles influence behavioural expression, with men leaning toward agentic roles and women toward communal roles.

3. Visual Representation and Self-Presentation Behaviour

Visual analysis revealed clear gender-based differences in **self-presentation strategies**.

Male users more frequently used:

- Third-person camera angles
- Neutral or serious facial expressions
- Minimal use of filters

This visual style suggests a preference for **authenticity, realism, and assertive self-representation**. Such presentation aligns with masculine norms of control and composure in public communication.

Female users more frequently displayed:

- Smiling facial expressions
- Filter-enhanced visuals
- Warm colour tones

These elements contribute to a **visually engaging and emotionally expressive presentation style**, designed to enhance aesthetic appeal and relational warmth. From a visual communication perspective, this indicates conscious image curation to invite interaction and engagement.

This finding strongly reflects **Goffman's theory of impression management**, where users strategically curate visual cues to influence audience perception.

4. Emotional Tone of Posts

The emotional tone analysis showed that:

- Positive emotional tone dominated across both genders
- Male users displayed slightly higher negative-toned content
- Female users leaned more toward positive emotional expression

Female users' preference for positive emotional tone suggests an inclination toward maintaining **social harmony and emotional positivity** in online spaces. Male users' comparatively higher negative tone may reflect expression of stress, opinionated views, or critical commentary.

These differences highlight how emotional expression on social media is shaped by gendered norms of communication, where emotional openness and positivity are more socially accepted among female users.

5. Caption Style and Language Use

Caption analysis revealed that:

- Male users preferred **informative and casual captions**
- Female users used more **emotional and expressive captions**
- Female users employed emojis more frequently

The use of emojis and emotional language enhances **parasocial interaction**, encouraging audience response and engagement. This behavior indicates that female users actively use textual elements to complement visual content and strengthen interpersonal communication.

Male users' relatively restrained caption style reinforces a content-first approach, where visuals take precedence over emotional narration.

6. Engagement Behavior (Likes and Comments)

One of the most significant findings of the study relates to **audience engagement**.

Female users received:

- Higher average likes
- Higher average comments

This suggests that emotionally expressive visuals, aesthetic presentation, and relational content tend to attract more interaction. Engagement metrics serve as behavioural indicators of audience resonance, implying that female users' content style aligns more effectively with platform engagement dynamics.

Male users, while slightly more active in posting, received comparatively lower engagement, indicating that frequency of posting does not necessarily translate into higher interaction.

7. Behavioral Interpretation from a Media Studies Perspective

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that **social media behavior is gendered not only in content choice but also in visual strategy, emotional expression, and engagement outcomes**.

- Male behavior reflects **individualism, activity orientation, and controlled self-presentation**
- Female behavior reflects **relational communication, emotional expressiveness, and aesthetic engagement**

These findings reinforce the idea that social media functions as a **performative space**, where gender identities are continuously constructed and reinforced through visual and textual content.

Analytical Summary

Gender has a significant influence on social media behavior, according to a thorough content analysis of 100 Instagram posts. Male and female users use different communication tactics in digital settings, as evidenced by differences in content themes, visual representation, emotional tone, and engagement behavior. These patterns of behavior are a reflection of larger cultural expectations and social conventions related to gender roles.

v. Findings and Discussion

Instagram is no longer gender-specific, as seen by the nearly equal distribution of social media activity between male and female users, according to a content study of 100 Instagram posts. Nonetheless, there are noticeable variations in how people create and express their identities on the internet. In keeping with conventional masculine notions of independence, success, and self-reliance, male users tended to share activity-oriented and individual-focused content, such as selfies, travel, work life, and family-related postings. The preference for group photos and socially integrated content was higher among female users, indicating a relational orientation toward online self-presentation.

In terms of emotional and visual expressiveness, gender-based disparities were also evident. Male users tended to utilize simple visual framing, neutral facial expressions, and few filters, indicating a focus on controlled self-presentation and authenticity. Through the usage of expressive captions, front-facing positions, aesthetic upgrades, and smiling expressions, female users showed higher levels of visual curation. Both genders' posts were dominated by positive emotional tones, although female users were more outspoken in their emotional communication, whilst male users were more reserved. These trends show that emotional expression and self-representation in digital contexts are still influenced by offline gender conventions.

Analysis of audience engagement emphasizes even more how emotional and aesthetic appeal influence Instagram interaction. Posts with descriptive titles, emotive images, and a positive emotional tone were more likely to be liked and commented on, especially by female users. This implies that affective communication and content style—rather than just posting frequency or gender—are what drive social media engagement. Overall, the results confirm that gender identities are constantly built, reinforced, and negotiated through visual and textual communication on Instagram, which serves as a performative and interactive arena.

Suggestions for Future Research

To allow for a more comprehensive comparison analysis, future studies might increase the sample size and incorporate a variety of social media platforms. Deeper understanding of user motivations and behavioral patterns may be obtained by combining qualitative methodologies with other characteristics like age, occupation, and cultural background. The impact of influencer culture and algorithms on gendered self-presentation and audience engagement on social media may be the subject of future research.

Conclusion

The current study used a content analysis of 100 Instagram posts to look at how male and female users behaved on social media. The results show that although both sexes actively contribute to the development of social media material, there are significant variations in the themes, emotional expression, visual self-presentation, and engagement patterns of the content. While female users exhibit a relational and emotionally expressive communication style, male users typically present an individual-centric and activity-

oriented identity. According to the study's findings, Instagram is a performative platform where users utilize images, captions, and emotional cues to create and negotiate gender identities. The persistence of conventional gender roles even in contemporary digital platforms is seen in these behavioral patterns. Overall, by showing how gender affects online self-representation and audience interaction, the study advances visual communication and media studies. The results highlight social media's function as a platform for ongoing identity construction and a mirror of society norms.

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