

# Social Media Trends and Digital Marketing Insights Among University Students: A Survey-Based Analysis

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## Abstract:

This study aims to analyze social media trends and digital marketing insights among university students, focusing on their perception regarding digital media communication and the factors influencing decision-making in academics. A survey-based research approach was adopted, collecting data from a sample of 200 university students through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire explored students' social media usage patterns, preferred platforms, and engagement with digital marketing content, campaigns, and advertisements. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were used to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Findings reveal that social media plays a crucial role in shaping students' decision-making processes, with platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn being highly influential. Relevant and authentic content, as well as convenience, emerged as significant factors driving engagement with digital marketing campaigns. The study provides valuable insights for marketers and educational institutions seeking to optimize their outreach efforts to university students through social media. Leveraging these trends and insights can enhance digital marketing strategies, enabling better connections with this important demographic and fostering stronger engagement in academic decision-making.

Keywords: Social Media, Digital Marketing, Digital Marketing Strategies, University students

## Introduction

In today's digital age, the internet has become an integral part of people's lives, with an increasing number of individuals spending considerable time online. Currently, the number of internet users globally reached a staggering 5.18 billion, accounting for approximately 64.6 percent of the total global population. Among these users, social media platforms were accessed by a vast majority, with 4.8 billion people, equivalent to around 59.9 percent of the world's population (Statista 2023).

The vast reach and accessibility of the internet have paved the way for digital marketing to flourish. Digital marketing refers to the strategic use of digital channels and technologies to promote products, services, or brands and connect with target audiences. Through various online platforms such as social media, search engines, email, and more, businesses can engage potential customers, build brand awareness, drive website traffic, generate leads, and convert them into loyal patrons. Strategic planning, data analysis, and continuous optimization are key elements in ensuring the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns in today's digital landscape.

With the growing popularity of the internet, internet usage among students has also become pervasive. According to a study conducted by Nina B. in 2021, the findings revealed that more than 95% of students were users of the internet, highlighting the prevalence of internet usage among the younger generation. FA Loan's study in 2011 further supports this notion, indicating that the younger generation holds the largest

proportion of internet users. Students heavily rely on the internet for research, accessing educational resources, socializing, and entertainment. As per recent data, internet usage is on the rise globally and particularly in India. The country has witnessed a significant growth in active internet users, with projections showing that it will reach 900 million by 2025 (The Hindu, May 4, 2023). Among internet users, social media platforms have become widely accessed by a substantial percentage of the population (Statista, 2023).

Considering the immense influence of social media and digital marketing in the lives of university students, this study aims to delve into their digital habits and interactions with digital marketing content on various online platforms. By exploring their preferences, perception, and decision-making behaviours related to digital media, this research seeks to uncover valuable insights that can inform educational institutions and businesses on effective ways to engage and connect with this demographic. The growing significance of digital media in shaping students' choices and behaviours presents a unique opportunity to understand their preferences and tailor marketing strategies accordingly. Through a survey-based analysis, this study seeks to provide valuable data and trends to better comprehend the impact of digital marketing on university students, contributing to a deeper understanding of their digital behaviour and decision-making process.

### Literature Review

1. Truong & Simmons (2011): Highlighted the importance of creating access to digital devices for students, recognizing their role as protagonists in the digital age.
2. Fagerstrøm and Ghinea (2013): Pointed out the limitations of traditional marketing in higher education and advocated for the use of digital media to facilitate broad communication and knowledge dissemination.
3. Bock et al. (2014): Acknowledged the ongoing transformation in the education sector due to information and communication technologies (ICT) and highlighted the effective use of digital marketing by universities and educational institutions to communicate with students and potential applicants.
4. Kotler et al. (2016): Noted consumers' mixed feelings about adapting to new technologies, observed the increasing trend of using digital environments for daily activities such as businesses, financial transactions, and communication.
5. Jain (2019): Emphasized how digital marketing democratizes information delivery to a large audience, with social media platforms significantly influencing engagement, particularly among the youth.
6. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019): Defined digital marketing as a sub-branch of traditional marketing that uses modern channels like the web, e-mail, and wireless media to communicate with the target audience, establishing its unique characteristics and dynamics.
7. Kusumawati (2019): Suggested that digital media significantly influences students' college choices, with heavy reliance on various digital platforms for information gathering.
8. Cao G & Tian Q (2020): Revealed an indirect connection between Social Media Usage (SMU) and student academic performance, with factors like collaborative learning, student-instructor interaction, and academic distraction playing crucial roles.
9. Gaskill (2020): Highlighted the extensive engagement of the college-aged generation with various social media platforms, shedding light on potential implications for their behaviour and academic performance.
10. Vesna Baltezarevic (Mar 2023): Discussed the need for innovative marketing methods in the education sector due to increased competition, with digital marketing through social media considered crucial for visibility and competitive advantage, especially among the youth.

### Objectives of the Study

- a) To study and analyse students' perception regarding digital media communication.
- b) To study and analyse factors influencing decision-making in academics

## Research Methodology

The research methodology for the study involves a survey-based approach to analyse the current social media trends and digital marketing insights among university students. The aim is to gain valuable insights into their interactions with digital marketing content, campaigns, and advertisements on popular social media platforms.

### Source of Data Collection

Data collection is conducted through a structured questionnaire distributed to a sample of 200 university students. The questionnaire is designed carefully to explore their social media usage patterns, preferred platforms, and the extent of engagement with digital marketing content. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions are included in the questionnaire to gather both quantitative and qualitative data

### Sample

For sample selection, the study focuses on university students as the target population. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified random sampling technique is utilized. This approach ensures the inclusion of participants from various academic disciplines and year levels, providing a comprehensive understanding of social media trends and digital marketing insights among university students.

### Data Analysis

The collected data is being analysed using statistical tools and techniques to identify trends, patterns, and preferences among university students regarding social media platforms and digital marketing content engagement. Quantitative data is being analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and percentages to present key findings. Qualitative data from open-ended questions is being examined for relevant themes and insights to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and experiences with digital marketing content.

### Ethical Considerations

The research is being conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of participants' responses. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before their participation in the survey. Participants are assured that their data will be used solely for research purposes and treated with confidentiality.

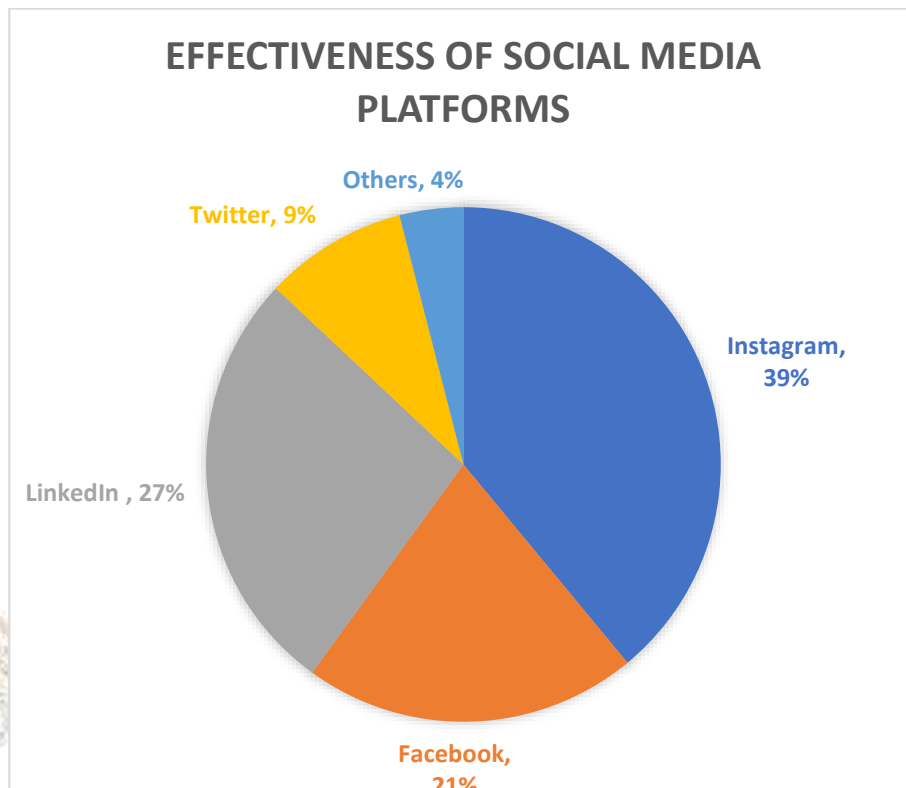
## 6. Findings and Inferences

### 6.1: Impact of Digital Media on Decision Making: Key Findings for University Students

**1. High Awareness and Usage:** University students displayed high awareness and usage of social media and digital media platforms. Approximately 98% of respondents used digital media as a source to access information.

**2. Influence from Reference Groups:** Similar to the target population (age group of 20-30), influence from reference groups emerged as the primary driving factor behind digital media usage among university students. Reference groups significantly impact their decision-making process.

**3. Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms:** Among social media platforms, Instagram was considered effective by 39% of university students for decision-making and Facebook by 21%. LinkedIn, discussion forums, and review sites followed closely, with an average effectiveness of 27%. Twitter had the lowest impact, considered effective by only 9% of respondents.



#### 4. University Students' Decision-Making Process and Online Information Sources for Purchases:

Before making a purchase, 93% of university students referred to Google or other search engines, indicating the importance of online search in their decision-making process. Company websites were checked by 69% of respondents, further emphasizing the significance of a brand's online presence. Review sites and e-commerce portals were referred to by 64% of students, demonstrating their reliance on customer feedback and product information. Twitter had the least influence on purchase decisions, with only 3% of students referring to it.

**5. Decision-Making Factors for Employment:** LinkedIn emerged as the most preferred medium for employment decisions, with 74% of university students relying on it. Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube followed, but were less influential with 28%, 13%, and 18% of students respectively. Company websites and search engines were the top choices, with 86% and 81% of respondents respectively using them for employment-related decisions.

#### Inferences:

The findings demonstrate that university students exhibit similar patterns of digital media usage and decision-making factors as the broader target population of young adults (age group 20-30). Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and LinkedIn, play a crucial role in influencing their decisions.

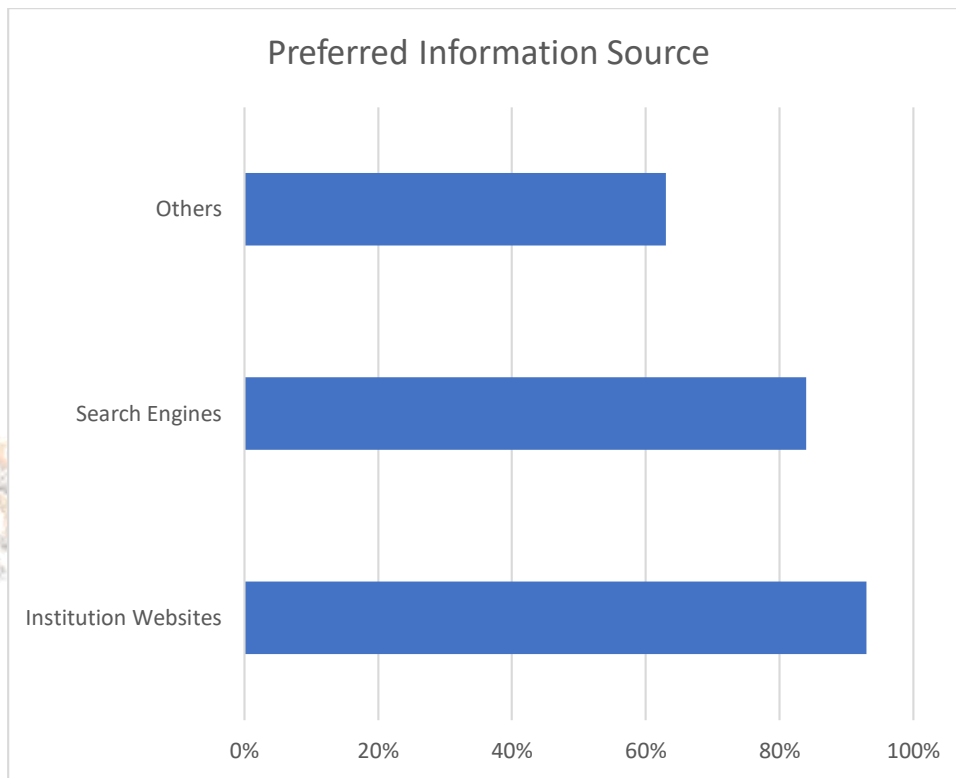
When making purchase decisions, university students heavily rely on search engines and company websites, emphasizing the importance of online presence and visibility for businesses. Reviews and feedback on review sites and e-commerce portals also hold significance in their decision-making process.

For employment-related decisions, LinkedIn stands out as the most preferred platform, showcasing its relevance as a professional networking and job-seeking tool among university students. Company websites and search engines also play a vital role in helping them gather information about potential employers and opportunities.

Overall, digital media significantly impacts university students' decision-making process, highlighting the need for businesses and educational institutions to strategically utilize various digital marketing channels to engage and influence this demographic effectively.

## 6.2 Education/Admission Related Decisions

**1. Preferred Information Sources:** University students heavily rely on institution websites (93%) and search engines (84%) for education/admission related decisions. Review sites, blogs, and discussion forums moderately influence their decisions, with an average of 63% reliance on these platforms.



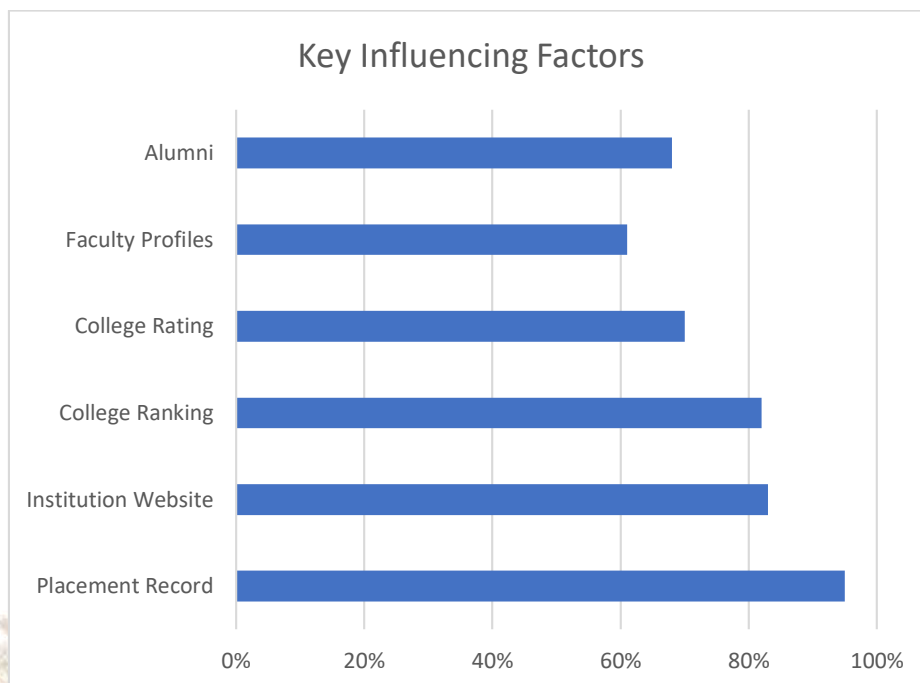
**2. Impact of Relevant Ads:** For university students, relevant ads play a crucial role in enhancing their viewer experience and motivating them to click. Approximately 68% of students consider the relevance of advertisements before engaging with them.

**3. Free vs. Paid Advertisements:** The nature of advertisements, whether they are free or paid, affects decision-making for 52% of university respondents. This suggests that the cost factor can influence their perceptions and choices.

**4. Importance of Ad Positioning:** Ad positioning holds significance for 48% of university students when making decisions. Marketers should consider strategic ad placement to capture their attention effectively.

**5. Key Influencing Factors:** For education-related decisions, university students prioritize various factors: Institution placement record is the most crucial factor, influencing decisions for 95% of students. Institution websites play a significant role (83%) in students' decision-making process. College ranking (82%) and College rating (70%) also have considerable impact on their choices.

**6. Significance of Alumni and Faculty Profiles:** Alumni and faculty profiles are essential considerations in the decision-making process, with 68% and 61% of university students respectively finding them influential.



**7. Least Influential Factor:** Events happening at the institution hold the least influence on education-related decisions for university students.

### Inferences

The data reveals that university students heavily rely on institution websites and search engines for making education/admission related decisions. This highlights the importance of maintaining informative and user-friendly websites and optimizing content for search engines to attract and engage potential students.

Furthermore, relevant and well-targeted advertisements are crucial in capturing university students' attention and motivating them to take action. Understanding their preferences and interests is vital for crafting effective ad campaigns.

In terms of decision-making factors, the institution's placement record is of utmost significance to university students, indicating their focus on career outcomes and job prospects. College ranking and rating also influence their choices, emphasizing the importance of institutional reputation.

Overall, marketers aiming to reach university students should prioritize digital channels, optimize relevant content, and emphasize the institution's strengths, placement records, and alumni success stories to appeal to this audience effectively.

### 6.3: Awareness and Knowledge about Digital and Social Media

**1. Influence and Perception:** 55% of university students find content on social media influential, indicating its impact on their decisions. However, only 39% perceive the content as convincing, suggesting room for improvement in content effectiveness. Additionally, only 29% consider the information accurate, raising concerns about the reliability of digital media sources.

**2. Impact on Decision-Making:** Approximately 16% of students are influenced by unconvincing content, highlighting the need for more compelling and persuasive messaging. Moreover, 24% of students are influenced without verifying the accuracy of the information, indicating the importance of fact-checking and providing credible sources.

**3. Influence on Others:** While 54% of students believe digital media aids in their important decisions, a higher percentage (65%) think it influences others' decisions. This suggests that students recognize the potential impact of digital media on their peers' choices and behaviours.

**4. Actual Decision Changes:** Only 48% of university students have actually changed their decisions based on digital/social media influence, indicating that the impact may not be as significant for all individuals.

**5. Content Clarity:** 44% of students believe digital media content is unclear and incomplete, indicating the need for clear and comprehensive communication in digital marketing efforts.

**6. Convenience and Effectiveness:** A significant majority of students (78%) find digital media convenient, reflecting the ease of accessing information through various online platforms. The overall effectiveness of digital media is rated at 77%, based on factors like influential content, relevance, interactivity, and availability.

**7. Credibility Concerns:** Credibility is a concern, with students rating it at 2.7 out of 5, suggesting that marketers need to establish trustworthiness and authenticity in their digital marketing efforts.

**8. Neutrality of Blogs and Reviews:** While blogs and review-based websites gain popularity, 41% of students lack confidence in their neutrality, highlighting the importance of unbiased and transparent content.

**9. Perceived Misleading Nature:** 70% of students perceive digital media as misleading due to factors like ambiguity, bias, fake content, and deception, underscoring the need for transparency and accurate information.

**10. Continued Usage:** Despite concerns, 78% of students are likely to continue using digital/social media due to convenience, emphasizing the importance of maintaining user-friendly experiences and valuable content.

## Inferences

The data indicates that university students have varying perceptions of digital media's impact and effectiveness. While they find it influential, there are concerns about content clarity, accuracy, and credibility. Marketers targeting this demographic should focus on creating more convincing and accurate content while ensuring transparency and authenticity. Understanding the convenience of digital media for students is essential and optimizing content to enhance effectiveness and user experience can lead to higher engagement and trust. Addressing students' concerns about misleading content and neutrality in reviews can help build credibility and foster positive brand perceptions. Despite challenges, digital and social media remain significant channels to engage university students effectively.

## 6.4 Social media platforms popular among university students and their engagement with digital marketing content, campaigns, and advertisements

**1. Social Media Platforms:** Instagram is the most popular platform among university students, with 78% using it regularly. Twitter and Facebook follow closely, with 65% and 54% of students using them, respectively. Snapchat and Facebook are also popular choices, with 48% and 42% of students using them, respectively.

**2. Engagement with Digital Marketing Content:** 73% of students come across sponsored posts or advertisements on social media daily. Approximately 64% actively engage with digital marketing content by clicking on links or exploring products and services.

**3. Preferred Content Types:** Visual content, such as images and videos, is favoured by 86% of students. Eye-catching visuals increase engagement with advertisements.

**4. Influencer Marketing:** Nearly 61% of students make purchasing decisions based on recommendations from social media influencers they follow.

**5. Authenticity Matters:** Approximately 79% of students prefer authentic and genuine content over overly promotional or sales-oriented content.

**6. Impact on Decision-Making:** Around 71% of university students admit that digital marketing content on social media platforms influences their purchasing decisions. Students discover new products, services, and brands through digital marketing content.

### **Inferences**

Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook are the most popular social media platforms among university students. Visual content, particularly images and videos, attracts the attention of students, making it essential for marketers to focus on creating visually appealing advertisements. Influencers play a significant role in shaping students' purchasing decisions, highlighting the potential of influencer marketing strategies. Authenticity is crucial in engaging students, as they respond more positively to genuine and relatable content. Social media is a key platform for reaching and engaging university students through digital marketing, driving brand awareness, consideration, and conversion.

### **Limitations of the study**

1. The study's sample size may limit the generalizability of findings to a larger population of university students.
2. Self-reported responses from participants may be subject to biases or social desirability.
3. The research was conducted within a specific timeframe, and factors such as changes in social media trends may not be fully captured.

### **Implications of study**

The study's implications are valuable for marketers and educational institutions targeting university students. For marketers, understanding students' social media preferences helps create more effective digital marketing strategies. Tailoring content to specific platforms can increase engagement and brand visibility, fostering stronger connections with students.

Educational institutions can use these insights to attract potential students and engage current ones. By utilizing preferred platforms and creating compelling content, recruitment efforts can be enhanced, highlighting the institution's strengths effectively. The study also reveals social media's potential in fostering educational engagement, presenting opportunities for innovative approaches to student outreach and support. Overall, these findings can lead to more successful marketing and communication efforts with university students.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into the social media preferences and engagement of university students with digital marketing content, campaigns, and advertisements. The research revealed that social media plays a significant role in influencing their decision-making process, with platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn holding particular importance.

For marketers, these findings offer opportunities to tailor their strategies and content to resonate with specific platforms, maximizing audience reach and engagement. Understanding students' preferences can lead to more effective marketing campaigns and better connections with this demographic.

For educational institutions, the study highlights the importance of utilizing social media for student recruitment and engagement. By leveraging preferred platforms and creating compelling content, institutions can enhance their outreach efforts and showcase their strengths effectively.

Overall, this study emphasizes the significance of social media in today's digital landscape and its potential to shape decision-making and engagement among university students. The implications drawn from this research can help both marketers and educational institutions optimize their strategies for greater success in reaching and connecting with this vital demographic.



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