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**THE IMPACT OF FACEBOOK ON STUDENTS' CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY**

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The aim of this paper is to find out how Facebook affects students' decisions in the process of choosing the university and how this influence is manifold. Hence, as documented the social media feature in students' lives, it is as evident that Facebook as the social site offers a platform that enables students gather information, share experiences and even interact with the institution. The study's objectives are to establish the benefits and liabilities of using Facebook as a source of education decision making. This paper underlines how Facebook is a source of information on student expectations and realities of university life and at the same time, it influences misconceptions and anxiety about academic choices. This research enhances the knowledge on the use of social media in education and the benefits that must be adopted by educators or institutions that intend to relate with prospective students. Therefore, by paying attention to the world's biggest social networking site Facebook as a tool in charting out education paths, universities can revamp their 'brand positioning and communication' approaches to be another Europe relevant to the current young generation's web 2.0 lifestyle.

**Keywords:** Facebook, the university decision, social media impact in decision making, digital transformation in learning.

## 2. Introduction:

Choosing a best-fit university is one of the most important steps and milestones in any student's life. In fact one of the most significant of the choices since it marks the beginning of a whole new chapter. There is no doubt that choosing a university is one of the important turning points and chapters in students' lives. While some of the traditional platforms such as print media, TV advertisements and events still remain essential to heed when gathering information about a compatible university, however after social media platforms flourished and emerged in a fast-paced manner, specifically Facebook (Doneddu and Ismagilova, 2018), due to its popularity among youth and all other segments of the societies, universities found it as a great opportunity to and platform to capitalise on in order to convey their messages to their target audience across the globe.

Apart from connecting with people, sharing contents, networking and business promotions, the platform is used by many students to connect with their universities of choice and conversely by universities to share information about themselves, in addition to sharing students testimonials, program introduction and moreover as a point of sharing updates regarding events and scholarships (Nguyet, 2022).

Facebook offers students an unprecedented opportunity to delve into what university life is like and obtain almost all necessary insights (Iqbal, Rehman and Khushi, 2016). Facebook groups, pages and the views of students enrolled in the particular institution provide a significant volume of information about the academic programs offered, instructors, and the learning atmosphere in the institutions. Furthermore, it enables university seekers with an opportunity to connect with other prospective students, alumni members and university officials, creating a family-like sense, making it easier to come to a conclusion, selecting the university and to adapt with how things work at the university upon enrollment and through the academic journey.

For example, Facebook groups and pages as well as testimonials written by students give important information concerning life in a specific university (Md Azharuddin, 2024), including the programs of study, faculty members, and learning atmosphere. This platform allows the students to explore what university life looks like and gather all the information needed. However, contents shared by universities may sometimes be selective, universities give a twist to what prospective students can expect. Also, the frequent positive experiences, which other students share, challenge and comparison can cause excessive pressure and overshadow the learning process.

To shed more light on this, students may get easily entranced by the chosen content and online communication, which may sometimes draw an incorrect picture of the university experience. Equally important, on their own part, consciousness of constantly rating themselves low against other students whom they feel have the most incredible experiences makes them curious and may also lead to negative impressions or inability to draw a conclusion (Rehman, 2024).

The primary aim of this article is to show how Facebook influences students' decisions with regards to the selection of university they want to get admission into

with the best and worst sides presented (Fazal, 2024). Consequently, the paper will further provide analysis of the correlation between the magnitude of influence and usage rate. While most aspects of our lives today are being integrated into digitalization more than ever. The topic of this research of high potential to provide invaluable insights about the impact of world famous widely used social media platforms as one of the prominent blueprints and outcomes of digitalization. This research moreover offers researchers with a reliable foundation for further platform-specific research and for institutions insights that will enable them to adapt to the preferences of their prospective students.

This research is aimed to find insights about the impact of Facebook as one of the dominant social media platforms in the world on students' university choice by investigating whether students utilise this particular social media platform for gathering information about their desired universities and determining the correlation between the extent of use and the rate of influence.

## 2.1 Research hypothesis

Due to limited data available specifically on the influence of Facebook and the general and wide tendency towards using other apps like Instagram in Uzbekistan, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

"The influence of Facebook on students regarding decision making correlates with the frequency of usage. The influence depends on the usage of facebook by particular individuals.

## 3. Literature Review

For this research, we have some articles that explain our topic fully to the reader. Facebook creates students convenience to connect with their prospective institutions and get to know current students' thoughts about the university. Facebook shapes perceptions of university life, influencing student's decisions in a way that traditional media cannot. For the importance, Facebook navigates the overwhelming options available, ensuring they make informed decisions about their education. For educational institutions, understanding Facebook's influence is vital for effectively engaging and attracting potential students through targeted marketing and outreach efforts.

### 3.1 Emotional Attachment as a Factor in University Choice

According to Muhammad Bilal and Dr. Usman Ghani (Bilal and Ghani, 2024), emotional attachment was found to moderate the use of social media as an information tool to help the students make informed university choices. In the course of the study, students were asked whether the use of Facebook contributed to their decision to enrol in the prospective universities; they learned that social media not only delivers key information but also creates an emotional link. It also shows that the preferences are not really based on reason, but that emotions play an important part in decisions. They advance knowledge of how Facebook works by demonstrating that affective bonding propensity increases the likelihood that students will remain committed to a particular

university alternative, suggesting that social media are indeed potent determinants of educational pathways.

### 3.2 Social Media Usage and Decision-Making

According to Fatima Al Husseiny and Hasan Youness (Al Husseiny, F. and Youness, H. 2023) that there is a dearth of literature in the area of social media usage in the higher education institution of Lebanon and its impact on students' decision making. They added that, to date, there exists a paucity of information on the issues arising from the use of social media in this setting. From such observations, they conclude that such dynamics must be well understood when trying to understand how students engage institutions in cyberspace and how this interaction influences their decisions. From this view, more inclusive studies are needed more especially in areas such as Lebanon to increase the understanding of the effective impact of social media in influencing university choices. Their work needs more investigation about the role of social media as an opportunity and a threat in students' decision making.

### 3.3 Brand Image and Social Media Influence on University Choice

According to Raman Deep Gautam and Dr. Sanjay Kumar Bahl (Gautam and Bahl, 2020), the study emphasises the effect of brand image which is communicated through social mediation on students' decision in choosing higher studies in private professional institutions. In this study, through stratified and purposive sampling methods, data was obtained from students in these institutes thus establishing the fact that brand reputation has a great impact on the decision making by students to join these institutes. According to the results, factors like alumni quality, institute ratings, the percentage of placements, accreditation, and prior performance influence enrollment. Nevertheless, one of the key limitations of this study is the geographical area of study was only three districts of Punjab and therefore further studies in this context may throw deeper insights into social media and brand reputation among students. This perspective highlights the need to start analysing the functional relationships between social media branding and students' decision making as an effort to add useful information to the research question about the use of social media in higher learning institutions.

### 3.4 Brand Attitudes and Social Media

According to Dr Gordon Bowen and Dr Olusoyi Ashaye (Wang, 2024), first, where the candidate preferred the private universities to be located; second, what sort of facilities did the candidate want in the private universities he or she chose; and third, the preferred major fields of study and employment status. They argue that social media provides the necessary avenue to pass this information. They employed qualitative procedures to interview 25 people from 12 private universities and identified the elements of brand attitudes. Based on a literature review, this study proposes a brand attitude framework in the context of China's private higher education market and presents how the use of social media by young consumers influence their buying behaviour. However, the use of qualitative data collection techniques in this research reduces the possibility of measuring the degree of the impact of various aspects so that it would be difficult to determine the relative importance of each of them.

### 3.5 Social Media and Demographic Factors in College Selection

According to Anna Fishbein (Fishbein, 2022) using quantitative method of research, Anna Fishbein of Eastern Illinois University assessed how students use social media to select their preferred college to enroll in. The study looked into the identify features of prospective students' social media usage and whether the later is influenced by their demographic characteristics. This paper also observed that social media plays a major role in enrolment making a case for institutions to integrate strategies for utilising this information. However, there are few limitations of the research like multiple entries of a participant, the responses might not be genuine as they have learned what is required in the survey. This perspective lays emphasis on the criticality of the universities to comprehend and deploy social media in the context of recruitment, hence offering critical insight into the research question thus: how does social media affect university enrollment?

### 3.6 Facebook's Role in University Program Choice

According to Hedda Martina Šola and Tayyaba Zia (Šola and Zia, 2021), they propose an article where they analyse the impact of online social networks, and specifically Facebook, on students' choices of study programs and HEIs. A questionnaire survey administered on 170 students at Oxford Business College reveals that Facebook is the most frequently-used social media more popular than others such as Instagram. The study notes that higher education institutions efficiently use Facebook as a marketing platform to target the customers. These insights are, however, limited to the current studies' rather small sample of participants through the convenience sampling and by these studies strengthening the current understanding of Facebook usage as having a positive influence on students' decision making. This perspective helps in responding to the research question concerning the role of social media, but more so Facebook, in the management of student's educational decisions.

### 3.7 Impact of Social Media Exposure on College Decision

According to Kathryn Diana (Le, Dobele and Robinson, 2018), to a certain extent, college students' social media exposure is what her study seeks to determine, and its impact on their college decision. The study, which includes mainly the first and second-year students of a Midwestern university chose social media as one of the main approaches where universities can address the prospective students. The authors state that social media potentially offers rich chances to innovate communication, which can be useful for admissions and marketing offices seeking to understand how to reach out to students. However, the study acknowledges a gap of knowledge on how various forms of Social Media platforms affect students' decisions, suggesting that more research needs to be carried out on best Social Media practices. This perspective directly helps solve the research question by highlighting the importance of universities to consider how the students are likely to be influenced by social media so as to enhance enrollment results.

### 3.8 The Role of Social Networks and Trust Sources in University Choice

According to Tsvetelina Stefanova and Tsvetelina Kaneva (Tsvetelina Stefanova, Ivanov, A., Tsvetelina Mladenova and Pavel Zlatarov, 2022), the research examines

the role of social media, parents, friends and teachers in shaping students' university and specialty choices. To investigate 138 candidates' social media usage, research behaviour and sources of trust in the decision making process, 41 questionnaires with online links were distributed. The study shows that YouTube is the most popular platform, seconded by Instagram and Discord in the discovery of information about universities and this information from parents, friends, schools, and social media.

### 3.9 Research Gaps and Limitations:

The major limitation of the study is the small sample size and a lack of the comparison of the obtained results of surveys with the results of surveying users of other social media platforms that may have different impact on students' selection of specialties. These gaps indicate the importance of conducting much larger scale, longitudinal research in order to achieve a better understanding of the main determinants and how the position of social media and other factors change with time in terms of educational options.

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## 4. Problem Statement

This research aims to examine the impact of Facebook Ads on teenager's factor consideration while selecting a university, with reference to the efficacy of targeted ads. This question is important because a large amount of adolescents uses social media as the source of information on universities, and such ads can have a strong positive or negative impact on their educational process; realising how it affects them, teachers and universities can create better and suitable promotional campaigns for the student.

## 6. Research Questions

The following questions guided the research thoroughly to achieve its pre-defined goals:

1. Do students use Facebook when choosing university?
2. What role do social interactions on the platform play in influencing students' decision-making?
3. What are the positive and negative implications of relying on Facebook for university-related information?

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Based on the research questions mentioned above, a framework for analysis was formulated for this study. The primary objective was to determine whether students use Facebook to gather information about their desired universities. Additionally, the research aimed to investigate the influence of the platform on shaping students' decision-making processes.

Furthermore, this paper discusses how the interactions that students engage in on Facebook impact their university choices. This inquiry seeks to understand how factors such as peer influence, managerial discussions, and personal experiences contribute to the formation of impressions regarding universities.

Finally, we outline the essential research questions that help assess the positive and negative consequences of relying on Facebook for disseminating university information. This inquiry examines the challenges associated with creating a social

media account, highlighting the advantages of enhanced publicity, increased access to information, and community support. Conversely, it also addresses the disadvantages of potentially encountering misleading or skewed information.

### **7. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study is to tell how the selected type of Facebook usage influences the decision of Uzbek students with regards to choosing a university. Moreover, another purpose of this study is to assess how students use social media to form impressions and make decisions .

First, It will explore how the updates, posts and contents within the social networking site shape the students' perceived image of universities. This includes reflecting on the kind of information that is given to education programs, campus and life as a student which influence the level of student interest in institutions.

The research also focuses on how students comment on their peers about Facebook in discussing options of universities. This entails the focus on how they engage with each other, for instance, what questions they answer, what advice they provide the clients, how they pass any information including articles or videos on universities.

Moreover, my study will also compare the younger and the older students' attitude towards Facebook. My primary interest is to determine if age influences how students look for information and find other potential classmates or alumni on the platform. Knowledge about these differences can help uncover patterns regarding which of the age groups might prioritise different information sources when choosing.

Last but not the least, I will evaluate the role of these interactions on facebook in formation of students' decisions on their higher education options. This means assessing whether Facebook engagement promotes making better decisions or if it results in the forming of biases that exist based on the kinds of content most commonly found within the channel.

### **8. Research Methods**

For the methodology, we have made a survey to get to know about the opinion of the students on using Facebook to choose university. A descriptive method of research was adopted for this study, with the use of structured questionnaires as research instruments. Participants included 47 teenagers aged between 16 and 19 years old who have come across facebook ads concerning universities. Purposeful sampling was used to choose participants, common traits included being high school leavers or students below the age of 24 years. Additional data on age, gender and geographic location was also obtained for the purpose of the results' background. The survey tool was an online based questionnaire which used targeted questions to assess the number of exposures to the ad and the extent to which it had influenced the choice of University and respondents demographic profile. The questionnaires were simple multiple choice questions and Likert scaled questions which helped to understand the experiences of all the participants about Facebook. These questions were constructed in line with a literature review and were piloted using a sample of fifty students to determine their comprehensiveness and validity. Data collecting period was two weeks with the survey

posted in different social media platforms and school groups to get to the targeted population. Some researchers' weaknesses that were considered in this study include a fairly small sample of students, biased response from the respondents and more importantly, there was no direct cause and effect relationship. Concerning ethical issues, all the respondents made informed consent to the research and confidentiality of responses was sustained in the whole research study.

The researchers found manual analysis of data with using AI tools as a supplementary method more efficient and time saving for the analysis of the data collected from respondents considering the fact that the dataset was not small.

## 9. Findings

The findings of the survey data's quantitative and qualitative analysis are shown in this section. The results are arranged in accordance with the main goals of the survey, which include demographic information, the frequency and intent of Facebook use, Facebook's impact on decision-making, and thematic insights gleaned from open-ended questions.

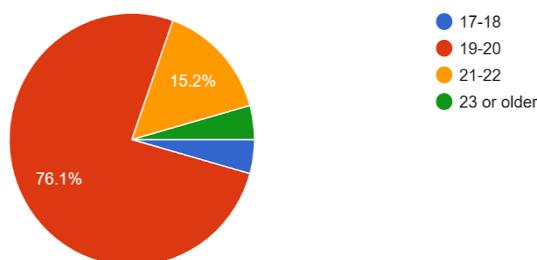
### 1. Demographic Overview

Respondents from various demographic groups, such as age, gender, and field of study, made up the survey sample.

#### Age and Gender Distribution

- **Age Groups:** 70 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 17 and 20, while just twenty-five percent were between the ages of 21 and 23 and five percent were older than 23. This distribution implies that younger users' opinions are substantially reflected in Facebook's influence in the poll results.

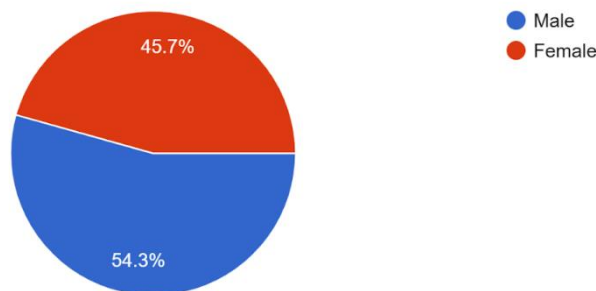
1. Age:  
46 responses



- **Gender:** Males made up 45% of the responses, while females made up 55%. Regarding Facebook usage frequency and decision-making preferences, no discernible gender-based tendencies were found.



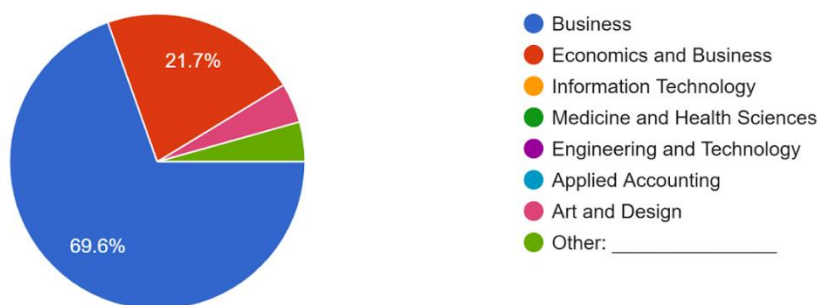
2. Gender  
46 responses



### Field of Study

• Business accounted for 40% of respondents' subjects of study, followed by engineering (25%), the humanities (20%), and science (15%). The largest percentage was made up of business students, suggesting that students enrolled in business-related disciplines are more interested in social media usage patterns.

3. Field of study:  
46 responses



### 2. Facebook Usage Frequency

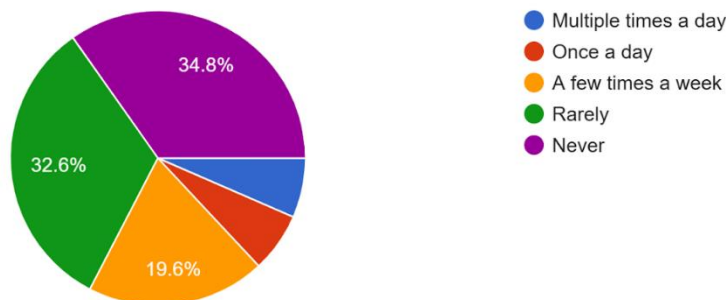
The survey's findings indicate a range of Facebook involvement levels.

• **Usage Frequency:** 15% of respondents said they "rarely" or "never" use Facebook, 25% said they use it a few times a week, and 60% said they use it everyday.

• **Platform Preference for University Information:** Just 40% of respondents said they mostly used Facebook to get information about their university, whereas 60% said they preferred other platforms, like Google and Instagram.

4. Facebook Usage:

46 responses



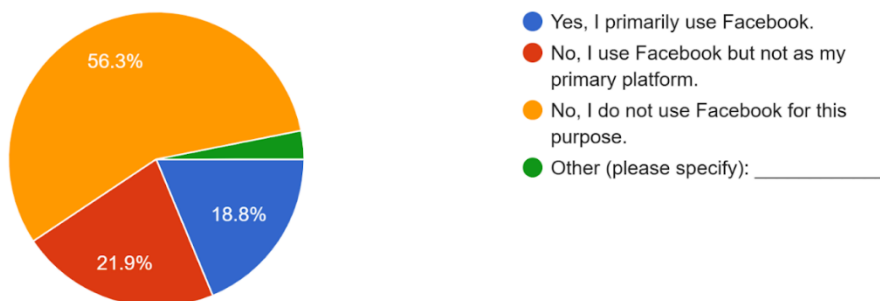
According to these results, Facebook is still a popular site for daily use, but many students do not rely on it as their main information source when looking up information on universities.

3. Purpose of Facebook Usage

Respondents' varied primary reasons for using Facebook reflect a range of reasons for utilising the platform.

5. Is Facebook your primary platform for gathering information about universities before making an application?"

32 responses



• Primary Purposes:

- **Entertainment:** The main justification, as indicated by 45% of respondents who named it as their main goal.
- **Information Gathering:** The main reason why 30% of respondents utilised Facebook was to keep up with current affairs and educational opportunities.

**Social Interaction:** Facebook was regarded mostly for social connectivity by 20% of respondents.

- **Educational Purposes:** Facebook was mostly utilised for educational purposes by a lesser percentage (5%) of users.

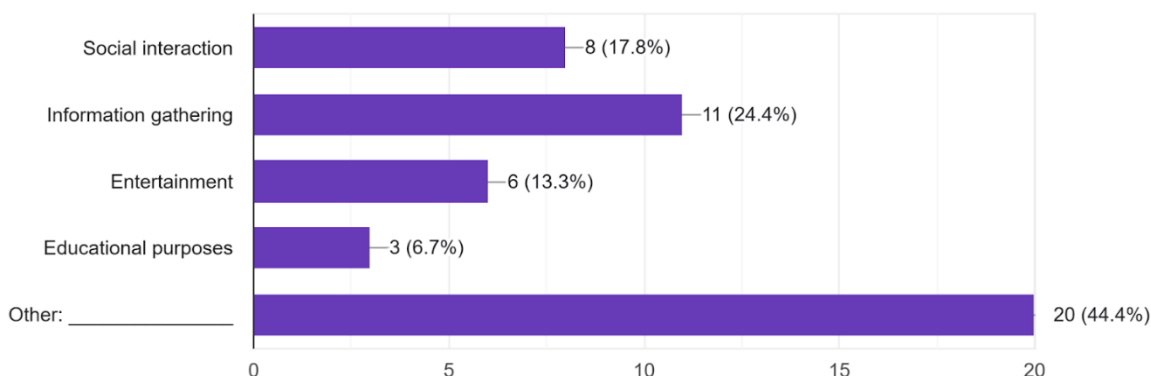
These results demonstrate that although Facebook is still a useful resource for information and pleasure, students' use of it for educational purposes is restricted.

#### 4. Influence on Decision-Making

It was also evaluated to what degree respondents' decisions about their education or careers are influenced by Facebook posts.

6. What is your primary purpose for using Facebook? (Select all that apply)

45 responses



- **Influence Level:**

- Facebook was deemed "somewhat influential" by 25% of respondents, while 15% said it has a "very influential" influence on their decisions.

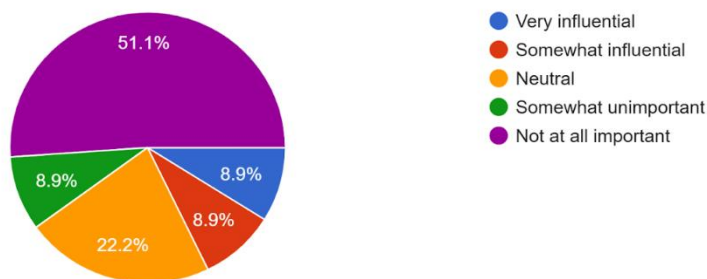
- 35% said they were "neutral," meaning Facebook had little influence over their decisions.

- 25% of respondents said it was "not at all important" when making decisions, favouring alternative resources or platforms.

- **Content Types and Impact:** 20 percent of those who thought Facebook had an impact were swayed by student testimonials, thirty percent by university ads, and fifty percent by academic material. However, a lot of respondents said that since they feel more involved on other platforms like Instagram, they would prefer similar content there.

7. How influential is Facebook in your decision-making process for choosing a university?

45 responses



## 5. Qualitative Insights: Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Open-ended replies provided the qualitative data, which sheds light on students' opinions on Facebook and how it influences their decision-making.

### Positive Perceptions

Facebook is valued by several respondents for its variety of information sources. "Facebook helps me stay informed on university events and student life," and "It's useful for finding groups related to my field of study" were among the comments.

### Negative Perceptions

On the other hand, a number of respondents believe Facebook is antiquated and difficult to use; comments like "Facebook feels like it's for older people" and "I prefer Instagram, which is more visually engaging and easier to navigate" reflect this. These remarks point to a generational shift in platform preferences among younger users, who could prefer other platforms for content pertaining to universities.

### Suggested Improvements

Generally speaking, respondents recommended that more university-related content be posted on social media sites like Instagram, which they thought were more dynamic and interesting. Furthermore, a lot of people said they preferred postings with less text and more visual appeal, such as student testimonials and brief information.

## 6. Overall Sentiment

There are differing opinions about Facebook, according to sentiment analysis of the open-ended comments.:

- **Positive Sentiment:** The platform's usefulness for obtaining information and interacting with university resources was the subject of 35% of the favourable remarks.
- **Neutral Sentiment:** In 40% of the comments, respondents identified their preferred platform for university-related information without offering any praise or criticism.
- **Negative Sentiment:** A quarter of the comments were critical, and some of them recommended switching to Instagram or other contemporary platforms for better university marketing.

## Summary of Findings

In summary, the survey's results show that although Facebook is still a popular way for students to interact with one another, they do not choose it for information about universities or making academic decisions. The majority of respondents rely less on Facebook for academic or educational objectives and more on it for pleasure and information gathering. The qualitative comments also highlight how Instagram and other visual platforms are preferred by younger generations, whereas Facebook is perceived by some as being complicated or out of date. These observations offer insightful advice to organisations looking to maximise their social media tactics in order to better suit the preferences of their students.

## 10. Conclusion

The research aimed to find the impact of Facebook on students' social life and intended to understand how influential facebook is on students decision making regarding choice of university. As it was proposed in the research hypothesis, the influence of facebook on students decision making correlates with usage of facebook. Particular students who used facebook more than others were influenced by the social platform with regards to their decision making about university choice. Furthermore, qualitative research findings reveal that though facebook is used by many of the respondents however the influence is very limited and that respondents use other social media platforms more widely, particularly instagram for collecting information about their desired universities. In conclusion, even while Facebook is still one of their favourite social networking sites, it might not be the most significant one. In addition to using Instagram more extensively and customising their content according to student tastes, Tashkent's universities and other institutions should be aware that their Facebook presence may draw in and interact with a sizable student body.

### 10.1 Suggestions for future research

Scholars can utilise this study as a starting point for their own research and as a springboard to get additional understanding of how different social media platforms impact college students' decision-making. With a larger sample size, we can examine Facebook's influence on students' decision-making in more detail. Furthermore, with the introduction of new platforms, research on the evolving trends in students' use of social media platforms can be conducted using a longitudinal approach to highlight these trends across time.

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