

BUSINESS STUDENT PREFERENCES IN SOCIAL MEDIA CHOICES AND USAGE

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a worldwide phenomenon! According to Statista, there are 5.07 billion social media users. This number accounts for 62.6 percent of the world's population. What are students' preferences regarding the various types of social media? Additionally, how much time do students spend on social media? The purpose of this paper is to answer these questions and give suggestions to faculty on how to incorporate social media into the classroom. A survey was conducted on students in a small, southeastern university. Business students in the areas of accounting, financial services, healthcare, management/marketing, and sports management were asked if they used social media and, if so, what were their preferences? Additionally, the authors wanted to address how many hours were spent on social media usage. This paper will also help the business community understand how social media can be beneficial and detrimental. Finally, suggestions are given on how to optimize classroom utilization of social media.

Keywords: *college of business social media choices, college of business social media uses*

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are defined by Wix.com as “online platforms and tools that allow people to create, share, and exchange information and content with others.”

As of April 2024, Shopify shows the following are the most used social media platforms (Bernhardt, G., 2024):

Table 1
Social media platform number of global users

Social media platform	No. of global users (as of April 2024)
1. Facebook	3,065 million
2. YouTube	2,504 million
3. Instagram	2,000 million
4. WhatsApp	2,000 million
5. TikTok	1,582 million
6. WeChat	1,343 million
7. Facebook Messenger	1,010 million
8. Telegram	900 million
9. Snapchat	800 million
10. Douyin	755 million

According to another source called MixBloom, the following are the top 10 Most popular social media platforms as of April 2024.

1. Facebook with **3.04 billion** active users worldwide and **175 million** users in the US.
2. YouTube (video-sharing) with **2.7 billion** users worldwide and **239 million** monthly users from the US.
3. WhatsApp (instant messaging app) with over **2.7 billion** active users worldwide and **98 million** in the US.
4. Instagram with s **2.4 billion** users worldwide (**29.2% of the world's population!**) and **159 million** users based in the US
5. TikTok with **1.5 billion** users worldwide and over **88 million** active TikTok users in the US
6. X (one of the lowest worldwide user rates), with the number of active monthly users expected to drop to **335 million** this year. There are over **50 million** active users in the US.
7. LinkedIn with **1 billion** users worldwide, and **211 million** in the US alone and their largest demographic (**60%**) is between the ages 25 and 34.
8. Snapchat with over **750 million** users worldwide and **108.8 million** in the US. India has the most SnapChat users at **182.3 million**.
9. Pinterest with over **465 million** users worldwide and **86.8 million** in the US.
10. Reddit with **1.6 billion** each month. **26.4 million** from the US alone.

As you notice in the two separate lists, it is evident that Facebook is well ahead of the other platforms. Facebook is the most popular platform among the 65+ generation, yet users ages 25-44 make up 49% of the users. The reason for this usage among millennials is that it is a great tool for marketing. Young entrepreneurs use it for their small businesses. (www.mixbloom.com)

Another interesting fact is that Meta, the parent company of Facebook, owns three of the platforms in the list of the top 10. Those platforms are Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Therefore, Meta is by far the giant in the social media world. (DiLallo, M., 2024)

Characteristics of a social media platform include the fact that users generate the content by creating posts, videos, or images within the platform. These posts can be shared and commented on or “liked” as in the case of Facebook. Some platforms are “real-time engagement. For instance, live videos can be made on Facebook. Marketing campaigns can also be created and optimized. Finally, social media platforms have mobile accessibility via phone usage. (wix.com)

Let us now explore the psychological effects of social media. Hopelessness, loneliness, depression, and feelings of inferiority were reported in individuals who spent more time on social media than advised (Aalbers et al., 2018). High-stress levels were observed by Tang et al. (2013). Viewing news posts and stories that relate to tragic situations and sharing these types of posts and others on politics and economics, as well as social and personal issues, also contributed to stress. (Ley et al. (2014); Weng and Menczer (2015)). When stress is present, negative emotions such as anxiety and depression are exacerbated. (Iwamoto and Chun (2020)). Addiction to social media can also occur and is more prevalent in those students who use TikTok. Addiction was also more prevalent in younger college students, ages 18-20, because they spent more time on social media. (Karayigit, C. & Parlade, J., 2023). Consequently, younger students experience lower outcomes academically. (Moreno-Guerrero, et al., 2020).

Despite the downside of social media platforms, there are benefits gained by students from using these platforms, especially in business. Some of the benefits, especially in marketing, are that using social media can increase brand awareness and customer usage. This benefit also increases customer loyalty. Advertising on social media is cost-effective and ranges from free to paid options, which is also a benefit of using social media platforms. (wix.com). Connections can be made with businesses, thereby increasing professional opportunities. Business management skills may become more developed using social media. For example, teamwork, time management, and critical thinking are developed. Engagement and interaction with other students and teachers are a plus when using social media. (Baha, A., 2019)

In 2023, a study was conducted on a midwestern university with 446 students. The findings were that social media usage among these college students regarding certain platforms was as follows:

Table 2
Social media usage

Usage	Percentage
Snapchat	37%
YouTube	15%
Instagram	14%
TikTok	12%
Facebook	11%
Twitter	8%
Others	4%

The "other" category includes Pinterest, Tumblr, Reddit, and Bitchute. (Karayigit, C. & Parlade, J., 2023).

The purpose of this paper is to identify what social platforms are preferred among college students in a small university in the southeastern United States. Additionally, we wish to identify how much time these students spend on social media. Finally, the purpose of this paper is to give suggestions for using student-centered social media in a university setting.

METHODOLOGY

The research will be a quantitative method using a questionnaire with objective responses requested. The students were asked to rank the forms of social media they use. They were asked to number the forms listed on the survey in order of usage. The authors listed Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter (now X), and LinkedIn with an “other” category for forms of social media not listed.

Participants

Surveys were conducted on 155 college students enrolled in various business classes at a small university located in the southeastern United States. The surveys were conducted voluntarily in the spring of 2024.

The voluntary involvement in this survey is crucial for completing this study.

- Sample Size = Questionnaire Survey = 155 students
- The formats employed were in person and inside the class.
- The recruitment material was distributed on paper, and the students who participated were business students.
- Completing the survey will take around 5 to 10 minutes.
- The ranking scale consists of closed-ended multiple-choice questions to measure the response to the question.
- It is understood that students' personal information will be kept confidential.
- Student participation was on a volunteer basis.

Table 3
Demographics

Description	Gender	Classification	Emphasis
Male	64%		
Female	36%		
Freshmen		2%	
Sophomore		31%	
Junior		49%	
Senior		18%	
Accounting			26%
Financial Services			14%
Health Care Management			8%
Management/Marketing			34%
Sports Management			12%
Other			6%

Sixty-four percent of the students were male, and only 34% were female. Approximately 50% of the students were juniors, while 31% were sophomores. Only 2% of the students were freshmen, and 18% of the students surveyed were seniors. Approximately one-third of the students surveyed had a management/marketing emphasis. Twenty-six percent of the students were accounting emphasis, while only 8% were Health Care Management emphasis. Fourteen percent of the students had a Financial Services emphasis; 12% had a Sports Management emphasis, and 6% of the students had an emphasis in other business areas.

RESULTS

Figure 1 indicates that the majority (97%) of the students surveyed use some form of social media. Only 3% of the students indicated they do not use social media. The authors were surprised that the results did not indicate 100% of the students using social media.

Figure 1: Do You Use Social Media?

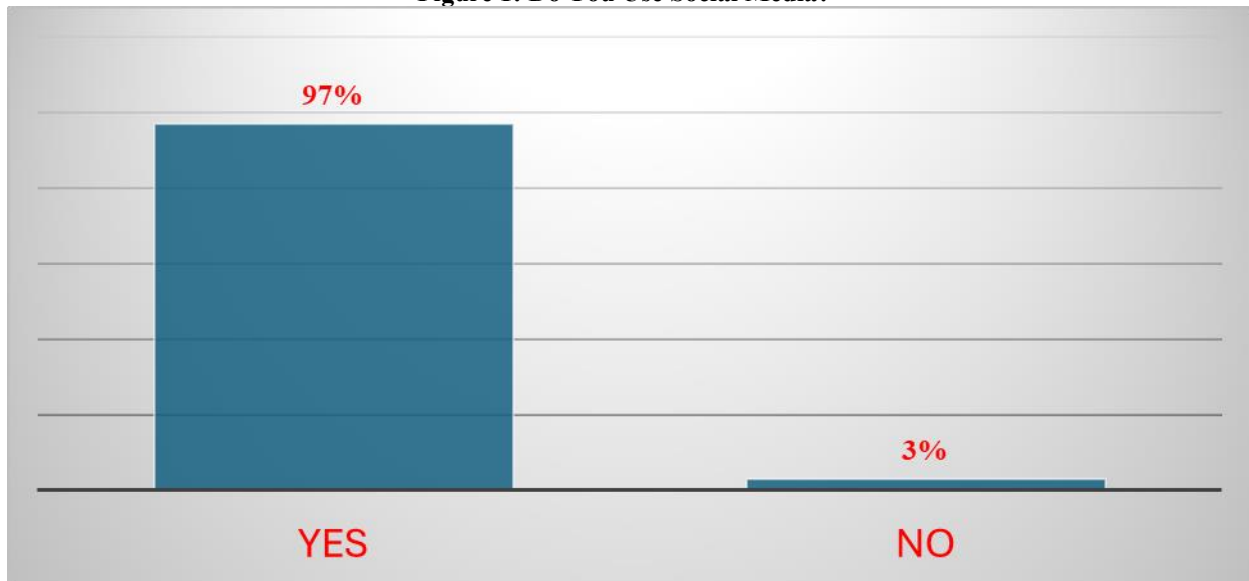


Figure 2: Social media usage

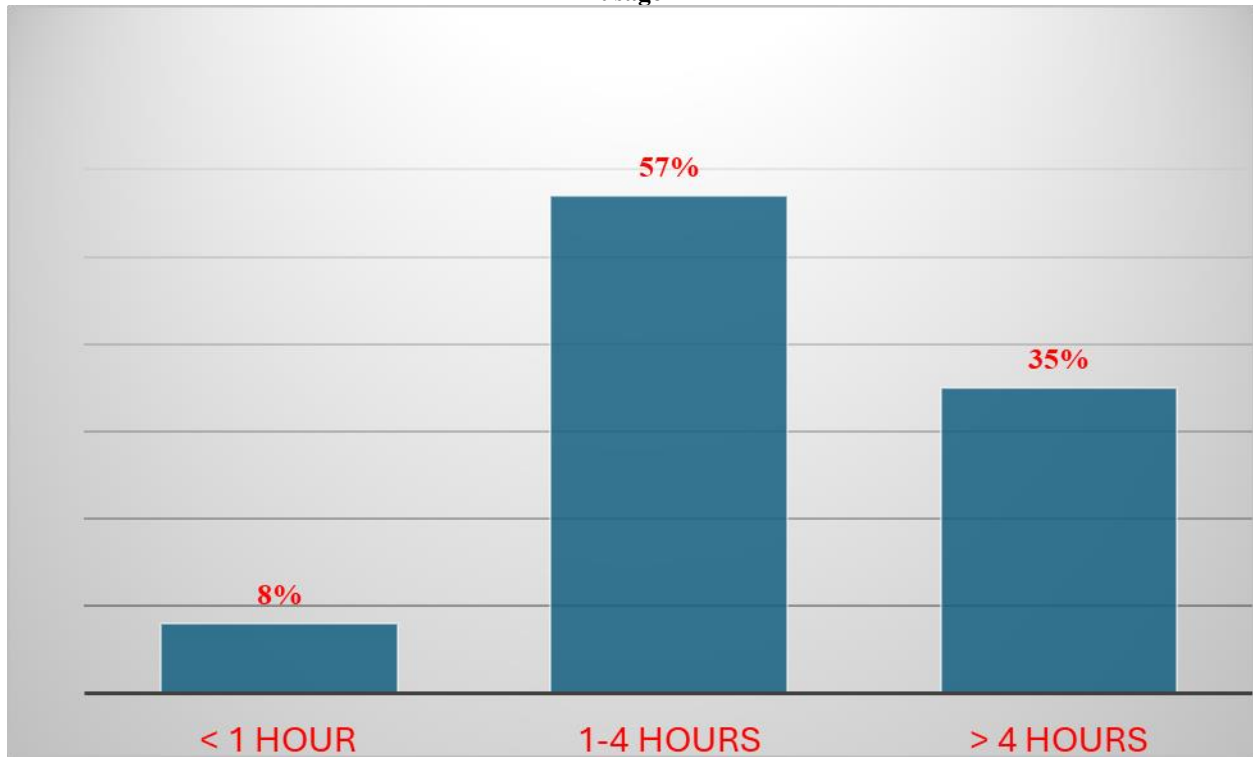


Figure 2 indicates the daily amount of time spent on social media by the students surveyed. Approximately 57% of the students use social media between 1 and 4 hours daily. Only 8% of the students use social media for less than an hour a day, while 35% of the students use social media for more than 4 hours a day.

Figure 3: Social Media Usage Ranking

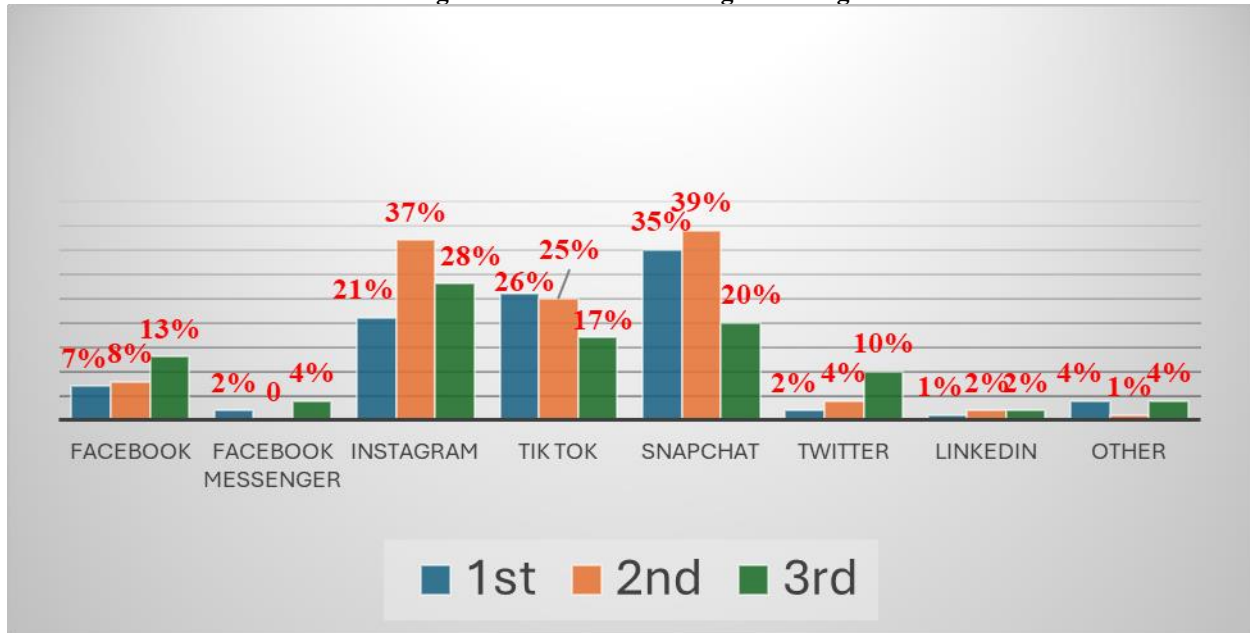
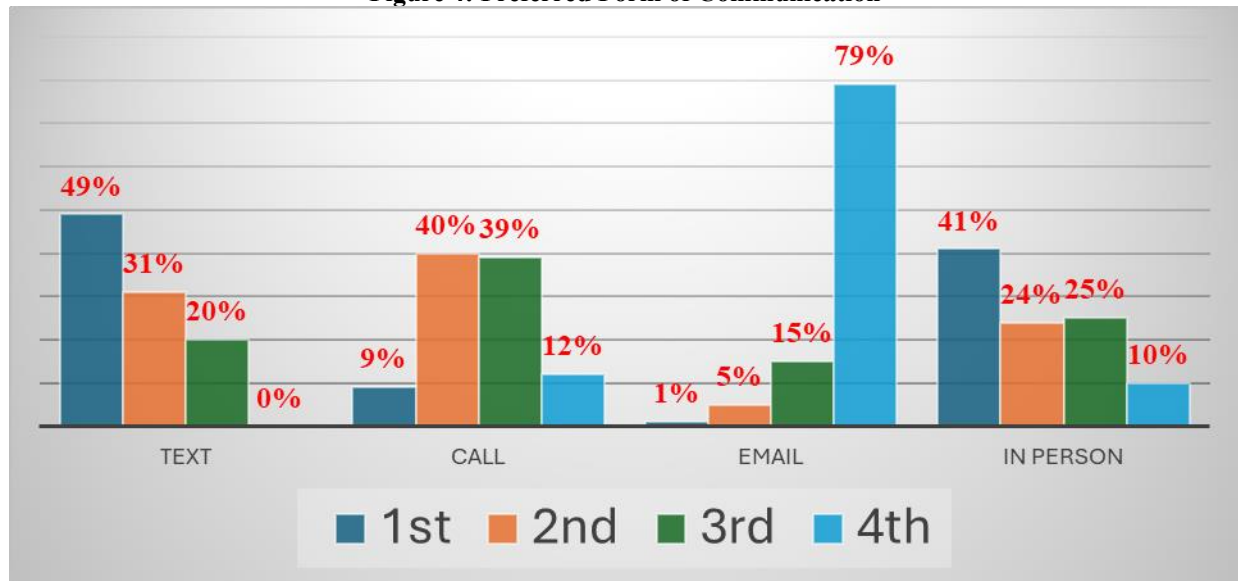


Figure 3 shows the social media usage rankings. The top three preferences of the students were Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. Thirty-five percent of the students ranked Snapchat as the most used form of social media, while 39% of the students listed Snapchat as the second most used social media. Twenty percent of the students rank Snapchat as the third most used social media. TikTok had the second most first-place usage with 26%. Instagram received the third most first-place usage with 21%. Thirty-seven percent of the students ranked Instagram second while 25% of the students ranked TikTok second. Twenty-eight percent of the students ranked Instagram third in usage, and 17% of the students indicated TikTok as being third. These three usages were by far the preferred usage of most of the students surveyed. Facebook only received 7% as the students' most used social media type, while Facebook Messenger, Twitter, and LinkedIn received 2%, 2%, and 1% respectively as the top-used form of social media. A few students listed other social media not listed as one of their top three social media used.

Students were asked to rank their preferred choice of communication tools among four choices: Text, Call, Email, and In Person. Figure 4 shows the rankings of these four communication tools as preferred by the students.

Figure 4: Preferred Form of Communication

The top choice ranking by the students for communication was texting. Communication through text messaging was the top choice of nearly half of all the students. In-person received the second highest ranking with 41%, while email and calling received a top ranking of 9% and 1%, respectively. Calling received the highest percentage of second choice with 40%, while texting received the next highest choice of being ranked second with 31%. Eighty percent of the students ranked texting as either first or second, and 65% of the students ranked in-person as either first or second. Forty percent of the students ranked call as second, while only 9% of the students ranked call as first. Seventy-nine percent of the students ranked Email as their last choice of preferred communication. A further study based on gender or emphasis may explain these differences.

DISCUSSION

It is evident that students are interested in connections to others, whether it be by text, email, calling, or in-person; therefore, suggestions for using social media in a classroom environment should be made. Those in administration and teaching positions can use social media to bridge that gap and connect with current and future students. Social media should be used to actively learn and help students succeed in college (Ravey, 2023).

Ravey (2023) says that questions that should be considered in effectively using social media are:

What are we trying to achieve?

Who are we trying to reach?

What interests does this audience have?

What is the content that should be shared and is relevant, engaging, and timely?

What platforms in social media will be used, making certain they are ones that students will use?

How frequently will you post?

How will you respond to comments, questions, live questions, and answers?

How will success be measured?

Be ready to use social media to make the connection you want with your students, and then also follow some “best practices” for the execution of student-centered social media. These best practices are suggested by Ravey (2023) in *Education Dynamics*:

1. **Create Engaging Content:** Informative, visually appealing, and engaging.
2. **Incorporate Student-Generated Content:** Encourage students to contribute their content.
3. **Encourage Peer-to-Peer Collaboration:** Discussion forums, group projects, and virtual study sessions can all be organized through social media, fostering a sense of camaraderie among students.
4. **Ensure Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Accessibility includes providing alt-text for images, closed video captions, and using inclusive language in written content.
5. **Provide Timely Feedback and Support (Analyze Student Sentiment):** Timely responses to questions, concerns, and feedback demonstrate that the institution is attentive to students’ needs.
6. **Online Learning Environment:** Institutions should have strict policies against bullying or inappropriate behavior on social media platforms. A positive atmosphere ensures students feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging with their peers.

Finally, collect feedback from the students to measure the success of these best practices. This feedback can be done on social media platforms because many provide spaces for opinions and concerns. Listen to the concerns and make adjustments to help engage and retain students. By being attentive to the concerns of students using social media, a positive online experience can be maintained (Ravey, 2023).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the relationship between students' social preferences and their usage and preferred communication within a college of business at a small university located in the southeastern region of the United States. The findings indicate that 97% of these business students use social media. Their top social media preferences were Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram. Additionally, these business students preferred texting and in-person communication rather than email. Business schools can use the findings of this study to develop social media usage within the classroom to better enhance the learning experience for their students.

The researchers conducted a literature review while proposing this topic for the study. During the literature review, it was found that there was a significant research gap in the literature concerning the influence of social media usage on the higher education skills of students, even though educational institutions were rapidly implementing those networks. Many academic institutions have implemented social media, but more research needs to be conducted regarding the impact of these networks on the professional development and management skills

of business students. This study helps to fill the gap by analyzing the usage of social media by business students, as well as their preferred forms of communication.

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