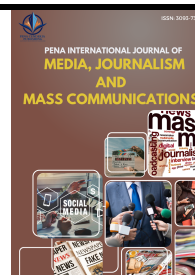




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The Importance of Social Media Content in Influencing Event Participation among Private University Students in The Klang Valley

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the importance of social media content in influencing event participation among private university students in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. A quantitative research approach was employed to examine the relationship between social media content and students' participation in events. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 387 private university students in the Klang Valley. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29. The findings reveal that social media content has a significant positive influence on event participation among private university students. Among the variables examined, social media content emerged as the strongest predictor of students' intention to participate in events, highlighting its crucial role in promoting and encouraging event engagement. These findings suggest that well-designed, relevant, and engaging social media content can effectively enhance students' interest in and attendance at events. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on social media marketing and provides practical insights for event organizers, higher education institutions, and marketers in developing more effective social media content strategies to increase event participation. The findings also serve as a valuable reference for future researchers investigating digital marketing and consumer engagement in the higher education context.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, social media has transformed our lives. According to Howe [5], Malaysia has shown a strong willingness to embrace the digital era, with consistent year-on-year increases in digital usage. Fig. 1 shows a 1.1% growth in online engagement, indicating that approximately 97.4% of the population has adopted and immersed themselves in the digital world. Additionally, there has been a 20% increase in social media users, reflecting the growing trend of individuals creating their own social media accounts. Among the population focused on online engagement, the most significant reach is among the younger demographic.

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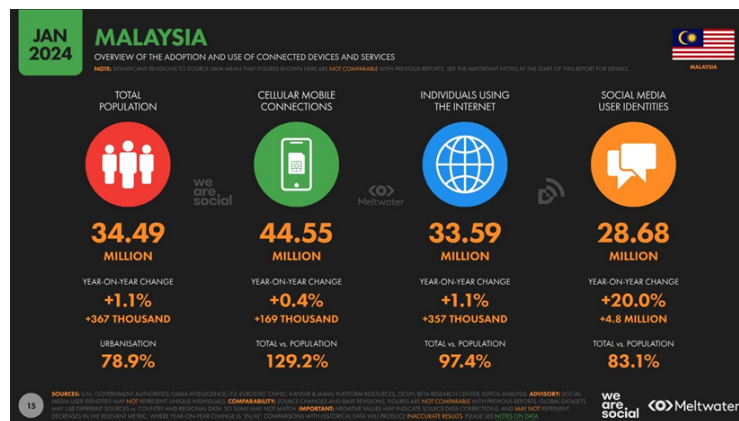


Fig. 1. Overview of the adoption and use of connected devices and services
Source by: Howe, 2024

Statista [13] and Armășelu and Deselnicu [1] reported that Malaysia ranks third in terms of average daily time spent on social media, with individuals spending around two and a half hours on various platforms each day. Howe [5] corroborates this, noting a 0.7% increase in the average time spent on social media, which highlights Malaysians' steady engagement with these platforms.

2. Methodology

A research approach refers to the overall plan or strategy that outlines how a study is conducted, including the methods used to narrow down broad concepts into specific procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. As defined by Creswell [3], research approaches are typically classified into three main categories: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Each approach is chosen based on the nature of the research problem and the type of data required.

This study will adopt a quantitative approach, which focuses on gaining in-depth understanding of human behavior, experiences, and the underlying reasons behind certain patterns or actions. Specifically, it will explore the causal relationships between variables by interpreting patterns, opinions, and perspectives from participants. The quantitative method is particularly suitable for this study as it allows for a more flexible, detailed examination of how social media influences event participation, capturing insights that may not be easily quantified. Through this approach, the researcher can delve deeper into the context and meaning behind the data, leading to more comprehensive findings.

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to collect data from the selected participants. The questionnaire was developed based on findings and variables identified from previous studies and was designed to obtain relevant information regarding the relationship between social media content and event participation. The questionnaire was divided into seven questions. These categories consisted of screening questions, demographic information, and key areas related specifically to social media content and its influence on event participation. Each category contained questions designed to measure specific variables relevant to the research objectives.

Participants were given a structured questionnaire comprising multiple questions, organized into seven questions informed by findings from prior research. These categories include screening questions, demographic information, and key areas such as social media content. Each category corresponds to specific variables required to address the research objectives, ensuring that the data collected is both relevant and comprehensive for analysing the relationships between social media content factors and event participation.

2.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was carefully designed with concise and straightforward questions, avoiding any leading language. To reduce hesitation among respondents, a neutral question was included. Most questions were closed-ended to allow for quick and efficient completion (Blaxter et al. [2]). The survey is organized into three main sections: Section A features screening questions to confirm whether participants are university students, ensuring the data collected is relevant to the study's target group. Section B collects demographic details, including age and gender. Section C focuses on the core of the study, presenting questions that explore respondents' perceptions of how social media influences event participation.

Table 1
Social Media Content Independent Variable

No	Question	Source
SMC 1	I frequently encounter event-related content on my social media feeds.	Moran, Muzellec, and Johnson [6], Shahbaznezhad, Dolan, and Rashidirad [11]
SMC 2	I find event-related content on social media more appealing when it includes real-time updates (e.g., live streaming, countdowns).	
SMC 3	Event-related content on social media that includes interactive elements (e.g., polls, quizzes) makes me more likely to engage.	
SMC 4	I am more likely to engage with event-related content that is visually appealing (e.g., well-designed graphics or videos).	
SMC 5	I am likely to attend an event based on the content shared by the event organizer on social media.	

2.3 Pilot Test

A pilot test will be carried out before the main study is conducted in order to evaluate the reliability and clarity of the research instruments, particularly the questionnaire. The purpose of this pilot test is to identify and address any potential issues such as ambiguous wording, confusing layout, or technical difficulties that may affect the quality of the data collection process.

For this pilot test, the questionnaire will be distributed to a small sample of 30 participants who are similar in characteristics to the actual target population of university students. Their feedback will help determine whether the questions are easily understood, logically arranged, and relevant to the research objectives. Additionally, data from the pilot test can be used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire using statistical methods such as Cronbach's alpha, which measures internal consistency. If the reliability score is acceptable (typically above 0.7), it indicates that the questionnaire is suitable for use in the full study.

Table 2
Reliability Test of Social Media Content

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.718	5

Based on the table above, there is a total five items (questions). The Cronbach's Alpha of the overall result is 0.718, which result the data of overall is being analyzed reliable as it is above 70%.

3. Findings

3.1 Age

Based on Fig. 2, the majority of respondents, 198 (51.2%), were between 22 to 25 years old. This was followed by 108 respondents (27.9%) aged between 18 to 21 years, while 77 respondents (19.9%) were below 18 years old. Only 4 respondents (1.0%) were aged 26 years and above. Overall, the findings indicate that the respondents were predominantly within the 18–25 age range, with the 22–25 age group representing the largest proportion of the sample.

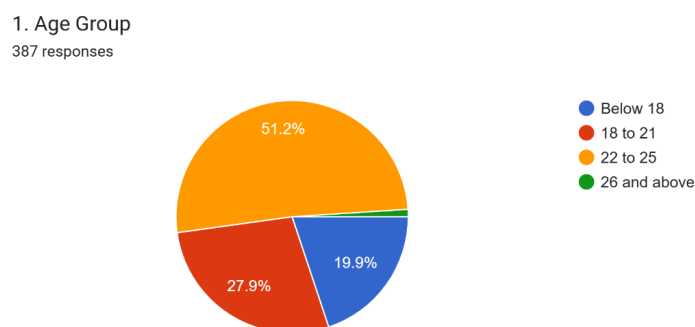


Fig. 2. Percentage of Age

3.2 Gender

Based on Fig. 3, 197 respondents (50.9%) were female, while 190 respondents (49.1%) were male. The findings indicate a relatively balanced gender distribution among the respondents, suggesting that the survey captured perspectives from both male and female participants fairly.

2. Gender
387 responses

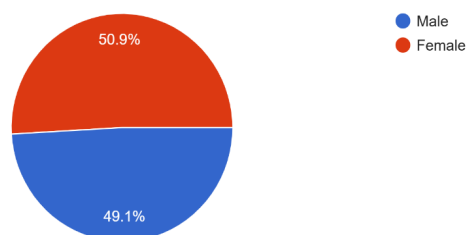


Fig. 3. Percentage of Gender

Based on Fig. 3, 197 respondents (50.9%) were female, while 190 respondents (49.1%) were male. The findings indicate a relatively balanced gender distribution among the respondents, suggesting that the survey captured perspectives from both male and female participants fairly.

3.3 Education Level

Based on Fig. 4, the majority of respondents, 210 (54.3%), held a degree qualification, making it the most common educational qualification among the respondents. This was followed by 92 respondents (23.8%) who held a diploma, while 77 respondents (19.9%) had completed foundation-level studies. Only 8 respondents (2.1%) held a master's degree, representing the smallest proportion of the sample. Overall, the findings indicate that most respondents had attained degree-level qualifications or below.

3. What is your level of education?
387 responses

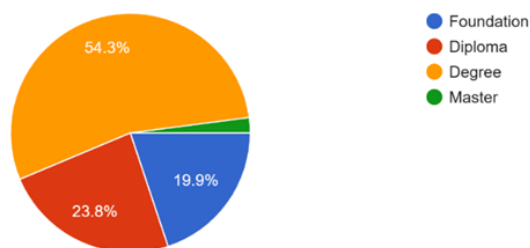


Fig. 4. Percentage of Education Level

3.4 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are statistical methods used to summarize, organize, and describe the main features of a dataset. They help present data in a meaningful way without drawing conclusions or making predictions beyond the data collected.

3.4.1 Social Media Content

The responses to social media content indicate a generally high level of agreement, with mean scores ranging from 3.99 to 4.28. Among the items, SMC3 recorded the highest mean score of 4.28, suggesting that the quality and relevance of social media content may play an important role in influencing respondents' engagement. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents perceived the social media content positively.

Table 3
Social Media Content

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMC1	387	1.00	5.00	3.9922	.89757
SMC2	387	1.00	5.00	4.2274	1.00773
SMC3	387	1.00	5.00	4.2817	.95263
SMC4	387	1.00	5.00	4.1292	.86609
SMC5	387	1.00	5.00	4.0568	.90587
Valid N (listwise)	387				

3.5 Reliability Test

A reliability test is a statistical procedure used to determine the consistency and stability of a measurement instrument, such as a questionnaire. It assesses whether the items used to measure the same construct produce consistent results. In quantitative research, Cronbach's Alpha (α) is one of the most commonly used methods to assess the internal consistency reliability of questionnaire items.

3.5.1 Social Media Content

As shown in the table above, the reliability analysis for the independent variable Social Media Content (SMC) indicates that the five items used to measure this variable demonstrate acceptable consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha value suggests a moderate level of reliability, as values above 0.7 are generally considered acceptable in social science research. This confirms that the scale is sufficiently reliable for measuring Social Media Content (IV1).

Table 4
Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SMC1	16.6951	7.073	.551	.675
SMC2	16.4599	6.399	.607	.649
SMC3	16.4057	7.382	.429	.721
SMC4	16.5581	7.931	.375	.737
SMC5	16.6305	7.047	.550	.675

3.6 Coefficients

In multiple regression analysis, the coefficients indicate the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the relationship between each independent variable (IV1) and the dependent variable (DV).

3.6.1 Social Media Content

The results of the regression analysis indicate that the independent variables related to Social Media Content (IV1) have a statistically significant influence on the dependent variable, event participation, as indicated by their respective p-values, all of which are below the 0.05 significance level. Furthermore, the standardized Beta coefficients indicate the relative strength of each independent variable in predicting event participation. Among the variables, Social Media Content (IV1) emerged as the most influential factor, with a Beta coefficient of 0.487. This finding suggests that social media content has the strongest positive effect on event participation, indicating that more effective and engaging social media content is associated with a higher likelihood of participation in events.

Table 5
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.336	.137		2.457	.014	.067	.605
	IV1	.531	.063	.487	8.489	<.001	.408	.654

3.7 Normality Test

A normality test is a statistical procedure used to determine whether a set of data follows, or approximately follows, a normal distribution (bell-shaped distribution). In academic research,

normality testing is commonly conducted to assess whether the data meet the assumptions required for certain parametric statistical analyses, such as regression, correlation, t-tests, and ANOVA.

3.7.1 Social Media Content

The histogram with the normal curve provides a visual check of normality for IV1. The distribution shows most values concentrated around 4.0 and 5.0, indicating a deviation from normality. This aligns with the skewness (-1.722) and kurtosis (2.178) values, which suggest a non-normal distribution. However, since the sample size is large ($n > 200$), minor deviations from normality are generally acceptable [4].

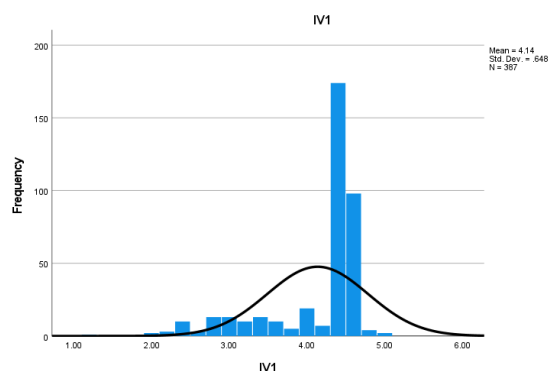


Fig. 5. Histogram Social Media Content

3.7.2 Normality Test Event Participation

For the dependent variable (DV), the histogram indicates that most responses were concentrated between 4.0 and 5.0. The skewness value of -1.284 and kurtosis value of 1.049 suggest a deviation from a normal distribution. Nevertheless, given the relatively large sample size ($n = 387$), minor deviations from normality may be considered acceptable, as larger samples are generally more robust to violations of the normality assumption [4].

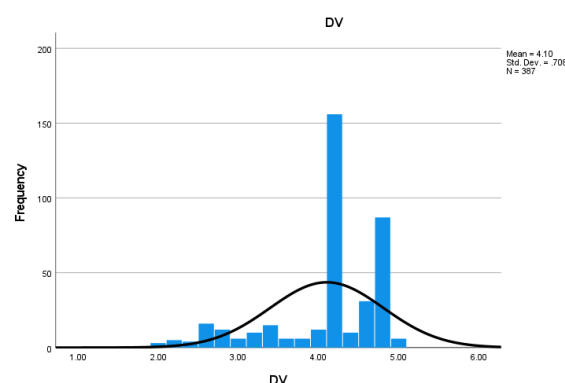


Fig. 6. Histogram Event Participation (Dependent Variable)

3.8 QQ Plot

A Q–Q plot is a graphical technique used to evaluate the normality of a dataset by comparing the observed values (sample quantiles) with the expected values (theoretical quantiles) of a normal distribution. If the data points are approximately aligned along a straight diagonal line, the data can be considered to follow an approximately normal distribution. Significant deviations from the diagonal line may indicate that the data are not normally distributed.

3.8.1 Social Media Content

The Normal Q-Q Plot for IV1 (Social Media Content) shows how the observed data compares to a perfectly normal distribution. However, the dots noticeably deviate from the line especially at the lower and higher ends that indicating that the data does not follow a normal distribution. Specifically, the curve of the points suggests a negative skew, meaning that more respondents gave higher ratings.

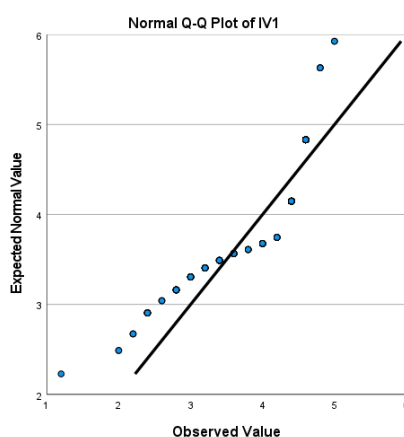


Fig. 7. QQ Plot Social Media Content

3.8.2 Event Participation

The Normal Q-Q Plot for Dependent Variable (Event Participation) shows how well the data aligns with a normal distribution. Ideally, in a normal distribution, the points would fall along the diagonal line. However, in this case, the data points noticeably stray from the line at both the lower and upper ends. The pattern shows a downward curve at the start and a sharp rise at the end, indicating a negative skew. This suggests that the majority of respondents gave higher ratings to the items related to social media platforms.

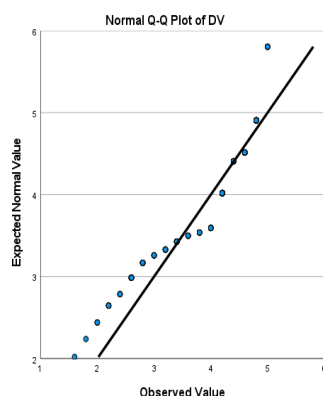


Fig. 8. QQ Plot Event Participation

4. Conclusion

Social media has emerged as an increasingly important communication and engagement tool for promoting events and influencing student participation. This study aimed to examine the impact of social media content on event participation among students in private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley. Through the application of appropriate statistical analyses, including descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, histogram, and Q-Q plot assessments, the study provided empirical evidence regarding the relationship between social media content and students' event participation.

The findings demonstrate that social media content has a significant and positive influence on student event participation. The Pearson correlation analysis indicated a strong positive relationship between social media content and event participation, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.797$. This finding suggests that students who perceive social media content as informative, engaging, relevant, and attractive are more likely to participate in events. Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis revealed that social media content recorded the highest standardised beta coefficient $\beta = 0.497$, indicating that it was the strongest predictor among the independent variables examined in this study. These findings provide empirical support for the importance of social media content in shaping students' willingness to participate in events.

The significant influence of social media content may be attributed to the ability of well-designed digital content to capture students' attention, communicate event information efficiently, and generate interest and anticipation. In particular, interactive, visually appealing, informative, and frequently updated content may encourage students to engage more actively with event promotions. Content such as short videos, images, infographics, testimonials, and interactive posts can provide students with a clearer understanding of the event while simultaneously creating emotional interest and perceived excitement. This interpretation is consistent with Rahman [9], who highlighted the importance of engaging social media content in encouraging audience interaction and event-related engagement. Similarly, Rahim [8] demonstrated that well-developed social media content can contribute significantly to higher engagement levels and influence behavioural responses.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that universities and event organisers should regard social media content not merely as a supplementary promotional channel but as a strategic component of event marketing. Greater emphasis should be placed on developing content

that is visually appealing, informative, interactive, timely, and relevant to students' interests. Consistent content updates may also help maintain students' awareness and interest throughout the event promotional period. By adopting a more strategic approach to social media content development, universities may strengthen communication with students, increase engagement, and ultimately encourage higher levels of event participation.

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence that social media content plays a significant and influential role in student event participation within the context of private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley. The strong correlation and regression findings demonstrate that the quality and effectiveness of social media content are important considerations when seeking to influence students' participation behaviour. Nevertheless, student event participation is a multifaceted behaviour and may also be shaped by other personal, social, and situational factors. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the variables and population examined in this study. Overall, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating the strategic value of social media content in enhancing student engagement and provides a practical foundation for universities and event organisers to develop more effective and student-centred event promotion strategies.

4.1 Limitation of the study

Although this study provides valuable empirical insights into the influence of social media content on student event participation, several limitations should be acknowledged. These limitations are important in defining the scope of the findings and should be considered when interpreting their generalisability and implications.

Firstly, the study was conducted exclusively among students from private universities in the Klang Valley. This geographical and institutional focus may limit the generalisability of the findings to students from public universities, other regions of Malaysia, or different educational and cultural contexts. Students from different institutions may differ in terms of demographic characteristics, socioeconomic backgrounds, access to technology, social media usage patterns, and attitudes towards university events. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the behaviour of the broader Malaysian student population. Future research should consider expanding the sampling frame to include both public and private higher education institutions across different regions to enhance the representativeness and external validity of the findings.

Secondly, the multiple regression model explains 67.3% of the variance in event participation, while the remaining 32.7% remains unexplained. Although an explanatory power of 67.3% indicates that the variables included in the model provide substantial explanatory value, the unexplained proportion suggests that other determinants of student event participation may not have been captured in the present study. Student participation is a complex behavioural outcome that may be influenced by various personal, social, and situational factors. These may include personal interests, perceived relevance of the event, event accessibility, financial constraints, peer influence, previous event experiences, time availability, and perceived benefits of participation. The omission of such variables may therefore limit the comprehensiveness of the research model. Future studies should consider incorporating additional predictors to provide a more holistic explanation of the factors influencing student event participation.

Thirdly, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, whereby data were collected at a single point in time. While this approach is appropriate for examining relationships among variables within a specific period, it does not capture changes in students' social media behaviour or event participation over time. This limitation is particularly relevant because social media platforms,

content trends, algorithms, and user preferences are continuously evolving. Consequently, the relationships identified in the present study may change as students' social media consumption patterns and preferences develop. In addition, a cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish temporal relationships between exposure to social media content and subsequent event participation. Future research could employ a longitudinal design to examine these relationships across different periods and provide greater insight into changes in student behaviour over time.

Finally, the study does not differentiate between specific social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. This represents a limitation because each platform has distinctive features, algorithms, user demographics, communication styles, and content formats that may influence student engagement differently. For instance, students may respond differently to short-form video content on TikTok compared with image-based or informational content on Instagram or Facebook. By examining social media content as a general construct, the study may not fully capture these platform-specific differences. Future research should therefore examine individual platforms separately to determine which platforms and content formats are most effective in generating student engagement and encouraging event participation.

Overall, these limitations do not diminish the significance of the findings but instead establish the boundaries within which the results should be interpreted. Addressing these limitations in future research through broader and more diverse samples, additional explanatory variables, longitudinal research designs, and platform-specific analyses could strengthen the robustness, generalisability, and explanatory power of future studies. Such approaches would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influences student behaviour and event participation within the higher education context.

4.2 Recommendations

Future research should consider several avenues to further expand and deepen the understanding of the influence of social media on student event participation. First, future studies should consider increasing the sample size and broadening the research scope to include students from both public and private higher education institutions across different geographical regions. A more diverse sample would enhance the generalisability of the findings and provide broader insights into how social media influences event participation across different cultural, demographic, and institutional contexts.

Second, future research should undertake a platform-specific analysis to examine the varying effects of different social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. As each platform possesses distinctive features, user demographics, communication styles, and content formats, examining these differences may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how specific platforms influence students' awareness, engagement, and participation in events. Such findings could assist universities and event organisers in developing more targeted and effective social media promotional strategies.

Furthermore, future studies should investigate the influence of different types of influencers and content formats on student engagement and event attendance. In particular, comparisons between micro-influencers and macro-influencers could provide valuable insights into the relative effectiveness of influencer credibility, reach, and audience engagement. Similarly, examining the effectiveness of different content formats, including short-form videos, images, stories, and live-streaming content, could contribute to a better understanding of how content characteristics influence students' attitudes and behavioural intentions towards event participation.

Additionally, future research should incorporate other potential determinants of event participation, including event accessibility, financial constraints, transportation availability, and offline promotional activities. These factors may influence students' decisions to attend events and could provide a more comprehensive explanation of participation behaviour. In particular, examining the interaction between online and offline marketing strategies would enable researchers to determine how these approaches complement one another and collectively contribute to event awareness, engagement, and attendance.

Finally, comparative research could examine the influence of social media across different categories of events, including academic conferences, sports events, cultural festivals, career-related events, and recreational activities. Such comparisons could determine whether the effectiveness of social media promotion varies according to event type, purpose, or target audience. By addressing these areas, future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media, student behaviour, and event participation. The findings could subsequently contribute to the development of more evidence-based and targeted promotional strategies for higher education institutions and event organisers.

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