



Social media use for everyday life information: Information-seeking behavior of Saudi university students



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ABSTRACT

This study explored how students at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia use social media to find information for everyday life. It compared how often students use social media and how much they trust it, in comparison to other information sources. The study also identified which social media platforms are used most and what types of everyday life information they provide. In addition, it looked at how students search for information on each platform. The research further explored how gender affects the use of social media for these purposes. Data was collected through an online survey of 585 undergraduate students (363 males and 222 females) and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that social media was the second most used source of everyday information, after web search engines, but was the least trusted. WhatsApp was the most commonly used platform, while Twitter was considered the most trustworthy. The study analyzed information-seeking behavior across eight everyday life topics and ten social media platforms, showing different patterns of use for each. Gender had a significant effect: female students used social media more often, trusted it more, and found it more useful. Gender also influenced which information topics were important, which platforms were preferred, and how students searched for information.

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1. Introduction

The evolving nature of social media has transformed it into a multifaceted channel for everyday life information as people shift between purposeful searches and unplanned encounters, which requires us to re-examine how we define information-seeking in the broader landscape of information behavior. The evolution of information-seeking terminology in research has progressed from a broad term encompassing what is now known as information behavior to a more specific aspect of information behavior. According to [Given et al. \(2023\)](#), information-seeking is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in one's knowledge, through reading, conversation, observing, or various other ways to locate information. This study emphasizes that the

concept of information seeking used here goes beyond purposive seeking. It includes a broad range of activities, from active searching to passive reception. This also covers "unintentional discovery," which may occur through serendipitous encounters or accidental findings ([Foster, 2004](#)). To capture this broader scope, we adopt [McKenzie's \(2003\)](#) model, which identifies four modes of information seeking: active seeking, active scanning, non-directed monitoring, and seeking by proxy, each involving stages of connecting and interacting.

Referring to the fact that the majority of studies of information-seeking behavior focused on work-related or research-related information-seeking behavior, while studies of information-seeking related to everyday life are scarce, [Savolainen \(1995\)](#) suggested designating Everyday life information-seeking (ELIS) for non-work or study information-seeking and defined it as follows: The acquisition of various informational elements, which people employ to orient themselves in daily lives or to solve problems not directly connected with the performance of professional tasks or full-time study.

[Savolainen \(1995\)](#) suggested a model that provides a theoretical and methodological framework for researching the topic of ELIS which

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led to the use of this model in many studies which shaped the development of ELIS research, such as [Prigoda and McKenzie \(2007\)](#), who focused on the information-seeking behavior of everyday life in a public library knitting hobby group, and [Agosto and Hughes-Hassell \(2005\)](#) study which dealt with the behavior of the new generation of young people in searching for everyday life information, followed by [Agosto and Hughes-Hassell \(2006\)](#) who developed a theoretical and empirical model of adolescents' everyday life information needs. [McKenzie's \(2003\)](#) study observed that information-seeking behavior studies focus on active information-seeking and ignore indirect practices. This study provided a model that categorized information-seeking practices into four modes: active seeking, active scanning, non-directed monitoring, and by Proxy. Each mode has two stages: the first stage is connecting, and the second is interacting. Many later studies have applied [McKenzie's \(2003\)](#) model. For example, [Yeoman \(2010\)](#) examined its relevance to

information-seeking behaviors during the menopause transition, while others investigated its use in understanding how college students engage with social networking sites to find health and wellness information.

To cope with the rapid developments in digital information sources and everyday life information-seeking research, [Savolainen \(1995\)](#) kept revisiting and enhancing his 1995 model. The first time in [Savolainen's \(2008\)](#) book, where he renamed it to the Everyday life information practices model, with many modifications, one of which is the adoption of [McKenzie's \(2003\)](#) information-seeking practices and the second time in 2021 when [Savolainen and Thomson \(2021\)](#) expanded the model suggested in 2008 to include the information creation practices, see [Fig. 1](#). In our study, we adopt the expanded Everyday information practices model as it best serves the study of the information practices used with social media for everyday life information.

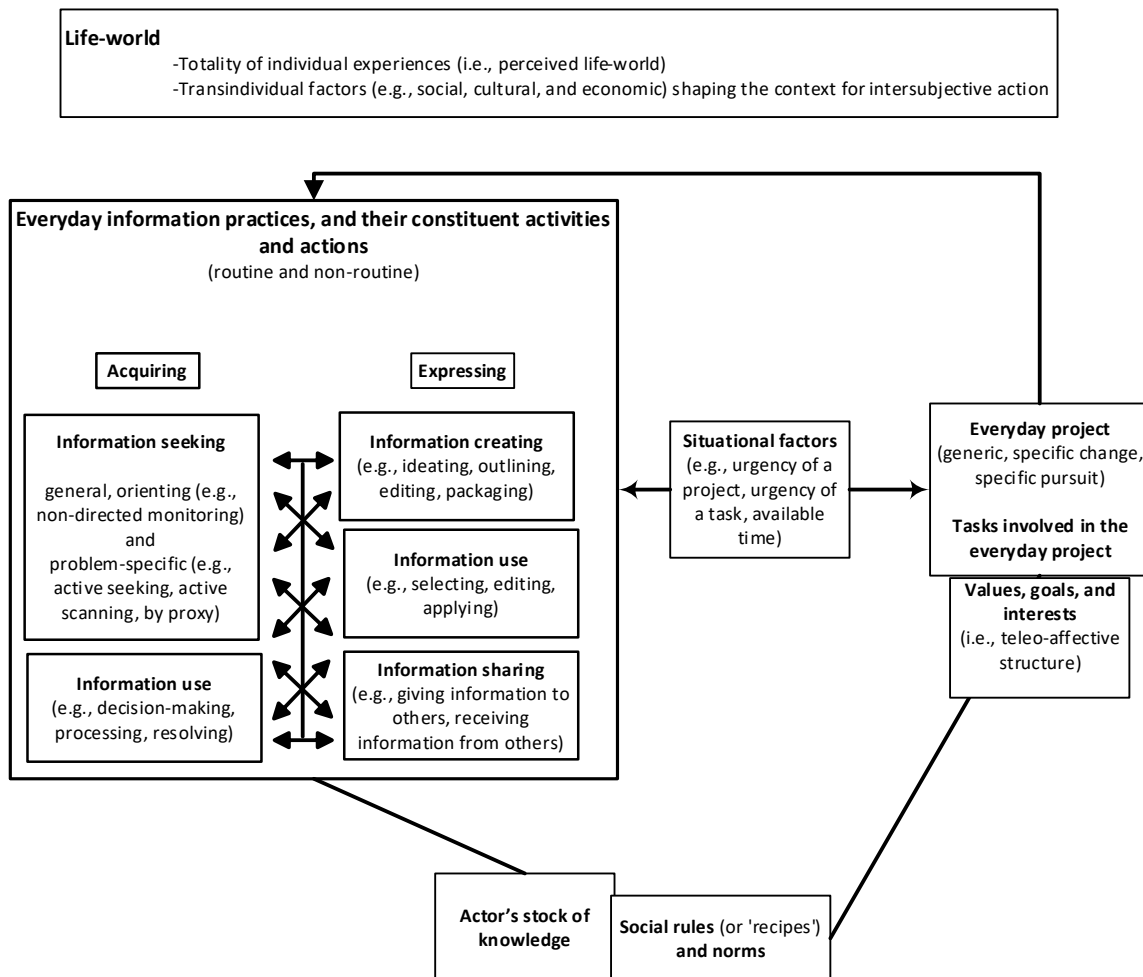


Fig. 1: Expanded everyday life information practices model ([Savolainen and Thomson, 2021](#))

ELIS research examined the evolving impact of digital information sources, particularly the Internet, on everyday information-seeking. For example, the study of [Rieh et al. \(2010\)](#) dealt with the home as an environment for using information and identified the characteristics and behaviors of searching for information on the web in the home.

2. Literature review

With the spread of social media platforms, their role has emerged in many studies, such as [Sin and Kim \(2013\)](#), which dealt with using scholarship students of social networking sites in everyday life information. The study mainly relied on a

questionnaire to explore the most important information needs of scholarship students, the extent of their use of social networking sites for everyday life information, and the level of usefulness of this information in meeting their daily needs. Kim et al. (2014) explored the use of social media as information sources by undergraduates in both academic and three everyday-life information-seeking domains, namely health, news, and leisure. In a subsequent study by Sin (2016), the focus was on informational problems in the results of searching for information on everyday life on social media.

Bartlett et al. (2020) compared undergraduate students at McGill University's social media use with other information sources for three domains of ELIS, health, leisure, and news versus academic information, where social media came at the top for leisure and news against other information sources. When comparing platforms, Facebook and YouTube followed Google search as the search tool for leisure and news.

COVID-19 has encouraged research on how social media platforms facilitate ELIS, particularly in health. When Masambuka-Kanchewa et al. (2024) compared multiple social media platforms using an online questionnaire with 1,048 U.S. respondents, they found that Facebook had the highest daily or more usage (70%), followed by Instagram (49%) and Twitter (37%). In contrast, Snapchat (18%), Pinterest (14%), and TikTok (13%) had lower usage rates.

While some studies have concentrated on a single platform, such as TikTok, Kirkpatrick and Zorina (2024) examined TikTok as a source of health information and misinformation among young women in the United States. Using an online questionnaire with 1026 respondents, they found that most young female users of TikTok obtain health information from the platform, either intentionally (65.5%) or unintentionally (92.4%), while 98% believe that misinformation is prevalent on the platform. Beyond health, information-seeking in other domains of everyday life has also garnered scholarly attention. For instance, Macías Urrego et al. (2024) surveyed 214 college students and recent graduates in Colombia to analyze social media's role in pre-purchase research. 92.5% used social media to obtain information before making a shopping decision, and Instagram 64%, Facebook 15%, and YouTube, 13% were the preferred platforms.

For the Saudi Arabian context, information-seeking studies covered social media as an information source in rare cases and specific contexts, such as for usage for learning purposes, as in Alamri (2019), who studied Saudi undergraduate students' perceptions of social media and their academic performance. Or for health information-seeking for different demographics like health care professionals (Almaiman et al., 2015), patients (Iftikhar and Abaalkhail, 2017), or undergraduate students (Abdoh, 2022) and residents of Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 (Alshareef et al., 2021).

From the literature reviewed, we can conclude that studies on ELIS, especially in Saudi Arabia, lack an understanding of how university students use multiple social media platforms to meet their diverse information needs. This study explores students' platform preferences, perceived trustworthiness, engagement patterns, and gender-based differences to improve educational practices and information provision services for Saudi university students.

This study examines the use of social media as a source of everyday life information among university students in Saudi Arabia. It seeks to identify the most utilized social media platforms for this purpose, determine the areas of everyday life where social media is frequently used, and evaluate their perceived trustworthiness, usefulness, and ease of use for accessing everyday life information. Additionally, the study explores potential gender differences in these aspects. The study aims to explore the following research questions:

- How frequently do Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) students use social media to acquire everyday life information, and how trustworthy do they perceive the obtained information compared to other sources?
- What are the most popular social media platforms among IMSIU students, and how do they perceive the ease of use and their level of trust in the everyday life information they gain?
- What are the information practices used by IMSIU students for seeking everyday life information on social media platforms?
- In what domains of everyday life do IMSIU students use social media platforms? What is the level of their perceived usefulness of the information they gained in each domain?
- How does using social media platforms as a source of everyday life information differ between male and female students?

3. Study methodology and data collection

The study used a descriptive approach with survey tools. An electronic questionnaire was peer-reviewed by three information science academics, who evaluated item clarity, relevance to research objectives, and potential response biases. Based on their feedback, three questions were reworded for clarity, and one new question was added. The questionnaire was then tested with a pilot group of 10 undergraduate students from various disciplines to check its clarity and completion time, leading to further minor revisions to two questions.

The final version of the questionnaire began with definitions of everyday life information and social media platforms, followed by eleven closed-ended questions in total: three demographic questions and eight questions aligned with the research objectives. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to collect data from IMSIU students from Apr to Jul 2023, and to maximize the response rate, faculty members across eight colleges were requested to

forward the questionnaire to their undergraduate students.

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 25, where descriptive statistics, means, and percentages were used, and when differences were reported, Chi-square tests were used for categorical data, and t-tests were used for scale data.

The study was limited to students from a single university (IMSIU) due to practical considerations. Although IMSIU is among Saudi Arabia's most prominent universities, findings may have limited generalizability, and potential self-selection bias inherent in online surveys should also be acknowledged. Additionally, differences in academic disciplines, socioeconomic status, and internet access were not directly measured but could have influenced results. Future research should address these factors explicitly.

4. Results

Of the 585 responses received, 363 (62%) were male, and 222 (38%) were female. While the responses were distributed among ten colleges, 98% of the responses were concentrated in five colleges. The College of Social Sciences came in first with a total of 358 responses with a percentage of 61%, then the College of Computer and Information Sciences with a total of 100 responses at a rate of 17%, then both the College of Economics and Administrative Sciences with a total of 46 responses at 8% each, and in fifth place is the College of Fundamentals of Religion, with 24 responses, at a rate of 4%. The remaining 11 responses were

distributed among the remaining colleges. The responses came from all eight academic levels of undergraduate students, and the sixth-level students had the largest share at 22%, while the lowest share was for the fourth-level students.

4.1. Frequency of use and perceived trustworthiness of social media as a source of everyday life information

Analyzing the respondents' answers to the question to rate the frequency of use of different sources of everyday life information (1 is never or seldom, and 5 is always), see [Table 1](#). Web search engines came as the most frequently used source for everyday life information, with a 3.86 score, followed by social media in second position with a 3.59 score. Next, human sources of information as "friends and family" and "experts and specialists," with 3.47 and 2.91, respectively, then electronic books and newspapers. Traditional information sources such as printed books and newspapers, libraries, radio, and television are used less frequently, indicating the shift towards digital sources of information for everyday life.

A significant gender difference in five cases as females reported higher use frequency four times for the three top sources of web search engines, social media and family and friends (4.20, 3.85, 3.47, respectively) compared to males (3.65, 3.42, 3.38, respectively) in addition to lesser used libraries 2.37 vs 2.12, while males reported higher use frequency only once, for radio and television (2.26) compared to female students (2.02) as illustrated in [Fig. 2](#).

Table 1: Frequency of use of information sources for everyday life information

Source	All	Female	Male	P-value	Sig
Web search engines	3.86	4.2	3.65	<0.01	*
Social media platforms	3.59	3.85	3.42	<0.01	*
Friends and family	3.47	3.62	3.38	0.02	*
Experts and specialists	2.91	3	2.86	0.18	
Electronic Books and Newspapers	2.83	2.87	2.81	0.55	
Printed Books and Newspapers	2.3	2.24	2.34	0.31	
Libraries	2.21	2.37	2.12	0.01	*
Radio and television	2.17	2.02	2.26	0.01	*

*: $p < 0.05$

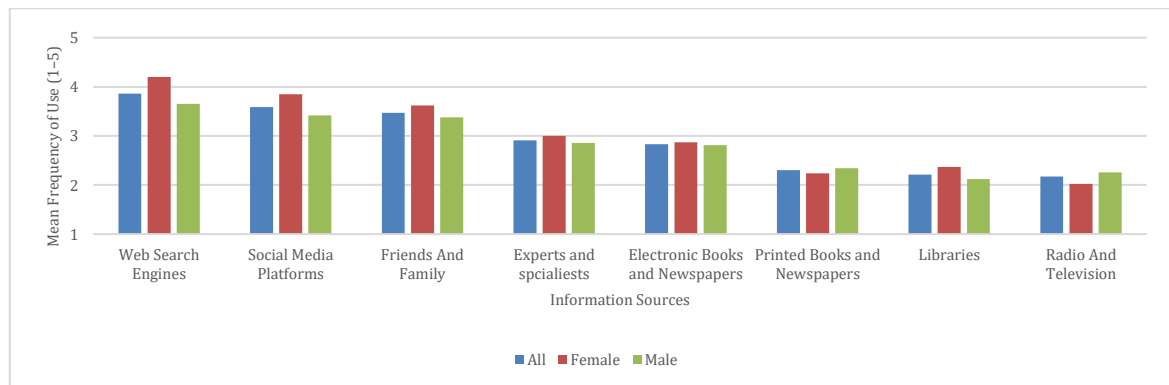


Fig. 2: Frequency of use of information sources for everyday life information

When they were asked to evaluate the level of trust in everyday life information they get from each information source—where 5 represents the highest degree of trust and 1 represents the lowest degree of

trust—shown in [Table 2](#) and illustrated in [Fig. 3](#). The reported trust ranged from 2.72 to 3.91 out of 5, with the least trust for social media platforms at 2.72, while experts have the highest score of 3.91,

followed by printed books and newspapers with 3.62 then libraries with 3.55, showing that students continue to trust traditional sources of information. Web search engines have a score of 3.12, while friends and family have a score of 3.08.

Here, it is noticeable that social media usage frequency and trust level for IMSIU students differ significantly: 3.59 vs 2.72, indicating that Students often use social media for information, but many doubt its accuracy. This pattern is seen across genders, suggesting a cautious approach to social

media as an information source. The greater use of social media as an information source among the surveyed demographic was not influenced by their lower level of trust in it for everyday life information. This may be attributed to the convenience and accessibility of social media, similar to family and friends, which encourages frequent use despite low trust. Nevertheless, trust remains higher in more traditional and authoritative sources of everyday information, regardless of how often they are used.

Table 2: Trust in everyday life information sources

Information source	All	Female	Male	P-value	Sig
Experts and specialists	3.91	4.15	3.77	<0.01	*
Printed books and newspapers	3.62	3.92	3.43	<0.01	*
Libraries	3.55	3.76	3.42	<0.01	*
Electronic books and newspapers	3.43	3.57	3.35	0.03	*
Radio and television	3.15	3.28	3.06	0.06	
Web search engines	3.12	3.20	3.07	0.20	
Friends and family	3.08	3.10	3.07	0.76	
Social media platforms	2.72	2.82	2.66	0.10	

*: $p < 0.05$

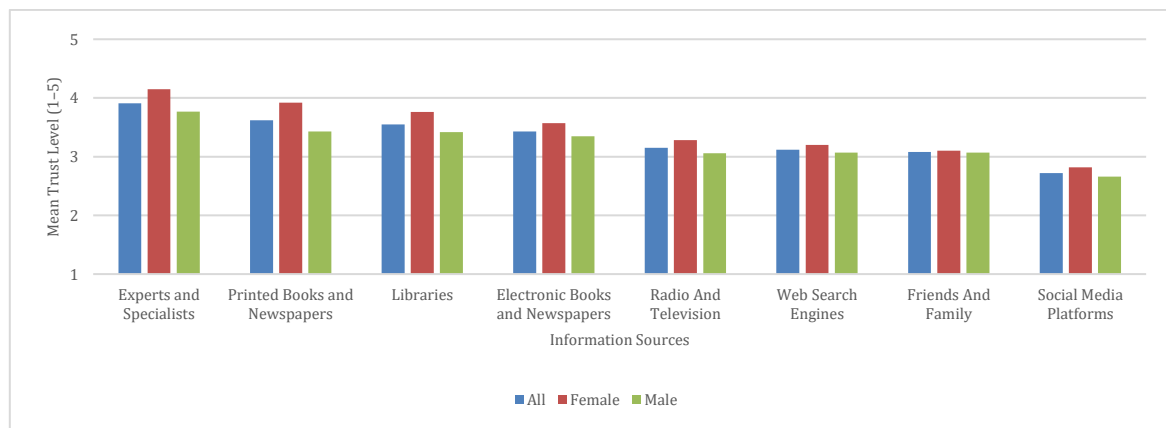


Fig. 3: Trust in everyday life information sources

4.2. Social media platforms used for everyday life information

To address the RQ2 – “What are the most popular social media platforms among IMSIU students, and how do they perceive the ease of use and their level of trust in the everyday life information they gain?”

Ten social media platforms were selected based on the most used among Internet users in Saudi Arabia, according to the Digital 2022 report: Saudi Arabia (datareportal.com) and the questionnaire pilot test.

4.2.1. Frequency of use of social media platforms for everyday information

By analyzing responses to the question, “How often do you use these social media platforms?”—where a score of five indicates “always” and a score of one indicates “never” or “seldom”—the mean scores are presented in Table 3 and visualized in Fig. 4. The most frequently used platforms were WhatsApp (mean = 4.27), Snapchat (4.02), and YouTube (3.90), followed by Twitter (3.65) and Instagram (3.46). In contrast, LinkedIn (1.48) and

Facebook (1.45) were the least used. The low usage of LinkedIn may reflect its professional focus, which is likely less relevant to undergraduate students. The relatively low usage of Facebook requires further explanation. Although Facebook remains the most widely used social networking platform globally, in Saudi Arabia, it ranked fifth among social media platforms in Digital 2022: Saudi Arabia. This ranking includes non-Saudi expatriates, who make up approximately 40% of the population but are not represented in the IMSIU student demographic.

Table 3: Frequency of use of social media platforms

Platform	All	Female	Male	P-value	Sig
WhatsApp	4.27	4.46	4.16	<0.01	*
Snapchat	4.02	4.23	3.89	<0.01	*
YouTube	3.90	3.84	3.93	0.33	
Twitter	3.65	3.77	3.57	0.07	
Instagram	3.46	4.04	3.10	<0.01	*
Telegram	2.95	3.49	2.61	<0.01	*
TikTok	2.42	2.89	2.14	<0.01	*
Pinterest	1.95	2.60	1.55	<0.01	*
LinkedIn	1.48	1.35	1.57	0.01	*
Facebook	1.45	1.28	1.55	<0.01	*

*: $p < 0.05$

Gender differences were evident in eight platforms except for YouTube and Twitter, with no

significant differences; female students had a significantly higher frequency of use for six platforms, the most notable being Instagram, with a score of 4.04. vs 3.10. for males, which got it in the third position for females compared with the fifth position for males. In contrast, male students showed higher usage frequencies for two platforms:

LinkedIn (1.57 vs. 1.35 for females) and Facebook (1.55 vs. 1.28 for females). The lesser use of LinkedIn and Facebook among female students may be attributed to concerns regarding privacy and anonymity, as these platforms typically require more personal and professional information to be shared publicly.

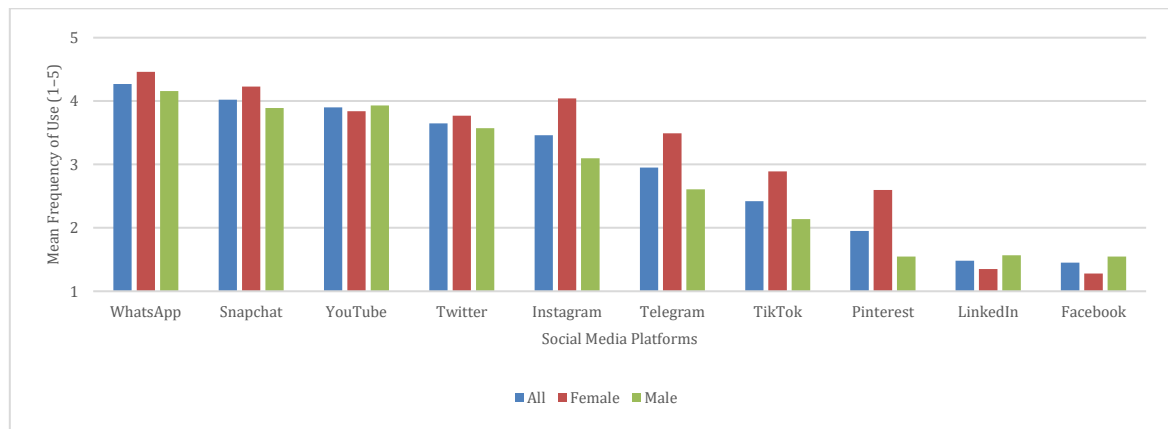


Fig. 4: Frequency of use of social media platforms

4.2.2. Ease of seeking everyday life information on social media platforms

By analyzing the responses regarding the perceived ease of searching for everyday life information on social media platforms, we observe the following.

YouTube received the highest ease of use score, 4.37, followed by WhatsApp, 4.23, and Instagram, 4.18. On the other hand, Facebook and LinkedIn received the lowest scores, 3.29 and 3.07, respectively. It is worth noting that females rated the ease of use of all social media platforms higher than males.

The female students' evaluation of the ease of searching for everyday life information on all platforms was higher than the male students' evaluation. Eight platforms obtained a degree more than four among the female students, while only two platforms obtained this degree among the male students. We also notice that Instagram is ranked second among female students, while it ranked fourth among male students, and Pinterest is ranked eighth among female students, while it ranked tenth among male students. These findings are detailed in Table 4 and illustrated in Fig. 5.

Table 4: Ease of searching for everyday life information on social media platforms

Platform	All	Female	Male	P-value	Sig
YouTube	4.37	4.67	4.18	<0.01	*
WhatsApp	4.23	4.50	4.05	<0.01	*
Instagram	4.18	4.55	3.91	<0.01	*
Twitter	4.14	4.47	3.92	<0.01	*
Snapchat	4.08	4.43	3.85	<0.01	*
Telegram	3.75	4.21	3.38	<0.01	*
TikTok	3.69	4.27	3.20	<0.01	*
Pinterest	3.43	3.99	2.71	<0.01	*
Facebook	3.29	3.89	2.97	<0.01	*
LinkedIn	3.07	3.59	2.77	<0.01	*

*, p < 0.05

4.2.3. Trust in everyday life information available through social media platforms

When analyzing participants' responses regarding their level of trust in information about everyday life on the social media platforms they use (see Table 5 and Fig. 6), the following observations emerge: Twitter was rated as the most trusted platform for everyday life information, with a mean score of 3.41 out of 5. In contrast, TikTok received the lowest trust rating, with a score of 2.29. The trust scores for other platforms were relatively close, with YouTube ranking second after Twitter at 3.12. Notably, female participants reported higher trust levels than male participants for Telegram (2.96 vs. 2.53), Instagram (2.86 vs. 2.59), and TikTok (2.61 vs. 2.00), with the largest gender difference observed for TikTok.

4.3. Social media platforms use information domains across everyday life

To address the fourth research question, "RQ4 - In what domains of everyday life do IMSIU students use social media platforms? What is the level of their perceived usefulness of the information they gained in each domain?" Participants were asked to mark all domains of everyday life information they utilized each platform for from the following eight domains, namely "News, Hobbies, Sports, Shopping, Health, Travel and Tourism, Food and Diet, and Beauty and Cosmetics," which were selected to represent different aspects of everyday life. However, it is important to recognize that these domains are not strictly separate as they often intersect and overlap, reflecting the nature of everyday life information. While YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat were used for a wider variety of domains, Twitter and WhatsApp were predominantly used for news by

63.8% and 62.9% of the respondents, respectively, see Table 6 and Fig. 7. There is a noticeable gap between the top five social media platforms - namely YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and WhatsApp - and the bottom five - namely TikTok, Pinterest, Telegram, Facebook, and LinkedIn - where each of the top five has at least one domain used by 40% of the respondents versus the bottom five where the highest utilization was for telegram use for News 28.7% followed by 26.2% for TikTok use for hobbies and then less than 20% for rest.

Table 5: Trust in everyday life information available through social media platforms

Platform	All	Female	Male	P-value	Sig
Twitter	3.41	3.48	3.37	0.32	
YouTube	3.12	3.05	3.17	0.25	
Snapchat	2.93	2.94	2.93	0.90	
Telegram	2.75	2.96	2.58	0.01	*
Instagram	2.69	2.82	2.59	0.04	*
Pinterest	2.53	2.62	2.42	0.24	
WhatsApp	2.50	2.51	2.49	0.84	
LinkedIn	2.48	2.69	2.37	0.11	
Facebook	2.34	2.51	2.26	0.18	
TikTok	2.29	2.61	2.00	<0.01	*

*: $p < 0.05$

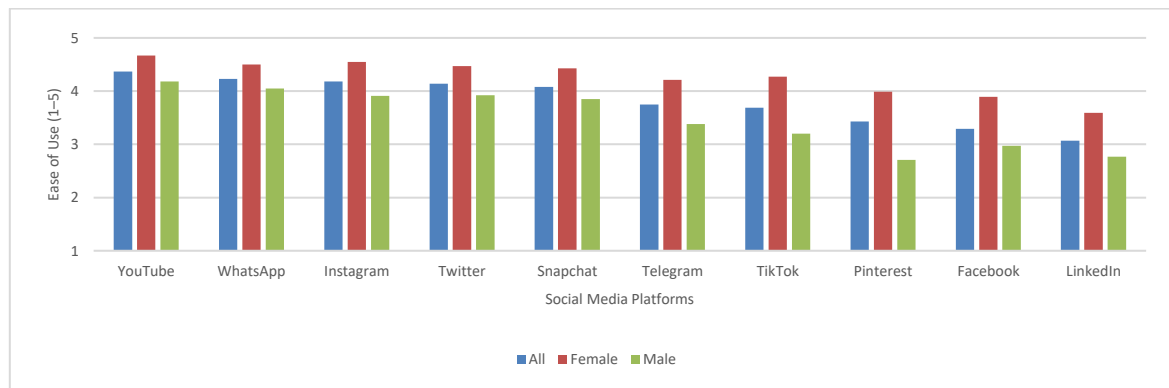


Fig. 5: Ease of searching for everyday life information on social media platforms

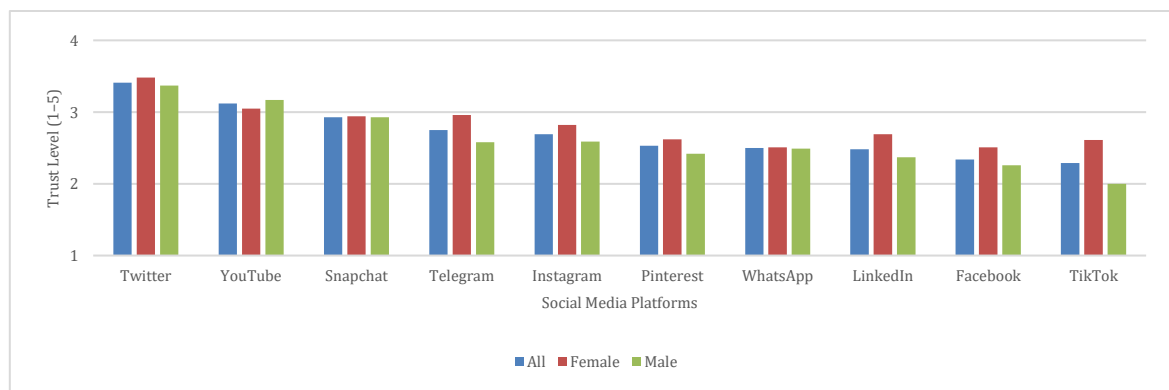


Fig. 6: Trust in everyday life information available through social media platforms

For IMSIU students' platform preference for everyday information domains for news, Twitter, and WhatsApp are the best used by 63.8% and 62.9%, respectively; for hobbies, YouTube is used by 54.0%, followed by Snapchat at 40.5%; for sports, YouTube is used by 59.1%, followed by Instagram at 32.5. Instagram was the most frequently used platform for shopping, 42.1%, followed by Snapchat, 28.9%. For health information, YouTube was used by 33.0%, closely followed by Twitter at 29.2%. In the

"travel and tourism" domain, YouTube and Snapchat were the most frequently used platforms, with usage rates of 35.2% and 34.5%, respectively. For food and diet information, YouTube was again the most used application, with a usage rate of 35.4%, followed by Instagram at 30.3%. Finally, for beauty and cosmetics, Instagram was the dominant application, with a usage rate of 30.6%, followed by Snapchat at 26.0%.

Table 6: Social media platform usage across everyday life information domains by IMSIU students

	News	Hobbies	Sports	Shopping	Health	Travel and tourism	Food and diet	Beauty and cosmetics
YouTube	28.7	54.0	59.1	17.3	33.0	35.2	35.4	24.4
Instagram	31.5	39.5	32.5	42.1	21.7	29.1	30.3	30.6
Snapchat	41.2	40.5	24.8	28.9	23.4	34.5	26.5	26.0
Twitter	63.8	33.2	26.5	20.2	29.2	20.9	16.4	14.4
WhatsApp	62.9	15.7	9.1	12.0	13.0	8.2	7.5	5.8
TikTok	15.2	26.2	11.5	14.5	10.9	14.9	8.0	9.1
Pinterest	12.8	17.6	8.2	11.8	11.6	8.0	8.5	9.4
Telegram	28.7	14.7	6.7	10.3	8.2	4.8	4.6	2.6
Facebook	13.7	5.0	4.6	7.5	8.0	4.4	2.1	1.4
LinkedIn	11.8	5.8	2.7	8.9	7.2	2.9	2.7	0.5

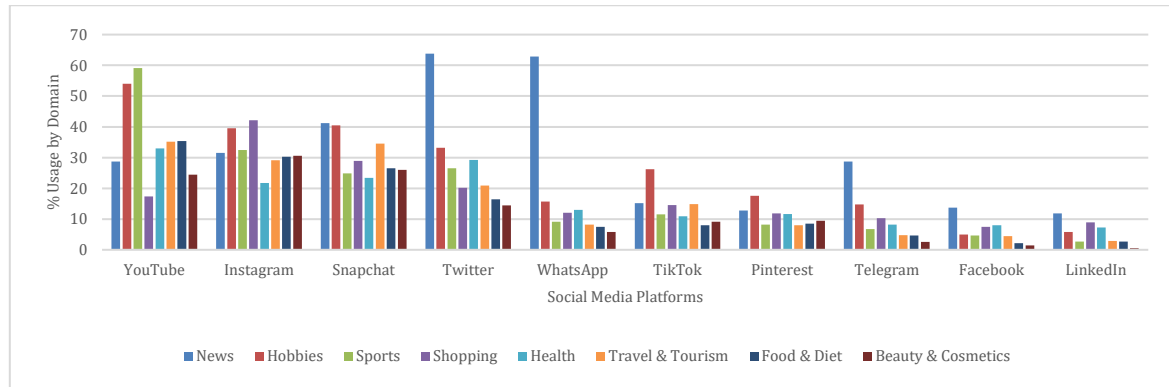


Fig. 7: Social media platform usage across everyday life information domains by IMSIU students

When comparing gender differences in usage percentages for each social media platform across various everyday life information domains, females reported higher usage in 54 out of 80 cases versus 26 cases for males. Out of these, 42 cases showed significant differences, with females having higher usage in 30 cases compared to 12 for males see Table 7 and Fig. 8. It is noteworthy that females' higher usage was predominantly on the most utilized platforms, whereas males showed higher usage mainly on the less utilized platforms. Additionally, a higher percentage difference was observed among female users, with 28 out of 30 cases showing a difference of more than 10%, compared to only 2 out of 12 cases for male users.

The top five highest differences with females' higher usage were as follows: Instagram usage for Beauty and Cosmetics was 65.3% for females compared to 9.4% for males, followed by YouTube for Beauty and Cosmetics at 48.2% for females versus 9.9% for males. Instagram for shopping showed 64.4% for females and 28.4% for males. Snapchat for Beauty and Cosmetics was 46.4% for females compared to 13.5% for males, and Instagram for Travel and Tourism showed 47.7% for females versus 17.6% for males. The top two cases where male usage was higher included WhatsApp for Health at 17.6% for males versus 5.4% for females and WhatsApp for Sports at 12.9% for males compared to 2.7% for females.

Table 7: Social media platforms usage across everyday life information domains, gender comparison

Platform	News (%)		Hobbies (%)		Sports (%)		Shopping (%)		Health (%)		Travel and tourism (%)		Food and diet (%)		Beauty and cosmetics (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	29.3	28.4	58.1	51.5	68.0	53.7	18.0	16.8	34.2	32.2	40.1	32.2	46.8	28.4	48.2	9.9
2	35.6	28.9	52.3	31.7	45.0	24.8	64.4	28.4	31.1	16.0	47.7	17.6	48.2	19.3	65.3	9.4
3	48.2	36.9	41.9	39.7	19.8	27.8	35.1	25.1	25.2	22.3	41.0	30.6	36.9	20.1	46.4	13.5
4	71.2	59.2	37.4	30.6	22.1	29.2	18.9	20.9	32.4	27.3	21.6	20.4	18.5	15.2	22.5	9.4
5	64.4	62.0	11.3	18.5	2.7	12.9	8.6	14.0	5.4	17.6	4.5	10.5	5.0	9.1	5.0	6.3
6	18.9	12.9	38.3	18.7	12.6	10.7	23.4	9.1	14.0	9.1	21.2	11.0	13.5	4.7	18.5	3.3
7	16.2	10.7	31.5	9.1	14.9	4.1	21.2	6.1	13.5	10.5	17.6	2.2	18.0	2.8	23.4	0.8
8	40.1	21.8	12.2	16.3	4.5	8.0	13.1	8.5	4.1	10.7	4.5	5.0	5.4	4.1	4.1	1.7
9	16.2	12.1	4.1	5.5	1.8	6.3	5.0	9.1	3.6	10.7	1.4	6.3	1.8	2.2	1.8	1.1
10	7.2	14.6	4.5	6.6	0.5	4.1	12.2	6.9	3.2	9.6	2.7	3.0	0.9	3.9	0.9	0.3

F: Female; M: Male; 1: YouTube; 2: Instagram; 3: Snapchat; 4: Twitter; 5: WhatsApp; 6: TikTok; 7: Pinterest; 8: Telegram; 9: Facebook; 10: LinkedIn

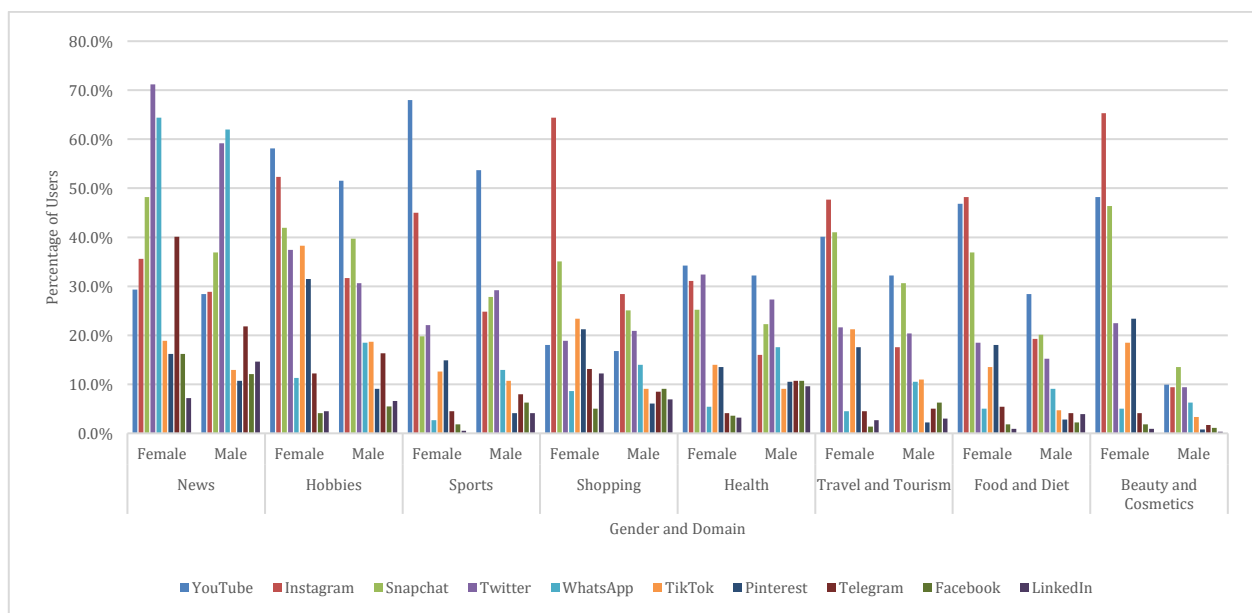


Fig. 8: Social media platforms usage across everyday life information domains, gender comparison

4.4 Perceived usefulness of everyday life information gained through social media

To address the second part of RQ3, "What is the level of their perceived usefulness of the information they gained for everyday life domains?" Students were asked to rate the perceived usefulness of the everyday life information they gained from social media platforms for eight everyday life domains using a 5-point scale. The analysis of their responses can be summarized as follows. When comparing the overall mean scores for all respondents, "News" came at the top with a 4.15 mean, followed by "Sports" and "Shopping" in second and third place with 4.04 and 4.03 scores, respectively, while "Health" and "Beauty and cosmetics" came in the last

two positions received the score with 3.95 and 3.42 respectively see [Table 8](#), and [Fig. 9](#).

Female respondents perceived a higher level of usefulness across all eight domains. Seven of those were statistically significant. The largest gaps emerged in the domains "beauty and cosmetics" (4.29 vs. 2.95), "food and diet" (4.15 vs. 3.47), and "shopping" (4.40 vs. 3.85). By contrast, "News" was the only domain without a statistically significant difference (4.19 vs. 4.12), ranking fourth among females but first among males.

Each gender group demonstrated a different ranking for their perceived usefulness of the information gained, which may be attributed to varying gender information needs and interests.

Table 8: Perceived usefulness of everyday life information by domain

Domain	All mean	Female mean	Male mean	P-value	Sig
News	4.15	4.19	4.12	0.47	
Sports	4.04	4.26	3.91	<0.01	*
Shopping	4.03	4.41	3.8	<0.01	*
Hobbies	3.97	4.16	3.85	<0.01	*
Travel and tourism	3.83	4.18	3.62	<0.01	*
Food and diet	3.73	4.15	3.47	<0.01	*
Health	3.59	3.75	3.5	0.01	*
Beauty and cosmetics	3.46	4.29	2.95	<0.01	*

*: $p < 0.05$



Fig. 9: Perceived usefulness of everyday life information by domain

4.5. Information-seeking practices on social media platforms for everyday life information

To address RQ4, "What are the information practices used by IMSIU students for seeking everyday life information on social media platforms?" Students were asked to mark all the practices they used to seek everyday life information on the ten popular social media platforms studied from the following standard practices:

1. Conducting searches on the site search tool or web search engines for the required information (Search-Driven).
2. Locating and browsing the content of people, groups, or pages in areas of interest (Interest-Based Browsing).
3. Scanning my timeline and capturing important information (Timeline Scanning).
4. The following links are sent to me by others (Referred Links).

5. Ask direct questions and engage with those people and groups who I think have an answer to my questions (Questioning).

These common practices could be loosely mapped to three of the four information practice modes introduced by [Makenzi's \(2003\)](#) model, while Search-Driven and Questioning are "active seeking" modes, Interest-Based Browsing and Timeline Scanning are "active scanning," and finally, Referred to Links are mapped to "by proxy." The fourth mode, "non-directed monitoring," can happen during any of these five practices.

The five information practices used by IMSIU students for everyday life information-seeking can be detailed as follows ([Table 9](#)).

4.5.1. Active scanning mode

The first two positions were for "active scanning" practices, as Interest-Based Browsing was used by more than 40% of the respondents on four

platforms, namely YouTube at 46.8%, Twitter with 44.8%, Instagram 44.6%, and Snapchat 42.7%, and it came the top used practice for 7 out of 10 platforms followed by "Timeline Scanning" used by 40% on Twitter, 34.9% on YouTube, 31.4% on Snapchat and 30.4% on WhatsApp, which came in second position for 7 of the platforms.

4.5.2. Active seeking mode

"Search-Driven" was mainly used with both YouTube 47.2% and Twitter 34.2%, and to a lesser extent for other platforms, with relatively high usage for Facebook and LinkedIn compared to other practices used within these platforms. This can be attributed to the powerful search tools available on

this platform and its openness to be indexed by web search engines. While "Questioning" was the least used method overall, it was used most on Twitter and WhatsApp, with 20.5% for both, and Telegram at 12.1%.

4.5.3. By proxy mode

"Referred Links" emerged as the most common information-seeking practice for everyday life information on WhatsApp (33.3%), followed by Twitter (19.7%) and Telegram (17.6%). Regarding gender differences in information-seeking practices (see Table 10 and Fig. 10), the analysis identified 17 instances of statistically significant differences between male and female participants.

Table 9: Information-seeking practices on social media platforms among IMSIU students

Platform	Interest-based browsing	Timeline scanning	Search-driven	Referred links	Questioning
Twitter	44.8	40.0	34.2	19.7	20.5
YouTube	46.8	34.9	47.2	14.0	9.4
WhatsApp	18.0	30.4	13.7	33.3	20.5
Snapchat	42.7	31.5	14.0	13.9	9.2
Instagram	44.6	29.2	17.3	8.4	6.0
Telegram	29.7	27.0	17.3	17.6	12.1
TikTok	21.5	17.6	11.3	8.2	1.5
Pinterest	20.7	14.4	17.1	3.8	1.4
LinkedIn	15.6	10.1	16.2	4.8	0.5
Facebook	9.9	10.6	14.7	5.6	0.7

Table 10: Information-seeking practices on social media platforms by gender

Platform	Interest-based browsing		Timeline scanning		Search-driven		Referred links		Questioning	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Twitter	50.0%	41.6%	49.1%	34.4%	36.5%	32.8%	21.6%	18.5%	25.7%	17.4%
YouTube	48.7%	45.7%	34.2%	35.3%	46.0%	47.9%	14.9%	13.5%	8.6%	9.9%
WhatsApp	11.7%	21.8%	34.2%	28.1%	10.8%	15.4%	34.7%	32.5%	25.2%	17.6%
Snapchat	51.4%	37.5%	34.2%	29.8%	10.8%	16.0%	14.0%	13.8%	10.8%	8.3%
Instagram	60.4%	35.0%	38.3%	23.7%	19.4%	16.0%	11.3%	6.6%	11.7%	2.5%
Telegram	34.2%	27.0%	30.2%	25.1%	15.8%	18.2%	24.3%	13.5%	16.7%	9.4%
TikTok	26.6%	18.5%	19.8%	16.3%	10.4%	11.9%	10.4%	6.9%	2.7%	0.8%
Pinterest	32.4%	13.5%	16.2%	13.2%	20.3%	15.2%	5.0%	3.0%	1.8%	1.1%
LinkedIn	9.9%	19.0%	6.3%	12.4%	16.2%	16.3%	2.3%	6.3%	0.5%	0.6%
Facebook	6.8%	11.9%	6.8%	13.0%	15.8%	14.1%	2.3%	7.7%	0.5%	0.8%

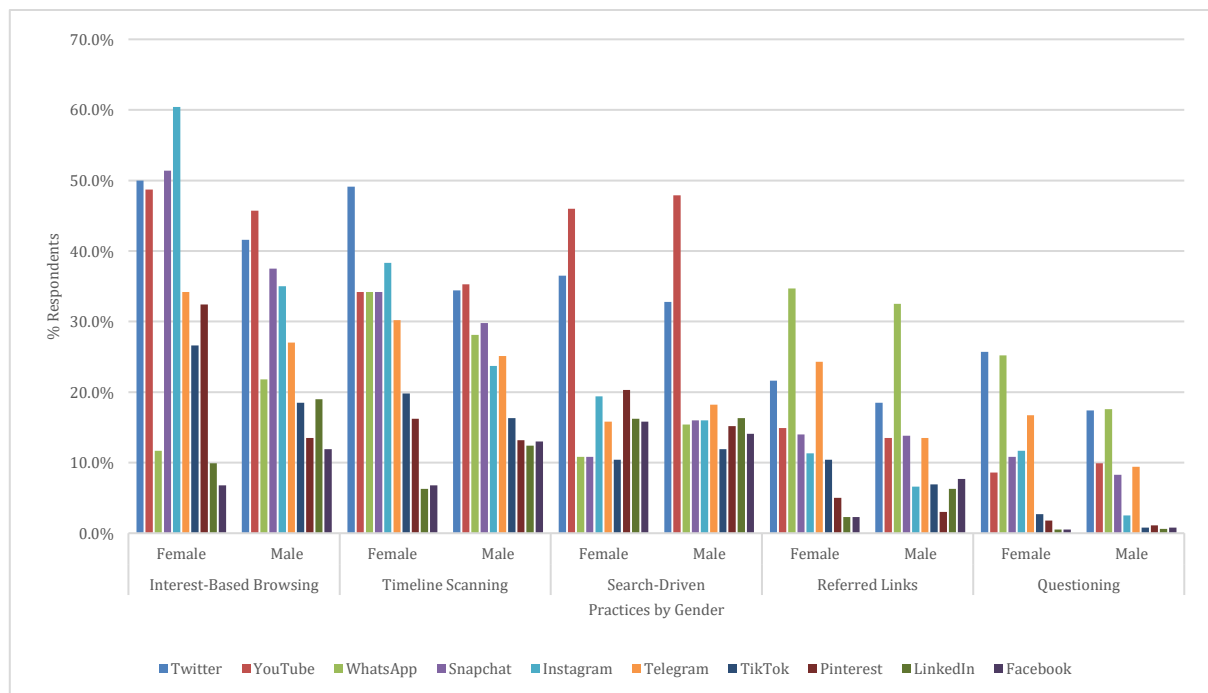


Fig. 10: Information-seeking practices on social media platforms by gender

Females demonstrated higher engagement in 11 of these cases:

- Interest-Based Browsing: Instagram (60.4% vs. 35%), Pinterest (32.4% vs. 13.5%), Snapchat (51.4% vs. 37.5%), and TikTok (26.6% vs. 18.5%).
- Questioning: Instagram (11.7% vs. 2.5%), Twitter (25.7% vs. 17.4%), WhatsApp (25.2% vs. 17.6%), and Telegram (16.7% vs. 9.4%).
- Timeline Scanning: Twitter (49.1% vs. 34.4%) and Instagram (38.3% vs. 23.7%).
- Search-Driven: Telegram (24.3% vs. 13.5%).

In contrast, males showed higher engagement in six instances:

- Interest-Based Browsing: WhatsApp (21.8% vs. 11.7%) and LinkedIn (19% vs. 9.9%).
- Timeline Scanning: Facebook (12.9% vs. 6.8%) and LinkedIn (12.4% vs. 6.3%).
- Referred Links: Facebook (7.7% vs. 2.3%) and LinkedIn (6.3% vs. 2.3%).

This lower engagement by females in interest-based browsing on WhatsApp may be attributed to concerns over privacy and anonymity. Engaging more deeply with WhatsApp groups requires sharing information with individuals beyond one's direct contacts, which might raise privacy and anonymity concerns for females with this specific practice.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The study indicates that individuals adapt their social media platform choices to the domains of the everyday life information they seek. Platforms like Twitter and WhatsApp dominate the News domain, reflecting their utility in disseminating and accessing real-time information. YouTube's prominence in Hobbies, Sports, and Food and Diet indicates a preference for instructional and visually engaging content, whereas Instagram's use in Shopping and Beauty and Cosmetics highlights its role in inspiration and trend dissemination.

While prior studies in the United States and Colombia have identified Facebook as a leading platform for information-seeking, particularly for news, leisure, health, and shopping content (Bartlett et al., 2020; Masambuka-Kanchewa et al., 2024; Macías Urrego et al., 2024), our findings reveal that it is among the least preferred platforms among IMSIU students, who also showed higher use and trust of Twitter, especially for news. This contrast highlights the influence of cultural and regional factors on social media usage patterns and underscores the need for context-specific research when examining platform preferences.

The investigation into the information practices employed by IMSIU students across ten social media platforms for seeking everyday life information reveals a rich tapestry of digital engagement. Students predominantly engaged in active scanning

practices, such as Interest-Based Browsing and Timeline Scanning, which were prevalent across platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. This preference underscores the students' inclination towards serendipitous discovery and passive information acquisition, aligning with the fast-paced, feed-based consumption habits prevalent today.

Active seeking behaviors, particularly search-driven inquiries, were most commonly observed on YouTube and Twitter. These platforms are recognized for their strong search capabilities and extensive content availability. This suggests a purposeful use of social media, where engagement is driven by specific information needs, underscoring the importance of search tools in supporting information discovery.

The least engaged practice was questioning, suggesting a possible reticence in directly soliciting information from peers or networks, which could stem from privacy concerns, the perceived reliability of potential responses, or the norms of digital etiquette within these communities.

By identifying the most widely used and trusted social media platforms by Saudi university students in various domains of everyday life information and their preferred information practices, this study will enable content producers, advertisers, and government agencies to prioritize and deliver appropriate content across optimal social media platforms and methods to Saudi university students across all everyday life information domains. The findings offer practical implications for various stakeholders: educators can integrate social media literacy into curricula, policymakers can develop targeted communication strategies, and social media designers can implement user-centered improvements. The study highlights the significance of incorporating social media education into the information science curriculum within academic institutions.

The results of the study encourage more studies to be carried out on the use of social media in everyday life information, including:

- Examine the use of social media for everyday life information among other demographic groups in Saudi society.
- Conduct more specialized research, such as studying a single social media platform for everyday life information or focusing on social media use in a particular everyday life domain.
- Investigate the factors contributing to varying levels of trust in everyday information across different social media platforms.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

The study followed ethical standards. Participation was voluntary with informed consent,

and no personal data were collected. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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