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## **UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENT SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR: AN ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC CLASS**

### **Abstract:**

Nearly two-thirds of the world population participate in social media. Because undergraduate business students will be the future users and managers of social media, this longitudinal study was undertaken to empirically examine social media participation by academic class, in particular, with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Results demonstrate that undergraduates primarily utilize six sites with total social media time increasing slightly after the end of the pandemic. Usage minutes varied by class, by year, and, within class, varied by social media site. A correlation analysis found that total minutes on social media was negatively correlated to academic class. These results suggest a new normal with increasing time spent on social media but less dependence on social media as the student's academic years pass.

### **Keywords:**

Social Media Usage, Empirical Study, Online Behavior, Business Students, Academic Class

**JEL Classification:** M15

## Introduction

Social media participation continues to grow at an extraordinary pace. In January 2025, it was estimated that there were 5.24 billion social media users or 64% of the world's population (Datareportal.com, 2025). This is an increase of 206 million new users joining social media in the previous 12 months, equating to an annualized growth of 4.1% with an average rate of 6.5 new users every second. According to Statista, the platforms with the most active monthly users are Facebook (3.1 billion), YouTube (2.5 billion), WhatsApp (2.0 billion), Instagram (2.0 billion), TikTok (1.6 billion), WeChat (1.4 billion), Facebook Messenger (.95 billion), Telegram (.95 billion), Snapchat (.85 billion), and Douyin (.77 billion) (Dixon, 2025).

Of concern to educators is the use of social media by students. A research study of undergraduate business students in Nigeria, for example, indicated that excessive Internet use negatively affects students' academic achievements, social interactions, and overall well-being (Adebayo, et.al, 2024). The findings revealed that the extent of excessive use of social media platforms, constantly seeking out new information and consuming online content, continually checking and responding to emails, spending long hours playing online games, excessive use of chat and messaging applications, and binge-watching videos on streaming platforms resulted in difficulty focusing on offline activities.

A study of undergraduate students in West Bengal also illustrated a significant negative correlation between Internet usage and academic performance (Ansary & Rakshit, 2024). The self-made 'Internet Addiction Scale' and an 'Academic Achievement Ability' scale further revealed that there is no significant difference in academic achievement between male versus female, rural versus urban, or nuclear versus joint family college students. Another study targeting undergraduate students studying business and economics subjects at a large public university in an Eastern African country found an inverted U-shaped relationship with academic performance (Tafesse, 2022). Researchers found that spending up to 89 minutes daily on social networking sites is positively associated with academic performance, but, beyond that, social networking site use was negatively associated with academic performance.

Other negative behaviors have been found. Results from a study in which participants completed an online anonymous questionnaire that included the short version of the Internet Addiction Test, a modified Youth Health Movement survey, and questions regarding their interest in healthy Internet use coursework revealed that 70% of participants acknowledged excessive Internet use and expressed that it negatively affected his/her sleep and increased anxiety (Baroni, et.al, 2023). Moreover, a study of Spanish university students found that students exhibiting problematic Internet use had a significantly higher risk of suicidal behavior, with the risk being 3.8 times higher among women and 5.6 times higher among men (Herruzo, et.al, 2023). Because of increasing mental-health hospitalizations in Australia, the Online Safety Amendment Act of 2024 was enacted to ban social media for children under the age of 16 (Campbell/Canberra, 2025).

As a result of these described negative consequences of social media participation and because current business students are the future professionals that will be utilizing social media in business, this study was conducted to examine several questions. What are the primary social media sites utilized? How much time is spent daily on individual social media sites? Is there a

relationship between academic class and time spent on social networking? Has the March 11, 2020 World Health Organization declaration of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as a global pandemic changed activity (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020)? And, what has been the effect with the WHO declaration on May 5, 2023 of the end of the pandemic (Mundasad & Roxby, 2023)? Results are important in determining if there is a need for further proactive education to improve student behavior.

## **Previous Research**

As a baseline to better understand undergraduate business student online behavior, the authors conducted an exploratory study (Case and King, 2017). Results showed that all students indicated using at least one social media site with the average undergraduate spending 176 minutes (nearly 3 hours) per day on social media sites. Although undergraduate business students used nearly 20 social media sites, there were five sites that were used by most students. These included Snapchat (95% of students), Instagram (88% of students), Facebook (81% of students), Twitter (76% of students), and YouTube (67% of students).

A subsequent three-year author-conducted study examined gender differences with respect to social media usage (Case, King, & Case, 2019). When comparing gender, although participation varied by social media site, a larger percentage of females versus males subscribed to each social media site except YouTube and Reddit. Overall, while males spent 188 minutes on social media per day, females spent 27 more minutes (215 minutes per day) or 14% more time than males. Females were also correlated to more minutes on social media than males.

Finally, a usage study was conducted from 2017 to 2021 (Case & King, 2023). Results showed that participation per day increased pre-pandemic in 2019 from 227 minutes to 310 minutes in 2020 during the beginning of the pandemic, a 37% increase in one year.

## **Research Design**

This study employs a survey research design. The research was conducted at a private, northeastern U.S. university. A Student Social Media Usage instrument was developed by the authors and administered via an online link to undergraduate students enrolled in a School of Business course. The surveys were collected each semester during a five-year, nine-consecutive semester period (from Spring 2021 through Spring 2025). The courses included a variety of subjects such as Business Information Systems, Introduction to Financial Accounting, Introduction to Marketing, Macroeconomics, and Business Policy. A convenience sample of class sections and faculty members was selected and, to ensure consistency, the same questions were asked during each of the semesters. Because of the sensitivity of the subject and to encourage honesty, no personally identifiable data were collected. Respondents were informed that surveys were anonymous, participation was voluntary, and responses would have no effect on his/her course grade. As a result, the response rate was over 80% each semester.

The survey instrument was utilized to collect student demographic data such as gender and academic class. In addition, the survey examined student Internet behavior regarding online social media sites. Students were asked to estimate the average number of minutes spent daily on fourteen social media sites and list any other social networking sites used by the student. WhatsApp was added to the survey in 2024 because of increased student use. Results were summarized by social media site and a correlation statistic was calculated to determine the potential relationship between study factors (i.e., academic class and social media usage minutes). To examine potential trends, the data was segmented by calendar year. Finally, repeated measures were not examined because of the anonymity of respondents, it could not be determined if a given student participated during multiple semesters.

## Results

A sample of 887 usable surveys was obtained. Table 1 indicates that 71% of the respondents were male and 29% were female.

**Table 1: Gender Response Rate**

|        | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Total |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Male   | 61%  | 75%  | 74%  | 71%  | 67%  | 71%   |
| Female | 39%  | 25%  | 26%  | 29%  | 33%  | 29%   |
| Count  | 109  | 115  | 271  | 270  | 122  | 887   |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

The response rate by year, with the exception of freshmen participation during the pandemic 2021-2022 years, was relatively equally distributed among academic class. Table 2 illustrates that overall, 22% of respondents were freshmen, 27% were sophomores, 33% were juniors, and 19% were seniors.

**Table 2: Academic Class Response Rate**

|           | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Total |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Freshmen  | 0%   | 5%   | 24%  | 35%  | 21%  | 22%   |
| Sophomore | 35%  | 50%  | 21%  | 20%  | 25%  | 27%   |
| Junior    | 55%  | 34%  | 27%  | 31%  | 28%  | 33%   |
| Senior    | 10%  | 11%  | 28%  | 14%  | 26%  | 19%   |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Responses were first examined with respect to the percentage of students using the various social media sites per year. Table 3 illustrates that in 2021, 96% of students used Snapchat, 97% used Instagram, 51% used Facebook, 66% used X (Twitter), 77% used YouTube, 79% used TikTok, 34% used LinkedIn, 10% used Pinterest, 15% used Google+, 13% used Reddit, 0% used Tumblr, 12% used YikYak, 20% used Other, and 0% used Voat. In terms of social media site utilization percentage of students by year, six social media providers increased by 2025. Instagram increased from 97% to 98% of students, LinkedIn increased from 34% to 65%, Pinterest increased from 10% to 19%, Reddit increased from 13% to 14%, Tumblr increased from 0% to 2%, and YikYak increased from 12% to 30%. Five social media sites decreased in percentage of students. Snapchat decreased from 96% to 95%, Facebook decreased from 51% to 42%, X (Twitter) decreased from 66% to 44%, Google+ decreased from 15% to 10%, and Other decreased from 20% to 16%. TikTok and Voat remained consistent.

**Table 3: Percent of Students Using Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          | 96%  | 97%  | 94%  | 93%  | 95%  |
| Instagram         | 97%  | 91%  | 94%  | 95%  | 98%  |
| Facebook          | 51%  | 40%  | 40%  | 36%  | 42%  |
| X (Twitter)       | 66%  | 61%  | 53%  | 44%  | 44%  |
| YouTube           | 77%  | 77%  | 73%  | 73%  | 74%  |
| TikTok            | 79%  | 72%  | 72%  | 73%  | 79%  |
| LinkedIn          | 34%  | 41%  | 55%  | 60%  | 65%  |
| Pinterest         | 10%  | 7%   | 14%  | 13%  | 19%  |
| Google+           | 15%  | 4%   | 9%   | 11%  | 10%  |
| Reddit            | 13%  | 19%  | 11%  | 17%  | 14%  |
| Tumblr            | 0%   | 1%   | 3%   | 1%   | 2%   |
| YikYak            | 12%  | 57%  | 26%  | 33%  | 30%  |
| Other             | 20%  | 20%  | 17%  | 16%  | 16%  |
| Voat              | 0%   | 0%   | 1%   | 0%   | 0%   |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 11%  | 14%  |

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Overall Average   | 100% | 99%  | 99%  | 100% | 100% |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Results illustrate that for every year of the study, there were six sites that are used by most students. These include Snapchat (93-97% of students per year), Instagram (91-98% of students per year), X (Twitter) (44-66% of students per year), YouTube (73-77% of students per year), TikTok (72-79% of students per year), and LinkedIn (34-65% of students per year). The lesser utilized social media sites were Facebook (36-51% of students per year), Pinterest (7-19% of students per year), Google+ (4-15% of students per year), Reddit (11-19% of students per year), Tumblr (0-3% of students per year), YikYak (12-57% of students per year), Other (16-20% of students per year), Voat (0-1% of students per year), and WhatsApp (11-14% of students per year). Overall, the percentage of students using social media each year was between 99-100% of students.

Table 4 presents the volume of minutes per day that a student indicated he/she used each social media site. In 2021, for example, users of each of the social media venues reported spending 66 minutes per day on Snapchat, 56 minutes on Instagram, 18 minutes on Facebook, 39 minutes on X (Twitter), 64 minutes on YouTube, 66 minutes on TikTok, 10 minutes on LinkedIn, 18 minutes on Pinterest, 32 minutes on Google+, 14 minutes on Reddit, 0 minutes on Tumblr, 7 minutes on YikYak, 67 minutes on Other, and 0 minutes on Voat. By 2025, the number of minutes per day on Snapchat increased by 1 minute, Instagram increased by 4 minutes, Facebook decreased by 5 minutes, X (Twitter) decreased by 16 minutes, YouTube decreased by 8 minutes, TikTok increased by 24 minutes, LinkedIn increased by 7 minutes, Pinterest increased by 4 minutes, Google+ increased by 6 minutes, Reddit decreased by 7 minutes, Tumblr increased by 8 minutes, YikYak increased by 1 minute, Other increased by 81 minutes, and Voat increased by 8 minutes. Overall, the average minutes per day increased from 277 minutes (4.5 hours) to 291 minutes (5 hours), an increase of 5%. Of note, the average minutes peaked at 294 minutes per day during the third year of the pandemic.

**Table 4: Minutes per Day Utilizing Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          | 66   | 69   | 77   | 65   | 67   |
| Instagram         | 56   | 57   | 59   | 65   | 60   |
| Facebook          | 18   | 17   | 18   | 15   | 13   |
| X (Twitter)       | 39   | 28   | 29   | 29   | 23   |
| YouTube           | 64   | 54   | 62   | 57   | 56   |

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TikTok            | 66   | 69   | 88   | 83   | 90   |
| LinkedIn          | 10   | 13   | 19   | 16   | 17   |
| Pinterest         | 18   | 15   | 12   | 12   | 22   |
| Google+           | 32   | 29   | 30   | 44   | 38   |
| Reddit            | 14   | 31   | 15   | 16   | 7    |
| Tumblr            | 0    | 10   | 3    | 42   | 8    |
| YikYak            | 7    | 13   | 12   | 8    | 8    |
| Other             | 67   | 125  | 128  | 78   | 148  |
| Voat              | 0    | 0    | 3    | 9    | 8    |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 41   | 24   |
| Overall Average   | 277  | 272  | 294  | 279  | 291  |

Source: Own based upon survey data

Next, the usage minutes at each social media site by year was examined by academic class. Table 5 displays the usage of freshmen. In 2022, for example, users of each of the social media venues reported spending 84 minutes per day on Snapchat, 68 minutes on Instagram, 5 minutes on Facebook, 40 minutes on X (Twitter), 31 minutes on YouTube, 74 minutes on TikTok, 1 minute on LinkedIn, 10 minutes on Pinterest, 60 minutes on Google+, 38 minutes on Reddit, 10 minutes on Tumblr, 14 minutes on YikYak, 38 minutes on Other, and 0 minutes on Voat. By 2025, the number of minutes per day on Snapchat increased by 8 minutes, Instagram increased by 3 minutes, Facebook increased by 6 minutes, X (Twitter) decreased by 33 minutes, YouTube increased by 16 minutes, TikTok increased by 31 minutes, LinkedIn increased by 8 minutes, Pinterest increased by 15 minutes, Google+ decreased by 52 minutes, Reddit decreased by 37 minutes, Tumblr decreased by 10 minutes, YikYak decreased by 3 minutes, Other increased by 155 minutes, and Voat remained at 0 minutes. Overall, the average minutes per day increased from 321 minutes to 365 minutes (6 hours), an increase of 14%.

**Table 5: Freshmen Minutes per Day Utilizing Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          |      | 84   | 103  | 85   | 92   |

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Instagram         |      | 68   | 63   | 72   | 71   |
| Facebook          |      | 5    | 21   | 15   | 11   |
| X (Twitter)       |      | 40   | 18   | 27   | 7    |
| YouTube           |      | 31   | 61   | 65   | 47   |
| TikTok            |      | 74   | 97   | 102  | 105  |
| LinkedIn          |      | 1    | 8    | 13   | 9    |
| Pinterest         |      | 10   | 13   | 9    | 25   |
| Google+           |      | 60   | 20   | 39   | 8    |
| Reddit            |      | 38   | 4    | 15   | 1    |
| Tumblr            |      | 10   | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| YikYak            |      | 14   | 9    | 9    | 11   |
| Other             |      | 38   | 236  | 97   | 193  |
| Voat              |      | 0    | 3    | 0    | 0    |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 18   | 23   |
| Overall Average   |      | 321  | 343  | 324  | 365  |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Table 6 displays the usage of sophomores. In 2021, for example, users of each of the social media venues reported spending 60 minutes per day on Snapchat, 56 minutes on Instagram, 12 minutes on Facebook, 37 minutes on X (Twitter), 73 minutes on YouTube, 43 minutes on TikTok, 8 minutes on LinkedIn, 16 minutes on Pinterest, 27 minutes on Google+, 5 minutes on Reddit, 0 minutes on Tumblr, 0 minutes on YikYak, 20 minutes on Other, and 0 minutes on Voat. By 2025, the number of minutes per day on Snapchat decreased by 1 minute, Instagram decreased by 6 minutes, Facebook decreased by 1 minute, X (Twitter) decreased by 23 minutes, YouTube decreased by 41 minutes, TikTok increased by 32 minutes, LinkedIn increased by 4 minutes, Pinterest decreased by 5 minutes, Google+ decreased by 7 minutes, Reddit increased by 18 minutes, Tumblr remained at 0 minutes, YikYak increased by 7 minutes, Other increased by 67 minutes, and Voat remained at 0 minutes. Overall, the average minutes per day decreased from 238 minutes to 216 minutes (3.5 hours), a decrease of 9%.

**Table 6: Sophomore Minutes per Day Utilizing Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          | 60   | 65   | 85   | 54   | 59   |
| Instagram         | 56   | 57   | 52   | 52   | 50   |
| Facebook          | 12   | 15   | 17   | 14   | 11   |
| X (Twitter)       | 37   | 23   | 23   | 32   | 14   |
| YouTube           | 73   | 42   | 60   | 54   | 32   |
| TikTok            | 43   | 73   | 93   | 67   | 75   |
| LinkedIn          | 8    | 11   | 12   | 12   | 12   |
| Pinterest         | 16   | 10   | 11   | 13   | 11   |
| Google+           | 27   | 22   | 16   | 51   | 20   |
| Reddit            | 5    | 44   | 24   | 11   | 23   |
| Tumblr            | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| YikYak            | 0    | 15   | 10   | 7    | 7    |
| Other             | 20   | 159  | 72   | 33   | 87   |
| Voat              | 0    | 0    | 0    | 9    | 0    |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 22   | 16   |
| Overall Average   | 238  | 263  | 283  | 239  | 216  |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Table 7 displays the usage of juniors. In 2021, for example, users of each of the social media venues reported spending 73 minutes per day on Snapchat, 53 minutes on Instagram, 20 minutes on Facebook, 39 minutes on X (Twitter), 55 minutes on YouTube, 76 minutes on TikTok, 11 minutes on LinkedIn, 16 minutes on Pinterest, 31 minutes on Google+, 19 minutes on Reddit, 0 minutes on Tumblr, 7 minutes on YikYak, 67 minutes on Other, and 0 minutes on Voat. By 2025, the number of minutes per day on Snapchat decreased by 9 minutes, Instagram increased by 1 minute, Facebook decreased by 7 minutes, X (Twitter) decreased by 18 minutes, YouTube increased by 10 minutes, TikTok increased by 11 minutes, LinkedIn increased by 6 minutes, Pinterest decreased by 1 minute, Google+ decreased by 4 minutes, Reddit decreased by 15 minutes, Tumblr remained at 0 minutes, YikYak remained at 7 minutes, Other increased by 83

minutes, and Voat remained at 0 minutes. Overall, the average minutes per day decreased from 296 minutes to 267 minutes (4.5 hours), a decrease of 10%.

**Table 7: Junior Minutes per Day Utilizing Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          | 73   | 72   | 78   | 55   | 64   |
| Instagram         | 53   | 58   | 68   | 62   | 54   |
| Facebook          | 20   | 21   | 17   | 16   | 13   |
| X (Twitter)       | 39   | 33   | 36   | 30   | 21   |
| YouTube           | 55   | 74   | 69   | 53   | 65   |
| TikTok            | 76   | 59   | 95   | 77   | 87   |
| LinkedIn          | 11   | 14   | 15   | 18   | 17   |
| Pinterest         | 16   | 17   | 14   | 14   | 15   |
| Google+           | 31   | 20   | 26   | 29   | 27   |
| Reddit            | 19   | 17   | 14   | 13   | 4    |
| Tumblr            | 0    | 0    | 5    | 0    | 0    |
| YikYak            | 7    | 10   | 6    | 6    | 7    |
| Other             | 67   | 96   | 88   | 73   | 150  |
| Voat              | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 73   | 8    |
| Overall Average   | 296  | 279  | 321  | 256  | 267  |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Table 8 displays the usage of seniors. In 2021, for example, users of each of the social media venues reported spending 54 minutes per day on Snapchat, 73 minutes on Instagram, 33 minutes on Facebook, 50 minutes on X (Twitter), 78 minutes on YouTube, 85 minutes on TikTok, 9 minutes on LinkedIn, 30 minutes on Pinterest, 40 minutes on Google+, 15 minutes on Reddit, 0 minutes on Tumblr, 6 minutes on YikYak, 120 minutes on Other, and 0 minutes on Voat. By 2025, the number of minutes per day on Snapchat increased by 6 minutes, Instagram decreased

by 5 minutes, Facebook decreased by 18 minutes, X (Twitter) decreased by 20 minutes, YouTube decreased by 8 minutes, TikTok increased by 9 minutes, LinkedIn increased by 13 minutes, Pinterest increased by 10 minutes, Google+ increased by 28 minutes, Reddit decreased by 9 minutes, Tumblr increased by 8 minutes, YikYak remained at 6 minutes, Other decreased by 20 minutes, and Voat remained at 0 minutes. Overall, the average minutes per day increased from 307 minutes to 331 minutes (5.5 hours), an increase of 8%.

**Table 8: Senior Minutes per Day Utilizing Social Media by Year**

| Social Media Site | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Snapchat          | 54   | 72   | 47   | 56   | 60   |
| Instagram         | 73   | 52   | 53   | 75   | 68   |
| Facebook          | 33   | 20   | 17   | 12   | 15   |
| X (Twitter)       | 50   | 34   | 33   | 24   | 30   |
| YouTube           | 78   | 63   | 56   | 50   | 70   |
| TikTok            | 85   | 86   | 66   | 68   | 94   |
| LinkedIn          | 9    | 19   | 32   | 23   | 22   |
| Pinterest         | 30   | 20   | 9    | 19   | 40   |
| Google+           | 40   | 0    | 50   | 95   | 68   |
| Reddit            | 15   | 0    | 19   | 26   | 6    |
| Tumblr            | 0    | 0    | 2    | 42   | 8    |
| YikYak            | 6    | 13   | 35   | 13   | 6    |
| Other             | 120  | 133  | 93   | 91   | 100  |
| Voat              | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0    |
| WhatsApp          | -    | -    | -    | 34   | 36   |
| Overall Average   | 307  | 270  | 235  | 275  | 331  |

*Source: Own based upon survey data*

Finally, a Spearman Rho correlation was calculated to determine if there is a correlation between academic class and total social media usage minutes. As indicated in Table 9, user minutes

spent using social media had a negative statistically significant correlation (significant at the .05 level) to academic class. In other words, as academic class increased, students spent less time on social media.

**Table 9: Spearman Rho Correlation between Academic Class and Social Media Minutes**

| Study Factor   | Minutes |
|----------------|---------|
| Academic Class | -.076*  |

\* Correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed).

## Conclusions

Results illustrate that there are six sites each year that were used by most students. In 2021, these included Instagram (97% of students), Snapchat (96% of students), TikTok (79% of students), YouTube (77% of students), X (Twitter) (66% of students), and Facebook (51% of students). By 2025, the ranking changed to Instagram (98% of students), Snapchat (95% of students), TikTok (79% of students), YouTube (74% of students), LinkedIn (65% of students), and X (Twitter) (44% of students). Of note, X (Twitter) participation decreased from 66% to 44% of students while LinkedIn increased from 34% to 65% of students. The remaining sites were not commonly used by undergraduates for all of the study years. Overall, however, nearly 100% of students indicated using social media.

The time spent using social media varied by year and by social media site. In 2021, for example, the sites with the most minutes expended per day were Other (67 minutes), Snapchat (66 minutes), TikTok (66 minutes), YouTube (64 minutes), Instagram (56 minutes), and X (Twitter) (39 minutes). On the other hand, in 2025, the sites with the most minutes expended per day were Other (148 minutes), TikTok (90 minutes), Snapchat (67 minutes), Instagram (60 minutes), and YouTube (56 minutes). Overall, total minutes rose slightly from 277 minutes to 291 minutes during the study time frame.

An examination of academic class found that usage minutes varied by class and within class varied by social media site. For freshmen, minutes per year averaged 84-103 for Snapchat, 63-72 for Instagram, 5-21 for Facebook, 7-40 for X (Twitter), 31-65 for YouTube, 74-105 for TikTok, 1-13 for LinkedIn, 9-25 for Pinterest, 8-60 for Google+, 1-38 for Reddit, 0-10 for Tumblr, 9-14 for YikYak, 38-236 for Other, 0-3 for Voat, and 18-23 for WhatsApp. For sophomores, minutes per year averaged 54-85 for Snapchat, 50-57 for Instagram, 11-17 for Facebook, 14-37 for X (Twitter), 32-73 for YouTube, 43-93 for TikTok, 8-12 for LinkedIn, 10-16 for Pinterest, 16-51 for Google+, 5-44 for Reddit, 0 for Tumblr, 0-15 for YikYak, 20-159 for Other, 0-9 for Voat, and 16-22 for WhatsApp. For juniors, minutes per year averaged 55-78 for Snapchat, 53-68 for Instagram, 13-21 for Facebook, 21-39 for X (Twitter), 53-74 for YouTube, 59-95 for TikTok, 11-18 for LinkedIn, 14-17 for Pinterest, 20-31 for Google+, 4-19 for Reddit, 0-5 for Tumblr, 6-10 for YikYak, 67-150 for Other, 0 for Voat, and 8-73 for WhatsApp. For seniors, minutes per year averaged 47-72 for Snapchat, 52-75 for Instagram, 12-33 for Facebook, 24-50 for X (Twitter), 50-78 for YouTube, 66-

94 for TikTok, 9-32 for LinkedIn, 9-40 for Pinterest, 0-95 for Google+, 0-26 for Reddit, 0-42 for Tumblr, 6-35 for YikYak, 91-133 for Other, 0 for Voat, and 34-36 for WhatsApp.

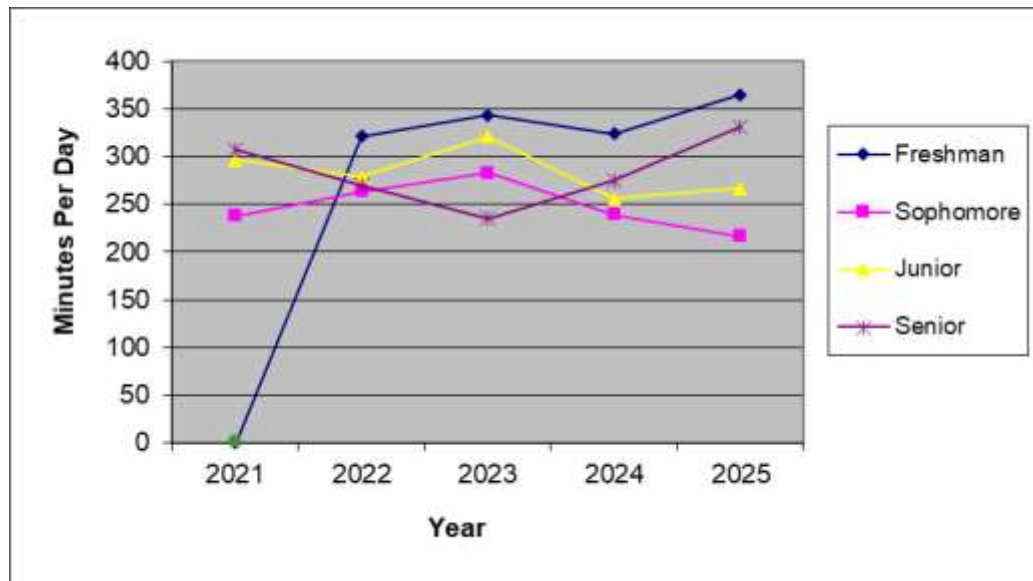
Finally, a correlation analysis suggests that the total minutes on social media is negatively correlated to academic class. Thus, as academic class increases, students spent less time on social media.

## Implications

There are three important implications from these findings:

1. One implication is that academic class is a factor in social media usage time. Chart 1, for example, illustrates social media minutes for each academic class during the five-year time frame and shows that although relatively consistent per year, total minutes are different for each academic class. The results of the statistically significant Table 9 Spearman Rho correlation analysis further confirm this implication. It is possible that the cumulative effect of educational efforts and/or desensitization to technology as the student progresses through his/her academic career may result in a lesser need or desire to utilize social media. In addition, it may be that upperclassmen may be finding alternative forms of entertainment, have a lessened desire to maintain constant social contact, have decreased discretionary time, are more mature, or have an increased desire to devote more time focusing on entering the job market.
2. A second implication relates to the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, students averaged approximately three hours per day on social media. During the pandemic, usage jumped to approximately 4.5 hours per day. Subsequently, the usage increased slightly to nearly five hours. It appears that the pandemic has created a new normal in usage time. This suggests an increasing student dependence on social media and, ultimately, an addiction to the platforms. As a result, it is increasingly imperative that educators recognize this potential addiction problem and implement instructional pedagogies to help students in both understanding and disabling his/her addiction.
3. The third implication is that the social media landscape is changing and evolving in usage. Facebook, one of the first and major social media platforms, and X (Twitter) have seen dramatic decreases in student participation and usage minutes while TikTok has been increasing in popularity. Given the apparent student desire to increasingly use products such as YouTube and TikTok, it is possible that undergraduates are moving to more visual and less textual environments (such as Facebook and X (Twitter)) because he/she is more comfortable with the visual learning style and video watching is more interesting. Furthermore, it is possible that Facebook is now being perceived as outdated and the X (Twitter) is decreasing in popularity because Elon Musk removed trolling and misinformation guardrails designed to restrict the flow of mis- and disinformation. This includes stripping away what was once a free account verification process designed to combat impersonation and replacing it with paid "blue check" accounts that guarantee posts will be prioritized by X's algorithm (Czopek, 2023).

## Chart 1: Minutes Per Day on Social Media



Source: Own based upon survey data

The limitations of this study are primarily a function of the sample, sample distribution, and type of research. The use of additional universities and more equal distribution among academic class and gender would increase the robustness of results. Another limitation relates to the self-reported nature of the survey. Future research is needed to explore why academic class is a factor in social media usage and what educational procedures may be implemented in controlling social media time misuse. In addition, research is needed to determine which platforms the students consider to be included in the Other category listed on the survey instrument. Overall, however, the study provides a profile to better understand undergraduate student social media usage.

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