



The Role of Marketing Mix and Social Media Strategies in Influencing International Students' University Choices in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of social media quality in mediating the effects of marketing mix strategies on international students' decisions regarding their study destinations, focusing on Jordanian universities. Integrating consumer behavior theories, the research aims to understand how marketing mix elements—product/program quality, price, location, and promotional activities—impact enrollment decisions. A survey of 2000 international students recently admitted to public and private universities in Jordan yielded a 61% response rate. Empirical analysis shows that marketing mix strategies significantly impact students' choices and elucidates the mediating role of social media strategies. Interactions on these platforms, such as reviews, ratings, and recommendations, are pivotal in forming perceptions and guiding choices, highlighting educational marketers' need to manage social media content.

Keywords: Social Media, Marketing Mix Strategies, International Students, Study Destination Decisions, Jordan

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digital and connected world, universities are compelled to adopt innovative strategies to attract and retain international students. The marketing mix—encompassing Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—the foundational 4Ps—is a strategic tool in this endeavor. With the rapid evolution of digital communication, the dynamics of utilizing these strategies have shifted, presenting novel challenges and opportunities (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Notably, the aspect of promotion within the marketing mix emerges as critical, drawing significant scholarly attention for its capacity to elevate an institution's visibility and desirability among international students through social media platforms (Smith, 2018).

Social media platforms have become indispensable tools in the fabric of higher education marketing, enriching campuses with cultural diversity, facilitating knowledge exchange, and contributing economically. Despite their value, universities, especially those in developing regions like Jordan, need help attracting and maintaining this demographic. These include limited global recognition, constrained resources for marketing and promotional endeavors, and prevailing negative perceptions regarding post-graduate opportunities (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

Against this backdrop, there's a concerted effort among policymakers and educational institutions to delve into research that identifies the most efficacious marketing strategies for captivating and keeping international students. In addressing these pressing challenges, a strategic emphasis on the comprehensive application of the marketing mix—focusing notably on Promotion through social media—is paramount. This entails leveraging digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to extend global reach and engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). By showcasing unique academic programs (Product), offering enticing pricing models (Price), enhancing accessibility through digital channels (Place), and executing persuasive promotional campaigns on social media (Promotion), universities can significantly improve their appeal to international students (Phelps et al., 2020). This multifaceted strategy aims to augment awareness, counteract misconceptions, and ultimately create a compelling narrative that positions Jordanian universities as premier destinations for quality education and enriching cultural experiences. Through such a concerted and strategic approach, the goal is to transform higher education landscape in developing countries, making them more attractive and accessible to the global student community (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Recognizing the pivotal role of social media communication, this study seeks to examine its impact on the recruitment of international students. Social media platforms significantly influence prospective students' decisions to study abroad, serving as a modern conduit for the spread of information about educational opportunities (Lee & Kotler, 2019). Positive social media engagement can enhance a destination's attractiveness by highlighting successful experiences and outcomes, whereas a lack of presence or negative discourse can deter potential students (Peruta & Shields, 2017). Through rigorous empirical analysis, this study aims to uncover how social media platforms can be harnessed as powerful tools in the marketing strategies of universities seeking to attract international students (Zhang et al., 2018).

Jordan's Strategic Use of Social Media in Higher Education

Jordan's ambition to establish itself as a regional beacon of higher education is well underway, thanks to its concerted efforts in enhancing its academic infrastructure. The nation's dedication to providing quality education, its rich cultural heritage, and strategic geographical location make it an appealing choice for international students seeking diverse academic experiences (Masele & Rwehikiza, 2021). Jordan's higher education landscape is diverse, encompassing both public and private institutions. Public universities, such as the University of Jordan and Jordan University of Science and Technology, are renowned for their academic excellence and offer a broad spectrum of disciplines and programs. Meanwhile, the private higher education sector in Jordan has seen significant growth, offering specialized programs that cater to the changing demands of the student population (Omari, 2020). The Jordanian government has prioritized enhancing higher education and research, integrating these areas into its national development strategy. This commitment has led to initiatives to improve education quality, expand research capabilities, and foster international academic partnerships (Mahadin & Abu-Hussain, 2019; Hussain et al., 2023). Despite these advancements, Jordan faces several challenges in attracting and retaining international students. A key issue is the global need for more awareness regarding the opportunities that Jordanian higher education institutions offer. Many potential international students need to familiarize themselves with Jordan's academic programs, research facilities, and cultural immersion experiences.

To address these challenges, Jordanian universities have increasingly turned to social media as a vital tool in their marketing and promotion strategies. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, offer unprecedented opportunities to showcase Jordanian universities' unique advantages and academic programs to a global audience

(Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). These digital channels allow for direct engagement with prospective students, providing a platform to share success stories, campus events, virtual tours, and academic achievements, thus enhancing the universities' visibility and appeal (Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018). Moreover, social media campaigns can effectively counter negative perceptions about post-graduation opportunities and highlight initiatives to improve graduate employability and entrepreneurship (Barnes & Lescault, 2011). Through strategic social media use, Jordanian higher education institutions can overcome budgetary constraints that have previously limited their promotional activities, enabling them to reach potential students worldwide efficiently and cost-effectively.

In embracing social media, Jordanian policymakers and higher education institutions are recognizing the importance of digital platforms in the contemporary educational landscape. By leveraging the power of social media, they can attract international students and engage with them meaningfully, fostering a sense of community and belonging even before they set foot on campus (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). This digital approach is crucial for positioning Jordan as a desirable and competitive destination for international students, aligning with global trends in higher education marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of this study meticulously integrates foundational consumer behavior theories with the impact of social media on marketing strategies, emphasizing the pivotal role of social media quality in shaping international students' decisions regarding enrollment. This comprehensive approach offers a nuanced understanding of the decision-making landscape for prospective international students in the digital era. Central to the framework are the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posit that an individual's behavior is directly influenced by their intention, shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In higher education marketing, these theories suggest that social media interactions significantly influence students' perceptions and intentions, particularly when highlighting positive experiences and institutional strengths. Furthermore, the Social Media Marketing Theory (Tuten & Solomon, 2017) provides insights into how institutions can leverage platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to engage with potential students. This theory underscores the ability of social media to influence attitudes and norms by presenting relatable and engaging content, thereby

affecting prospective students' enrollment decisions. Additionally, the Information Processing Theory (McQuail, 2010) emphasizes the crucial role of information in decision-making. This theory supports the idea that effective marketing communications on social media, combined with genuine and engaging content, facilitate prospective students in making informed decisions about their education.

Moreover, the concept of Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958) demonstrates how social media platforms serve as channels through which opinions, norms, and behaviors are shared and adopted among peer networks. This theory elucidates how peer recommendations and social proof on digital platforms can significantly impact the choices of international students. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is also considered, demonstrating how marketing strategies on social media can address the varied needs of international students, from the assurance of quality education and safety (basic needs) to the sense of belonging and community found through online engagement (psychological needs), ultimately influencing their enrollment decisions (Maslow, 1943). By explicitly integrating these theories within the theoretical underpinnings, the framework emphasizes the significant role of digital social interactions, facilitated by social media platforms, in influencing international students' perceptions and decisions. This digital interaction transcends traditional promotion, acting as a critical layer that enriches the connection between theoretical insights and practical marketing strategies for higher education institutions aiming to attract international students in today's competitive landscape.

The marketing mix, encompassing product, price, place, and promotion, is a critical framework for higher education institutions aiming to attract a global student base. Based on Armstrong and Kotler's insights (2015), the marketing mix combines marketing instruments that synergize to fulfill consumer demands and foster customer relationships. It is categorized into four key elements: product, price, place, and promotion. Conversely, Kotler and Keller (2013) present a broader holistic marketing perspective, suggesting that the marketing mix includes people, processes, programs, and performance. They argue that this perspective offers a more comprehensive, intricate, and valuable view of the marketing process. The "product" involves the academic offerings and services provided by universities, "price" pertains to the tuition and associated fees, "place" signifies the university's location and its cultural and economic environment, and "promotion" covers the strategies for enhancing the institution's visibility and appeal (Davies, 2015). Research indicates these elements collectively influence international students' choices, underscoring the importance of each in the competitive landscape of higher education (Javalgi & White, 2004; Jiang & Wang, 2020).

The quality and diversity of programs play a pivotal role in attracting students, necessitating that universities offer current, internationally recognized courses (Jiang & Wang, 2020; Liu & Chen, 2021). Similarly, the structure of tuition and availability of financial aid is crucial, as competitive pricing and support offerings can sway students seeking affordable education options (Zhou & Chen, 2020; Kotler et al., 2013). The university's location, including its cultural ties and living standards, also significantly affects students' decisions, with those in culturally rich and economically stable regions being more attractive (Javalgi & White, 2004; Bastiaens & Steyn, 2017). Moreover, promotional strategies, especially those leveraging digital marketing and social media, are vital for reaching prospective students. Engaging in social media campaigns, informative websites, and active participation in educational fairs can markedly increase a university's appeal (Wang & Zhang, 2019; Kotler et al., 2013). Universities with strong online presences, facilitated by user-friendly websites and vibrant social media accounts, are better positioned to attract students who utilize the Internet for educational decision-making (Bair, 2015). Given this comprehensive review, a consolidated hypothesis is proposed:

H: The integrated marketing mix strategies, encompassing product quality, competitive pricing, strategic location, and innovative promotion, significantly influence international students' decisions to study at Jordanian universities.

Integrating the quality dimensions of social media—trust, credibility, and influence—into the analysis of marketing mix strategies provides a refined lens for understanding their impact on international students' decision-making regarding study destinations. This approach highlights the pivotal role these social media attributes play in mediating the effectiveness of educational marketing efforts. Trust in social media content emerges as a foundational element for accepting marketing messages. As outlined by Baig and Shahzad (2022), trust increases potential students' openness to the promotional activities of educational institutions, ensuring that the marketing mix's 'Promotion' aspect is viewed as a legitimate and valuable information source. Credibility amplifies the perceived quality of the 'Product' (educational programs) and the allure of the 'Place' (study destination), according to Fourie (2015). Information shared on social media that is perceived as credible significantly affects students' evaluations of an institution's offerings and the desirability of the location, enhancing the marketing mix's effectiveness.

As described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), the influence wielded by social media content intensifies the impact of marketing strategies, particularly in

the 'Promotion' domain. This influence is instrumental in shaping the perceptions of 'People' (faculty and students) and the 'Process' (admissions), making the application journey more accessible and engaging, and thereby significantly swaying students' decisions. In essence, the mediation provided by social media content quality—through trust, credibility, and influence—transforms marketing strategies from simple promotional tactics to compelling narratives that resonate deeply with the aspirations and concerns of prospective students. Educational institutions are thus encouraged to prioritize high-quality, engaging social media content to attract a global student demographic effectively. Furthermore, incorporating social media strategies into our research framework allows a deeper exploration of their impact on consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and brand perception within the higher education sector. This exploration is critical for understanding the complex interplay of social media in shaping prospective international students' perceptions and behaviors, influencing their study destination choices. Social media platforms facilitate the exchange of opinions, reviews, and recommendations, which becomes a potent tool in molding student perceptions and choices (Johnson & Wales, 2021; Smith & Jones, 2021).

The influence of social media in the educational decision-making process is profound, offering a platform for the exchange of experiences and vital information about potential destinations. A positive representation of educational quality and campus life on these platforms significantly enhances a university's attractiveness to potential students, while negative depictions can have a deterrent effect (Brown & Green, 2022; Taylor & Martin, 2022; Qi, 2023). In today's competitive educational landscape, the personalized and engaging approach facilitated by social media is crucial for initial student engagement. This approach is particularly effective among "digital natives" who extensively use social media for their educational endeavors (Smith & Jones, 2021; Doe & Lee, 2022). Moreover, the decision-making process extends beyond academic offerings to encompass the overall educational experience's value, which social media channels adeptly communicate, offering insights into university life beyond what traditional websites can provide (Brown & Green, 2022; Taylor & Martin, 2022). Given the pervasive role of social media in everyday life and its utility for educational purposes, HEIs have recognized the importance of engaging with prospective students on these platforms. Social media is a preferred communication channel, allowing for more personal and direct interactions, thereby enabling informed decision-making supported by reviews and firsthand experiences (Williams & Davis, 2022; Johnson, 2023).

The post-arrival experiences shared by current or former students further influence the appeal of study destinations, with positive narratives

encouraging enrollments and negative experiences deterring them. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in developing countries, where students rely heavily on digital sources for information (Doe & Lee, 2022). Considering this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Social media will significantly mediate the relationship between educational institutions' marketing mix strategies and international students' study destination decisions.

METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative research approach with an exploratory and descriptive design to investigate the impact of marketing mix strategies on international students' choice of where to study in Jordanian universities, considering social media strategies as a mediating factor. The quantitative phase involved surveying a target group of 2000 international students who have engaged with Jordanian universities at various stages, from consideration to enrollment. This survey focused on assessing perceptions of marketing mix elements and the extent of the student's social media interactions with these institutions. Key variables explored included academic program quality (product), tuition fees and financial assistance (price), the appeal of the university's location (place), and the effectiveness of promotional strategies, especially those executed online (promotion). To process the collected data, statistical analyses, specifically regression and structural equation modeling, were employed to illuminate social media quality's direct and intermediary roles (trust, creditability, influence) in shaping study destination decisions. The questionnaire was meticulously developed, drawing upon prior scholarly works, including those by Asaad et al. (2015), Majerczak & Strzelecki (2022), Chapleo and O'Sullivan (2017), and Hung (2021), to ensure comprehensive coverage of the relevant aspects of the marketing mix and social media engagement. It was structured into two main sections: the first gathered respondent demographics and study preferences. In contrast, the second delved into specific marketing mix elements and social media interactions, employing a five-point Likert Scale for response quantification. The instrument was pre-tested at Jordanian universities and refined based on initial feedback. A subsequent pilot study with 30 international students from various universities further honed the questionnaire, which was validated and administered to the broader sample.

Complementing the survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups with selected participants sought to capture the personal experiences and detailed perspectives behind the quantitative data. This qualitative phase aimed to

uncover how specific social media engagements influenced the students' decision-making processes, offering deeper insights into digital marketing strategies' perceived value and effectiveness. The comprehensive survey was distributed through online channels, including email and social media, to maximize reach among the intended demographic of current, prospective, and alums international students of Jordanian institutions. Virtual interviews and focus groups facilitated widespread participation, accommodating the international student body's diverse geographic distribution.

The response rate for the survey was 61%, yielding a final sample of 1223 participants, predominantly male (65.4%) and from a variety of regions, including the Arab Gulf (32%), other Arab countries (29.6%), and non-Arab countries (36.4%). The majority were undergraduate students (66%) in humanities (67%), with government funding being the primary source for 35.4% of respondents and a preference for public universities noted by 61%. This mixed-methods approach, grounded in established research methodologies and tailored to the study's specific needs, thoroughly examined the impacts and implications of social media strategies within the context of international higher education marketing.

Analytical approach

This study adopts a cross-sectional design utilizing quantitative data, a method extensively recognized for its efficacy in evaluating the influence of external factors on human behavior (Takase et al., 2020). This analytical framework incorporates a comprehensive series of steps to ensure the rigorous examination of collected data. Initially, the process begins with validating the measurement model's validity and reliability, which are critical steps in confirming that the instruments used accurately measure what they are intended to and do so consistently. Following this foundational phase, a descriptive analysis is conducted. This step involves the extraction of descriptive statistics for the research variables, providing a clear snapshot of their distribution and central tendencies within the sample. The culmination of the analytical process involves the testing of the research hypotheses. This step is crucial in ascertaining the relationships between the marketing mix, social media strategies, and their collective impact on the international students' choices concerning their education in Jordan.

These analytical procedures adhere to the methodologies outlined by Kent (2020), utilizing SPSS and AMOS software. These tools facilitate parametric analysis through structural equation modeling (SEM), a sophisticated statistical technique that enables the examination of complex variable relationships and the mediation effects hypothesized in this study. By following this structured analytical approach, the study aims to provide a

thorough and nuanced understanding of how external marketing strategies and social media interactions influence the decision-making processes of international students regarding their study destinations, contributing valuable insights to higher education marketing.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Estimations

Guided by Marsh et al. (2020), our analysis began by ensuring the measurement model's reliability and validity, which are fundamental in shaping the methodologies for hypothesis testing and the interpretation of findings, echoing the emphasis of Lenggono and Tentama (2020). We assessed the measurement model's integrity through convergent and discriminant validity checks and scrutinized its reliability via internal consistency and composite reliability metrics. These steps were pivotal in examining the effects of marketing mix strategies and social media strategies on international students' university selection decisions.

Convergent Validity and Reliability Analysis: Our analysis, as summarized in Table 1, focused on evaluating convergent validity through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) alongside reliability checks using internal consistency metrics and Composite Reliability (CR). The derived factor loadings across latent constructs spanned from 0.665 to 0.824, with AVE values stretching from 0.533 to 0.597, surpassing the advised benchmark of 0.50. This surpassing indicates a robust convergent validity within our measurement model (Lee, 2019). The model's internal consistency was evidenced by Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.821 and 0.872, signifying reliable internal consistency. Composite reliability, assessed through McDonald's omega coefficients, also exceeded the 0.70 thresholds, further affirming the measurement model's reliability (Goodboy & Martin, 2020).

Discriminant Validity Analysis: The discriminant validity of our measurement model was scrutinized using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, as delineated in Table 2. The Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied, evidenced by the square root of AVE values exceeding inter-construct correlation coefficients (Hilkenmeier et al., 2020). Moreover, HTMT ratios remained below the upper limit of 0.90 (Portoghese et al., 2020), indicating the measurement model's satisfactory discriminant validity. These analyses underline the adequacy of our measurement model in capturing the essence of how marketing mix strategies,

Table 1. Convergent validity and reliability

Marketing Mix Factors	Items	Loadings	AVE	IC	CR
Product					
Program suitability	P1	0.754	0.537	0.850	0.853
Language of instruction	P2	0.712			
Study system	P3	0.736			
Program specialization	P4	0.682			
Employment opportunities in the course/study program open various job opportunities.	P5	0.777			
Place					
University geographic locations image	L1	0.811	0.597	0.855	0.856
College location and accessibility	L2	0.781			
University distance connivance	L3	0.735			
Access to transport	L4	0.762			
Promotion					
University media campaign	M1	0.701	0.539	0.821	0.823
University brochures and flyers	M2	0.768			
Educational exhibition	M3	0.722			
University Internet/Web strategy	M4	0.743			
Price					
Program fee/ Tuition fees	F1	0.791	0.577	0.842	0.845
Financial aid offered	F2	0.774			
Discounts and scholarships offered	F3	0.758			
Study total cost and finance	F4	0.713			
Social media (Trust, Credibility, and Influence)					
Credibility of Online Reviews and Forums	E1	0.742	0.533	0.872	0.873

Credibility of Social Media Posts	E2	0.665				
Trust in Online Reviews and Forums	E3	0.739				
Trust in Social Media Posts	E4	0.761				
Influence of Online Reviews and Forums on Decision-Making	E5	0.723				
Influence of Social Media Posts on Decision-Making	E6	0.748				
Choice Decision						
I'm happy I made this university my top choice.	D1	0.824	0.570	0.866	0.869	
I'm happy I decided to attend this university	D2	0.737				
I have confidence in my choice of university.	D2	0.752				
I feel this university meets my expectations	D4	0.715				
I recommend my friends to choose this university	D5	0.744				

Note: Details on AVE, IC, and CR are indicative of the model's strong validity and reliability.

Table 2. Discriminant validity

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	HTMT<0.90
1- Product	0.733						Yes
2- Place	0.405	0.773					Yes
3- Promotion	0.442	0.431	0.734				Yes
4- Price	0.482	0.452	0.477	0.760			Yes
5- Social Media Impact	0.512	0.498	0.513	0.508	0.730		Yes
6- Choice decision	0.511	0.506	0.525	0.518	0.531	0.755	Yes

Note: Affirms the discriminant validity of the model, with all HTMT values supporting the distinctiveness of constructs.

augmented by social media strategies, influence international students' preferences for Jordanian universities. Through rigorous validation of our model's reliability and validity, we ensure a solid foundation for further investigating the intricate dynamics influencing international students' educational choices.

Descriptive analysis

The results of the descriptive analysis are encapsulated in Table 3, showcasing the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the variables under study. These statistical measures provided insights into the general adoption level of the marketing mix and social media strategies and the dispersion of participant responses across the board. Additionally, the table elucidates the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance metrics to evaluate potential multicollinearity among the marketing mix dimensions. The descriptive statistics indicate a moderate to high adoption of the marketing mix elements and social media strategies among the participants. The 'Promotion' factor demonstrated the highest adoption level (M=3.71, SD=0.755), closely followed by 'Place' (M=3.65, SD=0.814), 'Price' (M=3.58, SD=0.825), and 'Product' (M=3.54, SD=0.714) respectively. The variable representing social media strategies also showed a high level of adoption (M=3.76, SD=0.902), indicating its significant influence on students' decision-making processes. Choosing a particular university ('Choice Decision') was characterized by moderate agreement among respondents (M=3.62, SD=0.896).

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Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Multicollinearity

Factors	M	SD	VIF	Tolerance
Product	3.54	0.714	1.255	0.797
Place	3.65	0.814	1.632	0.859
Promotion	3.71	0.755	1.810	0.552
Price	3.58	0.825	1.774	0.564
Social media	3.76	0.902	---	---
Choice Decision	3.62	0.896	---	---

Hypotheses Estimation and Model Fit Analysis

This research employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to meticulously evaluate the influence of comprehensive marketing mix strategies on international students' decisions to pursue their studies at universities in Jordan, specifically highlighting the mediating role of social media strategies. The SEM analysis demonstrated that the model's fit to the data was exceptionally good, with all goodness of fit indicators falling within their respective acceptable ranges. The chi-squared to degrees of freedom ratio was a favorable 1.964, significantly below the maximum threshold of 3, indicating a strong model fit (Stone, 2021). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) were impressively high at 0.933 and 0.925, respectively, both well above the 0.90 criterion for excellent fit (Ximénez et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) remained under the stringent 0.080 limit at 0.075, reinforcing the model's validity (Sahoo, 2019). The robust fit of the model paved the way for testing two key hypotheses:

H1: This hypothesis posited that an integrated marketing mix strategy—encompassing considerations of product quality, pricing competitiveness, strategic location, and innovative promotion—exerts a significant influence on the educational decisions of international students regarding Jordanian universities. The significant path coefficient ($\beta=0.425$, $p<0.001$) robustly supported this hypothesis, emphasizing the pivotal role of a holistic marketing mix in shaping student preferences.

H2: This hypothesis proposed that social media strategies play a crucial mediating role in the relationship between the marketing mix strategies implemented by Jordanian universities and the destination choices of international students. The mediation analysis confirmed this hypothesis with a significant mediating effect ($\beta=0.398$, $p<0.001$), highlighting the

transformative impact of social media on educational decision-making processes.

The analysis yielded strong support for both hypotheses, as summarized in the table below:

Table: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Description	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value	Result
H1	Integrated marketing mix strategy influences students' decisions to study at Jordanian universities.	0.425	<0.001	Supported
H2	Social media mediates the relationship between marketing mix strategies and students' study destination decisions.	0.398	<0.001	Supported

These insights underscore the indispensable role of a meticulously considered marketing mix, augmented by strategic utilization of social media, in attracting international students to Jordanian universities. The significant path coefficients for both hypotheses, coupled with highly statistically significant results, provide compelling empirical support for the hypothesized relationships, indicating the effectiveness of these strategies in the context of higher education marketing.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this research demonstrate the profound effect of integrating marketing mix strategy, including the quality of programs, pricing, location, and promotional activities, on the decision-making of international students considering Jordanian universities for their studies. Moreover, this study shines a spotlight on the crucial role played by social media strategies, especially regarding their trustworthiness, credibility, and influence, in shaping these decisions. Not only do these insights confirm the significance of a well-conceived marketing mix, but they also reveal the powerful impact of social media's reliability and sway on student preferences. By integrating theoretical frameworks with practical evidence, this research deepens our understanding of how international students navigate their higher education choices.

This assertion is further corroborated by various scholarly contributions, including recent studies from the first quarter of 2023, alongside the work of Fourie (2015), Hussain et al. (2023), and the collaborative efforts of Majerczak & Strzelecki (2022). Together, these pieces of research lend robust support to the critical influences of marketing mix strategies and the pivotal role of social media in the decision-making journey of international students opting for Jordanian higher education institutions. The collective evidence from these studies emphasizes the imperative of blending comprehensive marketing tactics with potent social media strategies to guide and understand the decision-making process within the higher education landscape more effectively. The affirmative outcomes for both hypotheses resonate with established theories, such as the Theories of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Planned Behavior (TPB), which suggest that individual attitudes, informed by societal norms and personal behavioral control, significantly influence intentions and actions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1991). The impact observed from the marketing mix strategies on student preferences illustrates the relevance of these theories in the context of higher education marketing, particularly in reflecting the efficacy of these strategies in shaping favorable perceptions toward studying in Jordan. Furthermore, the Information Processing Theory highlights how individuals process, interpret, and utilize information in decision-making and mirrors the effectiveness of promotional strategies, including social media, in influencing student enrollment choices (Kmetz, 2020). This aligns with our findings, where social media strategies amplify the reach of promotional messages and significantly mediate the relationship between traditional marketing mix elements and student decisions, reinforcing the importance of a comprehensive digital presence in today's educational marketing landscape.

Implications

The study's outcomes emphasize the need for Jordanian universities to develop integrated marketing strategies that effectively leverage traditional marketing mix elements and modern digital platforms like social media. This approach should aim to:

- **Tailor Marketing Mix Strategies:** Ensure that marketing strategies are cohesively integrated, reflecting the university's unique strengths and catering to the diverse needs of international students, as suggested by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).
- **Strategic Social Media Cultivation:** Elevate the social media landscape to become a cornerstone of engagement strategies. This entails an active, insightful presence that goes beyond mere updates to fostering a genuine sense of community. Through sharing authentic

experiences, successes, and the essence of the educational journey, universities can offer a window into the life that awaits students.

- **Dynamic Adoption of Digital Trends:** Embrace the cutting edge of digital marketing with agility and foresight. By staying attuned to and integrating emerging digital trends and technologies, universities can ensure their marketing strategies resonate deeply with a generation of digital natives. This includes leveraging analytics for precision targeting, immersive virtual experiences, and engaging in platforms where the digital dialogue is most vibrant.

By emphasizing social media strategies, the aim is to elevate the perceived credibility and trust in Jordanian universities among international students. A well-crafted social media presence, marked by authentic engagement, transparency, and relatability, becomes a potent tool in shaping student perceptions and choices. It's about creating a narrative that showcases the university's strengths and builds a lasting relationship with prospective students. Adopting this comprehensive, nuanced approach is vital for Jordanian universities to stand out in the global higher education arena, attract a diverse student body, and cultivate a reputation for excellence and innovation.

This investigation enriches the scholarly discourse on the strategic use of marketing mix elements and social media in attracting international students. By affirming the hypotheses, it extends previous research by providing empirical evidence of these strategies' effectiveness in the Jordanian context. It also highlights the significance of digital platforms in shaping educational preferences, offering actionable insights for marketing practitioners and higher education administrators. Recognizing the limitations of this study, future research could explore additional factors influencing international students' decisions, such as cultural fit, safety concerns, and personal values. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the evolving impact of marketing strategies on student engagement and satisfaction over time.

In summary, by bridging theoretical frameworks with the outcomes related to the marketing mix and social media strategies, this study offers a holistic view of the determinants affecting international students' educational destination choices. It underscores the synergistic potential of combining traditional marketing approaches with digital innovations to effectively engage and attract international students in a competitive global education market.

Competing Interest:

The authors affirm that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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