

**MALAYSIA ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES PRESENCE IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS  
VISIBILITY AS EDU-TOURISM PRODUCTS**

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<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>The use of social media, extending beyond information exchange to proactive engagement, has significantly changed news delivery. Rapid engagement requires accessibility to the latest information and news. Many institutions, notably Malaysian Islamic public universities, use these techniques to maintain visibility and engagement with their audiences. This approach promotes educational institutions as educational tourism products known as Edu-tourism. Edu-tourism emphasises educational content that satisfies visitors' requirements and motivations to study while traveling, and media exposure has helped universities attract, grow, and enroll students. This article analyzes Malaysian Islamic public universities' social media presence as Edu-tourism products and their strategies for promoting their institutions and enticing prospective students. The content analysis method was employed by contrasting and thematically analyzing the educational and promotional digital content shared by Islamic universities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Digitalising university promotion on social media has transformed traditional marketing methods by creating new opportunities and changing conventional advertising approaches. This study discovered that by analysing and comparing the news, information, and digital content on official Islamic public universities' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the approaches have evolved to meet current communication demands, enhancing universities' visibility as Edu-tourism products. This has expanded public engagement and access to campus tours, promoting Edu-tourism. Thus, social media has revolutionised university engagement, indirectly promoting Edu-tourism. The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) were chosen for this study because they explicitly identify as Islamic universities, as shown by the word "Islamic" in their names. This designation demonstrates their dedication to incorporating Islamic principles and values into their academic and administrative structures.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Presence, Social Media, Islamic University, Edu-Tourism, Public Islamic University.</i></p>
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The advent of social media technology has significantly transformed the realm of interpersonal and occupational communication. Social media platforms have a significant influence on various aspects of society, including culture, business, and global perspectives.

Social media takes the form of online platforms that enable connectivity, communication, collaboration (Zincir, 2017), engagement, and recruitment (Hosain & Liu, 2020). The different manifestations of social media can be searched via blogs, vlogs, instant messaging, virtual communities, and social networking sites (Chugh & Joshi, 2017). Social networking sites are segmented into different types of market segments and specific needs (Chugh, 2012). For example, LinkedIn and Viadeo essentially focus on facilitating formal business-related connections, whereas Facebook and MySpace generally focus on informal social communication. However, it is interesting to note that the distinction between professional and informal usage is becoming increasingly blurred. Another platform that provides engagement analysis is Twitter and Instagram, where both are simultaneously used to tackle problems or express opinions expressed by users (Giachanou & Crestani, 2016). In addition, universities employ Instagram as a marketing platform, utilizing videos and photographs accompanied by captions to promote the advantageous educational atmosphere in which prospective students are encouraged to pursue their studies (Kurniawan et al., 2020). Although social media includes a wide range of offerings such as social networking, blogging, discussion forums, bookmarking, and wikis, the focus of this article is solely on higher education institutions' presence on social networking sites.

Social networking sites form an integral and important part of social media, which aims to promote collaboration and engagement on a large scale. To understand what is meant by media social, an inclusive definition given by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as social networking sites that cover people, technology, and processes is an online service allowing users to construct a public or private profile to connect and interact with their social connections. For clarity and consistency, from here onwards the phrase social media will be used to denote social networking sites Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Referring to these three platforms, the term social media has also been used interchangeably at times. Social media is not just used for informal social networking or enhancing social capital (Ellison et al., 2007), but also for developing customer relationships (Eriksson & Larsson 2014), online engagement and marketing (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), and problem handling and complaint resolution (Pinto & Mansfield 2011) in a variety of different sectors by various people, including higher education institutions like universities.

The higher education sector has also joined the social media bandwagon and embraced it globally. In higher education, social media is actively used for content generation, sharing, interacting, and collaborative socializing (Hamid et al., 2009). Social media can be utilized to deliver teaching material, educational information, updates, and facilitate communication and collaboration. Facebook's social communication aspects benefit both educators and students by creating an online class group, increasing interactions between teacher-student and student-student (Munoz & Towner, 2009), and promoting collaborative learning (Menzies et al., 2017). Whereas on Twitter, most institutional universities in the United States post one-way messages aimed at disseminating information from the institution (Kimmons et al., 2017). Veletsianos (2012) found university scholars are among the most active people on Twitter, sharing their performance, recent publications, social engagement, and seeking new collaboration opportunities.

In developing social media plans, organizations must bear in mind social media's collaborative nature and potential for fostering interactive communication and strong relationships (Turri et al., 2013; Kodish, 2015). Further, they must consider the complexity of relationship building and the importance of engaging in two-way communication with stakeholders on social platforms (Kodish, 2015). The literature

suggests universities have used social media extensively for teaching and learning purposes but fail to use it effectively for marketing (Linville, McGee, & Hicks, 2012; Stuart et al., 2017). There is a limited amount of research concerning how higher education institutions use social media, however, the existing studies indicate higher education institution marketers tend to base their social media activity on instinct and feeling rather than planned strategy, which results in oversaturated feeds and little engagement (Peruta & Shields, 2017).

As the usage of social media continues to rise, the usage of social media in higher education is also continually growing and evolving, with proponents tugging between its merits and demerits. Higher education, also known as Islamic Higher Education, also referred to as tertiary education, refers to education undertaken after high school that includes undergraduate and graduate studies. Literature reviews have been carried out in the past that outline the usage of social media for learning and teaching activities but lack a sole emphasis on their presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This literature review paper aims to plug that gap by summarizing the present findings with exclusivity on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and therefore looking at the presence of Islamic higher education by holistically bringing the different studies together. In doing so, the review outlines the benefits and uses of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for the visibility of Islamic Universities in Malaysia through advertising, promotion, sharing activities, engagement, and information before highlighting the problems and limitations of their usage.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AND UNIVERSITY PRESENCE**

The advent of social media platforms (Figure 1) has brought about a significant transformation in the way tourism information is exchanged, distributed, and consumed. Edu-Tourism experiences are effectively promoted and marketed through their pivotal involvement. The efficacy of social media resides in its capacity to access a wide-ranging demographic, furnish up-to-the-minute data, and generate captivating content. Cheung et al. (2019) argue that the utilization of social media platforms allows travelers to actively interact with educational institutions, obtain relevant information regarding educational programs, and disseminate their personal experiences. Consequently, this phenomenon serves to enhance the impact and prominence of Edu-Tourism.



Figure 1: Social media platform for social networking.

In terms of university social media presence, social media platforms provide a special opportunity for institutions to actively interact with their intended audience, establish brand recognition, and exhibit their array of offerings. According to Ahmad and Umar (2020), the visibility of universities on social media platforms is a significant factor in improving the perceived quality and appeal of these institutions. Institutions are afforded the opportunity to establish a favorable online presence and proficiently convey their distinctive value proposition to potential students and stakeholders.

Rahimi et al. (2017) assert that the establishment of a robust presence on social media platforms plays a crucial role in bolstering the credibility of universities and

augmenting their visibility, particularly among the younger demographic. This is because the younger generation heavily relies on social media as a primary source for gathering information and making informed decisions. Moreover, the presence of a university on social media platforms can significantly enhance its global outreach and impact, facilitating opportunities for international collaborations, student enrolment, and research alliances.

In the Malaysian context, universities have acknowledged the significance of utilizing social media platforms to enhance their visibility and foster engagement. Malaysian universities have proactively adopted social media platforms as a strategic tool to enhance the visibility of their educational programs, foster interaction with potential students, and cultivate a distinct brand identity. According to the study conducted by Rahimi et al. (2017), Malaysian universities have demonstrated a proactive approach in utilizing social media platforms to engage with younger cohorts and enhance their appeal to prospective international students. Through the utilization of social media platforms, Malaysian universities have effectively increased their visibility and garnered the interest of both domestic and international Edu-Tourists by highlighting their distinctive offerings, academic accomplishments, and campus experiences.

In addition to that, the utilization of Facebook is a key strategy employed by Malaysian universities. According to the study conducted by Rahimi et al. (2017), it was observed that Malaysian universities demonstrate active involvement in engaging with students and stakeholders by utilizing Facebook pages. Malaysian universities effectively cultivate an interactive online presence by consistently providing updated information regarding courses, events, and campus activities. This proactive approach serves to engage prospective students and encourages their active involvement with the university's digital contents.

Apart from that, Malaysian universities are increasingly leveraging Instagram, and LinkedIn, as tools to exhibit their research partnerships, involvement in community advancement, and participation in educational activities (Ahmad & Umar, 2020). The enhanced visibility of Malaysian universities serves to attract prospective students and enhance the institutions' reputation on both domestic and international scales. Besides, the study conducted by Ramli and Ahmad (2019) examined the stakeholders' perception of social media utilization in Malaysian universities revealed that social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, were successful in fostering stakeholder engagement and facilitating the dissemination of information pertaining to events, activities, and announcements. This study also emphasized the significance of resource allocation and strategic development by Malaysian universities to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of their social media presence in engaging with stakeholders. Hence, indicate the advantages of social media presence from educational prospect.

Other than that, Ibrahim (2017) asserts that the effectiveness of social media platforms in attracting and engaging prospective students indicated that social media platforms served as a valuable tool in student recruitment efforts. The research demonstrated that higher education institutions that allocated resources towards social media marketing strategies, including targeted advertising, personalized messaging to engage with potential students, and promotion of campus life experiences, yielded favorable results in terms of student recruitment.

Moreover, a study conducted by Hamzah, Ahmad, and Damrah (2021) revealed that social media platforms exerted a substantial influence on the formation and augmentation of the reputation of Malaysian universities. The research revealed that higher education institutions that consistently shared updates, generated compelling content, and promptly addressed inquiries and feedback on social media platforms exhibited a more favorable perception among their stakeholders. Furthermore, it was discovered that the utilization of social media platforms contributed to the enhancement of universities' visibility, ultimately leading to an improvement in their rankings and overall reputation within the education sector.

Therefore, it can be inferred that social media has become an indispensable component of the operational framework of Malaysian universities, exerting a beneficial influence on stakeholder engagement, student recruitment, and the overall reputation of these institutions. The implementation of effective social media strategies, coupled with regular updates, can serve as a means for universities to enhance their visibility, foster brand promotion, and attract potential students.

### **EDU-TOURISM**

Edu-tourism has recently emerged as a novel genre of tourism that combines educational and recreational elements to curate a distinctive travel encounter for tourists. This form of tourism is categorized as sustainable, as it actively encourages cultural interchange, environmental preservation, and the advancement of local communities by means of diverse educational initiatives.

Edu-tourism refers to a form of travel that integrates educational opportunities with recreational activities, thereby providing tourists with cultural and experiential learning experiences. According to Mok et al. (2018), Edu-Tourism holds significance within the realm of cultural tourism due to its ability to offer distinctive educational opportunities to tourists, while simultaneously fostering the preservation and promotion of a destination's cultural heritage. In a recent study conducted by Hu et al. (2019), the concept of Edu-Tourism was elucidated as a form of sustainable tourism that facilitates cultural interchange, environmental preservation, and the advancement of local communities by means of educational endeavours. Gursoy and Li (2016) posit that educational activities in Edu-Tourism encompass a range of endeavours, such as participation in workshops, lectures, cultural events, language courses, and practical, experiential learning opportunities. These activities afford tourists the chance to fully engage in the indigenous culture, engage in meaningful interactions with knowledgeable individuals, and acquire a comprehensive understanding of the destination being visited. Hence, the segmentation encompasses a variety of manifestations, including study tours, language immersion programs, and cultural exchange programs, among other possibilities.

In contemporary times, Edu-Tourism has been conceptualized as a variant of tourism that integrates leisurely pursuits with prospects for educational enrichment (Kim & Yoon, 2020). The concept of Edu-Tourism has experienced significant growth as a means for travellers to familiarize themselves with the historical, cultural, and societal aspects of the destination country. Moreover, sustainable elements of Edu-Tourism are a viable approach that seeks to foster the socioeconomic advancement of the local community and facilitate cultural exchange. It has emerged as a significant element within the realm of cultural tourism. This facilitates the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the historical, contemporary, and prospective aspects of the nation being visited by individuals. The objective is to establish a sustainable tourism framework that generates mutual benefits for both tourists and the local communities they visit (Thurmaier, 2019).

Edu-Tourism exerts both direct and indirect effects on diverse stakeholders within the tourism sector. Edu-Tourism is widely recognized as a sustainable tourism model that yields economic benefits and makes a positive contribution to the local economy in terms of financial impact. Lu (2017) argues that Edu-Tourism has the potential to mitigate the challenges posed by seasonality and foster employment prospects, particularly in rural regions. Furthermore, it fosters the growth of educational infrastructures, accommodations, and local industries. Moreover, Edu-Tourism has significant social and cultural implications. It facilitates the development of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation through the engagement and exchange between tourists and residents. According to Kim and Yoon (2018), the authors highlight the potential of Edu-Tourism to augment cultural sensitivity, foster social inclusion, and enhance intercultural communication proficiencies among tourists thus serving to safeguard and advance regional customs, cultural legacy, and native

wisdom. Ong and Sandanam (2018) posit that the incorporation of sustainable practices and the preservation of the environment are integral elements within the realm of educational tourism. This initiative serves to enhance tourists' understanding of conservation matters, underscore the significance of biodiversity, and promote the adoption of responsible behaviors. Thus, highlighted the potential of the industry as one of the tourism segmentations.

When examining Malaysia from the perspective of Edu-Tourism, it becomes evident that the country possesses significant potential in this domain. This is primarily attributed to its abundant and varied cultural and natural resources, alongside its burgeoning status as a prominent educational center within the region. Malaysia possesses a profound historical background, a diverse ethnic composition, and a distinctive amalgamation of contemporary elements and traditional values, thereby presenting captivating educational opportunities for visitors. In addition, Malaysia serves as the venue for a diverse range of international educational events, including the World Youth Congress and international conferences. These events have the potential to draw a worldwide audience, contributing to the development of Edu-Tourism (Hu et al., 2019).

However, a significant challenge facing Edu-Tourism in Malaysia pertains to the inadequate coordination between the tourism and education sectors. According to Mok et al. (2018), a closer collaboration between the education and tourism sectors is necessary to guarantee the quality and pertinence of educational content provided to tourists. This issue could be effectively tackled by implementing collaborative initiatives, fostering knowledge transfer, and facilitating resource allocation. Moreover, it has been observed that there exists an excessive focus on the history and heritage of the nation, which comes at the detriment of other academic disciplines, thereby constraining the breadth of educational content and potential learning opportunities (Nor et al., 2020).

In addition to this, the matter of university visibility holds significant importance in the context of Edu-Tourism, as it serves as a crucial factor in the promotion of educational programs to the public and the establishment of a reputable standing in terms of educational excellence. The presence of universities plays a significant role in fostering the growth of intellectual and creative dimensions within the tourism industry, thereby enhancing its appeal to a diverse range of visitors. In recent times, universities have assumed a progressively significant role within the domain of tourism. Kim and Yoon (2020) assert that universities are increasingly prominent within the tourism industry because of their active participation in event hosting, research collaborations, and support for local tourism organizations. The visibility of universities within the tourism industry has the potential to yield several benefits, including the attraction of prospective students, generation of revenue, and enhancement of their academic reputation. According to Goh (2016), the strategic emphasis on university-specific programs plays a crucial role in the attraction of Edu-Tourists, as it enables the distinction of an educational experience from the conventional aspects of tourism.

### **MALAYSIAN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES AND POTENTIAL FOR EDU-TOURISM**

There are many public Islamic universities, such as Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA), and Universiti Islam Selangor (UIS) but for this research, only Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) were chosen because they explicitly identify as Islamic universities, as indicated by the word 'Islamic' in their names. Although these two universities were established in different time intervals of 15 years, they are today recognized as leading universities in the integration of knowledge by using different terms. IIUM is known as a breed institution of Islamization of knowledge by de-westernizing all Western-rooted knowledge and then re-installing the idea of Islam, particularly in Social Sciences disciplines (Ali, 1999). Mumtaz Ali (2014) further elaborates that the foundation of this project, as led by the late of Ismail Raji Faruqi and Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman is to bring about *change* not only in the concept of

knowledge but also in the educational system in which they believe would bring about change in the conditions of the *Ummah*. Instead, USIM has taken a different path in defining the epistemology of knowledge by promoting the term integration of *'ilm naqli and 'aqli*. As such, the concept seen by some is like the idealism of IIUM; however, USIM's vision is to transform and create value for the country, ummah, and humanity through integrated knowledge edge, which is defined as knowledge transmitted through the Al-Qur'an and Hadith (*Naqli* knowledge) and knowledge based on intellect (*Aqli* knowledge) (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Adding to the uniqueness held by these Malaysian Islamic public universities, USIM and IIUM shared huge potential in visualizing their strategies to promote a true sense of Islamic education in a new conundrum of Edu- Tourism. To do so, both institutions in put a great effort, played a significant role as Islamic higher education institutions, and recognized the importance of social media platforms in reaching out to a global audience.

USIM is known for its comprehensive Islamic higher education programs, which have effectively utilized various social media platforms to enhance their visibility. The institution has a strong presence on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where it shares engaging content related to its academic excellence, facilities, programs, current achievements, and campus life (Alwi et al., 2014). Strategically located in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, 20 minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and 40 minutes from the richness of green and Minangkabau traditional cultures at Rembau and Kuala Pilah, USIM is the heart of the vibrant multicultural environment and can thus potentially act as a connection hub between local and global interests. In fact, USIM showcases its commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals who come to the campus either as students or visitors to experience a combination of multiculturalism and intellectualism on and off campus (Yusoff et al., 2021). The utilization of informative videos, captivating images, and testimonials from students, alumni, and visitors has provided USIM with an authentic glimpse into the unique educational experience that no other university in the Klang Valley can offer.

Contrary to that, since its inception, IIUM has always been seen as a pioneer in the context of the Islamization of knowledge, where its vision is to integrate Islamic principles and values into various disciplines. As such, IIUM has made significant contributions to the development and dissemination of knowledge that has been Islamized and de-westernized. In maintaining such understanding, IIUM has leveraged social media platforms to enhance its visibility and engage with a wider audience in accordance with its status as a global Islamic university. IIUM is thereby influencing the landscape of Edu-Tourism in Malaysia at the center of Kuala Lumpur.

IIUM's main campus is in Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, where interconnecting public transportation like buses, speed rail (LRT and Monorail), and highways are easy to access, IIUM is a gateway to the metropolis and modern city in Malaysia and to the old village atmosphere that seems disconnected from the current rapid development. With such a unique locality, IIUM has been recognized by receiving the UNESCO/Unitwin Chair on Future Studies: Anticipation for Sustainability and Wellbeing in 2021 (Abdul Razak, 2021). Abdul Razak later emphasizes that the chair aims to develop its own 'laboratory of ideas' where people can have higher awareness as to why and how they can use the future through action learning and collective intelligence to co-create *sejahtera* (sustainability and wellbeing) towards peaceful living in humility while shaping the desired future united community. Another strong identity that IIUM has held so far is that it is home to international Muslim students who come from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Despite the challenges that international students must face, Jamal and Wok (2020) found that IIUM international students showed positive adaptation to the local culture and values, although it took time to settle in. By showcasing research, highly skilled faculty expertise, student success stories, and achievements, thus helps enhance IIUM's reputation with impactful

connections with prospective worldwide students, researchers, collaborators, and visitors to experience the potentiality of IIUM as an Edu-Tourism centre.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Two well-known Islamic public universities in Malaysia have been chosen and analyzed in this paper (IIUM and USIM). Both lead the Muslim ummah in all branches of knowledge and adopt a balanced approach between the physical and spiritual aspects, not only in the academic programs offered but also widely practised throughout the university, including administration and management levels. These organizations have been chosen for the following reasons: (1) active posting activities on their social media platforms, (2) visibility on their social media platforms that attracted the public and their students to engage, and (3) having used social media for teaching and learning purposes.

The data retrieved from posts on the official social media platforms of both universities IIUM and USIM pertaining to education and their promotions will be accompanied by post statements and specific hashtags "#". In addition, it assists universities in promoting their availability to deliver digital content to the public. This arrangement of social connections between users and texts via hashtag with "#" symbol placed before any word(s) or sentence(s) permits a connection between tweets without a preexisting follower relationship. Hashtags, which are user-defined, hypertext-linked terms for common topics, facilitate the efficient sharing of information. They are useful for recognizing trends, searching, retrieving information, and advertising. Numerous social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, embraced hashtags rapidly.

To elaborate for clarity, all social media posts can be searched using a keyword or subject related to a specific subject. Along with names and mentions, the hashtag facilitates the identification of individuals and subjects, enabling users to search and filter information on any topic of interest. A set of strong hashtag predictors for each post-topic classification is generated using domain-specific knowledge by combining hashtags with a set of topic-based concepts extracted from a knowledge base about the topic. As can be seen, the hashtag was established based on the situation or in relation to the intended post. Even though they also have a post without the hashtag, we are interested in how the hashtag can facilitate social connections between users and texts from different accounts and with various posts. There was also the use of a consistent hashtag in each post published to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to maintain the posts' accessibility and visibility to the public.

In this study, the content analysis method is employed. We contrasted and thematically analysed the educational and promotional digital content shared by both Islamic universities on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Therefore, this comparison identifies digital content produced by both IIUM and USIM in accordance with the hashtag's (#) educational and promotional connotations based on their posts. The data was collected between June and July 2023; one of the causes is due to the announcement of the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) result and affiliated education promotion programmes. Filter functions or advanced search on various social media platforms have been used in searching for and retrieving posts related to the themes mentioned during the period.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data retrieved from the official social media platforms of both universities (IIUM and USIM) related to education and their promotions will be accompanied by post statements and specific hashtags "#". In addition, it assists universities in promoting their capacity to provide digital content to the public. As shown in the table below, both universities have enormous numbers of followers on each social media platform (Table 1).

Table 1. A list of followers refers to university social platforms (Till July 2023)

Institution	Social media	Followers	Like/ Posts/ Following
IIUM	Facebook	66k	61k
	Instagram	24.5k	1339
	Twitter	18.3k	86
USIM	Facebook	164k	158k
	Instagram	38.8k	8633
	Twitter	9608	120

This arrangement of social connections between users and texts via hashtags with the "#" symbol placed before any word(s) or sentence(s) enables a connection between tweets without the need for preexisting follower relationships. The efficient dissemination of information is facilitated by hashtags, which are user-defined, hypertext-linked terms for common topics. They are advantageous for recognizing trends, browsing, retrieval, and advertising. Hashtags were promptly adopted by numerous social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

The digital contents statements posted that resembles related to education and their promotions categorized as follows; (1) showing support for educational achievement, (2) issuing a statement on education and promotion by the university to the public, and (3) delivering speeches on universities achievement based on education. Based on searched data, it can be estimated that views on each posting by both universities are quite high based on the post statement and the topic been uploaded. Some of the posts have been repeated to avoid the earliest post drawn into the new post been uploaded. This action is to ensure the objective of delivering the information is achievable. Most of the social media platforms members or followers will follow the post timeline thus like, share, followed or retweet the post.

Both public universities have a specialist team or webmaster in charge of their media platform to deliver media-related information. The use of social media platforms is consistent and may be fully utilized in conveying relevant information and staying up to date. Multiple postings will be published on their social media sites at the same time, allowing them to be viewed within a day. As a public institution of higher education, the university's popularity among Malaysians is one of its attractions. All of their posted content gained more likes and shares, increasing their visibility and availability for sharing educational digital content and promoting their universities.

The public's reaction to the released post differs depending on the number of likes, comments, and shares on digital content related to education and institutions from both universities. This indicates how the digitalization of educational content accelerates its diffusion, establishing a new standard for how people can research and connect with institutions through technology. Utilizing the hashtag symbol in all posts enables users to discover and share digital content on their official social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2. A List of Followers and Post Refers to University Social Platforms (Facebook)

Institution	# Hashtag	Post Like	Notes
IIUM	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40  #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	54	

	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	493	Ayo Kuliah di IIUM!
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	115	Jom Study@IIUM
	#SPM2022 #IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	253	IIUM mengucapkan tahniah kepada para pelajar lepasan SPM 2022!
	#EidMubarak #IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	266	2023 Eid-ulFitr Wish from IIUM's Rector
USIM	#TamhidiUSIM	498	Hari ini bermulalah sesi taaruf selama dua hari yang bertempat di Dewan Kuliah Pusat bagi semua pelajar baharu Tamhidi USIM sesi 2023/2024
	#USIMCemerlangUSIM Disayang #TamhidiUSIM	519	Saudari Nurul Atiqah Ithnani Bt Idrus merupakan anak orang asli pertama dalam sejarah USIM yang bakal melanjutkan pelajaran di USIM
	#FinalExam #USIM	500	Hari ini bermulalah medan peperiksaan untuk semua pelajar USIM
	#IntegrasiIlmuNaqliAqli #USIM	253	Salam Jumaat, nampaknya semua pelajar igih mengulangkaji pelajaran bagi persiapan peperiksaan akhir pada minggu hadapan
	#JomMasukUSIM #USIMPilihanPertama	27	Tahniah kepada semua pelajar STPM 2022 atas kejayaan anda
	#IntegrasiIlmuNaqliAqli #USIM	172	Tahniah diucapkan kepada lepasan Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Sesi Akademik 2023/2024 yang Berjaya diterima ke Tamhidi USIM

Table 3. A List of Followers and Post Refers to University Social Platforms (Instagram)

Institution	# Hashtag	Post Like	Notes
IIUM	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	1406	
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	1055	
	#JomMASukUIAM #IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	1498	JOM STUDY@IIUM
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM	500	POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR AND EXHIBITION IN JAKARTA
	#LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace		
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	3068	#QuranHour 2023 at IIUM Gombak Campus, Malaysia
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	831	PAMERAN PENDIDIKAN: AYO KULIAH DI MALAYSIA!
USIM	#TaarufUSIM #USIM	952	Jom kita tanya pelajar-pelajar baharu Tamhidi. Apa perasaan bila dapat masuk USIM?
	#tamhidi_usim	1992	Hari ini bermulalah sesi taaruf selama dua hari yang bertempat di Dewan Kuliah Pusat bagi semua pelajar baharu Tamhidi USIM sesi 2023/2024
	#IntegrasiIlmuNaqliAqli #USIM	1829	Salam Jumaat, nampaknya semua pelajar gigih mengulangkaji pelajaran bagi persiapan peperiksaan akhir pada minggu hadapan.

#TahniahDariUSIM #USIM	164	Congratulation to Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia and Faculty of Syariah and Law on the achievement of the Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law is now Indexed in Scopus.
#inimasadepankita	132	Tahniah kepada pelajar Lulusan SPM/Setaraf yang mendapat tawaran kemasukan ke program Tamhidi (Asasi) Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia Sesi Akademik 2023/2024
#USIMDiMedia #USIM	894	Buat julung kalinya, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) tersenarai dalam kedudukan keseluruhan 1,201 hingga 1,400 Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2024.

Table 4. A List of Followers and Post Refers to University Social Platforms (Twitter)

Institution	# Hashtag	Post Like	View	Notes
IIUM	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	19	7503	IIUM, an international award- winning institution for sustainability
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM	40	2729	
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld	2	1138	Come join us & be a part of IIUM and the growing Halal Industry!
	#SPM2022 #IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	1	1072	Ketahui lebih lanjut mengenai Program Asasi IIUM:
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	12	2482	Calling Students and Staff of IIUM! Join the 2023 Run for Peace event on 9 July 2023 at Sayyidina Hamzah Stadium, IIUM!

	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	2	1024	Temui IIUM di Jom Masuk U 2023!
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	18	6557	IIUM, an international award- winning institution for sustainability
	#IIUM2023 #IIUM40 #StudyatIIUM #LeadingTheWay #LeadingTheWorld #2Lead4Peace	8	2356	Pursue your Law Degree in IIUM
USIM	#JomMasukUSIM #USIMPilihanPerta ma	1	326	Tahniah Kepada semua pelajar STPM 2022 atas kejayaan anda!
	#USIMNaktanya #USIM	10	8279	Kakak, abang senior USIM ada tak ucapan dan pesanan untuk adik- adik tamhidi yang baru masuk ni? Cer tulis kat komen.
	#TamhidiUSIM	120	15.6k	Nurul Atiqah Ithnani Bt Idrus merupakan anak orang asli pertama yang bakal melanjutkan pelajaran di USIM. Beliau yang memperolehi 10A dalam peperiksaan SPM Tahun 2022 ditawarkan untuk menyambung pengajian di Tamhidi Perubatan, Pergigian dan Sains, USIM.
	#FinalExam #USIM	20	7314	
	#IntegrasiNaqliAqli #USIM	15	784	
	#JomMasukUSIM #USIMPilihanPerta ma	1	383	Tahniah Kepada semua pelajar STPM 2022 atas kejayaan anda
	#JomMasukUSIM	1	126	Saksikan siaran langsung Jom Setuju Terima Tawaran Ke Tamhidi (Asasi) USIM Sesi Akademik 2023/2024 pada hari ini jam 3.00 petang di USIMTV
#USIMNews #USIM	26	8859	Buat pertama kalinya dalam sejarah penubuhannya, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) tersenarai dalam kedudukan 1201-1400 di QS World University Rankings 2024	

Due to this support, universities' presence on social media platforms has become more influential in promoting Edu-Tourism within the country. These institutions have a myriad of opportunities to effectively market their distinctive educational offerings and cultural experiences to a global audience thanks to the dynamic nature and extensive reach of social media. By utilizing social media, universities have established a robust digital presence that fosters a strong sense of community among prospective students, educators, and tourists. One of the most crucial ways that social media promotes Edu-Tourism is by highlighting the variety of programs and courses offered by these universities. Prospective students from around the world can gain insight into the academic excellence of Malaysian

institutions and the country's rich cultural heritage through compelling multimedia content such as virtual campus tours, student testimonials, and faculty introductions.

Moreover, social media platforms facilitate seamless communication between university representatives and prospective international students, allowing for prompt and individualized responses to inquiries, visa concerns, and admission procedures. This accessibility instils prospective students with a sense of confidence and comfort, encouraging them to consider Malaysia as a destination of choice for pursuing higher education. In addition, social media serves as an effective medium for disseminating the universities of Malaysia's captivating cultural events, religious celebrations, and unique experiences. Such content attracts not only international students but also Edu-Tourists who want to immerse themselves in Malaysia's rich Islamic heritage and cultural traditions.

The information retrieved from each institution's social media channels provided valuable insights into the preferences, interests, and feedback of their online audience. Universities can tailor their Edu-Tourism strategies, refine their academic offerings, and enhance the overall student experience by analysing this data. This data-driven strategy guarantees that these institutions will remain competitive in the global education landscape and continue to attract students. Utilising social media data is indispensable for institutions seeking to effectively support Edu-Tourism. It ultimately contributes to the success and growth of Edu-Tourism initiatives by enabling them to make data-driven decisions, target the appropriate audience, improve their content, and measure the impact of their efforts.

## **CONCLUSION**

Edu-tourism has been significantly bolstered by the universities of Malaysia's active participation in social media. Through strategic content dissemination, interactive engagement, and cultural showcases, these institutions have successfully attracted global audiences, enhancing Malaysia's reputation as a premier educational and cultural hub, and ultimately contributing to the country's Edu-Tourism growth. The presence of Islamic universities in Malaysia on social media has had a significant and positive effect on Edu-tourism in the country. Through engaging content, real-time communication, and personalized interactions, social media has made Malaysia a more accessible and desirable destination for higher education.

Malaysia's Islamic public universities have leveraged the potential of social media to effectively engage with a diverse global audience and to promote their academic excellence and cultural diversity. Consequently, not only have they expanded their scope, but they have also substantially contributed to the growth and development of Edu-Tourism in Malaysia. The social media serve as a dynamic link between prospective students and vacationers and educational institutions, facilitating information exchange, showcasing distinctive offerings, and cultivating a sense of community. Collectively, these factors contribute to the expansion and support of Edu-Tourism in the digital era.

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