

Social Media's Impact on Career Choice of College Students: A Study of Accounting & Finance Professions

Addison Thomas, Sydney Nichols, Samuel Moschides, Dr. Aleksandra Zimmerman, and Connor Dawkins

Introduction

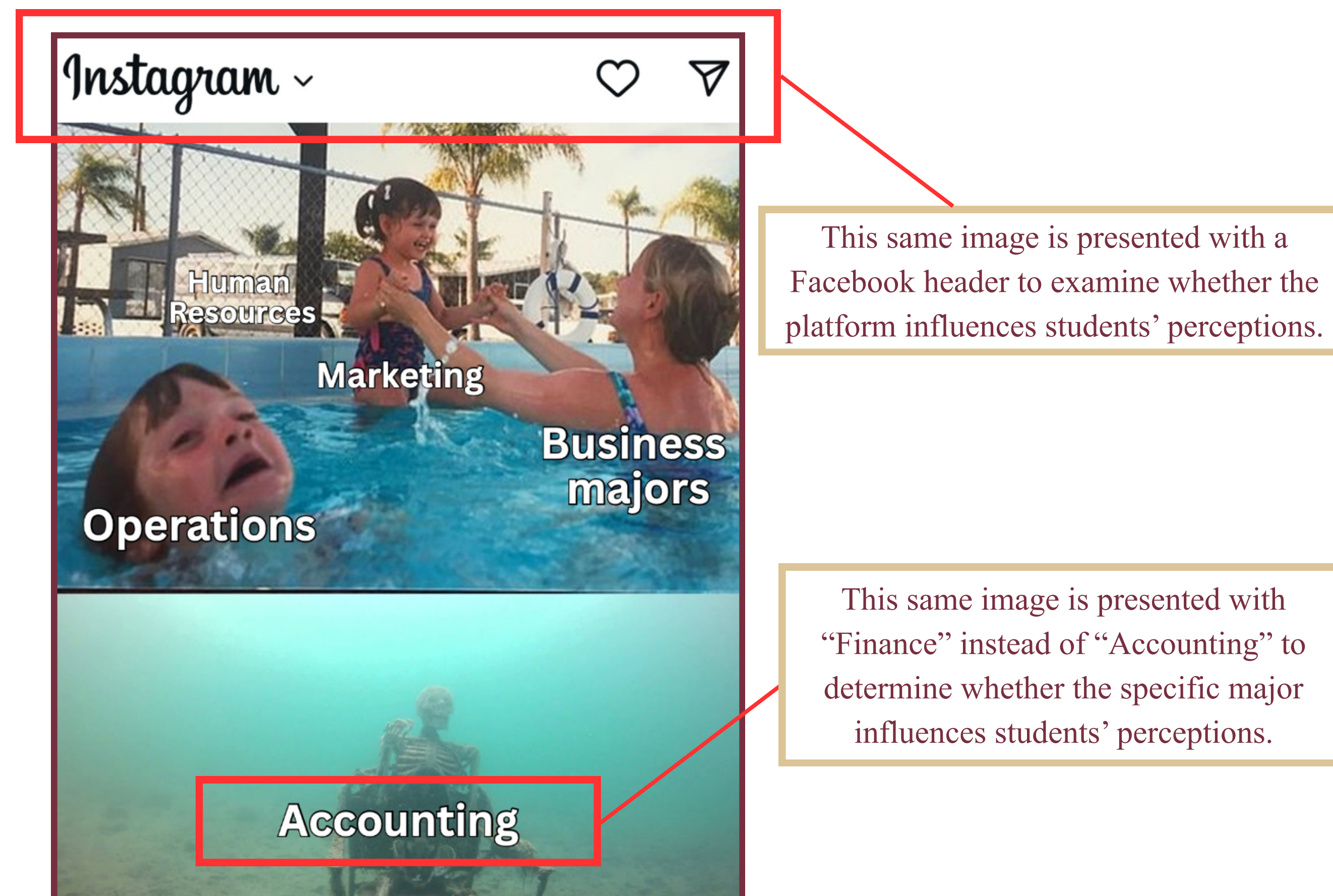
- As social media continues to increase its presence in daily life, the influence it has on an individual's perception of decisions, specifically career choices is increasingly more important to study.
- Several articles have been written which help to validate the importance of our study on social media. One such article demonstrates that social media can impact learning at the university level (Khan, et. Al, 2016). Another study discusses how students going through the accounting recruitment process use social media to analyze potential careers (Renew, et. Al, 2019).
- These articles are helpful to understand the weight social media carries with college students, but don't directly address the impact of negative social media posts on career perceptions.
- A decrease in accounting and finance professionals which could be due to social media posts focusing on long hours and boring work.

Research Question

This study intends to answer the question: "How do various forms of social media posts impact students' perception of the accounting or finance profession?" If social media posts do have an effect on the career perceptions that could not only explain the shortage of these professionals, but also a shortage of CPAs in recent years.

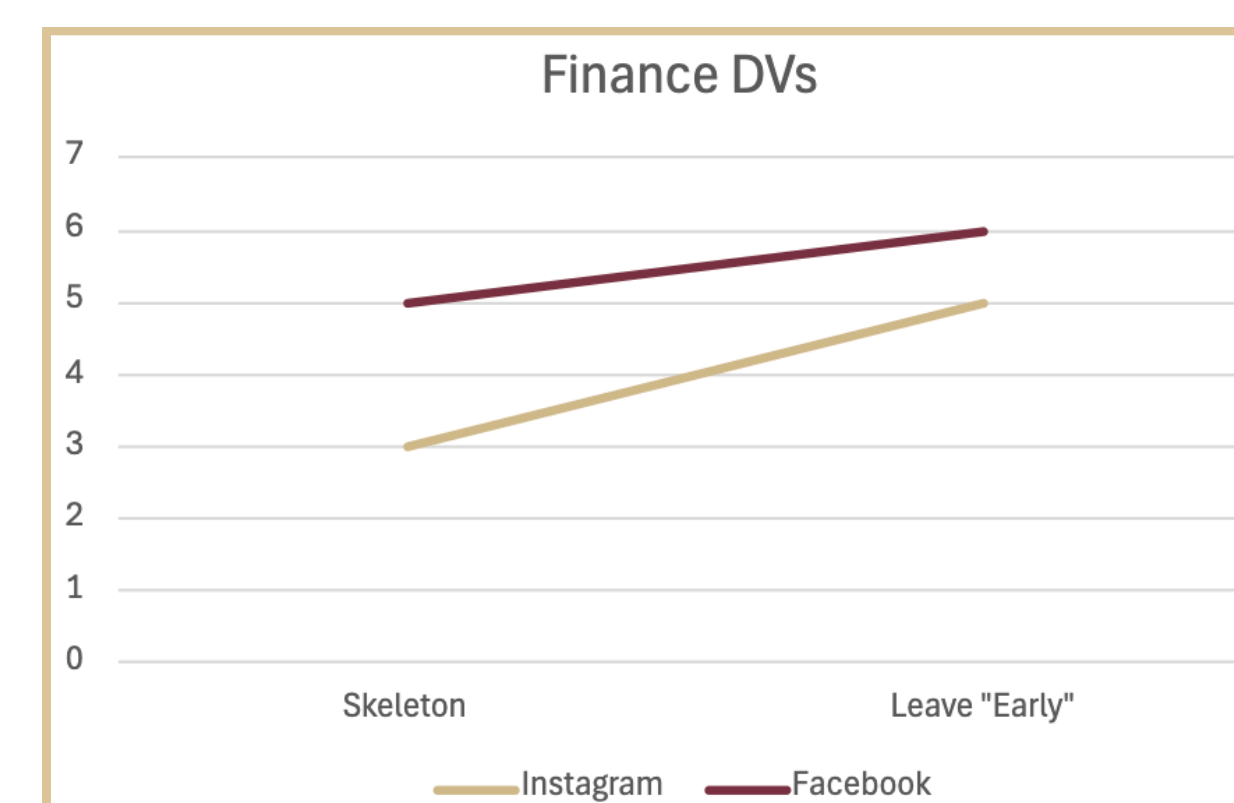
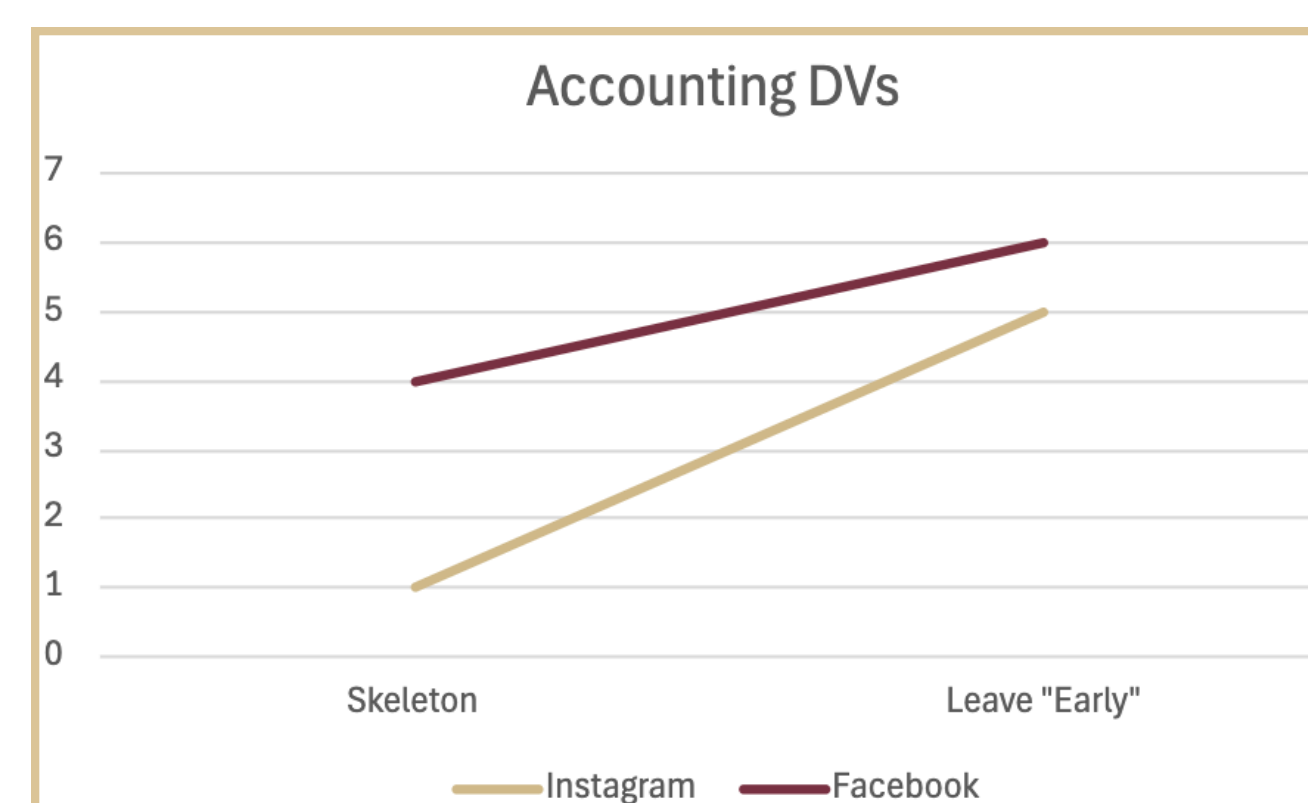
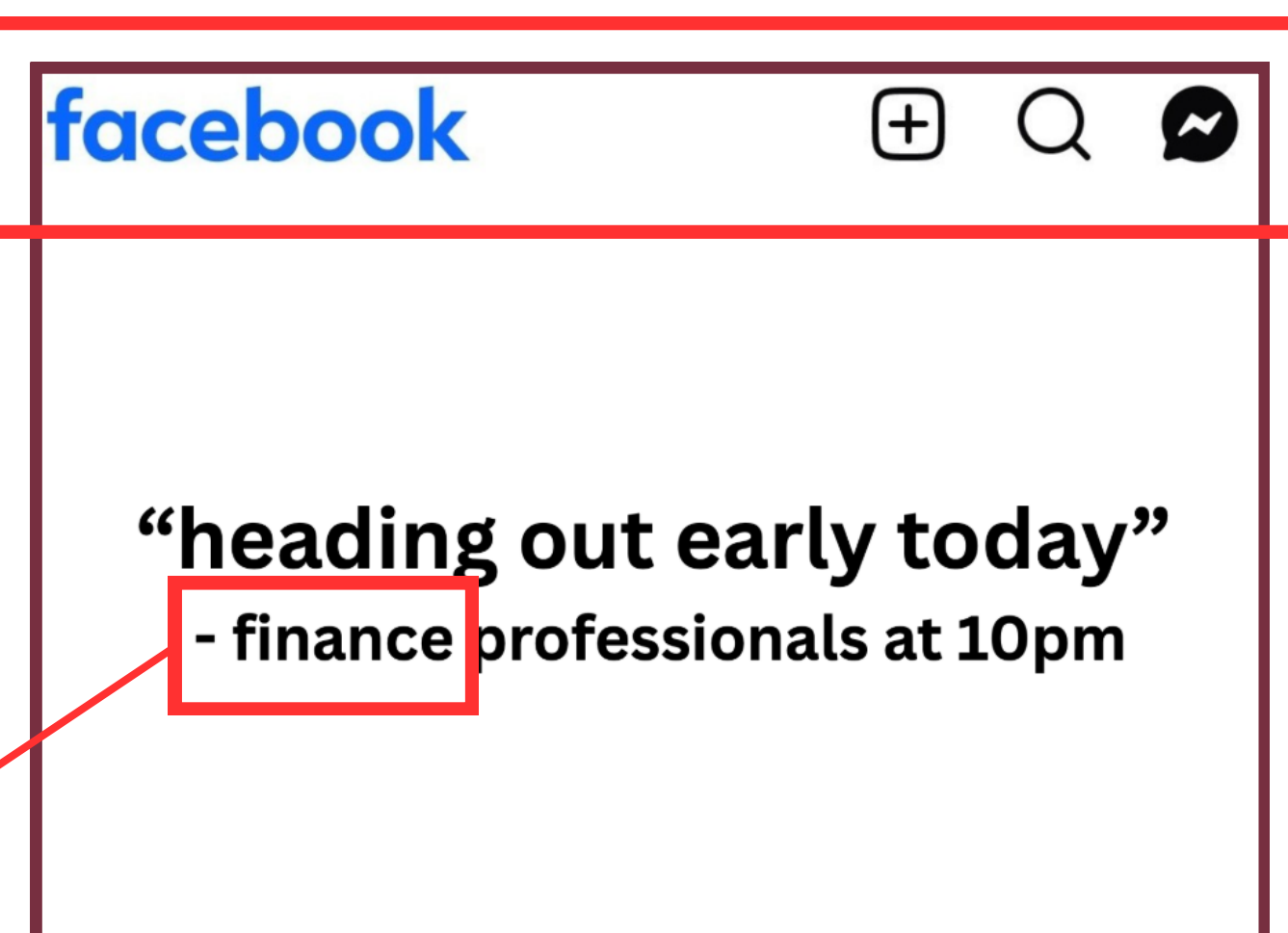
Methods

- Within this Qualtrics-based study, we manipulated the image source, content type, and the depicted major to examine how each factor influences students' perceptions of accounting and finance. This experimental design allowed us to isolate variables such as platforms, content, and domain to identify interactions among them.
- Participants enrolled in introductory accounting courses at Florida State University were randomly assigned to view either a satirical or a neutral meme depicting one of the two professions.
- After viewing one assigned meme, participants completed a series of survey questions designed to measure how the content influenced their perceptions of the profession as well as their longer-term intentions to pursue a career in that field.
- Once all survey responses have been collected, the data will be analyzed using statistical software. A statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted to determine whether meme type and professional label produce statistically significant differences in students' career perceptions and their willingness to exert effort toward entering the profession.



This same image is presented with an Instagram header to examine whether the platform influences students' perceptions.

This same image is presented with "Finance" instead of "Accounting" to determine whether the specific major influences students' perceptions.



Instagram's visually driven platform is expected to amplify more emotionally intense content, such as the skeleton meme, leading to stronger negative effects on career perceptions, more so for accounting than finance. This expected relationship is illustrated in the graph below.

Expected Results

- Although results for our study have not yet been finalized it is likely that our findings will demonstrate that social media does have an impact on the perception of accounting and finance careers among students.
- The question we are trying to answer is if social media posts can affect the perceptions of accounting and finance professions on students. We break this question into several hypotheses based on how variables interact with each other to form these perceptions.
- We hypothesize that exposure to accounting and finance memes will reduce students' interest and perceptions of these fields, especially on Instagram, with the skeleton meme, and for accounting.
- Additionally, negative effects are predicted to be stronger for accounting than for finance due to students' pre-existing perceptions, with meme exposure potentially decreasing accounting perceptions while relatively increasing finance perceptions.

Implications

- This study differs from existing literature as it focuses on two professions which have been undergoing a decrease of applicants every year.
- If a significant relationship between social media exposure and career perception is supported, other academic fields could apply similar research designs to evaluate how social media content influences career decision-making within their respective industries.
- The strengths of this research are how many participants we have due to strategies such as using large introductory courses within the College of Business .
- A major limitation of this study is the large number of variables that must be considered. Accounting for factors such as platform differences, meme content, and domain changes requires careful control and interpretation of the data.

References



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