THE IMPACT OF USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN UNIVERSITY MARKETING: A CASE STUDY ON DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

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https://doi.org/10.35189/dpeskj.2025.64.3.3

Abstract. *In recent years, social media platforms have significantly influenced university marketing strategies, with the aim of promoting educational offerings, increasing student retention, and strengthening the institutional brand. At the same time, the accelerated development of artificial intelligence has generated new opportunities for optimizing communication and administrative processes. Although the education sector is often perceived as conservative in adopting emerging technologies, integrating AI into university marketing strategies demonstrates high potential for improving workflows, personalizing messages, and attracting a larger number of students. The purpose of this research is to analyse the impact of using artificial intelligence in the creation and dissemination of digital content on the engagement indicators, by comparing the impact of different promotion materials published on the university's social platforms (Facebook and Instagram). The research results highlight the significant contribution of AI in strengthening the visibility and attractiveness of educational offer, by developing a more efficient and dynamic relationship with the target audiences. At the same time, there were significant differences between the social network platforms, in terms of impact of dissemination materials (Facebook) and attracting new public (Instagram). For future research, the degree of international user satisfaction regarding the technological tool based on AI will be very important in relation to the educational offer, especially since the presence of international users underlines the need to adapt the content and communication to a multicultural audience.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; higher education marketing; social networks; user engagement; digital communication.*

Received: *10 October 2025* / **Accepted:** *16 November 2025* / **Published:** *28 November 2025*

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Introduction

In 2020, a study showed that artificial intelligence (AI) will change the way marketing activities are designed and implemented (Grandinetti, 2020). Given the rapid development of AI, specialists in the field emphasize that it is important for higher education institutions to start using this technology, even though they operate in a traditional sector, largely resistant to change (Deloitte, 2024), because the education sector is itself in continuous transformation (Bates, 2018). Universities can leverage AI to optimize their marketing strategies, improve

communication with potential students, and streamline internal processes (AbuDaabes et al., 2025).

Into university marketing strategies, artificial intelligence (AI) is a powerful tool to increase stakeholder engagement, simplify administrative processes, and ultimately attract students (Isnaini & Muslimin, 2024). Optimizing marketing strategies involves adapting messages to the individual preferences and behaviours of potential students. Through predictive analytics, universities can segment and target specific demographics to increase the effectiveness of promotional campaigns (Kharis & Indriyani, 2024). At the organizational process level, AI can automate repetitive marketing tasks, such as email campaigns or social media posts, automation that leads to more efficient use of resources and consistent communication with potential students (Huang & Rust, 2021; Rane et al., 2023; Yang & Evans, 2019).

At the same time, studies show significant increases in university marketing performance: 35% for information requests, 28% for applications and 22% for enrolments, following the implementation of AI-based strategies. These results have been reported in different countries (Indonesia, Poland, Ukraine), confirming the effectiveness of AI in data analysis, decision-making and market segmentation in the digital environment (Akinwalere & Ivanov, 2022).

In recent years, universities have implemented innovative strategies to both maintain their value and competitiveness and to optimize their organizational brand (Bhardwaj et al., 2024). In this endeavour, AI offers significant opportunities in terms of improving learning processes, streamlining administrative tasks and supporting academic innovations (Ocen et al., 2025).

Thus, the objective of universities must be to develop digital marketing strategies that aim to create content of interest to a specific target audience on social networks (Grewal et al., 2024). AI tools help universities target potential beneficiaries of educational services with appropriate messages, by being able to analyse large databases and highlight student trends, behaviours and preferences (Kharis & Indriyani, 2024; Islam et al., 2024). This information becomes a resource for optimizing digital marketing campaigns (Papić et al., 2023).

The main strategy on social networks is to publish explicit and appropriate content for the target audience (Sintani et al., 2021). Because social media provides the opportunity to interact directly with recipients, through feedback and building lasting relationships (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), engagement-based marketing provides valuable data on the performance of social media campaigns, helping to identify their strengths and weaknesses and optimize future strategies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). At the same time, social media marketing also involves adapting to new technologies and consumer behavioural changes (Kočišová & Štarchoň, 2023). By effectively analysing engagement indicators provided by social media platforms, marketers can adopt strategies that increase the level of involvement, conversion rates and strengthen brand loyalty, thus achieving their objectives in a constantly evolving digital environment (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Considering the aforementioned aspects, in this study AI is analysed as a tool for generating and editing digital content with the aim of highlighting the relationship between the level of engagement of the target audience and the video content promoted on social networks, as well as that between the video content and the type of social network used.

Hypotheses

H1. Videos made with and without AI generate different values of engagement indicators of the target audience that interacts with them.

H2. The values of engagement indicators are influenced by the type of event promoted on social networks.

H3. The intensity of the target audience's interaction with university's posts, expressed through views and their duration, depends on the social media platform used.

Methodology

Methods

In order to evaluate the efficiency of AI tools in marketing promoted by the National University of Physical Education and Sport (UNEFS) from Bucharest, an experiment was designed, in which the following variables were used:

- Video content created with and without AI, which was promoted on UNEFS's social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram), on the occasion of two academic events (UNEFS Admission 2025 and UNEFS Museum Night). Three categories of posts were used, namely, Admission 2025 and UNEFS Museum Night promotion clips, made with AI (AI Video), without AI (Reel Video) and in hybrid format (Hybrid Video), which combines AI-generated elements with authentic footage as shown in the photo collages presented below (Figure 1. Practical test filming_Reel Video, Figure 2. Practical test simulation_Reel Video, Figure 3. Student testimonials_Hybrid Video, Figure 4. Admission promotion_AI Video, Figure 5. UNEFS Museum Night_Hybrid Video).

Figure 1. The practical test within Admission 2025_Reel Video

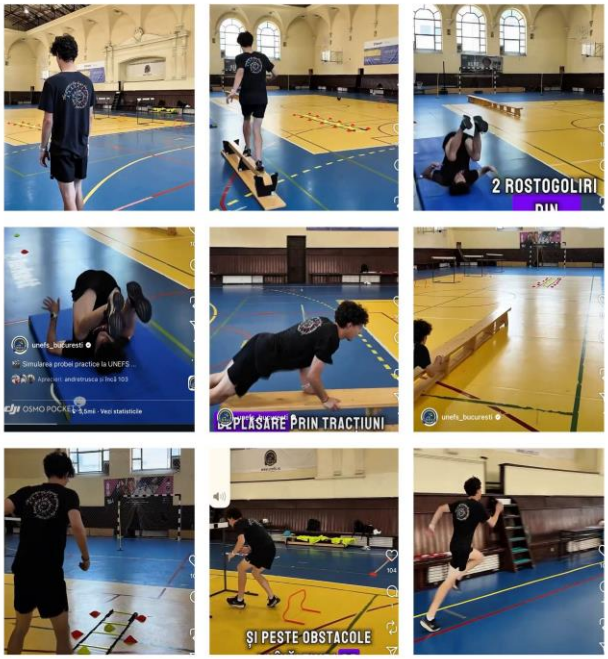

Figure 2. Practical test simulation within Admission 2025_Reel Video

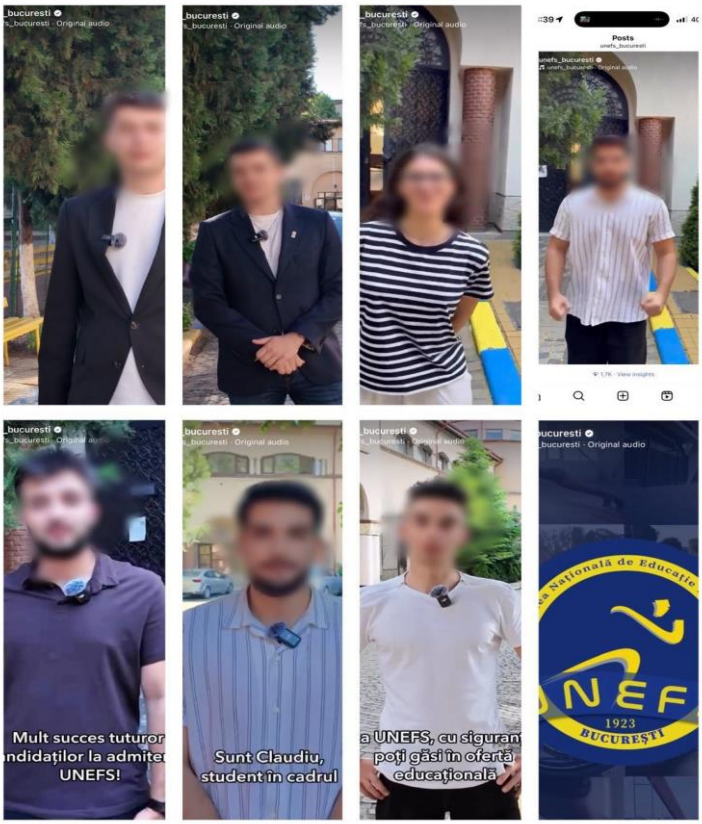

Figure 3. Student testimonials_ Hybrid Video

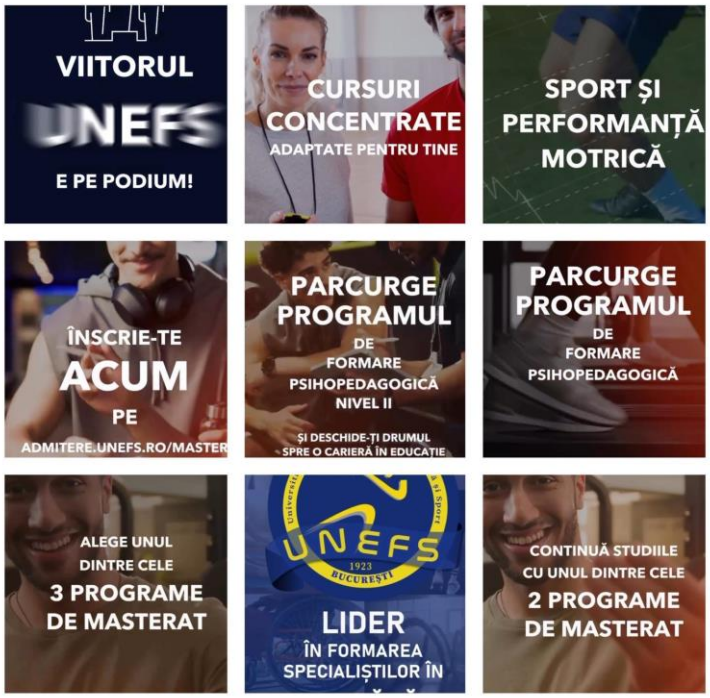

Figure 4. Admission promotion_AI Video
Source: https://www.facebook.com/UNEFS

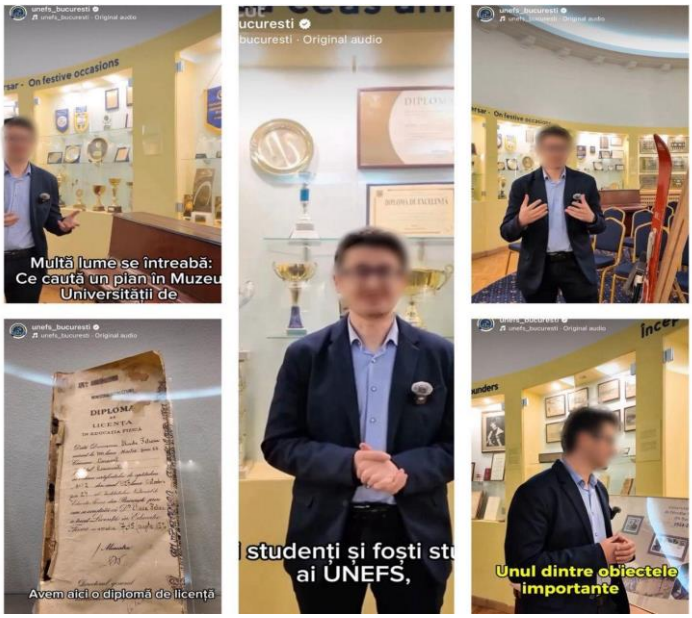

Figure 5. UNEFS Museum Night_Hybrid Video
Source: https://www.instagram.com/unefs_bucuresti/

To evaluate engagement, the following indicators provided by Meta Business Suite, for the Facebook and Instagram platforms, were chosen and considered relevant for the research (Table 1).

Table 1. *Engagement indicators analysis*

Engagement indicators	Definition
Accounts reached	The number of unique Instagram accounts that have seen a specific post at least once. This metric is an estimate.
Views	The number of times the post was played or displayed.
Interactions	The number of likes, saves, comments, and shares of the post minus the number of unlike, unsaved saves, and deleted comments.
Likes	The number of likes on the post minus the number of likes cancelled.
Average viewing time	Average actual viewing time
Total viewing time	Total time spent watching video content

Duration and stages

The study was implemented between April and September 2025 and involved a series of organizational measures, such as:

- Creating video materials. This was done using the CapCut application for video and audio editing, integrating textual elements, adding visual effects and modern transitions, which would increase impact and engagement on social networks;
- Creation of the UNEFS Instagram account. The verification badge for this platform was purchased, with the aim of confirming the authenticity of the profile and strengthening institutional credibility in the online environment;
- Periodic posts on UNEFS social media accounts, between May and July 2025, to promote the most important academic events.

Results

Analysis of engagement indicators on the Instagram platform

The three types of videos were analysed: Video Reel (three in number), Video AI (four in number), Video Hybrid (five in number), in relation to the values of the four engagement indicators (accounts, views, interactions, likes), generated by each type of video. Thus, the total number of variables analysed (N) represents the product of the number of videos (for each type) and the number of engagement indicators. In Table 2, we can thus see that video materials (Reel Video) determine higher values of engagement indicators than those generated by AI video (AI Video) and hybrid video (Hybrid Video).

Table 2. *Descriptive results_engagement indicators values on Instagram*

	Video Type	Total
N	Video Reel	12
	AI Video	16
	Hybrid Video	20
Mean of	Video Reel	1202
all indicator values	AI Video	763
	Hybrid Video	491

Standard deviation of all indicator values	Video Reel	1282
	AI Video	923
	Hybrid Video	548

Note: N = product of number of videos and number of indicators

Subsequently, it was verified whether the differences between the data generated by the three types of videos promoting the admission competition, from 2025, which were posted on Instagram, are significant. Given that the analysed data resulted from the action of three different variables, it was decided to apply the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 3).

Table 3. *Analysis of engagement indicators on the Instagram platform*

Engagement indicators	χ^2	df	p	ε^2
Accounts reached	5.31	2	0.070	0.483
Views	5.35	2	0.069	0.487
Total interactions	5.35	2	0.069	0.487
Likes	6.37	2	0.041	0.579

A significant difference is found between the effects of posting the 3 types of videos, in terms of the number of likes ($p = 0.041$). The effect size of $\varepsilon^2 = 0.57$ indicates a very strong impact of these posts on the behaviour of potential beneficiaries of the educational services offered by UNEFS. At the level of all engagement indicators analysed according to the type of video, there are no significant differences ($p>0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 4. *Kruskal-Wallis test result - total engagement values indicators*

	χ^2	df	p	ε^2
Total	4.92	2	0.085	0.105

It was found that, for the digital content created to promote the UNEFS 2025 Admission event, the audience indicators of views, total interactions and likes recorded higher values compared to the same indicators recorded by the UNEFS Museum Night event. Conversely, in the case of the accounts reached, the UNEFS Museum Night event recorded higher values of this indicator (Table 5).

Table 5. *Descriptive results_Admission 2025 vs. Museum Night*

Engagement indicators	event	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Accounts reached	Admittance	5	830.2	778.0	138.2	61.80
	Museum Night	5	862.8	907.0	171.8	76.85
Views	Admittance	5	1373.0	1374.0	188.0	84.06
	Museum Night	5	1196.8	1262.0	238.3	106.56
Total interactions	Admittance	5	42.0	46.0	12.9	5.79
	Museum Night	5	36.6	41.0	13.7	6.14

Likes	Admittance	5	40.8	45.0	13.3	5.95
	Museum Night	5	35.6	40.0	12.7	5.66

Note: SD: standard deviation; SE: standard error.

To highlight the significance of the differences between the audience indicators resulting from the posting of content intended to promote the two events, UNEFS Admission 2025 and UNEFS Museum Night, respectively, on the Instagram platform, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied (Table 6).

Table 6. *Mann-Whitney U test result - Instagram_Admission 2025 vs. Museum Night (Hybrid Videos)*

Engagement indicators	Statistical	p
Accounts reached	11.00	0.841
Views	8.00	0.421
Total interactions	8.50	0.463
Likes	9.00	0.548

Since $p > 0.05$, we consider that there are no significant differences between the two events promoted on Instagram, in terms of the audience indicators analysed.

Analysis of engagement indicators on the Facebook platform

The same video content was disseminated as in the case of the Instagram platform. The difference between the two platforms is represented by the opening date of the UNEFS Facebook page. Higher values of audience indicators recorded by hybrid video units are observed, which is justified by the authenticity perceived by the audience and by a greater emotional involvement, the subjects of the video materials being UNEFS students (Table 7).

Table 7. *Descriptive results_Engagement indicators values on Facebook*

Engagement indicators	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Accounts reached	AI Video	4	244.3	269.5	121.2	60.6
	Hybrid Video	5	356.2	312.0	310.5	138.9
Views	AI Video	4	4570.8	5013.0	1254.5	627.2
	Hybrid Video	5	5768.8	6458.0	2093.5	936.2
Total interactions	AI Video.	4	78.3	90.0	39.7	19.9
	Hybrid Video	5	97.0	98.0	62.3	27.9
Likes	AI Video	4	67.5	76.0	33.5	16.7
	Hybrid Video	5	89.0	91.0	54.1	24.2

Subsequently, we checked whether the differences recorded between the two types of videos promoting UNEFS 2025 Admission on the Facebook platform: videos made with AI (AI Video), respectively hybrid video (Hybrid Video) are significant (Table 8).

Table 8. *Mann-Whitney U test result - Facebook*

Engagement indicators	Statistical	p
Accounts reached	8.00	0.730
Views	5.00	0.286
Total interactions	8.00	0.730
Like	7.00	0.556

Since $p > 0.05$, we consider that there is no significant difference between the two types of videos in terms of total interactions, number of likes, views or accounts reached. The analysis of all engagement indicators analysed by video type indicates that there are no significant differences between them ($p = 0.063 > 0.05$) (Table 9).

Table 9. *Mann-Whitney U test results – Facebook: total engagement values indicators*

	Statistical	p
Total	145	0.633

Overall, it is found that Hybrid Video content units recorded higher values for the analysed audience indicators, compared to AI Video content units (Table 10).

Table 10. *Facebook_Descriptive results*

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Total	AI Video	16	1240	107	2066	516
	Hybrid Video	20	1578	143	2668	597

For the digital content created to promote the UNEFS 2025 Admission event, the analysed audience indicators recorded higher values than the same engagement indicators recorded by the UNEFS Museum Night event (Table 11).

Table 11. *Facebook_Descriptive Results_Admission vs. Museum Night*

Engagement indicators	Events	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Accounts reached	Admission 2025	5	356.2	312.0	310.5	138.9
	Museum Night	5	135.8	101.0	59.7	26.7
Views	Admission 2025	5	5772.4	6458.0	2095.5	937.2
	Museum Night	5	3104.0	2501.0	1887.6	844.2
Total interactions	Admission 2025	5	97.0	98.0	62.3	27.9
	Museum Night	5	88.2	73.0	81.2	36.3
Likes	Admission 2025	5	89.0	91.0	54.1	24.2
	Museum Night	5	83.4	70.0	76.1	34.1

Note: SD: standard deviation; SE: standard error.

Using the Mann-Whitney U Test, we verified the significance of the differences between the impact of the two events posted on Facebook: Admission and Museum Night (Table 12). Since $p > 0.05$ for the values obtained by applying the statistical test, we consider that there are no significant differences between the values of the audience indicators generated by the two events.

Table 12. *Mann-Whitney U test results - Facebook_ Admission vs. UNEFS Museum Night (hybrid)*

Engagement indicators	Statistical	p	Average difference
Accounts reached	7.00	0.310	211
Views	4.00	0.095	3231
Total interactions	11.00	0.841	25
Likes	11.00	0.841	21

Comparative analysis of the number of views Instagram vs. Facebook

To provide a comparative and relevant analysis of the impact of published video content, data on views and duration of interactions on Facebook and Instagram were centralized (Table 13).

Table 13. *Comparison of Instagram vs. Facebook views*

Engagement indicators	VT Instagram	VU Instagram	UNV Instagram	Instagram duration	Duration M Instagram	VT Facebook	VU Facebook	UNV Facebook.	Duration Facebook	Duration M Facebook
Hybrid Video	1,26	34.20%	65.80%	9805	10	1,14	51%	49%	3747	3.71
Hybrid Video	790	53.30%	46.70%	7873	14	2,23	70%	30%	19138	9,734
Hybrid Video	1,31	36.60%	63.40%	11130	11	6,12	45%	55%	55845	10,35
Hybrid Video	1,21	33.90%	66.10%	6428	6	2,50	56%	44%	12283	5,471
Hybrid Video	1,40	34%	66%	6829	6	3,51	48%	52%	17600	5.72
Hybrid Video	1,37	30.60%	69.40%	8917	8	6,72	59%	41%	57430	10,27
Hybrid Video	1,16	41.30%	58.70%	7976	9	2,34	60%	40%	13935	7,04
Hybrid Video	1,50	46.70%	53.30%	9374	6	6,45	50%	50%	33229	6,10
Hybrid Video	1,21	53.80%	46.20%	6243	7	5,47	44%	56%	36664	7,62

Hybrid Video	1,60	57.20%	42.80%	9540	9	7,847	79%	21%	36128	6,736
Video Reel	3,07	27.90%	72.10%	30995	14	30,233	31%	69%	433695	17,958
Video Reel	3,45	24.20%	75.80%	55112	23	9,029	47%	53%	142835	20,861
Video Reel	2,15	40.20%	59.80%	42401	29					
AI Video	3,04	34.60%	65.40%	12371	5	5,365	47%	53%	32861	7.22
AI Video	1,14	50.30%	49.70%	5100	6	5,487	50%	50%	22548	4,719
AI Video	1,85	53.70%	46.30%	9130	6	4,661	52%	48%	26049	6,591
AI Video	1,15	52.30%	47.70%	5826	6	2.77	51%	49%	10924	4,492

Note: VT- total views; VU- follower views; VNU- non-follower views; Duration-; Duration M - average duration.

Although at the beginning of the analysis we specified that the two pages differ in opening date and number of followers, we considered relevant a statistical analysis based on total views, follower views and non-follower views, as well as the duration of interactions with posts, to highlight engagement trends independent of audience size (Table 14).

Table 14. *Mediums_Instagram vs. Facebook*

Indicators	VT Instagram	VU Instagram	UNV Instagram	Instagram duration	Duration M Instagram	VT Facebook	VU Facebook	UNV Facebook	Duration Facebook	Duration M Facebook
Mean	48.11	0.41	0.59	14414.71	10.29	1894.04	0.53	0.48	59681.94	8.41
Standard Deviation	191.18	0.10	0.10	14341.45	6.60	7557.06	0.11	0.11	104910.77	4.74
Sample Variance	36550.2	0.01	0.01	205677248	43.60	57109091	0.01	0.01	11006268629	22.50
Kurtosis	17.00	-1.41	-1.41	3.80	3.62	16.00	1.89	1.89	12.45	2.87
Skewness	4.12	0.05	-0.05	2.15	1.97	4.00	0.76	-0.76	3.44	1.80
Rank	788.86	0.33	0.33	50012.00	24.00	30231.85	0.48	0.48	429948.0	17.15
Confidence Level (95.0%)	98.30	0.05	0.05	7373.69	3.39	4026.87	0.06	0.06	55903.00	2.53

Note: VT- total views; VU- follower views; VNU- non-follower views; Duration-; Duration M - average duration.

Table 15. *t-Test result: two-sample assuming unequal variances*

	Instagram Duration	Facebook Duration
Mean	14414.71	59681.94
Observations	17	16
df	16	
t State	-1.70	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.05	
t Critical one-tail	1.74	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.11	
t Critical two-tail	2.11	

For the one-tailed test, p = 0.05, the result is considered marginally significant in favour of Facebook. This difference indicates a possible superiority of the performance of this platform in terms of total accumulated viewing time (Table 14).

To compare the total viewing time of video content on Instagram and Facebook, the independent samples t-test was applied. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the average viewing time on Instagram and Facebook, t = 2.11, p = 0.11 (two-tailed test) (Table 15).

The differences between the results obtained on Facebook and Instagram can be explained by the algorithmic and demographic peculiarities of each platform, with Instagram favouring content discovery by new users, while Facebook stimulates retention and the accumulation of a greater volume of interactions from an already consolidated audience.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, we aimed to highlight the impact of integrating artificial intelligence-based technologies into university marketing, both in order to understand user behaviour and to understand the most appropriate institutional communication strategies.

From the descriptive analysis of the data, it results that the videos presenting the simulation of the practical test within the UNEFS admission gathered the most interactions, likes and views on both platforms, Facebook and Instagram, which highlights the high interest of future students in informative and practical content. Thus, this type of content, created without the help of AI, can help increase the audience's engagement on these platforms. The analysed audience indicators record different values on the two platforms, which is also justified by the difference in the length of UNEFS's presence on the two social networks. At the same time, these differences also confirm the specific behaviour of users, as Instagram offers constant and predictable exposure, while Facebook favours content with viral potential, regardless of whether the videos are of the AI Video or Hybrid Video type, i.e. independent of the use of AI tools.

We can also note that there is a major difference in the maximum total viewing times between the two platforms, with Facebook accumulating a total viewing time of approximately 5 days. However, attracting new audiences on Instagram is strongly correlated with the average viewing time of published content. Depending on the social platform in question, Facebook,

Instagram or X, users have access to content relevant to their habits and interests, and artificial intelligence tools help marketers create personalized posts for their audience (Beyari & Hashem, 2025).

Social platforms, Facebook and Instagram, can represent a source of active users and can help strengthen traffic on the UNEFS website to the extent that the digital content disseminated through them directs users to the site www.unefs.ro. Although in the present research Facebook and Instagram are secondary sources of traffic, they can register significant increases and can lead to the development of UNEFS brand awareness. Interaction and engagement are paramount when using chatbots, as they have a significant impact on student satisfaction and motivation (Hasan et al., 2024).

While AI brings many benefits to academic marketing, it is essential that it is used responsibly. Issues such as data protection, possible algorithmic bias, and the need for human oversight need to be carefully managed (Dong et al., 2024), as generative AI technologies - which have been evolving rapidly since the emergence of ChatGPT - need further evaluation for accuracy before being implemented in university systems (Peyton et al., 2025).

Integrating AI into university marketing not only provides a solution to human and financial resource constraints but also aligns with the evolution of the digital ecosystem, keeping institutions competitive and relevant (Bates, 2018; Bates et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021).

From the descriptive analysis of the data presented in the research, we observe that the videos made without AI, which present the simulation of the practical test for admission to UNEFS, gathered the most interactions, likes and views on both platforms, Facebook and Instagram, which highlights the high interest of future students in informative and practical content. Thus, this type of content can help increase audience engagement on these platforms. Although the statistical analysis revealed significant differences between traditional content and that made with AI, the integration of various AI-based technologies increases the visual attractiveness and virality potential of the published materials. Given these results, we can conclude that the first hypothesis, namely H1, is confirmed.

Regarding the analysis of the target audience's behaviour, in relation to the types of events promoted on social networks, it is found that no significant differences were recorded, thus disproving hypothesis H2. Segmenting the target audience according to interest in the activities organized by UNEFS is likely to generate comparable interaction on social networks.

The engagement indicators analysed record significantly different values on the two social networks, Facebook and Instagram, the latter being much more oriented towards attracting new audiences through constant exposure. At the same time, these differences also confirm the specific behaviour of users, as Instagram offers constant and predictable exposure, while Facebook favours content with viral potential. In contrast, the Facebook platform continues to be more effective for disseminating content with viral potential, even if attracting new users is more strongly correlated with activity on Instagram. It is also noted that there is a major difference between the total viewing times between the two platforms, with Facebook accumulating a higher total viewing time. This conclusion confirms the third hypothesis of the research.

Although the research results provide relevant data on the performance of content published on the selected social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), several limitations must be taken into account. The first limitation is represented by the relatively short observation period.

The present analysis considered exclusively the videos produced to promote *Admission 2025* and the *UNEFS Museum Night* event, with the specific aim of highlighting differences arising from the use of AI. Consequently, the analysis does not allow for the capture of long-term variations in audience behaviour. The analysed materials were published simultaneously on Instagram and Facebook during the period May 2025 – July 2025. Another limit of the study is collective administration of the Facebook page. Control over content, communication tone, and publishing timing is reduced due to the page being managed by multiple individuals. As a result, successive posts published at relatively short time intervals influence the engagement indicators of each individual post. Also, our research was limited by the differences in platform development. While the UNEFS Facebook page was created in 2011 and has accumulated over 10.000 followers, the university's Instagram page was created in December 2024 and gained approximately 600 followers during its first year. This discrepancy makes direct comparison between the two platforms difficult. Moreover, the influence of external variables must be taken into account. Seasonality, changes in platform algorithms, and paid promotion represent the most significant external factors that may affect engagement indicators independently of the analysed content.

For the future, we consider interesting to research the degree of user satisfaction regarding this AI-based technological tool, especially since the presence of international users from countries such as Germany, Italy or the United Kingdom highlights the university's development potential and the need to adapt content and communication to a multicultural audience. Thus, to grow the organization brand and develop content on various platforms, we consider the integration of AI technologies into university marketing to be a necessity, providing relevance and visual appeal.

Authors' Contributions: All authors have equally contributed to this study and should be considered as main authors.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The research was conducted according to the principles stated in the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UNEFS Bucharest (number assigned 11/0611).

Data Availability Statement: Data are available upon request to the contact author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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