

Study UK insights report: key information sources used by prospective students

February 2025



Purpose of this report

Study UK's annual research with prospective international students gathers insights on the international student journey, including information sources used at different stages.

This supplementary report presents market-level insights from Study UK's 2023-24 research with prospective international students in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and the USA. It focuses on the information sources used at the beginning of the student journey, when students are beginning to investigate options and consequently may be more receptive to marketing.

The report answers the following questions:



- What information sources do students use when beginning their research?
- How does this vary by market, and are there subgroup differences (e.g., undergraduates vs postgraduates)?
- How important is social media, and which channels are used most often?

The full report of Study UK's 2023-24 research is available [here](#). You may also be interested in a separate British Council report on prospective students' social media use, which you can find [here](#).



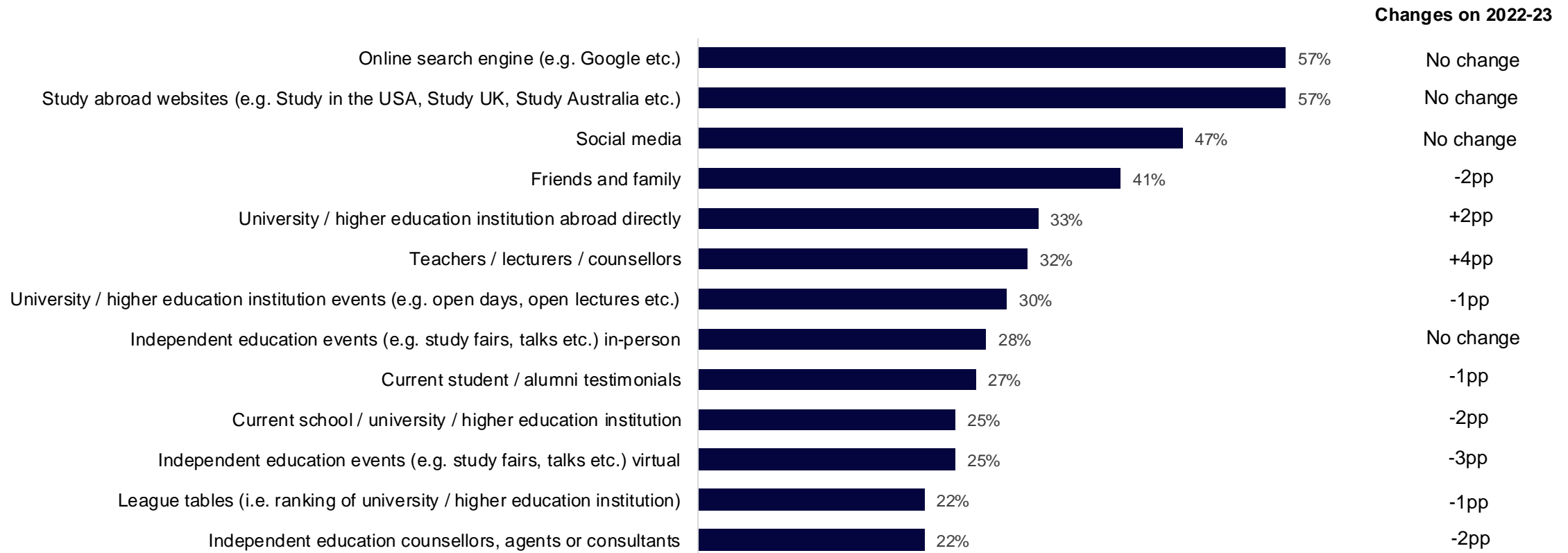
Sample and methodology

- Prospective international students aged 16-25 (50 per cent of sample) or 25-34 (50 per cent of sample), or parents of prospective international students of these ages took part in a 25-minute online survey between January-February 2024.
- All respondents were residents of one of the countries below. The country samples are weighted evenly to create international totals and all represent the same mix of 45 per cent undergraduate and 55 per cent postgraduate students.
- Respondents (prospective international students or their parents) must be considering studying abroad at a college/university in the UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada or New Zealand in English.

	Total sample	China 	India 	Indonesia 	Malaysia 	Nigeria 	Pakistan 	USA 
Students	1,700	300	300	300	300	100	100	300
Parents	632	100	100	100	100	70	60	100
Total	2,332	400	400	400	400	170	160	400

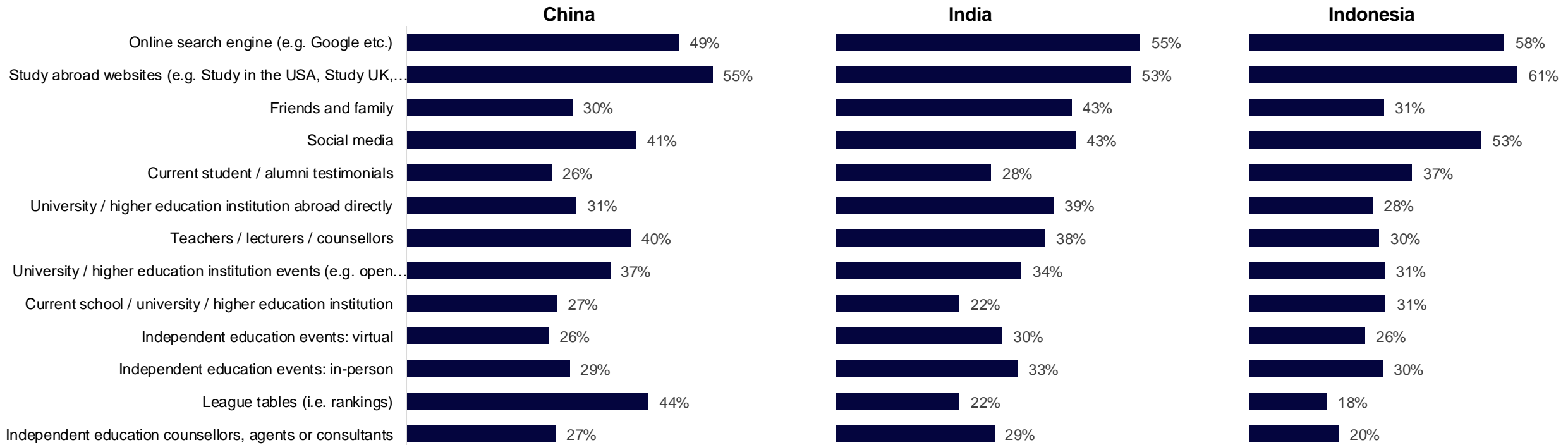
Search engines and study abroad websites are equally likely to be used by those in the early stages of the student journey. Differences by level of study are marginal, and overall, usage is broadly consistent year-on-year.

Sources of information used to explore study abroad options – all markets



League tables are a particularly important starting point for prospective students in China, while social media are used significantly more often in Indonesia.

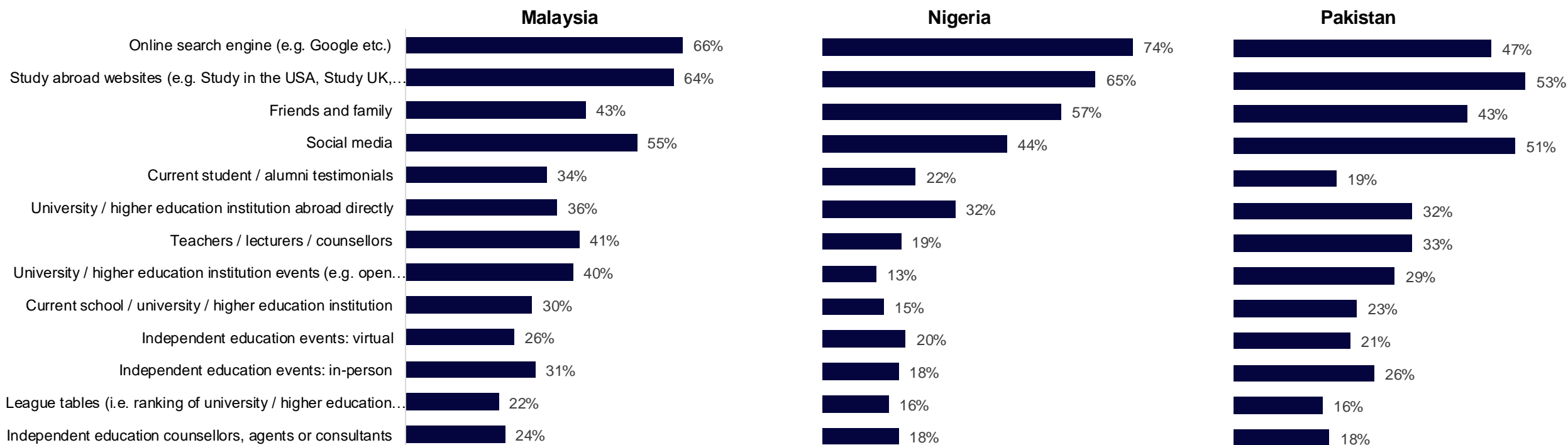
Sources of information used to explore study abroad options – individual markets



C01. Thinking about each part of the process of deciding where to study, which of the following sources of information have you used to explore your options for studying abroad when it comes to...?
 Base: starting to research China (400), India (401), Indonesia (400), Malaysia (400), Nigeria (170), Pakistan (160), USA (401)

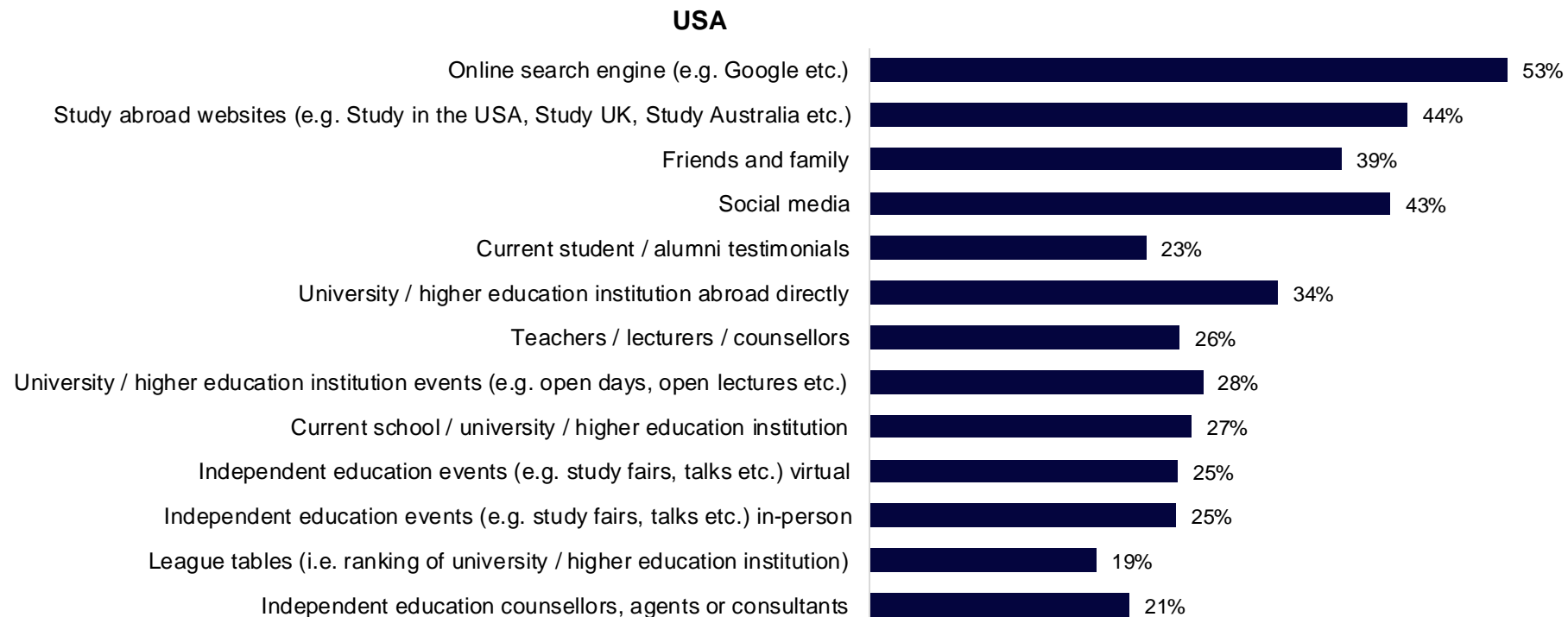
Search engines are the preferred tool for initial exploration among prospective Nigerian students. While over a fifth use counsellors/agents/consultants early on, usage increases later in the decision-making journey.

Sources of information used to explore study abroad options – individual markets



US undergraduates are significantly more likely than postgraduates to seek information from friends, family, and counsellors at their current school/university, while postgraduates are more likely to consult university league tables.

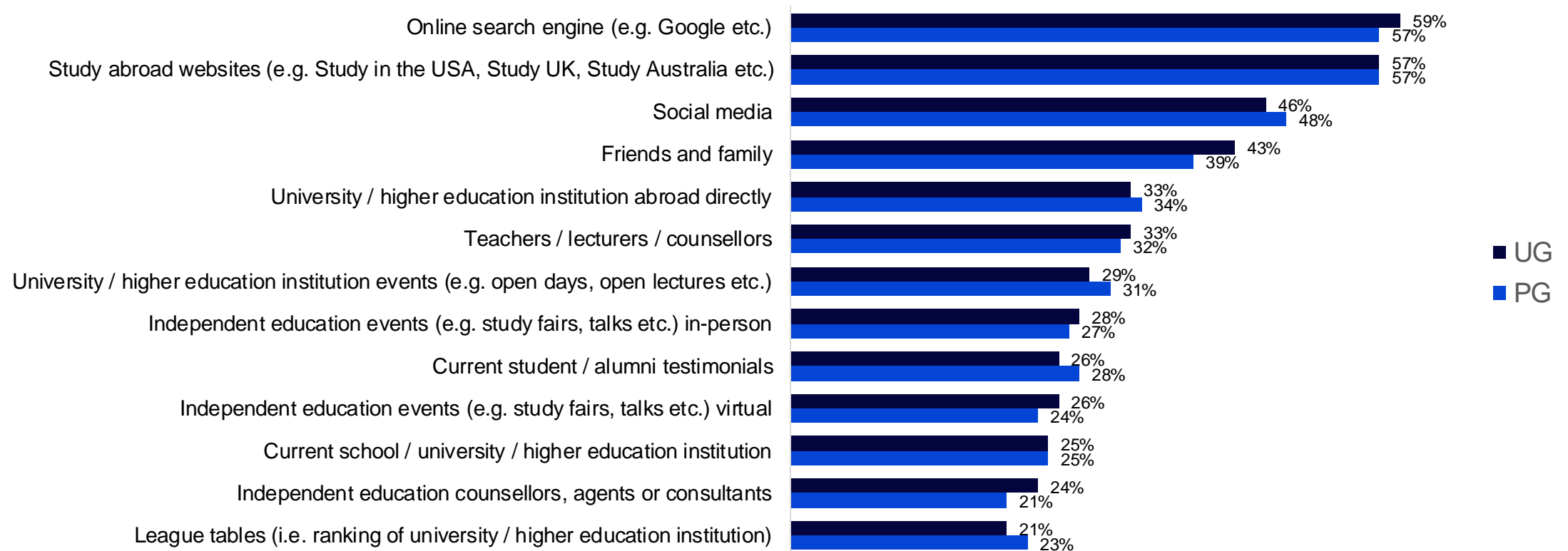
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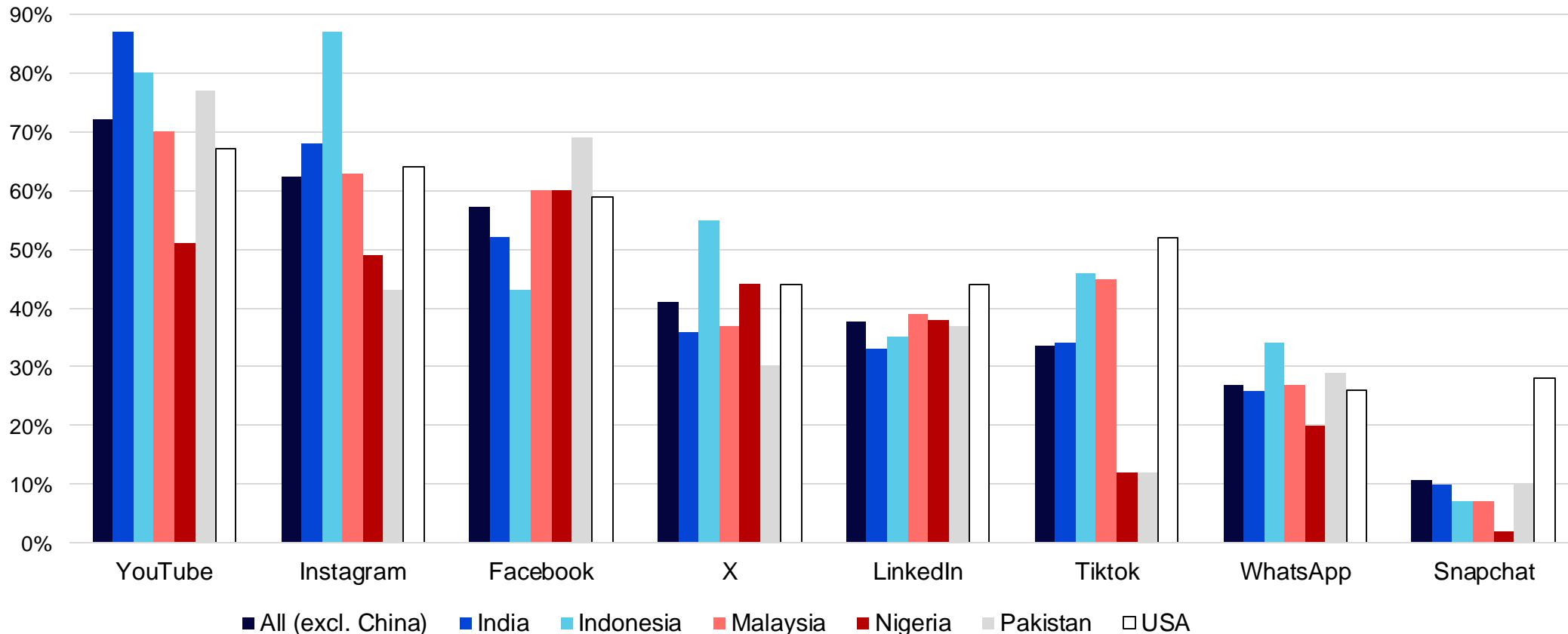
Across all markets, information source preferences are generally consistent regardless of study level.

Sources of information used to explore options for studying abroad – UG vs PG



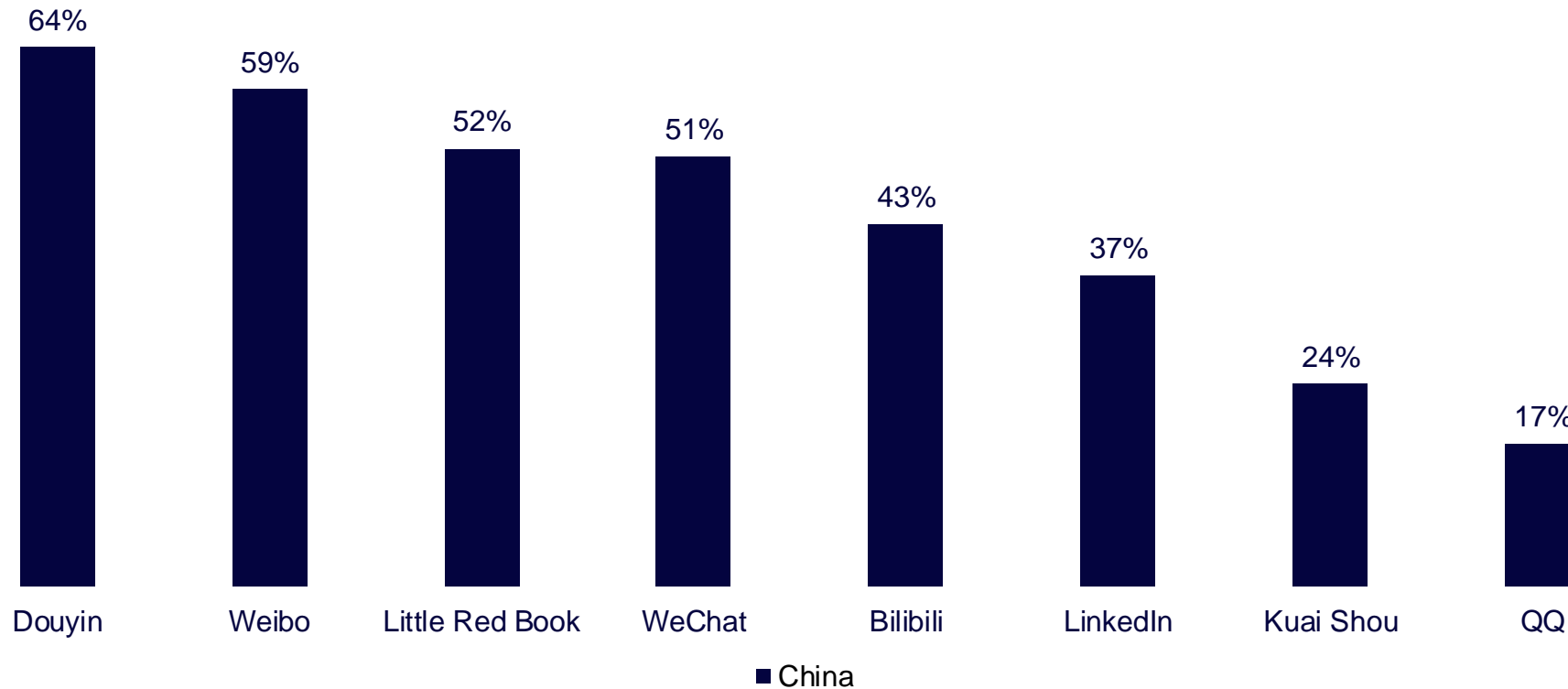
Overall, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are the most popular social media, but there are significant market differences, especially in the USA, Malaysia and Nigeria. Snapchat and TikTok see higher usage among female prospective students, while male students favour Facebook. Differences by level of study are marginal.

Social media platforms where students have seen study abroad content



Douyin and Weibo are popular platforms for Chinese students seeking study abroad information. Bilibili is significantly more likely to be used by postgraduates than by undergraduates, while Little Red Book/Xiaohongshu is more popular among female students.

Social media platforms where students have seen study abroad content



C11. You mentioned you've used social media as part of your process of deciding where to study. On which social networks did you see content specifically about studying abroad?
Base: China (230)

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