



**“ ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND ITS IMPACT IN
DECISION MAKING OF A STUDENT FRATERNITY IN
HIGHER EDUCATION 2021-2022 ”**

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected the Indian education sector, especially the admissions and enrolments of university students. The increase in competition among higher education institutions for student admission and enrolment has led to the investment of large amounts of advertising expenditure in branding, advertising and Public Relations activities. This research paper highlights the impact of Digital Marketing Communication Strategies which helps in leveraging the Student Admission Decision Making Process, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. The increasing usage of the internet by students recommends that higher education institutions need to make use of digital media to reach out to prospective students for admission and enrolment by feeding in continuous and engaging user-generated content through text, images, infographics, videos, and podcasts. It is also noted that there is a drastic shift in traditional decision-making to digitalized decision-making. The article emphasizes that both prospective students and university marketers should effectively use digital marketing communication tools. The article suggests strategies and conclusions to manage the corona crisis and structuring a conceptual model to increase admissions by using digital marketing communications as the primary promotional tool.

Profile of Company/Institution where the study is done and implemented.

People Tree Education Society (PTES) Belagavi, Karnataka, is a registered charitable education trust focused on higher education and making students employable. PTES was established in 2007 and has been imparting quality education in Belagavi region for a decade benefiting thousands of students in various streams and building their careers.

PTeS caters to all streams offering degree courses like BBA, BCA, and B.Com affiliated to Rani Channamma University (RCU). It also has Pre-University (PU) Commerce,

approved by Pre-University Board, Government of Karnataka. PTES, after 15 years of experience and shaping the career of thousands of students, is stepping into the world of Hospitality and Event & Bakery Management to cater to students interested in and interested in the Hospitality and Event Management Industry since 2019.

To meet this need PeopleTree Education Society makes education an active and participatory learning. Apart from the university curriculum, our study modules contribute to students' intellectual, practical and moral preparation in a complex, highly competitive and rapidly changing world.

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Introduction

We can all be assured that digital, mobile and social media are an crucial part of daily life for people around the world. The Digital Trends 2020 report (The Next Web, 2020) shows that more than 4.5 billion people now use the Internet and more than 3.8 billion use social media. Nearly 60 percent of the world's population is already online, and the latest trends suggest that more than half of the world's total population used social media in 2020.

Statistics project that India (Statista, 2020) is the second largest online market in the world with 560 million internet users and is second only to China. By 2023, it is expected to have 650 million internet users and 450 million social network users in India. A notable metric is that India has the largest Facebook user base by 2020. In 2019, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth conducted a survey and concluded that a fortune 500 companies use some form of social media as part of their marketing. Google conducted a US-based study in 2012 and found that while nine out of ten enrolled students used the Internet to research higher education institutions, one in ten only used online sources of information (Education Technology, 2014).

Studies show that the increase in digital usage by the younger generation is key to attracting them through internet search, mobile and social media. This clearly depicts that India is growing rapidly in digital context especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and people are in the habit of using internet and digital media and as the human society evolves, Improvement in communication processes and digital convergence open up new opportunities and challenges for marketing in the online realm. Subsequently, the Internet has moved

forward to play a significant role in the consumer decision-making process. The literature review aims to project the important aspects related to the role of digital in decision making, impact of internet on consumer behaviour, post purchase behaviour and consumer decision making process in the field of education.

Objectives

The present literature focuses on the following objectives:

1. To demonstrate various digital marketing communication strategies that assist students in higher education decision making.
2. To propose a model for continuous engagement using digital marketing for effective decision making.

Methodology

The data and information presented in the present study have been collected from various reports prepared by national and international agencies on digital marketing, decision making and student access. Information collected from various official websites. Information collected by People Tree Education Society. A few journals and e-contents related to the impact of COVID-19 on the variables mentioned above are studied.

Digital Marketing and Decision Making

Digital marketing involves the effective use of the Internet and digital channels for the promotion of a business, product, service or brand. Digital marketing communication channels include search engine marketing (SEM), search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, email marketing, website, online portals, online reputation management, content marketing, push notifications, influencer marketing, etc. These channels not only ensure brand strengthening but also help in targeting the right audience. Digital marketing communications are cost-

effective, results can be tracked using Google Analytics, quick response through SMS services, available as open source and have a higher conversion rate compared to traditional marketing. It has increased customer satisfaction and experience, increased customer retention and increased revenue through personalization. Digital marketing through web and Google Analytics helps track ROI and measure click counts, visitor reports, etc. to meet performance goals..

Search Engine Optimisation

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps to increase the visibility of a relevant website found in search engine results pages (SERP). Major search engines include Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Bing, and Baidu. Consumer decision making becomes easier when a website has high visibility in search results.

SEO is the collection of information to increase the quality and perception of a site in the SERP (Sharma, Butler, Irwin, & Spallek, 2011). MNCs like Apple, Amazon, and Microsoft use SEO to promote their products and services as part of their marketing (Yuksel, Milne, & Miller, 2016).

Search engine optimization is the first step in digital marketing. SEO is organic and unlike SEM does not involve any payment to search engines. There are two types of SEO namely on-page SEO and off-page SEO.

On page SEO is based on the content on the website and off page SEO is based on backlinking and social bookmarking. Dye mentions in 2008 that it is very competitive to get a

website on the first page of search engine results page. Higher education institutions should regularly upgrade their SEO to better rank for keywords when searched for as part of their marketing initiatives.

Search engine marketing, unlike SEO, Search engine marketing (SEM) is the process of marketing a business, brand, product, or service through paid advertisements that appear on search engine results pages (SERPs). Commonly searched keywords that are relevant to the business and bring more traffic to the website are identified through tools like Keyword Planner.

Identified keywords are usually bid against competitors and this helps to place the website on the first page of SERP. There are two types of paid ads namely text ads and image ads. Pay Per Click (PPC) or AdWords are Google's paid advertising campaigns. Alexa and Google Home smart speakers are being bought more these days. The study predicts that 20 percent of searches contain keywords like "best," "how to," and "better."

" We can conclude that more consumers than ever want answers in a simple way and adopting search engine marketing strategies fills the gap. Google ad words to have the right ad extension for high click through rate (CTR).

Some attractive ad extensions include a link to USPs like placements, infrastructure, scholarships and finally apply now as part of a digital marketing campaign for higher education. Two landing pages can be created and performance evaluated using A/B split testing.

Examples of Key words used in Google SEO.

SL.NO	Key words	
1	hotel management course	PUC courses
2	hotel management	Degree colleges
3	hotel management degree	Top BBA colleges
4	hotel management job	Top BCA colleges
5	hotel management college	Top BCOM colleges
6	diploma in hotel management	Top PU colleges
7	institute of hotel management	Best Degree colleges near me
8	hotel management course details	colleges nearby me
9	hotel management studies	Best BBA colleges
10	event management course	Best BCA colleges
11	event management	Best BCOM colleges
12	event management degree	Best PU colleges
13	event management job	commerce colleges
14	event management college	Business management colleges
15	diploma in event management	100% Placement colleges
16	event management course details	colleges with good infrastructure
17	event management studies	WIFI enabled campus

Social Media Marketing

According to a 2020 Social Media Examiner report, marketers indicate that social media is the most important promotional tool for their businesses (Social Media Examiner Report, 2020). 86% of marketers conclude that social media efforts have increased exposure to their brands and 78% of marketers conclude that social media has increased traffic. Social media marketing also generates prospective leads, increases fan base, improves sales, and opens doors to business partnerships.

The report provides us with an insight into the most commonly used social media platforms, where Facebook has a 94% share, followed by Instagram with a 76% share. LinkedIn has a 59% share, Twitter has a 53% share, YouTube has a 53% share, Pinterest has a 25% share followed by Messenger bots, Snapshot and Talk-Talk. Two of the top platforms used by marketers are Facebook and Instagram.

The report highlighted that Facebook declined by 69% and Instagram grew by 16% in 2019. It also appears that marketers are more interested in learning Instagram to promote their campaigns.

During this COVID-19 crisis we have seen a lot of online webinars and video marketing campaigns. YouTube video, Facebook video, IGTV Instagram video, LinkedIn video and Twitter video. Instagram stories and Facebook stories capture the audience instantly. YouTube and Facebook live streaming have gained more insights these days because people can engage, interact and chat directly. When it comes to paid social media advertising, 40% of marketers prefer Facebook ads, followed by 41% of marketers who use Instagram ads. The report talks about the ROI of organic social media activities and states that only 30% of marketers agree that organic social activities are measurable. According to the survey, organic reach has declined significantly.

Online Education Portals

Some of the leading online educational portals, publishers and search engines in India include College Dunia, Careers360, Shiksha, College Dekho, Minglebox, GetMyUni, HT Campus, MBA Universe, College Search etc. Gaurav Tiwari's review predicts 2020. 660 recognized universities with 35000 colleges with about 315 million students. With such intensity of choices in colleges and courses it becomes very difficult and at the same time higher education is competitive to position themselves. The above mentioned online portals facilitate students and parents to compare, check and have a call-to-action button that leads to the admission webpage. The portals are very informative and provide details about the university or college, courses, fees, scholarships, admission processes, entrance exam notifications, jobs, faculty, photo gallery, rankings, accreditations, current events and hostels. These education search engine portals help students identify the perfect combination of university and course they plan to study. Portals rely on content marketing strategies and work on an effective search engine optimization process over the years to rank organically on search engine results pages.

Digital Marketing and Student Admissions Decision Making

Nowadays students spend most of their time online on the internet. They use the internet to make product buying decisions, learn about services and check about brands. Digital marketing communication channels help students decide which course and college they want to join soon after school. Digital tools like university websites, social media platforms, Google Analytics

and online educational portals help to analyse, compare, suggest and review colleges, faculty, infrastructure, admission information and courses students plan to pursue.

From a study article on effective digital marketing strategy in education sector in Bangalore city, Afzal Basha (2019) demonstrated his empirical findings that 43% of the admission decision was taken after seeing the university website, 24% of the respondents decided their higher education from various official social media handles of the university, education guidance websites. 7%, 8% from search engine optimization, 9% from online reviews, 5% from email marketing and 3% from videos. From Likert scale analysis Afzal Basha (2019) found that 51% of students agree that digital marketing communication is an important factor for choosing a college and course of study.

A key rationale (Vikas and Pooja, 2019) for proposing digital marketing as a primary tool for decision-making is that students these days spend more time on mobile and internet than other traditional media platforms such as television and radio, online campaigns and advertisements. Effective compared to traditional advertising, Prospects use online platforms to search for courses and colleges, parents have started checking colleges and courses based on their website and online presence, students compare colleges and courses based on their online presence, These days universities use internet for application and query management and last of all foreign nationals want survey, research and access in university and college website of other country.

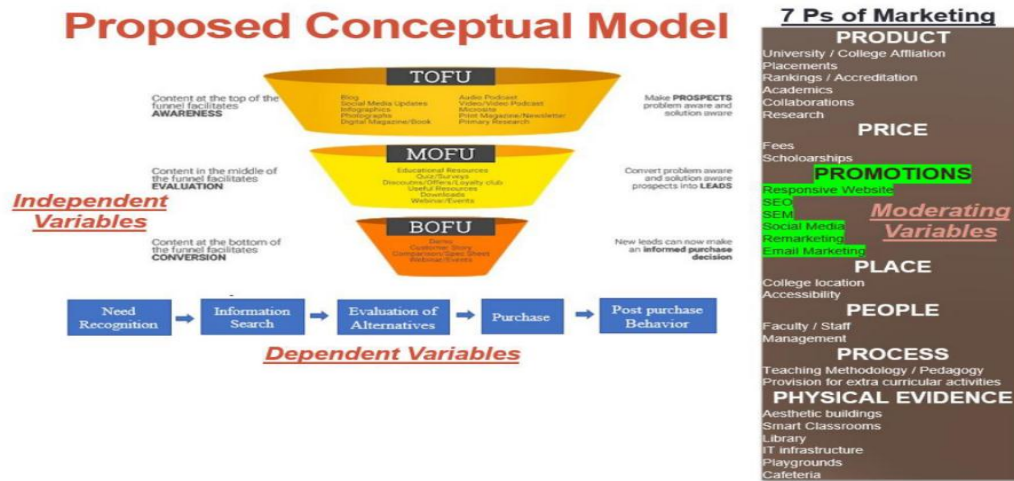
Analyses and report of various Marketing activities vs Admissions received.

Digital Marketing activities Vs Admissions for 2020-2021 Batch		
Sl No	Digital Marketing Activities	Admissions received @ various dept

1	Social media Campaigns (FB, Insta, YouTube, Twitter)	22
2	Tie up with Justdial and other local social media channels	17
3	TV Ads and Scrolling	12
4	Google ads campaigns	30
Total Admissions Received		81

Proposed Conceptual Model

The following conceptual model is proposed to demonstrate the impact of digital



marketing communication strategies on a student's higher education decision. The model is a combination of the 7Ps of Marketing that attributes to students Based on continuous feed of users from all stages in marketing funnel linked to decision making along with decision making parameters at different stages – TOFU, middle of funnel – MOFU and bottom of funnel –BOFU. Effective conversion requires continuous digital engagement at all stages of the decision-making process, from information search, evaluation, purchase and post-purchase. The study proposes a model for higher education institutions willing to adopt digital marketing as part of their marketing spend and strategy leading to greater access.

Conclusion

The decision of higher education has always been a topic of debate for decades. With the onslaught of digital marketing communication strategies, students are engaged with constant user-generated content, which is

persuasive in their digital marketing journey, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence enhance the entire decision-making journey. As the entire world moves towards a digitally dependent scenario all educational institutions must be flexible to embrace the changes in digital technology and change accordingly. The study aims to identify the need, want and requirement of the student and place the right options in front of them for easy decision.

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