

Usefulness of Digital Marketing in Higher Education in Pimpri Chinchwad City

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ABSTRACT

The media use in India has gone through numerous unmanageable disparities. Information expose that we presently have over 370 million internet consumer in the country and about 85 % of the population is active through their Smartphone devices. On the root of user base and revenues for most international internet companies India is one of the major markets. Internet is where the population uses highest time more than ever young students and working executives, with the digital marketing pay out accounting for an expansion of over 3700 Crore in January 2018 thus making it one of the most dominant brand communication stands in the current situation. Urban10 propose that "Digital marketing uses the internet and information technology to extend and improve traditional marketing functions".

It has an extensive reach application across area, however in the current context with broadcast digital and social media have gained massive popularity and are essential parts of the decision making of young students seeking higher Education. Digitalization has changed the way information is conveyed and supposed by audience or information seekers. The information conveyed through digital marketing may not be authentic and valid creating a scope for confusing the target audience.

The research paper aspire to study how digitalization useful to influencing decision making among Target cluster taking Higher Education Institutes as a sample in Pimpri-Chinchwad city. It search for addition the claim by appropriate data of an institute to calculate whether the information provided for marketing purpose is legitimate adequate to take essential decisions.

1. Introduction

As indicated by published information in Business Standard March 2018 we are now spending more of our lives surrounded by digital media with Smartphone, tablets, and PCs that are all the time connected to the internet. The report added pathway how Marketers have kept pace with their audience and are spending more than 40 % of their advertise budget on digital marketing. It states that while the total market for advertising is increasing at 3 % for each year, advertising on digital media is growing by more than 55%. The present situation has witnessed the development of a consumer who not just seeks information at the touch of a button but also propose to connect with a platform where information could be easily shared, reviewed validate and used to their benefit. Information sourced from the Business Intelligence, IAMA, Nielsen Story IDEATELABS state that India represent a total residents 1,389,560,000 including 165 million and 58 million rural that includes Tablet Users, Mobile Internet Users, Social media users, Internet Users. The IAMA report states that as on January 2018 there are 370 million Internet users in the country which are expected to reach 400 million by 2019 thus supporting for the increased importance of digital communication. The information points out towards a visible shift from traditional above the line communication to a more interactive through digital or social media which has gained high thrust in the present situation. Digitalization has changed the way information is communicate and perceived by viewers or information seekers.

It is not limited to informal information seeking for entertainment or leisure but has become an important platform for taking vital career decisions. Nevertheless unlike traditional media where reliability and legitimacy are the major USP's at times the information conveyed through digital media may not be valid and genuine creating a scope for confusing the target audience. The handiness and easy accessibility are characteristics that have made digital media a popular channel among the increasing youth population in the nation. Particularly the student communities in India seeking higher Education come into view highly influenced by digital media due to the information that it allow them to evaluate and compare information between different institutes before arriving at a definite decisions.

2. Literature Review

Digital marketing has assumed a extensive reach application across region, however in the current context with propagation digital & social media have increase massive popularity and are integral parts of the decision making of young students seeking higher Education. Usually observed that user created content is perceived to be more authentic and truthful⁹ as compared to industry generated content and has superior impact on overall awareness of a brand in consumer's mind¹¹. Social media marketing is defined by various researchers some of the definitions which are relevant from the viewpoint of this study are discussed in the subsequent part.

While Gunelius (2011) clearly focuses on the branding aspect of social media marketing defining it as “any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build awareness, recognition, recall, and action for a brand, business, product, person, or other entity and is carried out using the tools of the social Web, such as blogging, micro-blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, and content sharing”. The marketing perspective is high-lighted by Philip⁵ describing social media marketing as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through” Solis and Breakenridge¹⁴ have postulated about social media as opposed to traditional media, involves a shift in the way people discover, read, and share news: from broadcasting to a many-to-many communication model. Ford² assumes digital communications as less prevailing but very influential than traditional forms of communication. Urban¹⁰ suggests that “Digital marketing uses the internet and information technology to extend and improve traditional marketing functions”.

Simon, Roth and Madden⁴ have made the list exhaustive by adding mobile marketing, blogs, Search ads, online communities to the existing list of mediums for digital marketing. One of the elements which may justify these viewpoints could be the fact that Unlike Traditional media Digital offers multiple engagement platforms with a very easy accessibility.

According to Wertime and Fenwick¹⁷, Digital marketing constitutes variety of mediums such as web, Internet, email and viral marketing, mobile platform, gaming, user-generated content, digital signage and Internet Protocol Television etc. Social media for digital marketing medium Smith¹³ is an addition to “existing mediums of communication”.

Lazer and Kelly⁶ define social marketing as “concerned with the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities.” As per studies aspects of Interactivity apart, addressability, relevance a very high engagement quotient and a sense of empowerment has made it an extremely popular platform for the young generation even for taking some of the most crucial decisions of their life. Literature offers an overview of the current state of research on information quality in the youth and digital media context. Studies also point towards the growing dependence of youth in creating and disseminating content on the digital media. The broad reasoning for this could be a lesser flexibility interactivity convenience and control in relation to traditional communication platforms rendering the users an ability to evaluate the information quality facilitating a better decision making.

Additional recommended by studies “online information plays a significant role in decision-making, including decisions in important areas of life such as health, Higher Education, and financial matters (Pew Internet / Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin, 2005).

While majority of literature broadly focuses on the positive experiences of digital media indulgence frequently delving into

the significance of digital media platform as an “information source” there is however very less reference to the ability of digitally accessible content to either mislead or influence decision making of youngsters. Fogg and Tseng (1999, p. 83) suggest that “educators and Higher Educational institutions, among others, have framed efforts to teach people to avoid making mistakes in credibility judgments with the heading of “information quality.”

It is generally observed that user generated content is perceived to be more authentic and trustworthy¹⁰ as compared to firm generated content and is has greater impact on overall perception of a brand in the consumer’s mind¹². Findings of a study conducted by Torres and Weber (2011) indicate that “very young users tend to select links from a search results page that are prominently displayed, included advertisements and sponsored results. The importance of topicality is also highlighted in the frustrations experienced by youth during the search process, such as sites with misleading titles, irrelevant material, the sheer amount and disorganization of information available on the Internet, and the inability of students to know whether they had found “all the information” (Large and Beheshti, 2000, 1075, 1077). Lange and Ito (2010, p.261) describe how youth who are interested in creative production join social websites, forums, and websites geared towards specialized creation activities (such as fan fiction, anime music videos, or photo manipulation), and how such communities always had “mechanisms in place for creators to learn from one another”.

These mechanisms included hierarchies (including greater esteem for proven experts at creation), discussion forums, simple ratings, competitions, top video lists, and form feedback templates. To having peers provide ad-hoc advice and assistance). Lange and Ito describe all creators participating in giving and receiving feedback, and in the process improving their creative craft. As aptly observed by Dr. Russell¹¹ in his Paper “Deceptive practices are easier to carry out electronically than using traditional practices because it is a relatively simple task to make one’s self appear legitimate on-line. Dr Smith in his study further elaborates that it is very easy to disguise viewers in the web or online media as identity can be easily hidden and location can be easily changed if illegitimate activities starts to become evident Literature also elucidates the concept of “misleading” by reflecting the importance of internet which permits the boundaries between information, advertising and entertainment to be indistinct. Further tricking of the viewers to believe the content to be reliable and trustworthy is done by adding appealing graphics and audio-visuals, which are actually for the sake of advertising purpose.

Overall though Branding and communicating digitally is an effective way of reaching out to the target consumer yet literature does not throw much light on the consumer decision making influences but it observes that identification of misleading content is crucial to regulate since the practices of deception and misleading are very difficult to quantify. All the above researches have focused on digital communication from a technical perspective detailing on the use of internet and the ability to conveniently create and access information. The marketing perspective from the consumer point of view was

found to be missing. Our study which is exploratory has considered perceptions of the Consumers in the Target group 20- 25 years, seeking Higher Education.

3. The Reasons for the research were:

- [1]. The extensive use of Digital advertising in Higher Education institutes.
- [2]. The significance of understanding the awareness of consumers concerning usefulness of the medium was felt due to the improved influence of young students seeking information on the digital media for taking this decisive decision.

4. Research Objectives

- a) To Study the consumer awareness with reference to digital marketing.
- b) To investigate the factors influencing decision marking associated to Higher Education Institutes.

5. Research Methodology

Data was collected from a uniform sample containing 250 consumers. Post consistency the sample size narrowed down to Based on the research objectives of measuring usefulness of digital marketing on overall consumer decision making a questionnaire was designed and administered online. The methodology adopted was descriptive research to get a better

approaching from the perspective. Questionnaire covered subsequent broad aspects of decision making.

- [1]. Consumer Awareness.
- [2]. Consumer Preferences
- [3]. Customer Understanding.
- [4]. Influencing issues and genuineness.

Dissimilar characteristic were used to prepare the questionnaire in order to gather suitable data for achieving the objective of this research paper. Achieving accurateness in this research require in depth study regarding the subject. As the primary objective was to study the consumer awareness from digital & social platforms, the research methodology adopted is mainly focused on primary data through which the most recent and accurate portion of information could be collected. Descriptive research was adopted so that the factors underlying decision making could be derived therefore generate a scope for further research and analysis.

6. Data Analysis Findings and Inferences

• Decisions taking process :

Digital or Social media awareness is very high, at least in the age group of 20-25 which was the target population for this research, 97% of the respondents use digital media for getting some or other kind of information beyond reference group influence come out as the powerful factor for 75% of the digital media usage.

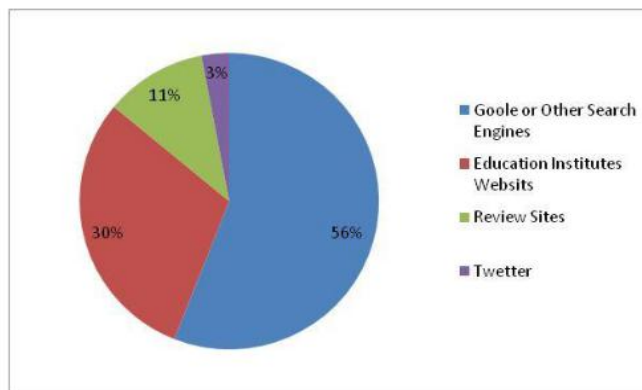


Fig No. 1

Respondents Referred

(Ref. Fig. No. 1) Prior to deciding on the taking admission 56% of the respondents referred to Google or other search engines, 30% checked higher education institutes

websites where as 11% referred review sites. Twitter was the slightest referred medium. As per the analysis only 3% of respondents referred to Twitter before taking admission related decisions.

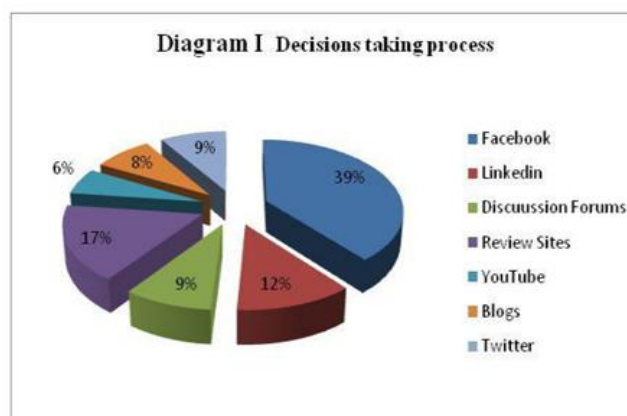


Fig. No. 2

If we consider effectiveness of various media without any constraint of particular decision making, (Ref. Fig. No. 2) Facebook is considered to be effective by 39% of the respondents closely followed by review sites (17%), LinkedIn

(12%), Discussion forums (9%) and Twitter(9%). Blog (8%) and YouTube (6%) respondents follow the digital marketing of higher education institutes (Diagram I).

• Decisions Related to Higher Education

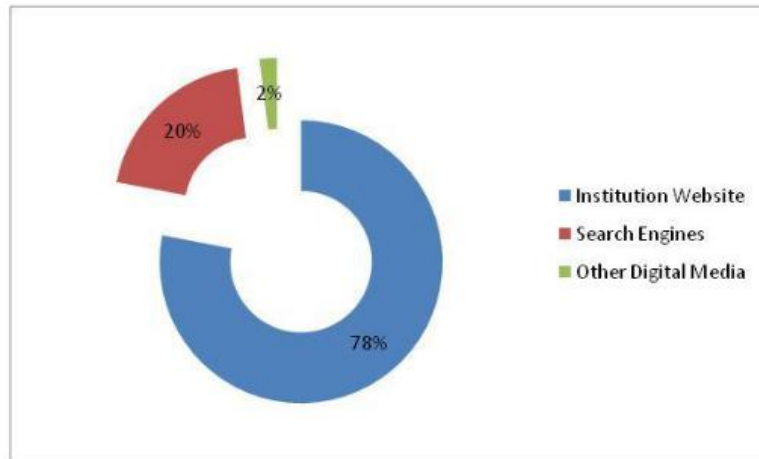


Fig No. : 3

The search engine optimization and Institute website are very important for the eminent visibility of the Institution. (Ref. Fig. No. 3) For “Admission Related Decisions” Institution website (78%) is preferred over all other

mediums. narrowly followed by search engines (20%). Reasonably referred mediums are other digital media which are on an average referred by 2% of the respondents.

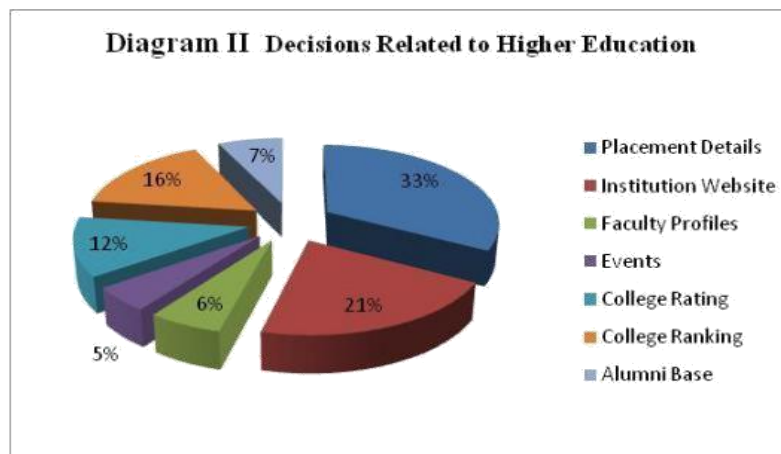


Fig. No. : 4

(Ref. fig. No. 4) Institution Placement record is one of the most significant factors for Higher Education related decisions and are referred to by 33% of the respondents. Other important factors include Institution website (21%), college ranking (16%), college rating (12%), Alumni base (7%) and Faculty profiles (6%). Events happening at the institution (5%) are the least referred factor (Diagram II). In order to influence the target group an Institute needs to Brand itself strongly by enhancing its visibility in each of the above mentioned areas projecting accurate and updated information in an attractive style.

Digital marketers should display the relevant Advertisements, so as to improve the viewer’s experience, inspiring him to click on the Advertise. Whereas searching about specific institute / course, a variety of advertisements are displayed as a result. 75% respondents view the advertisement’s significance to his/her

need. 45% of the respondents take a decision on whether the advertisement is free or paid before clicking on it. One of the criteria for this could be location of the Advertisements, which is observed by 56% of the respondent.

• Understanding & Awareness of Social and Digital Media

Though 45% of the respondents get positively influenced by content present on social media, only 35% think that the content is persuasive and 20% think that the information on various platforms is accurate. This clearly indicates that 55% of the respondents get influenced even if the content is not convincing and 45% of the respondents get influenced without having knowledge about accuracy of the information. 65% of the respondents think that digital media content helps in taking vital decisions whereas 76% of the respondents believe that people tend to change their decisions because of digital marketing influence. However survey results replicate that only

68% have actually changed their decision in the past due to digital or social media influence. Though almost all the respondents considered digital marketing as efficient, when asked about ambiguity of content and incomplete information on digital marketing, 32% of the respondents believed that the content is ambiguous and incomplete. Digital and social media and related content should be 'Relevant, convenient, and credible'.

We decided certain parameters to check convenience of use in terms of digital marketing like faster access to information, preferred time, time involved in availing information and live interaction etc. The Digital marketing is apparent convenient on an average by 89% of the respondents. Convenience as indicated by the respondents is the ability to carry on something useful with ease. Convenience can be in terms of accessibility, time required etc. Overall effectiveness of digital marketing were analyzed based on parameters such as influential content, current content, appealing nature, interactivity associated, issue addressed, relevance, evaluation capability, always available nature, convenience, networking ability. On the mentioned parameters digital marketing usefulness was found to be 92%. So far as digital marketing is concerned 'Credibility' was found to be the biggest concern. Respondents were asked questions depicting their reliability in digital or social media content. The parameters selected for examining credibility were accuracy, authentic sources, content crosschecking with other resources of information, hesitation to offer information on the digital or social media platforms. Another important factor was how many have a preference traditional media over digital media based on critical nature of decision on a scale of 1 to 5, credibility was rated as 3.7 Blogs and review based websites are gaining reputation these days because of the ease of access of information and also ease of evaluation based on others opinions.

But to what extent does it provide impartial or fair information. 35 % of the respondents were not confident on whether the information was providing a neutral point of view. 21 % were of estimation that it was biased. While 44 % are in favor of digital or social for providing unbiased information Respondents were asked about the digital marketing being ambiguous indirectly through certain parameters like ambiguity, incompleteness, legitimacy, biasness, fake content, and ability to deceive viewers by creating false impression, ability to control the information, the succession and possibility of fraud etc. Average rating comes out to be 2.46 that means it is perceived misleading 62 % of the times. After using Digital or Social, 79 % of the respondents said that they are likely to continue using these digital marketing because of the

convenience and ease provided. Apart from the reality that they will continue to use it, some of them also talk about that they would pass on it to other to aid them in decision making process.

7. Scope and Limitations

The geographical scope of the study was restricted to Pimpri-Chinchwad city. The study being investigative in nature, the sample size was restricted to 250 consumers (student group). Focus was mainly on analyzing usefulness of digital marketing for Higher Education related decisions, the simplification drawn are only analytical and not decisive. However there is a scope for future research where sex wise influences of digital marketing for various other decisions can be studied.

8. Conclusion:

The conclusion of the research indicate that there is a high degree of awareness with reference to digital marketing among the target group studied and the digital marketing is in reflection of the target consumer, with a reasonable influence even while taking vital decisions like admissions for Higher Education. However relevance of the content, convenience and the credibility aspects participate a essential role in decision making. Undoubtedly, indicating that academic institutes need to provide strong credible support and data on important aspects like Placement records and alumni data which again are important parameters while selecting an institute avoiding fake content, ambiguity in content, outdated content, incompleteness, and biasness. 'Reference group' influence plays a vital role and is one of the deciding aspect hence testimonials of alumni, existing students as well as industry experts need to be the focus.

Another attribute that emerged in the research was convenience where required data is easily available and the website also provides a variety of other platforms for the Consumers to engage, review and ask questions. Convenience can also be improved by lending a better browsing understanding to the consumer online as well as providing him alternate offline support. To conclude digital marketing certainly plays an important role in decision making for students in particular and if the three foremost characteristics are taken care of it can lead to a better idle talk and enhanced Brand building.

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