ACADEMIA ISSN, 2241-1402 http://hepnet.upatras.gr

Number 37, 2024

Academia A publication of the Higher Education Policy Network

Navigating Academic Choices: Exploring Social Media Consumption Patterns among Prospective Management Students in India

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Abstract

This research paper explored the consumption of social media communication among prospective management students. In this study, a qualitative approach is followed and in-depth interviews with 35 prospective management students were conducted using purposive sampling. Data was collected from two major educational hubs in eastern India namely Kolkata and Bhubaneswar states in the eastern region of India. The responses were transcribed using Microsoft Otero.ai software and analysed using the qualitative tool NVivo 11 plus. A thematic analysis approach has been adopted to identify the various dimensions of social media consumption among prospective students. The findings reveal that prospective students consume social media tools for collecting academic and admission-related information, collecting reviews and recommendations, awareness about the college brand, searching for job and internship openings, learning and knowledge sharing and networking with alumni.

Keywords

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Higher Education Marketing; Social Media Consumption; College Choice; Management Education.

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1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have been instrumental in enhancing education in India, creating a value-based society, and preparing students for 21st-century situations. To face such difficulties and make the most of possibilities, the Higher Education Department has worked hard to strengthen the educational system and taken creative initiatives to open up new pathways for students by providing need-based market-oriented education (John, 2013; Kusumawati, 2019). The Ministry of Education (MoE) targeted to achieve 50% GER by 2035 (MHRD, 2020). Indian management education demand has increased due to education sector expansion. Management education in India has several obstacles, but with the government's focus on Digital India and Skill India, the Indian higher education industry is predicted to thrive. Skilled managers who can lead firms to success are in demand as the Indian economy grows and more startups and global corporations set up shops in India (Grewal et al., 2022a; Shukla, 2013).

The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) reported that during the past ten years, there has been a considerable increase in the number of business schools (B-schools) in India. Over 13,000 business schools and MBA departments can attest to the significant global expansion of management education, with India accounting for one-third of these institutions. To achieve international standards, there is, nonetheless, a critical requirement to raise their quality and pursue excellence (All India Council For Technical Education, 2018). Universities are adopting social media policies and practices, not only for marketing but also for relationship building, career management, and learning (Begde, 2018; Dhaliwal, Aggarwal, & Chand, 2019; D'Uggento et al., 2022; Gill & Malhotra, 2019).

In recent decades, digital technology has rapidly changed communication techniques, models, and channels in different industries. Social media is an online forum where people may exchange ideas, opinions, and information with like-minded people (Aichner et al., 2021). The uniqueness of social media broadens how students may enhance their experiences in higher education. Many individuals in India now use social media and the Internet for their studies, jobs, education, entertainment, communication, banking, and online shopping (Saurabh & Sairam, 2016). In a dynamic learning environment, social media tools are one of those factors that have a huge scope in academic communication (Camilleri, 2020a; Krishnamurthy, 2019). Institutions promote, advertise, and market their services through social media techniques (Bose, 2016; Sahu

& Kumar, 2023b). Social media is an effective instrument with the capacity to increase contact between students and the institution (Safori & Rahman, 2019).

Due to the demand for bright employees and growing contributions from the service industry, India has experienced enormous growth in the field of advanced management education enterprises. In the past ten years, management training has evolved dramatically in higher education. However, due to shifting environmental conditions, administering these educational institutions, more notably management institutes, has grown more challenging (Arumugasamy et al., 2016; Karn & Kumari, 2023; Kwok & Yu, 2013).

In this research paper, the authors have attempted to understand how prospective management students perceive the usefulness of social media platforms specific to higher education marketing and enrollment. To achieve this broad objective the researcher adopted a qualitative method to understand the consumption of social media tools among prospective students. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 35 prospective students to understand the phenomena which are bearing a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The data is processed through the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) i.e., NVivo11 plus.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Role of Social Media in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) Marketing

Social media is an important platform for marketing products and services in India (Antil and Verma 2021; Guha, Mandal, and Kujur 2021; Verma 2020). This platform helps in promoting activities and getting information and feedback. For the education sector, these platform promises connectivity with students, teachers, parents, alumni and other stakeholders (Erisher et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2009; Keasberry, 2018). The social media platform has generated interest among researchers, academicians and practitioners. There is rapid penetration of social media among each stakeholder. Business firms wish to allocate and increase the budget for social media; to communicate and reach target customers (Dhaliwal, Aggarwal, & Chand, 2019). The research provides a better understanding of how social media can be used as a promotional tool in higher education in Malaysia (Almadhoun et al., 2011; Safori & Rahman, 2019). Facebook allows for cross-communication among peer groups (Saurabh & Sairam, 2016). The study also depicts both positive and negative aspects of social networks in our society. social media

contribute a significant quota to the development of their academic life promoting an education institute through outbound marketing Social media cannot replace traditional promotional techniques, they can be used as a platform to share information, brand its product, encourage word of mouth publicity, encourages customer engagement and interaction (Boateng & Amankwaa, 2016; Foster et al., 2015).

2.2 Role of Social Media in Global HEIs

Studies in Malaysia and Jordan depict what are the factors that lead to customer engagement in brand-related messages on higher educational Facebook pages, perception of social media as a communication tool for lecturers and students (Marciano, 2015; Safori & Rahman, 2019). Another study emphasizes the potential of University Pedagogy to enhance Greek Higher Education by promoting continuous improvement of teaching skills and incentivizing engagement in scientifically proven teaching and learning methods (Gougoulakis et al., 2020). A related study in South Africa aims to identify preenrolment factors influencing the academic performance of entrepreneurship students at a tertiary institution in the Western Cape. The top three influencing factors are lack of career guidance, study materials, and financial resources Sibanda and Iwu (2021). College major attributes indirectly impact students' self-efficacy, proving to be crucial determinant in influencing major choices (Passant, 2021; Rueda et al., 2017; Zainul et al., 2022). This implies that the features and characteristics associated with the college major play a significant role in shaping students' confidence and decisions in selecting their academic path.

The social environment factor had the most significant influence on students' enrollment in the postgraduate business program (Han, 2014; Hoyt & Brown, 1999; Zainul et al., 2022). However, the indirect effect analysis revealed that college-major attributes played a crucial role in enhancing students' self-efficacy and had a more substantial impact on major choices in Indonesia. The relationship between social media and education during the pandemic highlights the entrenched use of social media for emergency distance learning and teaching. Millennials and Generation Z need to engage in such learning importance of preparing future educators for utilizing new technologies in education (Grewal et al., 2022b; Morrish & Lee, 2011; Panagopoulos et al., 2023).

2.3 Role of Social Media in Indian HEIs

From the plethora of studies, it is evident that many higher institution instructors actively use social media tools to share knowledge and information related to college events, promotion of courses etc. (Karn & Kumari, 2023; Krishnamurthy, 2018; Singh & Srivastava, 2018). However, they understand that their students also use it for learning purposes and instructors found the potential of social media in teaching activities. The educational institute needs to actively involve social media to create followers of intellectuals, alumni, professionals and leaders associated with the educational industry (Bharucha, 2018). There are numerous studies found both from India and abroad related to the applications and usage of social media in higher education purposes. Location, Public Image, Employability of Graduates, Promotions, and Academic Quality positively influence students' choices (Dhaliwal, Aggarwal, Chand, et al., 2019). In contrast, the Fee Structure of an institute demonstrates a negative impact on students' decisions. A qualitative study conducted by Govindrao Athaley et al., (2023) in India examines the experiences of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in visual arts higher education. 15 interviews with sign language interpreters reveal communication barriers and lack of support services impacting learning. Findings emphasize the need for inclusive practices and modifications in curriculum, teaching strategies, and awareness-building efforts.

Karn & Kumari, (2023) conducted a systematic review in India and they found that students consider education as a means to gain knowledge and skills, prepare for a career, and aim for higher earnings. There are some problems also addressed such as increasing tuition fees, student debt interest rates, and competition for jobs etc. Srikanth et al. (2020) investigated the reasons behind students' choices regarding pursuing an MBA, and they identified key factors such as career opportunities, strategic development, and external influences as significant determinants that impact students' decisions in selecting an MBA program. Social media as a means to share information about events, links, internships or jobs, and other announcements related to the field of instructional design and technology affect the learners' awareness and participation in professional growth as instructional design practitioners outside the classroom environment (Bharucha, 2018; Kumar & Nanda, 2019; Sahu & Kumar, 2023a).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the education scenario in India. The dropout rate amongst the lower classes tripled from 1.8% in 2018 to 5.3% in 2020 (Sinha, 2023). Side by side the New Education Policy released by the Government of

India focussed on centralisation and digitisation. This led to the rapid exclusion of children from the weaker sections of the education institutes. However, the HEIs could quickly move towards the adoption of digital technology and started using WhatsApp, Zoom and other such tools to connect with students. But the same had some unforeseen consequences at the HEI level too – unequal access to educational resources and technologies (Pietro et al., 2020), assessment and evaluation took a hit as it became difficult to monitor the students for cheating and malpractices (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020) and impact on mental health (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). The rapid rate of adoption of social media in education – post-COVID – has made it imperative that we understand how social media is consumed by prospective students and how the institutes can leverage it to their benefit.

2.4 Importance of the research

Work has been undertaken in various other countries regarding the use of social media in the marketing of the institute and student admission. Before 2005, researchers examining the impact of the internet on college selection in the USA found that students mostly relied on the websites of higher education institutions (HEIs) for information when choosing universities (Martin, 2006; Poock, 2006). Nevertheless, there was not a uniform consensus as several investigations discovered that scholarships, parental and peer support, etc. also influenced college choice (Berge, 1998; Dennard, 2000; Donnellan, 2002). By the end of the following decade, social media had already established itself as a transformative force. The search for institutions was additionally being impacted by the increasing prevalence of social media. In 2009, over 41.6% of college students in the USA were utilizing Facebook, followed by blogs (15.6%), Twitter (9.1%), and MySpace (4%) (Burdett, 2013). A separate survey discovered that about 40% of the students predominantly relied on college websites and review platforms to collect information during the initial stage of their search, while they utilize social media to complement their decision-making process and ultimately finalize their pick (Turner, 2017).

Several researchers have provided many insights related to social media and their effectiveness in higher education applications with reference to the Indian context (Bose, 2016b; Dhaliwal, Aggarwal, Chand, et al., 2019; Krishnamurthy, 2018; Sahu & Kumar, 2023a; Saurabh & Sairam, 2016b). Social media use in choosing a college has grown steadily, from using emailers to using personalized software to help students through the whole process. A quick look at the website of any institutional website will show the

presence of YouTube Channels, Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, Instagram pages, blog accounts, and WhatsApp channels so that questions from potential students can be answered almost right away.

However, none of the above-mentioned research has looked at how the prospective students consume and respond to social media initiatives of the HEIs. In this paper, we apply qualitative research to the Indian context related to higher education marketing and social media consumption. We hope to provide a glimpse into how students consume the various social media platforms and deliberate on the implications of social media consumption on the management policies of admitting and retaining students.

Given the above the research questions that we aim to answer are as follows:

- 1. To comprehend how prospective students use social media in relation to their college and university choices.
- 2. To ascertain the various aspects or dimensions of social media consumption among potential students.

3. Research Methodology

Given, the dearth of qualitative studies on the choices of colleges and universities and the usage of social media tools among prospective students it is pertinent to understand the phenomena in an exploratory manner. With this requisite, the researcher decided to conduct a qualitative study. Qualitative research allows researchers to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the research topic. However, it does have much criticism for its subjectivity and verbatim characteristics in social sciences (Noble & Smith, 2015). It involves collecting rich and detailed data, which is particularly valuable when exploring new or complex areas where little is known (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell & David Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). In-depth interviews are used to explore individuals' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs on a particular phenomenon. Researchers can delve deep into the thoughts and feelings of participants, providing rich insights into their subjective experiences (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Creswell & David Creswell, 2018).

3.1 Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was adopted to collect samples from graduate-level educational institutes located in the cities of Bhubaneswar and Kolkata from the eastern region of India. Both cities are known for their well-developed educational infrastructure and serve

the states of Odisha and West Bengal respectively while also catering to the remaining 10 states of eastern India. It is estimated that West Bengal and Odisha account for 45.27% of the total enrolment of the eastern states and 8.75% of all India enrolment in higher education (Department of Higher Education, 2020). Purposive sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling method where researchers deliberately choose specific participants or cases based on predetermined criteria that align with the research objectives. It is commonly used in qualitative research to target individuals or groups who possess the desired characteristics or experiences relevant to the study (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Data Collection Method

An interview guide was prepared by the researcher for the depth interview so that the study could be carried out smoothly as recommended by (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Covered, 2006). The guide was prepared based on measures of the previous literature and discussion with the faculty guide. The interview guide followed a 3-stage structure as suggested by Boyce & Neale (2006). Firstly, in the Opening stage of the interview in which the researcher tries to understand the general usability of social media consumption by prospective students. Secondly, the main body of the interview consists of some follow-up questions and the closing stage contains the final remarks and thank you notes to the participants.

There were 44 prospective students who expressed interest in taking part in the study. We obtained the interview consent based on the prospective student's time and availability within a week. We randomly selected samples of final-year graduates who had joined various coaching institutes and were preparing for entrance examinations for MBA and PGDM courses. In this context, we would like to mention that there is a multitude of tests which are available for admissions to MBA but we decided to focus on the top three – Common Admission Test (CAT) conducted by the Indian Institute of Management consortium, Xavier Admission Test (XAT) conducted by the Jesuit Society of India run business schools and the Common Management Aptitude test (CMAT) conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA) Government of India. We found six participants unsuitable for further investigation as they were not in their final year of graduation or were not appearing in the above three examinations, leaving a total of 38 (86.36%) respondents for interview. We rejected another three interviews due to their low quality of answers or inability to answer key questions, leaving us with only 35 samples

(79.54%) suitable for analysis. We used an unstructured and flexible-depth interview questionnaire approach to extract as many insights as possible from the process using a thematic analysis approach (Creswell & David Creswell, 2018). The interview took place over one month via Google Meet and the Zoom platform in English. The length of the interviews varied from 20 to 30 minutes.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Following the interviews, the audio and video recordings were downloaded. The interviews were then transcribed into text files using the Microsoft otter.ai software. Once the software had produced the text files we decided to use the "intelligent verbatim translation" removing the background noises, verbal pauses, rambling repetitions, coughs etc. Once this process was completed the transcribed files were matched with the corresponding audio-visual file to check for any discrepancies. The text files were analysed using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo 11 plus.

4. Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure made considerable use of NVivo software to ensure the rigour and efficiency of the research findings as recommended by various researchers (Kaurav et al., 2020; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

 Table 1: Demographics of the respondents

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender			
Male	20	57.14	
Female	15	42.86	
Age			
19-21	23	65.71	
22-24	9	25.71	
25-27	3	8.57	
Region			
Bhubaneswar	20	57.14	
Kolkata	15	42.86	
Total	35	100	

Data were analysed through the flexible tool of thematic analysis, which allows modifications as per the need of the research contributing to detailed, trustworthy data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was chosen because of its inherent potential to facilitate the investigation of human experiences in objective contexts. (Percy et al., 2015). Thematic analysis is a technique that aids in identifying, exploring, and clarifying a pattern in complex data and usually helps the interpretation of several aspects of the research topic. (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012).

The analysis of the data was carried out in six stages, as demonstrated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first stage consisted of becoming acquainted with the data, followed by the generation of initial codes, and finally, the identification of the primary themes and the sub-themes that were associated with them.

4.1 Word cloud and Tree map

To enhance the clarity of the data, we first generated a Word cloud, considering both the frequency and proportion of words. Figure 1 displays a word cloud that visually illustrates keywords based on their frequency in the dataset (Sinclair & Cardew-Hall, 2008). Figure 1 illustrates the typical terms related to the utilization of social media platforms by potential students. The researcher defined specific criteria to identify the top one hundred terms included in the transcripts. The study eliminated certain filler words, such as "hmm", "yeah", "ohh" and so on. In addition, the researcher incorporated the stopword criterion of excluding words with fewer than three characters, as well as eliminating repeated words such as city names, interviewer, interviewee, and others. We conducted word stemming to eliminate superfluous suffixes or prefixes, allowing for the reduction of these words to their essential or base form for the purposes of tokenization and the creation of a word cloud.

According to Figure 1, social media was the most frequently used platform and had a significant impact on the conversation. The conversation revolved on topics such as higher education institutions, preferences, knowledge, support, students, exploration, choice, marketing, reputation, networking, evaluations, hierarchy, social media platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook/Meta, and similar subjects. The following are the favoured terms linked to the utilization of social media by potential students.



Figure 1: Word cloud based on Interview Transcript

Source: Authors

Subsequently a Tree map diagram was generated using NVivo. Tree map is a diagram that displays data in hierarchical order as a collection of stacked rectangles of various widths, sizes, and forms. The size represents the amount based on frequency and percentage. The Tree map is resized to best fit the available space. The sizes of the rectangles should be examined about each other, resulting in larger regions displaying towards the top left of the chart and smaller rectangles displaying toward the bottom right (NVivo Help, 2020). Figure 2 depicts the Tree map produced by this analysis, which depicts various aspects of social media consumption among prospective students. The following are some of the benefits of using social media for searching, collecting reviews, online recommendations, branding, promoting courses, and finding related information.

social students colleges reviews brand want searchlook going introdumanagsee actually aware comingpage procespromo thank differer nuch people nelps actors placem instagram like ust primerole basic plays institute ranking kind media purpos aet trying frien adve educ things cam ools alum ver prov informative matte rdefin facebo many nba obvi first choic joining time earn know platform makin eliev particular osts need con connect good select faculty bhuba outublinke/ takingfind

Word Frequency Query

Figure 2: Treemap based on social media consumption by prospective students

Source: Authors

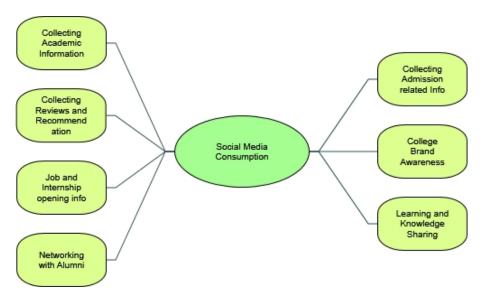


Figure 3: Dimensions of Social Media Consumption by prospective students

Source: Compiled by Authors

Figure 3 depicts the various dimensions of social media consumption among prospective students. Thematic Analysis is considered the most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretations (Alhojailan & Ibrahim, 2012). It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole contents. Thematic Analysis is capable of detecting and identifying, e.g. factors or variables that influence any issue generated by the participants (Kaurav et al., 2020; Leech &

Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The Mindmap Figure 3 portrays seven main themes which are extracted from the thematic analysis conducted by using NVivo 11 plus. The sample of the extraction of themes and codes is attached in appendix B. It consists of the open or axial code, main themes or nodes, their sources and references from the depth interview transcripts on an aggregate basis. To achieve reliability the researcher adopted Cohen's Kappa statistics and achieved 92 percentage of agreement with the co-author. Cohen's Kappa is one of the commonly used statistical measures to assess intercoder reliability, especially in situations where coders are assigning categorical codes to items. It takes into account the possibility of agreement occurring by chance and provides a more robust measure of agreement than simple per cent agreement (McHugh, 2012).

Figure 3 depicts seven dimensions of social media consumption among prospective students. The prospective students consume social media tools as a steady diet for collecting academic and admission-related information, collecting reviews and recommendations, awareness about the college brand, searching for job and internship openings, learning and knowledge sharing and networking with alumni.

5. Discussion

Our study was conducted in the context of the Indian Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The sample was taken from Indian Universities and management colleges. The results of this in-depth interview with prospective students shed light on their usage of social media for promoting and selecting HEIs. It was clear that social media is the term that is most frequently used, highlighting its importance in the conversation. The Word cloud provides insights into the preferences and priorities of prospective students in their engagement with social media. The terms such as college, like, and know suggest that students are actively seeking information and connections through social media platforms. The emphasis on help, students, and searching implies that social media serves as a valuable resource in aiding students during their decision-making processes. It assists and facilitates searches for relevant information. Our research findings also aligned with the findings of past researchers (Chauhan, 2023; Joshi et al., 2023; Kusumawati, 2019; Panagopoulos et al., 2023; Sahu & Kumar, 2023). The past studies depicted how the inclusion of specialized social media tools into students' travels can enrich and engage their experience, ultimately leading to HEIs success.

Terminology like selection, promotion, and brand emphasizes the importance of social media in the choice of institutions and courses. It emphasizes the importance of these platforms in promoting educational institutions and defining their brand image. Furthermore, the use of phrases like connect and reviews in Appendix-A highlights the social and informative components of social media consumption, implying that students use these platforms not only to obtain information but also to make connections and evaluate online reviews and rankings. Furthermore, specific social media platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook/Meta help prospective students in their decision-making processes.

Our study uniquely contributes by unveiling various dimensions of social media consumption among prospective students. The Nvivo output portrays many avenues of social media consumption in student's academic life. The in-depth interviews with prospective students reflected multifaceted aspects of the consumption of social media content, notably including its function as a tool for information search, online review collection, online recommendations, branding, and the promotion of courses and related information. In the realm of information search, participants utilized social media platforms to gather insights into university programs, admission processes, and campus facilities, shedding light on the initial stages of their decision-making process. The significance of reviews emerged as a pivotal factor, with attention to the sources and impacts of reviews on participants' perceptions of universities or courses. Online recommendations from peers and influencers played a notable role, prompting an exploration of the platforms that wielded the most influence and the credibility factors contributing to online recommendations. The analysis also delved into the perception of universities and courses through social media branding, considering the elements that shaped these perceptions and whether they aligned with the actual experiences of students. Lastly, the effectiveness of social media in promoting courses and related information was assessed, unravelling insights into the content that resonated most with prospective students and how social media shaped their understanding of course structures and requirements. These findings also align with the findings of (Dearden et al., 2019; D'Uggento et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2022; Wut et al., 2022).

The prospective students, akin to a steady diet, use social media as a primary source for collecting academic and admission-related information, ensuring they stay abreast of program details and institutional updates. Additionally, social media serve as a dynamic space for the collection of reviews and recommendations, guiding their decisions

on colleges and courses. Beyond academic considerations, social media become a valuable tool for job and internship searches, offering opportunities for networking with potential employers and staying informed about industry trends.

6. Managerial Implications

The managerial implications for Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are of considerable importance, as indicated by the findings derived from the comprehensive interviews and analyses conducted. The central role of social media in the discussions highlights its prominence, emphasizing the need for higher education institutions (HEIs) to strategically utilize these platforms for communication and outreach purposes. The recognition that potential students actively pursue information and establish connections via social media platforms implies that educational institutions ought to uphold dynamic and informative profiles to effectively engage with their target audience. Furthermore, the focal point on assistance, academics, and researching suggests that higher education institutions (HEIs) have the potential to augment their digital footprint by offering extensive and easily accessible information, thereby assisting students in their decision-making endeavors. The incorporation of terminology such as selection, promotion, and brand underscores the significance of fostering a favorable and captivating brand perception via social media platforms, thereby exerting an impact on the process of selection.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) ought to meticulously curate content in order to harmonize with their core values and inherent strengths. Moreover, the recognition of distinct platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook/Meta implies that educational institutions ought to customize their content to align with the distinctive characteristics of each platform, thereby guaranteeing a comprehensive and captivating social media encounter for potential students. The results obtained from the Treemap analysis serve to underscore the imperative for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to proactively oversee their digital footprint. This entails prioritising the dissemination of information, cultivating favourable reviews and recommendations, and strategically positioning their brand to align with the perceptions of students.

Moreover, the acknowledgment of the significance of social media in the realm of job and internship searches, as well as alumni networking, implies that higher education institutions (HEIs) have the potential to augment their career services and alumni

engagement endeavours by leveraging these platforms. This, in turn, can cultivate a comprehensive educational experience. The managerial implications of this study highlight the significance of higher education institutions (HEIs) strategically adopting and navigating the ever-changing realm of social media in order to establish meaningful connections with and attract potential students.

Future Scope of the Study

Future research should longitudinally track social media trends among prospective students, considering demographic variations and emerging technologies. Comparative analyses across demographics and qualitative assessments of HEI content impact can offer tailored communication strategies. Exploring the influence of emerging platforms and cultural nuances will further enhance understanding. This focused research aims to adapt HEI strategies in the dynamic landscape of digital communication. To complement the qualitative findings, a future study could adopt a quantitative approach to validate the result more efficiently.

Funding Acknowledgement

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

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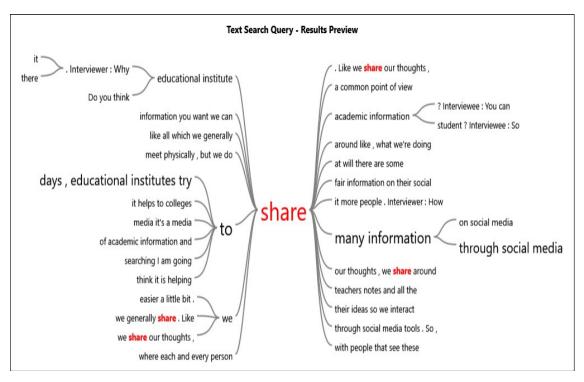
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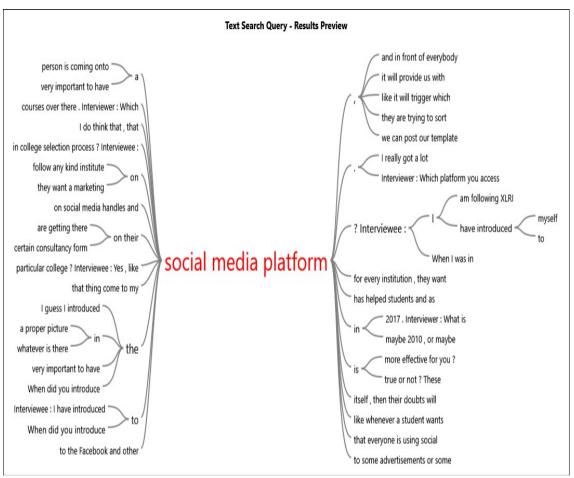
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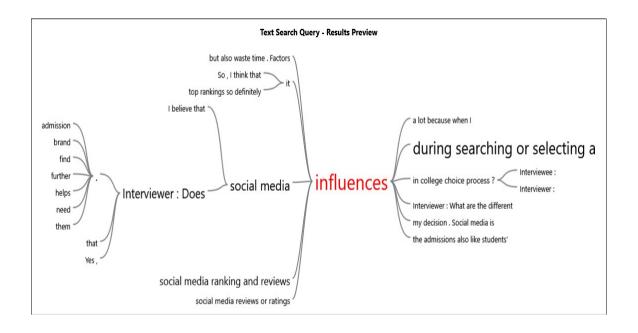
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Appendices

Appendix A: Word linkage themes based on social media consumption







Appendix B: Themes Extraction from the in-depth interview

Open Code/Axial Code	Main Theme/Nodes	Sources	References
I get to know about a college, I look forward to what kind of faculty they have, what kind of because that only that all things come from their social media or maybe on their website output, or how engaging their website is to look forward to deciding because if Institute is well designed and well planned, it will help a student for the same purpose	Collecting Academic Information	24	25
B-schools or any MBA school, are using social media and the broader interactive the social media is the get to have a more vital perspective about it. So, I think that it influences the admissions also like students' choice of the selecting the B School	Collecting Admission-related Information	28	36
I think when I was when I got shortlisted for my institute, I went on different social media platforms if I named them, one was Paglguy only, and the other was social media then I connected to LinkedIn, like I connected to a few of the alumni and the students who are in the campus. So, I talk to them I get to know about the campus faculty committees and everything. So, I think that has played a major role and every student does that	Collecting Reviews and Recommendations	29	38
I think that social media is excessively important when it comes to brand awareness these days because everyone is using social media, and most people are using social media to get this awareness	College Brand Awareness	29	35
LinkedIn purposes you can get What do you call exposure to many people it's a global platform in which many experts many things that are you make your profile, you take other people's profiles, and you see which sector they are experts in also helps in job searching job links and which job which company is the right choice for you. plus, you get linked to many people who have their details written their specifications, their expertise and everything	Job and Internship opening information	14	15
The most powerful one is YouTube. Like when you must go through lots of pages on Facebook and you get a video for five minutes and you understand the topics, it's a very good tool and nowadays smartphone is in everybody you do YouTube helps in educating them	Learning and Knowledge Sharing	23	27
Before entering the institute, new students, like new students who are going to start the session, tend to connect with the alumni, as we used to contact Illuminate through LinkedIn and other platforms too. So yes, it is helpful for both as well as Institute and students	Networking with Alumni	21	29