

How students make choice of Universities: Understanding students decision making with reference to Digital Media

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Abstract: Students favour universities that are closer to their homes, spend more on scholarships and teaching, and offer higher levels of non-academic student services. Parental background, socio-economic status, and so on also have considerable effect in this decision making. Researchers of higher education and college administrators have developed an intense interest in the college selection process. The marketing challenges presented by imminent and long-term demographic and economic conditions lead these persons to believe that a better understanding of the college-selection process will help them manage an institution's involvement in these processes more effectively. Most important is the Cost factor which is also highlighted, which would include tuition fees, costs of living, prices of services, etc. As prices for tuition rise, enrolment rates tend to fall. Atmosphere adjoining students such as campus life, security, campus plan, social life and people adjacent the HEI compounds. Support services such as medical, international schools, part-time jobs, children kindergartens, banks, counselling, financial support, career guidance were also Recognized. A decision-making process by potential student is often influenced by "significant others" such as friends, parents, counsellors, other students, teachers and university admission officers, internet, mass media and sometime the league tables.

Key Words: Students' Preference, Student Enrolments.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Understanding the basis of information about various factors for selection of a college or university is essential as it aids in formulating more hopeful marketing strategies. In the current world of professionalism, online marketing tools are serving as a speedy and trouble-free media to connect people together all over the world by means of the Internet.

Cooperative interactions of ideas, which include sharing quick response about consumer insight, have made the role of online marketing even more important and dominant. Information exchanged openly creates a quick buzz of captivation and eagerness and also inspires others to share experiences and valuable data. Indeed, Social Media Marketing has offered a large range of new forecasts for all the industries to indorse their brand, products, and services. It offers personal freedom and independence, and people are actively connecting with each other to exchange their experiences.

Access to consumer reaction about products and services that are self-tested or even just overheard about on a public stage has shaped a new world of elevation through word of mouth. With this entire backdrop, understanding select aids of online marketing to business has become even more vague and thought-provoking. With the immense infiltration of social media as a medium for communication, the education sector is undergoing a transformation. The impact of Social Media Marketing on the appearance of universities and colleges, due to the presence of users as students who are fairly armed and quick in networking, matters a lot to the education industry. The role of "online images" in perception formation is critical in decision-making for selecting a college or university.

2. HOW STUDENTS DECIDE:

College attendance and college choice have received considerable scholarly attention during the past decade. Initial interest came from sociologists who were examining processes of social mobility and occupational attainment and from economists who were concerned with public policy in an area that involved enormous numbers of people and amounts of public funds. These social scientists constructed elaborate statistical models of the structural phenomena and personal and institutional attributes that affect the outcomes of decisions to attend college and the selection of a specific college by an individual. Jackson reviews these models for their public policy implications. More recently other social scientists have examined the college selection process because it represents an example of an interesting genre of decision making-first-time, complex decisions of major importance to the decision makers or because it provides a focus for the study of family decision making regarding major purchases.

Most recently researchers of higher education and college administrators have developed an intense interest in the college selection process. The marketing challenges presented by imminent and long-term demographic and economic conditions lead these persons to believe that a better understanding of the college-selection process will help them manage an institution's involvement in these processes more effectively. Chapman provided a review of the college selection literature and developed a model that is intended to assist college administrators responsible for recruitment policy to identify the pressures and influences they need to consider in developing institutional recruiting.

3. ROLE OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN EDUCATION SECTOR:

The education trade has not remained outside the limits of undertaking marketing happenings. The major worry of colleges and universities has been upholding the enrolment ratio YoY. It becomes important for educational institutions to understand how potential students choose a college or university for higher studies. Chapman (1981, pp. 490–505) saw a weakening in the number of college applications and enrolments afterwards. Colleges are developing improved marketing strategies seeing the falling number of student admission and swelling number of institutions. Chapman presented a model demonstrating what effects or affects the incoming students' choice of college for advance education. The model aimed to aid decision-makers of the college recruitments to consider the influencing factors. Literature in recruitments/enrollments in education is not a new development.

In a book on higher education, Penn (1999) deliberated matters and trends in management of enrollment between higher education institutions, using information of 30 years. The report covers such features as access, answerability, economics, political and government backing, controlling environment, public observation, etc. The author carried out a survey on the managers of public universities. An effort on evaluating admission management program was made and moral implication issues were deliberated. For consumers, media plays a significant role in selecting service providers, comprising educational service providers. It is outside doubt that the Internet, mainly social media, has changed the way people used to make choices about buying and using various goods and services. This applies to deciding about further education as well.

There is a generational alteration about the method of selecting college or university for higher education using numerous bases of information. Social media is playing an significant role here, which is tacit by education institutions as well. A report (Barnes, 2009) commissioned by the National Association for College Admission Counselling references that colleges and universities have intimated using social media not only in the classroom, but also for their admission plans. It was established that more than 50 percent of admission divisions used social media of one type or the other for recruitments. Furthermore, crudely 20 percent used social media for selection of applications. The report found that colleges, yet, were using social media disproportionately. In alternative article titled "How social media can and should impact higher education" Blankenship (2010, pp. 11–12) deliberates Rheingold's five interconnected literacies of social media. These are Attention, Participation, Collaboration, Network awareness, and Critical consumption.

The author states that Rheingold's suggestion is that one must have training to become 'social media literate' because we are not born with the knowledge of using social media effectively. Blankenship determines that one cannot drip using social media in education today. Whether in a classroom or else, one needs to be conscious about making selections of using social media in higher education. Service providers are changing their eyes from number of hits a website is receiving to number of likes their Facebook page is getting. In the background of website(s) of college/university, it checks to be verified if institutions' website or social media is relied upon for information gathering.

4. CHOICE MAKING AND INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN EDUCATION SECTOR:

Padlee, Kamaruddin, and Baharun (2010, pp. 202–211) inspected international students' choice criteria for higher education. The learning was conceded out on 565 international students in south east Asia, enquiring questions on 48 factors for choice of private organization. The research found six influencers strappingly affecting decision-making among students, namely, class of learning atmosphere, influencers, customer emphasis, price, amenities, socialization, and site. The study recommended that administrators should develop marketing plans using these factors to attract foreign students for enrolment.

Litten (1982, pp. 383–402) recorded that method or procedure of college selection is neither simple nor similar for dissimilar entities. Depending upon changing requirements of the students, different types of information can be reached to students via diverse media. The author detected that parents have superior influence on students' college selection method compared to factors such as gender or race.

College managers can take up cost-benefit study to equate admission approaches. Internet privacy issues also upset users' judgement of probing for a service provider online. Ng (2012, pp. 53–63) cited that the Internet has already become a consumer medium for online users and concurrently raised concerns about access to users' information.

5. CONCLUSION:

This literature review compared the influence of online and offline media usage as a source of information for the choice of college. Further, the review tried to explore within the category of social media the range and frequency preference of various options available in the Indian Social Media market, both in terms of popularity and usage.

It is understood that both popularity and usage can serve as key indicators in understanding the factors affecting college students during the decision-making process of the most significant area of the life. The role of peer influence is highest among this age group while making decisions. The reasons for this can be further investigated. The clear impact of social media cannot be denied when it comes to the time devoted by this generation, yet it was surprising to discover that the role of the former is relative poor as compared to direct feedback and fact-based information.

In the choice-making process for selection of university, students give the highest weightage to personal communication. Simultaneously, the results are explicitly positive for social media in the category of non-personal marketing communication. Understanding and mapping students' perception is valuable to various stakeholders in identifying the impactful marketing techniques for effective promotion of education program. The findings can facilitate various stakeholders involved in designing strong marketing strategies to develop the right blend of medium of information for marketing.

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