A Study on The Use of Social Media Platforms by Higher Education Institutions (HEIS)

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behavior, business models, marketing strategies, and competition capabilities have changed with the increasing use of digital technologies. Educational organizations are not exceptions to the proliferation of digitalization. The prevailing pandemic has forced many Indian educational organizations to take the digital path.

This research aims to understand the use of social media platforms used by higher educational institutes as a channel for communicating information. It aims to study the adoption of social media platforms by HEIs for increasing awareness, brand building, and activities related to CSR and fundraising.

Data are collected for two higher educational institutions (HEIs) from the United States of America and India through social media accounts, posts, followers, and websites for the fall and winter periods in the United States of America and the first half of the academic year in India, followed by content analysis. Secondary Journals, research papers, articles, newspapers, periodicals are also analyzed for the same. It is secondary research for data collection and qualitative research for content analysis, segregated analysis of users.

Social Media Marketing channels such as Facebook and Twitter are helping HEIs to reach out to the students in a targeted manner as per our study. Social media channels are ideal platforms for stakeholder engagement and interaction amongst the youth.

Keywords: Digital Marketing strategies; Higher Education Institutions; Student's engagement; brand visibility; SocialMedia

INTRODUCTION

Our lives have been digitized and globalized with the advent of the internet and social media. As per the Digital in India: All the Statistics You Need in 2021 report, approximately 60% (4.66 billion) of the world population uses the internet compared to about 45% (624 million) in India which is a 7.3% rise worldwide and 8.2% rise in India from the year 2020. (Kemp, 2021)

With respect to social media, India witnessed a 21.2% increase as compared to a 13.2% increase globally which is approximately 53.6% (4.20 billion) of the world population and about 32.30% (448 million) in India. (Kemp, 2021)

Every organization, profit or non-profit, must have a strong presence on various digital platforms to reach the mass, faster and cheaper, through social media and mobile marketing (Alghizzawi 2019).

Facebook, Youtube, Whatsapp, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram are some of the most frequented social media platforms. (Kemp, 2021)

Given dropping funds support from the government and increased pressure of performance educational institutes are looking at successfully attracting substantial philanthropic backing (Neumayr and Handy, 2017). When it comes to fundraising for educational NPOs, they face difficulty. In the process of getting the support, it is observed some of them are successful in attracting additional funds than

others. Donors' trust is the most important factor (Neumayr and Handy, 2017). It is important to know what motivates individuals to donate and influences the choice among different causes supported by NPOs work to serve the community, they need to have a mechanism for disclosing information to have a dialogue with outside stakeholders (Pena, 2019). Noor and Hamid, (2008) state that the internet offers immense opportunities to organizations to target the right audience and maintain relationships with the existing ones. According to Tripathi and Verma (2018), the strategic use of social media platforms for engagement and relationship building may open new avenues for NPOs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- To understand the use of social media platforms in HEIs.

- To understand the use of the social media platforms to increase awareness amongst the stakeholders of HEIs.

- To analyze the type of content shared on social media platforms as a channel for communicating and information dissemination by HEIs.

- To understand whether educational trusts utilize social media platforms for spreading awareness about CSR and fundraising.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PAPER

The survey results are limited to accessible data, such as the number of social media accounts, posts, and followers. This topic requires a more comprehensive and segregated analysis of users.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marketing and Digital marketing

What is Marketing?

Hollensen, (2010) defines marketing as a management function that identifies, anticipates, and satisfies the requirements of the customer in a profitable process. Marketing is also defined by Chow et al., (2015) as the use of exchange processes to satisfy customer wants and needs. Lastly, American Marketing Association, (2018) defines marketing as the processes used by a company to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers that provide value to clients. As

per Philip Kotler (1991) "marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others". Marketing serves several more purposes such as building recognition and credibility. This means marketing is much more than just advertising and can be applied to profit and non-profit making organizations. And when it comes to NPOs it is important to build trust and establish their brand, because it can help increase their supporters and attract philanthropists, bringing in non-financial support as well.

What is Digital Marketing?

Digital marketing has given it a new face. Digital marketing is difficult to define. It is always interchangeably used for internet marketing or electronic marketing or e-marketing. Digital marketing refers to a type of marketing that transmits information in digital form and could be featured as computers, smartphones, or any other form of digital devices to promote the brand image, deliver the message of the brand, and increase the sales through advertising of the product (Bhagowati & Dutta 2018). It encompasses the varied methods of marketing with the help of different channels. The different digital marketing channels include websites, social media platforms, email marketing, mobile marketing, WebTV, video marketing, SEO, pay per click campaigns (Bhagowati & Dutta 2018, Webtech, 2018).

In 2012, Simon, Roth, and Madden added mobile marketing, blogs, Search ads, online communities to the list of digital marketing channels. Social media or digital marketing allow individuals to 'present their Web sites, products, or services through online social channels to communicate in a wide community and to listen to that community' (Weinberg, 2009, p. 3). The main channel is social media. Social media will be defined as 'forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos) (Edosomwan et al, 2011, p. 79, Galan, Lawley & Clements 2015). Many reasons can be attributed to the wide use

of social media by not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations amongst which low cost and broader reach are the most important (Tripathi & Verma 2018). "Marketing has always been about connecting with your audience in the right place and at the right time. Today, that means you need to meet them where they are already spending time: on the internet" (Alexander, 2019). Digital media are preferred channels for marketing due to their convenience (Jog et. al. 2015).

Websites are the nucleus of any digital marketing strategy and are the pillars of support for the other platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and others which are pivotal in user engagement. Even though these are low-cost marketing methods, the content that goes up on these platforms is critical for the success of the campaigns. As per the survey conducted by Octane research in 2021, the primary online marketing channels were – social media (85%), Search (80%), Display (60%), Influencer Marketing (52.50%), Email (47.5%), Affiliates (37.5%), Programmatic (22.50%), TV or Radio (12.5%), Others (7.5%), SMS (0.11%).

The performance of digital marketing can be measured by different metrics for websites and social media.

Website Metrics
These metrics enable you to quantify the relationships that you have built with your audience. Monitor the following metrics carefully:

Page visits: The total number of visits on different pages in a specific period.

Average visit duration: This metric helps you analyze how much time visitors spend on your website on average.

Return visits: The total number of visits from users who have visited your website before.

Bounce rate: This metric enables you to view the percentage of users who visit your website and leave immediately.

Social Media Metrics
These metrics enable you to view the distribution and influence of your content on social media. The following metrics can quantify social media marketing strategies:

Social Media Shares: Content shared using different social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Comments: Comments on social media posts can allow you to gather direct feedback about your content.

Likes: Likes, help you understand the reach of your posts and the number of people who appreciate your content.

Direct Messages: Social media users can send the direct messages to offer feedback for the posts or ask queries about the courses.

Unique Visitors: This metric helps you view new visitors on your social media handles.

Digital Marketing in Education Institutions
Findings revealed that the majority of the top 25 universities in Asia and Africa use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube for their digital and social media marketing and they differ in terms of the purposes of its usage and the level of adoption of digital technology. It shows that the collective responses by using digital and social marketing for HEIs are to market their programs and to give information about events and research of the HEIs (Paladan, 2018).

In the past, it was thought by educational institutions that marketing themselves would end up lowering the quality of education imparted but as the competition got intense the need for marketing arose. Social media and its use in the educational environment have been studied by several researchers (Augustsson, 2010). Educational institutions are using digital marketing as a vital component of their marketing strategy (Barnes and Mattson, 2009a; 2009b). Many Indian Business Schools and higher educational institutions have realized the importance of social media and the interactions in the social media platforms for branding their institution (Kumar & Raman 2019). The use of digital marketing as a marketing tool is limited in educational institutions (Constantinides & Stagno,2011). But Digital platforms are extensively used by the Universities in the United States of America for relationship

formation with stakeholders (Barnes and Mattson, 2009a). For any educational institution-building and maintaining relationships is of prime importance for its branding (McAlexander and Koenig, 2001) According to Kumar & Raman (2019) updating and maintaining the social media channels is essential digital marketing activity for institutions to communicate with all stakeholders. Literature also shows that higher education institutions maintaining Facebook platform can efficiently manage student placements (Peruta and Helm (2018a) Kumar and Raman's (2019) study on Facebook post suggest, achieving greater interest for the Facebook posts is possible with the mixed contain strategy using content related to Alumni, Students academic achievement, Competition related information and posts related to startup information, student-generated videos posted at appropriate timing on a weekday between 05.01 pm to 08.00 pm and also during weekends between 08.01 am to 10.00 am. Jog et al (2015) studied digital marketing in the education sector to find how digitalization can lead to misinformed decision making, they say the information provided through digital media may not be trustworthy and authentic making scope for misleading the target audience (Jog et al. 2015)

Social media or digital marketing empowers entities to "present their Web sites, products, or services through online social channels to communicate in a wide community and to listen to that community" (Weinberg, 2009, p. 3) to meet branding and communication objectives (Be´langer, Bali, &Longden,2014) form online communities intern facilitating eWOM disseminating information in their network which can change opinions and actions or behaviour influencing positively or negatively. Depending on this student's decision-making process is influenced. Educational institutions or universities can advantageously make use of interactive channels such as Facebook, Skype, and instant messaging to transmit information effectively in real-time in a synergistic manner (Galan et al 2015). Social media is one of the new mediums being used in student recruitment. Survey findings of Ikatrinasari, Tyas, Cahyana, & Purwanto (2020) indicate the appropriateness

of digital marketing strategy is necessary for the education industry. They say the website must exhibit several testimonials about customer satisfaction and social media should be used to upsurge the credibility of organizations because the internet disseminates the information promptly and reaches the consumer instantaneously (Ikatrinasari, Tyas, Cahyana, & Purwanto, 2020).

Digital Marketing NPO
The different sectors try to achieve the objectives through social media. Instead of Traditional marketing and communications, the use of digital marketing through social media platforms and eWOM has acquired a new way for communication and marketing making it an integral aspect of their lives. (Habes et al. 2018, Alghizzawi 2019). According to Gordon Fletcher (2014), digital business is the future of business, and it is important to understand the stages of digital development in businesses.

Most NPOs are not aware that Google has a Google's Ad Grants program, which is free money given to nonprofits to advertise on the world's largest and most effective search engine, Google. Ali Salman (2019) in his blog post says social media platforms are the best channels for interacting with the younger generation such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Measure Success Metrics. Other methods can be Facebook's "Donate Now" button and Email marketing. The feature of involvement and building relationships with the people on social media platforms would help NPOs obtaining the benefits of low-cost and high connectivity (Tripathi & Verma 2018). Blogs and social media are the ideal platforms for relational marketing activities as they are collaborative and interactive (Kumar and Raman 2019).

Fundraising and CSR activities in HEIs
Majduchova (2009) defines fundraising as a summary of activities that are aimed to receive not only funding but also support through the donation of services or products, recruitment of supporters or volunteers (Rebetak and Bartosova, 2019).

Even though many institutions use social media platforms for fund raising activities, many of them still use them only as communication

channels for their donors and supervision of such activities. Primarily many institutions in higher education use social media channels to communicate with their donors to remind them about various ongoing campaigns and deadlines and increase followers (Slover-Linett and Stoner, 2013).

Facebook is the most preferred social media platform adopted by institutions in higher education, but in many cases, it has become a mere profile page for institutions which does not guarantee the broadcasting of information. Facebook can be used as a more productive platform to bring on more followers (Slover-Linett and Stoner, 2013; Shin and Chen, 2016).

Shin and Chen, (2016), found out that when a fund-raising campaign's message is disseminated by the CEO, its permeability increases thereby increasing the success rate of the overall fundraiser. They also highlighted four fundraising practices – a permanent donation link, graphics to highlight fundraising, an online store, and other donation options. Having a permanent donation link does not always make a difference in the levels of donation. The effectiveness of fundraising depends on maintaining a healthy donor-recipient relationship which can be done by acknowledging even the smallest of donations the organization receives in a courteous and timely manner which helps ensure a recurring monetary relationship (Lee and Markham, 2015; Rebetak and Bartosova, 2019).

Brand building is a key activity leading to higher donations and more successful fundraisers which require a three-pronged strategy involving key stakeholders such as students who drive revenue through enrolments, alumni drive revenues through engagement in events, volunteering, and consumption of content online, and finally, donors who play a pivotal role in understanding and disseminating the campaign messages through persuasive and consistent storytelling, amongst various levels of the society thereby providing impetus to the fund raising activities (Sevilla and Glier, 2018)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper examines four not for profit educational organizations in the higher education sector, that have featured in the list of top 30 organizations which have successfully adopted digital marketing strategies. The four organizations under study are chosen based on the best practices demonstrated, two are from India, S P Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR) and The Indian School of Business (ISB), and two are from the United States of America, University of Chicago (UOC) and Princeton University (PU). Data are collected for two higher educational institutions (HEIs) from the United States of America and India through social media accounts, posts, followers, and websites for seven months from September 2020 to March 2021, considering the fall and winter periods in the United States of America and the first half of the academic year in India

According to Stelzner (2013), the most used social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogging, and YouTube (Roy and Dionne, 2014). The research conducts a content analysis of the official pages and handles used by the universities in the study, for social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube. The research questions are logically connected to the objectives of the research paper defined for secondary methods of data collection are as follows. The answers to these questions will help to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies used by educational organizations.

1. Which social media platforms are used and preferred by ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC?

2. What type of content is posted by ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC on their websites?

3. What is the frequency of new posts/events on Facebook and Twitter posted by ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC?

4. Do ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC actively use social media platforms for fundraising and CSR activities?

5. Which kind of posts are shared and liked more frequently on Facebook and Twitter handles of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC?

6.   Which social media platforms used by ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC have a higher number of followers/subscribers?

Answers to these questions are imperative to understand the different activities undertaken by educational organizations to engage their stakeholders.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Some of the NPOs in education are influential because they have marketed well, created recognition, credibility and reached larger audiences through marketing. Marketing has the potential to fulfill all these needs Smart marketing solves several problems. It is why all kinds of Non-Profit Organizations are now making use of digital technology to make their presence felt. NPOs need to have well planned, clearly defined marketing strategies.

The educational institutions taken under study (ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC) use social media marketing Platforms.

Which social media platforms are used and preferred by ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC?

According to an article published by www.searchenginejournal.com, the top 10 Social Media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Tiktok, Snapchat, Reddit, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn (Walsh, 2021). Table no. I show a consolidated view of the platforms employed by the institutions in question.

Table No. I – Presence of Universities on Social Media Platforms.

PLATFORM	ISB	SPJIMR	PU	UOC
FACEBOOK	✓	✓	✓	✓
YOUTUBE	✓	✓	✓	✓
INSTAGRAM	✓	✓	✓	✓
SNAPCHAT	×	×	✓	×
REDDIT	×	×	×	✓
PINTEREST	×	✓	✓	×
TWITTER	✓	✓	✓	✓
LINKEDIN	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Used - ✓

** No Official page/account - ×

Source – Official pages/accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

According to the table, the universities have their presence on most of the social media platforms. It is noticeable that Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn are used more frequently by all four universities whereas Instagram, Snapchat, Reddit, and Pinterest are not amongst the favored platforms. On Snapchat, ISB, SPJIMR and UOC do not have their official page or account. On Reddit, ISB, SPJIMR and PU do not have their official page or account. On Pinterest, ISB and UOC do not have their official page or account. In comparison, PU has its official presence on all the social media platforms except Reddit.

Due to the limitations of WhatsApp, data for the same is unavailable, whereas Tiktok is banned in India now making it impossible to get data. After analyzing the table above the platforms taken into consideration for the study are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. As per Auker (2011) Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+ are the most popular social media platforms.

Table No. II – Preference of Social Media Platforms by Universities.

COUNTRY	PLATFORM	UNIVERSITY	SHARE OF PLATFORM
	FACEBOOK	ISB	46.94%
		SPJIMR	22.06%
	LINKEDIN	ISB	29.87%
		SPJIMR	34.23%
INDIA	TWITTER	ISB	23.19%

		SPJIMR	43.71%
		PU	33.48%
	FACEBOOK	UOC	26.15%
		PU	20.32%
	LINKEDIN	UOC	46.26%
UNITED STATES		PU	46.20%
	TWITTER	UOC	27.59%

Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Table no. II shows that Facebook is the most popular platform for ISB, whereas SPJIMR and PU prefer using Twitter and UOC uses LinkedIn as their preferred choice of social media platform.

Even though various institutions have employed digital marketing platforms for communication with their stakeholders, promotion, and branding with the help of their students and a few dedicated professionals, but they have only managed to reach the tip of the iceberg when it comes to using these platforms optimally. (Mehra, 2017)

What Type of Content is Posted By ISB, SPJIMR, PU, and UOC on Their Websites?
Having a web presence is crucial for any organization because it serves as the face of the organization. Educational institutes use websites to sensitize their stakeholders about their purpose and their initiatives. Comparative analysis of the content on the websites of ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC (Refer Table No. III)

Table No. III – Comparative analysis of website content

UNIVERSITY	UOC	PU	ISB	SPJIMR
SOURCES (URL)	HTTPS://WWW.UCHICAGO.EDU/	HTTPS://WWW.PRINCETON.EDU/	HTTPS://WWW.ISB.EDU/EN.HTML	HTTPS://WWW.SPJIMR.ORG/
ADMISSION	✓	✓	✓	✓
FINANCIAL AID	✓	✓	×	×
PROGRAMMES	✓	✓	✓	✓
RESEARCH	✓	✓	✓	✓
NEWSLETTER	✓	✓	×	×
STUDENTS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FACULTY	✓	✓	✓	✓
EVENTS	✓	✓	✓	✓
VIRTUAL TOUR	✓	✓	×	×
ALUMNI	✓	✓	✓	✓
BLOGS	✓	×	×	✓

Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

The American universities take a holistic approach and focus on all the aspects that are part of any institute website whereas their Indian counterparts lack in some areas which are common amongst both the Indian universities. Both Indian universities lack information and transparency regarding the financial aid options offered and students related interaction. On the other hand, maybe since American universities target students from different countries across the world, they need to be more transparent with the financial aid options offered and various interactivity tools to provide the on-campus experience and information.

ISB uses its digital media platforms to communicate with its stakeholders that include prospective applicants, alumni, prospective mid-career professionals who are looking forward to the executive education programs offered by ISB, recruiters, faculty, and the public at large. (Mehra, 2017)

What is the frequency of new posts/events on Facebook and Twitter Posted by ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC?

The universities keep posting their campus updates and new events on their official handles and pages to keep their stakeholders updated.

The current generation is also referred to as the "digital natives" since they have grown up attached to their smartphones, tablets, and laptops, which make them a perfect audience for targeted communication. The communication channel is changing for millennials when making decisions, to friends and social networks (Newman, 2015) as they look out for interconnectedness. (Jain, 2019).

The information shared on the digital platform is an excellent way of keeping perspective and current and past students and others connected to the universities.

There is a seasonality witnessed in the frequency of new posts/events amongst the universities which shows that December and January have seen the highest number of posts on the most frequented platforms. (Refer Table No. IV)

December saw maximum updates related to co-curricular activities whereas January saw maximum updates related to general information and news. (Refer Table No. IV)

The bottom 2 categories that did not see any posts related to them were fundraising and CSR and placements. Despite the period of study being in the middle of the pandemic due to COVID-19, there were no posts/events related to any fundraising or CSR activity. (Refer Table No. IV)

Table No. IV – The frequency of new posts/events on Facebook and Twitter

Category of Post (Facebook & Twitter)	2020				2021			Grand Total
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Academic	1	5	25	71	14	13	10	**139**
Alumni	14	18	18	36	17	24	18	**145**
Campus Updates	1	8	8	5	13	15	5	**55**
Campus Updates	0	0	0	4	35	26	1	**66**
Co-Curricular (Events related to academics - Conferences, Workshops, Panel Discussions, Conclaves, Seminars)	40	63	77	133	99	75	42	**529**
Extra-Curricular (Sports, Cultural Activities)	5	30	30	49	24	12	8	**158**
General Information and News	50	46	60	120	208	106	55	**645**
Placement	1	3	4	1	5	0	0	**14**
Social	5	9	12	22	35	20	25	**128**
Fund Raising & CSR activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Grand Total	**117**	**182**	**234**	**441**	**450**	**291**	**164**	**1879**

Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Do ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC actively use social media platforms for fundraising and CSR activities?

Table no. IV suggests that despite being trusts, fundraising and CSR activities have not been a

priority for educational organizations under study on social media platforms, but they have a dedicated web page for donations and fundraising.

The web page for CSR and fund-raising shares information in the public domain about the fund utilization and dissemination of funds for donors and recipients. The major amount of donations and funding comes through corporates and alumni.

ISB has a dedicated page titled "Give to ISB" with a specific focus on the "Rise to Raise" program which is targeted at raising funds through corporate and alumni donations in the form of funded projects, scholarships, endowment fund. These donors are credited through various official communication channels like annual reports, newspapers, and websites.

UOC has a dedicated page on their website which is used to communicate with their donors and is used to raise funds. Students raise funds by organizing events and selling their program ads, and posters and magazine ads.

PU has a dedicated page on its website through which it gets funding under various heads such as annual giving, gift planning, capital giving, international giving, friends groups, corporate and foundation giving.

Which kind of posts are shared and liked more frequently on Facebook and Twitter handles of ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC?

Social media platforms and their respective applications play a pivotal role in the online experience, making social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter a significant part of our lives. The satisfaction level while being optimistic and sharing relevant emotions on social media platforms is high for people. (Weismayer et. al., 2021)

Social media platforms are avenues for social sharing of emotions by the people experiencing the emotion as it helps in reaching a broad and targeted audience. (Bazarova et. al., 2015)

Facebook Likes are social actions created by the social networking giant Facebook, the number 1 social media platform for marketing and product/service promotion (Auker, 2011)

A similar trend has been observed during the study of posts by various universities across platforms. The stakeholders of the universities under study prefer sharing and liking positive posts as against posts with a negative mood (Refer Figure No. 5 and Figure No. 6).
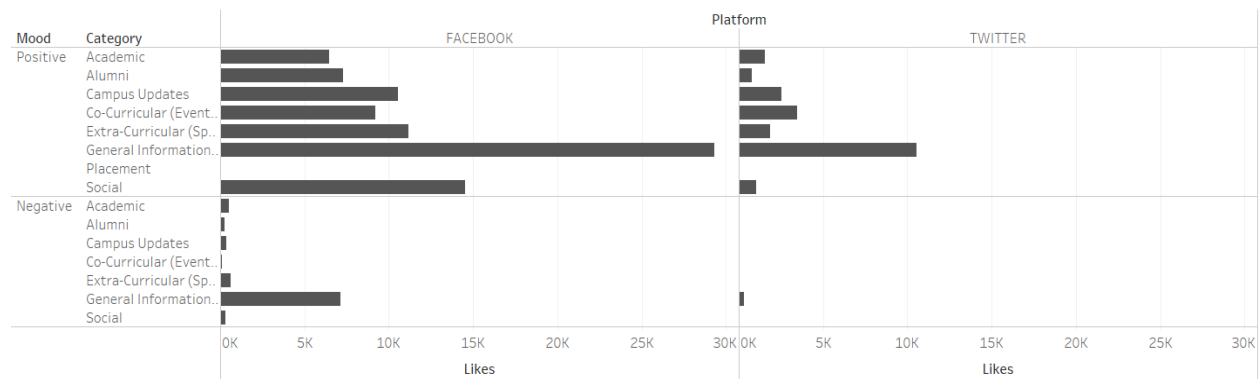
Figure No. 5 – The frequency of shares according to the mood of the post on Facebook and Twitter
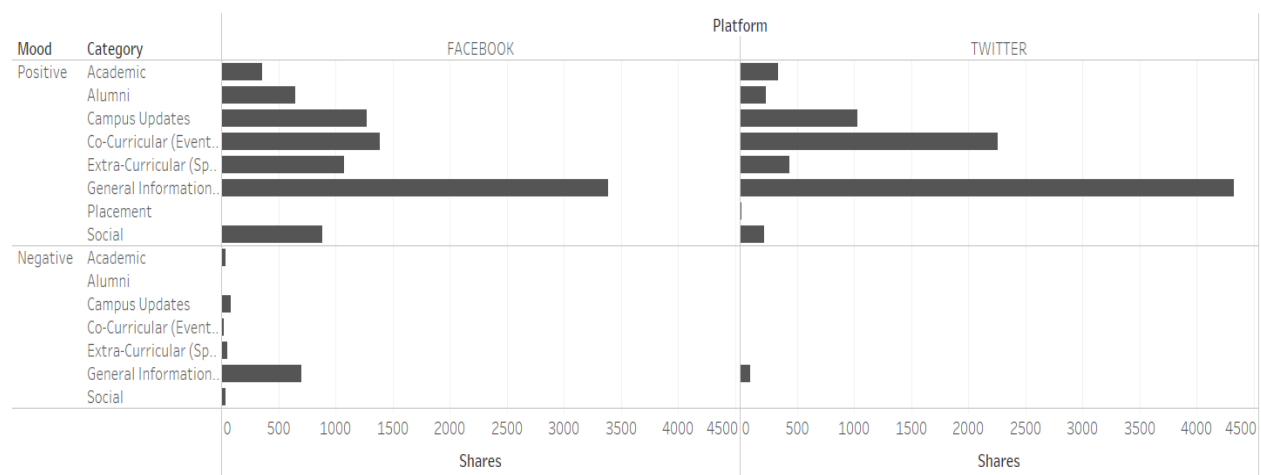
Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Figure No. 6 – The frequency of likes according to the mood of the post on Facebook and Twitter

Likes Comparision

Source – Official pages/accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Which social media platform used by ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC have a higher number of followers/subscribers?

Different social media platforms employ different metrics to keep track of their success. It is observed from Table No. IV that different universities use different platforms as their preferred option for promotions and interaction with their internal and external stakeholders. Table No. IV also brings to notice that followers are a common metric across the social media platforms under study. According to the study it has been observed that all the universities under study except ISB have maximum followers on Facebook, whereas the latter has maximum followers on LinkedIn.

Table No. IV – Analysis of various social media platform metrics.

UNIVERSITY	PLATFORM	LIKES	FOLLOWERS	ALUMNI	TWEETS
UOC	TWITTER		67,747		21,800
UOC	**FACEBOOK**	259,975	**268,094**		
UOC	LINKEDIN		205,686	106,103	
PU	TWITTER		430,962		39,400
PU	**FACEBOOK**	591,720	**604,553**		
PU	LINKEDIN		203,507	83,527	
ISB	TWITTER		149,045		8,958
ISB	FACEBOOK	190,419	194,270		
ISB	**LINKEDIN**		**202,242**	27,765	
SPJIMR	TWITTER		40,307		5,066
SPJIMR	**FACEBOOK**	291,661	**291,926**		
SPJIMR	LINKEDIN		38,405	16,789	

Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Slover-Linett and Stoner (2013) advise that metrics for return on investment on a social media initiative need to be well defined and tracked through a well-designed dashboard supported by a robust tracking mechanism. The top metrics identified by them include the number of friends/followers/subscribers, likes, the volume of participation/shares, and click-throughs to the websites, which can be observed in this research as well. Comparative analysis of YouTube data for ISB, SPJIMR, PU and UOC.

Research suggests that 90% of the information that reaches the human brain is visual and human brains can process visuals 60,000 times faster than text. YouTube has played an effective role in helping academicians, educators, and researchers across the globe to create engaging content adding a new perspective to teaching more creatively and innovatively (Sharma & Sharma, 2021).

Table No. V shows that the American universities were the front runners while

adopting YouTube as one of their official social media communication channels. With over 730,000 subscribers and more than 11.5 million views, UOC uses YouTube most extensively amongst the other universities under study. The

average views of all the universities are almost similar in number which can be an indicator that students irrespective of location prefer using YouTube as a medium of information.

Table No. V – Comparative analysis of You Tube data

University	Joined On	Subscribers	Channels	Videos	Playlists	Views	Average Views
UOC	28-09-2006	**730800**	13	3059	100	**11,676,409**	3,817
PU	19-09-2006	31700	9	853	37	3,043,296	3,568
ISB	07-08-2008	22400	1	691	30	2,317,006	3,353
SPJIMR	28-07-2014	4540	1	484	37	1,101,448	2,276

Source – Official pages / accounts of ISB, SPJIMR, PU, UOC.

Digital marketing is an important marketing tool to achieve business objectives such as enhancement of brand image, lead generation, student, and intellectual capital acquisition. But it is imperative that the primary goal for your digital marketing campaign be ascertained before execution. Digital communications tend to be more influential as compared to their traditional counterparts since they help to extend and improvise traditional marketing functions. (Jog et. al. 2015). In order to leverage the power of digital, educational organizations need to leap from nominal online presence to an integral online approach which involves more engagement with the users as Gordon Fletcher (2014) explains in his digital maturity model, that the cutting edge marketers have recognized the need for seamless integration of communication with the stakeholders regardless of device, medium or location and hence need to focus on replacing the term 'online marketing with the 'omnichannel marketing.

De Clerck (2014) says despite the maturity of social networks, many companies still lack strategic direction in using social platforms to communicate. Similarly, educational organizations and NPOs need to ascertain and define the purpose of foraying into the digital marketing arena. Digital marketing techniques such as SEO, SEM, Social Media Marketing, and other tools help accomplish the goals of organizations which include brand recall and recognition, higher engagement rate, popularity across various social media platforms. As per Kwok and Yu (2013), simple text posts see a lesser engagement rate when compared to photos and videos.

Amongst the various Social Media Platforms discussed in the research, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn are the most favorable platforms used for posting about co-curricular activities and general information. Websites are considered as the nucleus of the digital marketing strategy and it has been observed that all universities make use of their websites extensively and for effective dissemination of the information related to admissions, research, financial aid, intellectual capital, alumni connection through blog posts and dynamic web pages.

The universities not only post their updates on their websites but also on their social media handles on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. The rate at which universities put up new posts or events for their stakeholders is cyclical in nature. Social media posts often experience a temporal variability which results in sharing and reposting posts with a positive mood more frequently than posts with a negative mood. Although the universities under study undertake many CSR and fund-raising activities but there is no proof of such activities on their official social media handles. A common metric used to compare social media platforms including YouTube are the number of followers/subscribers. The pattern witnessed shows that the older the university higher the number of followers/subscribers.

CONCLUSION

The digital natives who have been growing up attached to their gadgets are a challenging lot to market to since they always want more than what is there to offer as they are a competitive

lot that requires content tailored to their creative minds (Newman, 2015). In a race to be ahead of the others, marketers need to switch to digital marketing techniques since digital natives are less responsive to traditional marketing techniques. Collective filtering is the norm of the day when it comes to making purchase decisions in today's era since the digital natives interact with each other and try to figure out what is worth buying and what is not. (Newman, 2015).

Ever since the formation of the internet, universities and colleges have employed digital strategies to reach out to stakeholders. But the advent of social media and smartphones revolutionized this. SEO, SEM and Social Media Marketing channels such as Facebook and Twitter, techniques help institutions reach out to the students in a targeted manner thereby increasing brand visibility. Digital marketing has been instrumental in the democratization of information, bringing personalized information in a nimble manner to the masses on an unimaginable scale. Social media channels are ideal platforms for engagement and interaction amongst the youth who is always on the lookout for interconnectedness (Jain, 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The digital business maturity model devised by Gordon Fletcher compares the social media and digital efforts of businesses with their competitors. Organizations need to adopt digital technology to transition from level zero to level four.

- Level zero – non-digital
- Level one – presence
- Level two – "E" Engagement
- Level three – integral
- Level four – Final Level – The future.

In accordance with the digital business maturity model, many educational organizations are still transitioning from level one to level two where they are attempting to move ahead in their digital journey by increasing their presence on various digital marketing platforms. Hence, they need to create a digital marketing ecosystem (DME) that will support a hybrid operational structure maintaining a balance between automation and the traditional modus operandi of an educational institute, thereby creating the opportunity to gradually transition from level zero to level four.

For educational organizations that are just starting off their digital journey, they should focus on developing an inclusive digital marketing ecosystem that can benefit the various stakeholders.

A digital marketing ecosystem is aimed at increasing the brand position through digital campaigns, which are unified, natural, and symbiotic in nature with the objective of gaining a competitive advantage and directing all the customer attention to websites.

Websites are the focal point of all digital marketing campaigns and strategies, and they can be considered as the nucleus of all the elements of the digital marketing ecosystem.

The elements of the DME include:

- The Website
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Pay-Per-Click Advertising (PPC)
- Web Analytics
- Content Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Email Marketing

Each element in the DME has its own importance and focus. It is important to maintain homogeneity of the design and structure of the content shared across various elements of the DME. In addition to the above, organizations need to channelize their digital efforts towards creating a symbiotic strategy aimed at synergizing the various elements of the DME.

Digital content created for online consumption should be disseminated via the website and various social media marketing platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and others supported by email and content marketing.

According to research conducted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and

Merrill (2011, p. 41), even though educational institutions utilize some form of digital and social media, the validation of the effectiveness is debatable and hence not measurable. But tools such as web analytics and social media analytics do help to a certain extent (Paladan, 2018).

To start with, the organizations should mandatorily have their official social media handles to maintain uniformity, credibility, and trust.

To connect with the reader, it is imperative that content developed for various digital marketing campaigns is appealing, compelling, and tells a story about the brand that captivates the reader thereby creating additional value.

The websites of educational organizations should speak about admissions, financial aid / scholarships offered to students, educational courses offered, research work, newsletters, student information, faculty information, information about various events conducted on and off-campus, virtual tour of the campus, alumni association, and blogs.

Information related to academics, alumni, co-curricular and extra-curricular events, placement, social and general issues need to be disseminated to various stakeholders using the official handles on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and others.

Regular updates and monitoring of all the elements of the DME is necessary to achieve the goal of connecting and generating interest amongst the stakeholders.

Fundraising and donations are activities that are primarily aimed at roping in the corporates and alumni. Most educational institutions have a dedicated web page for fundraising and donations. In many cases, corporates tend to lend a helping hand in funding projects such as lab and campus setups.

To successfully implement the DME, senior marketing and communications leaders need to define the strategies which will lead to integrated brand and campaign communications which will further drive success in fundraising and all other endeavors.

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