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A STUDY ON PRIORITIZING THE DIGITAL SOURCES WHICH IMPACTS THE PRE PURCHASE SELECTION OF THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE INSTITUTES OFFERING MANAGEMENT AND RELATED COURSES IN KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

Digital sources had brought a radical change in the conventional ways of interacting with the target audience. Digital marketing utilizes digital sources like social media, emails, websites, mobile marketing, online search engines etc. Literature shows that digital channels like emails and websites are mostly used by the universities and the institutes for marketing and communicating amongst the prospective students and the parents. The study aims to prioritize the digital sources that impact the pre purchase selection of the universities and institutes in Kolkata. The scope of the study is confined to 400 students pursuing the undergraduate and the post graduate management and other related courses in Kolkata. It is seen that the Beta value signifies the relative importance of each independent variable. It is found that emails, phone and social networking sites are significant predictors of the pre purchase selection process. Thus the results of this study can be utilized by the education marketers in framing effective digital marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS: *Online Sources, Pre Purchase, Prioritize*

INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation in the Indian universities and the institutes had drastically changed the way the students select the university or the institute, as the students gather the required information from a variety of digital sources such as videos, blogs, social media, student forum etc. Students now expect tailored content which is relevant to them in their digital experience. It is seen that most of the Indian universities and the institutes offering management and related courses had been successful to connect and communicate with the potential students and exploit the digital channels in a better way.

The students of this era are more careful in choosing the universities and the institutes for further study. The choice process for higher education, particularly the professional courses is highly complicated as there are more alternatives for the prospective students. Framing an effective enrollment strategy is of utmost importance for the university or the institute marketer.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To prioritize the digital sources which are directly impacting the pre purchase selection of the universities and the institutes offering management and other related courses in Kolkata.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various literatures on the sources of digital marketing that impacts the pre purchase selection decision had been reviewed.

Literature documents that social media marketing had become one of the popular techniques in the present era with the growing number of social networks. The marketer with the help of social channels like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram etc creates and sustains the image of a particular product or service. Thus, social media is regarded as the best possibility available in order to reach out the prospective clients. The marketers consider different social media channels to interact socially. The pace of social media trend is quite impressive in the age of digitalization. Researches reveal that Facebook is a prominent example of social media that had successfully reached out to millions of potential and the existing clients in service industry (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Some of the advantages of social media marketing are it helps to increase brand awareness, individualised response can be given to the customers, it is also cost effective and helps to gain inbound traffic.

Literature shows that it is through emails that the marketer can send a number of messages to a large group of people. This is how the merchants can tie up with the target audience in a broader way. Email marketing is the cheapest form and one of the effective methods of digital marketing. The marketer can communicate the value proposition to the existing or the prospective clients in its rapid form. As email marketing is less costly and have high response rate, it had turned into a valuable marketing tool (Sokolova & Titova, 2019). Some of the other advantages of email marketing include its flexible design, personalization and segmentation, shareable and being measurable. One of the disadvantages of email marketing is as the mails move in the spam folder, the online customers might not notice some of the received advertisements. To transcend such problem, the marketers might use 'permission marketing', where the marketers seek the permission of the recipients before they send the messages.

It was found in the literature that mobile marketing has certain unique characteristics that distinguish it from other channels of digital communication. For instance, ubiquity acts as the primary advantage of mobile marketing. Through these characteristics, the users can receive information at anywhere and at any time they want (Clarke, 2001). Mobile marketing is a two- way or a multi-way communication as it is interactive in nature. Literature reveals that SMS has been found to be the most popular and effective mobile application (Salo, Sinisalo, & Karjaluoto, 2008; Carroll, Barnes, Scornavacca, & Fletcher, 2007).

It was highlighted in the literature that counselors influence the students to a significant extent (Jatav, 2018) (Chapman D. , 1981) (Gilmour, 1981) (Briggs & Wilson, 2007). The students also use the apps to get the information about various universities and institutes offering management and related courses (Bashaa, 2019) (Watson, McCarthy, & Rowley, 2013). Websites play a pivotal role in reaching a large group of target customers and have been an effective tool in education marketing (Briggs & Wilson, 2007) (Kim & Gasman, 2011) (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

Thus through the literature review it is seen that six online sources have been found that impacts the pre purchase selection of the universities and institutes offering management and related courses.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology adopted is an explanatory research design. The data was collected from 400 student respondents with convenient snowball sampling technique. The research question that was raised in the study was---- Which digital sources impact most in the pre purchase decision process of the students of the management and allied courses in the universities and institutes in Kolkata?

ANALYSIS ON PRIORITIZING THE DIGITAL SOURCES THAT IMPACT MOST

To fulfill the objective, i.e. 'To prioritize the digital sources which are directly impacting the pre purchase selection of the universities and the institutes offering management and other allied courses' the following hypothesis has been framed and tested:

Null hypothesis-H_{o1}

H_{o1}: There is no linear relationship between the pre purchase decision and the digital sources.

To test this hypothesis, linear regression analysis is applied to the data through IBM SPSS 20. The linear regression analysis is applied on the dependent and the independent variables. The following results are shown in the Table 1:

The Table 1 explains the summary of multiple linear regressions and the overall fit statistics. The R Square of the model is.420 which implies that the linear equation explains 42% of the variance.

The ANOVA Table 2 gives the significant value is 0, which shows that it is highly significant. Hence F test is significant and we can assume that there exists a linear relationship between the variables in the model.

The Table 3 shows that Beta value for each of the variable. The Beta value signifies the relative importance of each independent variable. We can say that emails, phone and social networking sites are significant predictors of the pre purchase selection decision.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.648[a]	.420	.411	.316

a. Predictors: (Constant), counselors, emails, apps, social networking sites, phone, website
b. Dependent variable: Pre purchase decision

Table 2: Anova of Factors Influencing the Pre Purchase Selection Decision

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	28.350	6	4.725	47.419	.000[b]
Residual	39.160	393	.100		
Total	**67.510**	**399**			

a. Dependent variable: Pre purchase decision
b. Predictors: (Constant), counselors, emails, apps, social networking sites, phone, website.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model	Coefficients Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	5.721	.363		15.746	.000
Website	-.228	.042	-.266	-5.426	.000
Social networking sites	.006	.048	.006	.117	.907
Phone	.074	.036	.090	2.073	.039
Apps	-.243	.035	-.282	-6.894	.000
Emails	.413	.038	.494	10.941	.000
Counselors	-.228	.043	-.251	-5.329	.000

a. Dependent variable: Pre purchase decision

Testing the Multicollinearity in the Regression Model is Shown in the Table 4 below

It is evident in the Table 4 that the VIF value of all six dimensions is less than 3 and the tolerance level is above.2. It signifies that all dimensions of digital marketing in the present study are not correlated with each other. Therefore, conclusion can be

drawn that the data collected from different respondents to find the impact of digital marketing in the pre purchase selection of a university or an institute is justified. Researches reveal that Variation Inflation Factor (VIF) is an important statistical tool which determines the multicollinearity among variables found in a regression model. Multicollinearity exists in the data if the value of VIF is greater than 10 or the tolerance level is lower than.2 (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980).

Table 4: Multicollinearity among the Variables

	Collinearity Statistics	
Model	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant) Website	.612	1.634
Social networking sites	.578	1.730
Phone	.790	1.266
Apps	.882	1.133
Emails	.723	1.383
Counselors	.665	1.503

DISCUSSIONS

To fulfill the objective, i.e. to prioritize the digital sources which are directly impacting the pre purchase selection of the universities and institutes offering management and other allied courses, linear regression analysis was applied to the data. The results show that emails, phone and social networking sites are significant predictors of the pre purchase selection decision. This is again followed by apps, websites and counselors as significant predictors of the pre purchase selection decision. These online sources are used by the students while they search for the universities or the institutes. Hence, the results show that the study fulfills the objective.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes with the note that digital marketing impacts the pre purchase selection of the universities and the institutes. The students used the digital sources in their search for the universities and the institutes offering management and related courses. The results of the study can be leveraged by the education marketers for framing effective digital marketing strategies. It is suggested to the education marketers through this study that they can identify more such sources and factors which impacts the pre purchase selection of the university or the institute.

APPENDIX

- Table 1: Model Summary

- Table 2: Anova of Factors Influencing the Pre Purchase Selection Decision

- Table 3: Coefficients

- Table 4: Multicollinearity among the Variables

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