

Influence of Social Media Branding on Students in Selecting MBA Colleges of Dakshina Kannada District

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ABSTRACT

Branding of universities or colleges have been emphasizing as to what the universities or colleges stand for or what it is known for. Universities or colleges have been competing for students using different factors in various media which influence the students in selecting colleges. This study explores the effect the Social Media Branding on influencing students in selecting colleges. The researcher has collected data through questionnaire from 300 graduate students who are planning to join MBA colleges of Dakshina Kannada District. Stratified Random sampling method has been used. The results would play a key role in the marketing strategy of educational institutions.

Keywords: Branding, Social Media, Marketing strategy, Education, Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Media comprises of the resources like blogs, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Broadcasts etc that help people to share content. Media has always been seen as a most important factor in marketing strategy of any organization. Today "Social" concept is being stressed on where the importance of interaction between people and sharing of content has been realized. Social Media has risen over the years as a powerful marketing channel. The popularity of Social media has created an alternative source of information for students to engage, interact and collaborate with the colleges. Till recently, Social Media has been utilized for marketing or branding of products or services. However, currently, universities or colleges have also realized the importance of usage of social media to attract the students and thus Social Media Branding of universities or colleges has begun.

1.1 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers the graduate student population of Dakshina Kannada District who are interested to join MBA colleges in the region.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The current study is done on prospective students of MBA colleges in Dakshina Kannada to understand the influence of social media on students in selecting colleges. The data was collected from prospective students of MBA colleges through questionnaire in Dakshina Kannada district. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure unbiased data collection. The analysis of the data is done using percentages. Secondary data was collected from journal articles. Sample Size of 300 prospective students of MBA colleges has been considered.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- (a) To study the reach of social media among the students
- (b) To analyze the influence of social media branding on the students

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Companies seeking to build long-term customer relationships need to develop digital relations using promotional strategies that place importance on the co-creation of content and meaning. One way companies are seeking to achieve this is to adopt marketing campaigns aimed to produce word of mouth mainly through social network. Social networks are an online communication tool that allows customers to engage in a conversation with other consumers and the company. As social media has become a popular channel for exchanging information among consumers it is important for businesses to consider the best way to leverage the power of social media as well as how to properly invest resources to gain a valuable return (Divol et al. 2012).

Social brand engagement creates a connection and helps to communicate between consumers in association with the brand. The relationship thus grows from individual-individual association to individual-individual-brand association.

In current context, Social media provides a connectivity between people and brand effectively. The usage of traditional media appears to lose their reach with the target audience.

The user generated content in social media creates source of the customer preference, behavior and characteristics and the customers today have become more active parties in marketing exchanges because of social media platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al,2010)

Universities and Colleges from all over the world have begun to differentiate themselves and also interacting with their stakeholders by creating a unique position (Chapleo,2004; Waeraas and Solbakk, 2009)

Robert V Kozinets (2014) highlighted the significance of drawing customers through building relationships and interacting with them through brands

Fortunato (2008) informs the importance of the content in the message as this builds brand relationships. Clients are taking to online networking and creating belief with respect to new brands. (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). The increasing usage of online networking is causing extraordinary impact on peers as the feelings expressed are numerous including positive and negative thus helping a consumer to associate with a brand or organization or make purchase decision. (Gupta, 2013).

Brand Community give important data about brand to group individuals, and enable association to build solid brand (Fournier and Lee, 2009). A positive group builds trust and influence has been seen to influence the group's commitment towards the brand and positively build brand loyalty (Hur et al., 2011). It is prudent that each firm should try to build its group as a corporate plan and not just as a marketing technique to build a brand (Fournier and Lee, 2009). To assist and maintain social associations among the brand group individuals, brands need to draw in them with the assistance of significant and fascinating substance in the messages. In any case, the emphasis on content has been not really checked upon in the group which seems to be fundamental in a online platform which is more a informal communication.

Social media Social networking on online media describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers' intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues. It represents a revolutionary new trend that should be of interest to companies, operating in online space or any space, for that matter. Firms are now recognizing the imminent need to focus on building personal two-way relationships with customers that foster interactions. Such active interactions of a customer with a firm, with prospects and with other customers, whether they are transactional or non-transactional in nature, can be defined as "Customer engagement."

Rather than the customary perspective of client engagement, lately academicians and experts have recommended a behavioral view wherein it is considered as "Client's behavioral indications that have a brand or firm in spotlight due to motivational drivers. (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Customer engagement could be created by building the brand's value and building a culture within the organization within employees which would create a great customer engagement when they would engage with the customers on behalf of the organization. (Roberts and Alpert, 2010). In Social media, the engagement with customers occurs mainly due to word of mouth, blogs, ratings and user generated content. (Verhoef et al., 2010). In order to differentiate themselves in between the competition, organizations today are engaging themselves with customers. (Verhoef et al., 2010). The customer engagement in the online context varies a lot due to the changes in the features in different channels.

3. ANALYSIS

The data collected from the prospective students of MBA colleges are analyzed as below.

Table 1: Opinion about reach of social media among the students

Age (in years)	Number of Respondents	High
20	39	13%
21	168	56%
22	54	18%
23	27	9%
24	12	4%
Grand Total	300	100 %

Table 1 shows that 56% of the students rated the reach and effectiveness of social media to be very high. This shows that the students today are very well used to the usage of social media and gather relevant information by interacting with different people or with the brand.

Table 2: Impact level created by the social media in the mind of respondents

AGE (In Years)	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential
20	10%	70%	20%
21	16%	59%	25%
22	40%	38%	22%
23	43%	39%	18%
24	67%	17%	16%

The interactions in the social media create a great impact in the mindset of the students. This is seen through the data with 70% students in the age group of 20, 59% of the students in the age group of 21 and 67% students in the age group of 24 expressing that the social media is very influential on them.

Table 3: Statements which describes respondent’s efforts in using social media for education and searching for information of colleges

Statements	AGE (In Years)				
	20	21	22	23	24
You spend much of your time in social networking sites to interact and make friends	25 %	3%	9%	4%	8%
You have created your own blog and posted your profile in blogs	5%	3%	2%	4%	8%
You are a members of professional forums	3%	6%	2%	4%	17 %
You often interact with alumni through social media for getting information about colleges	9%	37 %	28 %	50%	25 %
You often visit information sharing sites for developing you skills	3%	3%	5%	7%	0%
You often participate in chatting with alumni, recruiters, etc.	9%	15 %	18 %	7%	17 %
You often interact with faculty to get materials, to clear doubts etc	3%	3%	4%	4%	0%

You often interact with industry experts to update the practical knowledge	3%	3%	5%	10%	17%
You share information with other college students through social media	40%	27%	27%	10%	8%

The data in Table 3 proves that majority of the student’s today use social media for collecting information about colleges through alumni or friends or through groups. Hence Social media becomes a very influential channel for the students in choosing colleges.

Table 3: Usage of different Social media channels

Social Media	AGE (In Years)				
	20	21	22	23	24
Facebook	2%	35%	7%	3%	2%
Blogspot	2%	3%	3%	2%	0%
LinkedIn	4%	8%	3%	1%	1%
YouTube	1%	6%	1%	1%	1%
Chat Room	2%	2%	3%	1%	0%
Blogs	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

Table 4 shows that majority of the students in different age groups use Facebook and LinkedIn. This also in turn helps colleges to decide the social media channel to be used for branding their campuses.

4. CONCLUSION

Social Media creates an interactive platform where the users share their views and opinions. Thus it builds a brand community across the brand with the users associated to the brand. The user generated content in the brand community builds an impression in the mindset of the customers. Most of the colleges today use social media to promote their brand talking about different events or achievements of their stakeholders thus creating an impact on the prospective students. Since the platform is interactive in nature the prospective students take to this to know more about the colleges which help them to decide about choosing the colleges.

The analysis has shown that majority of the students in the current trend use social media for collecting information regarding colleges by interacting with alumni or friends. It also shows that Social media branding is extremely influential in decision making of joining a college. The study also benefits the colleges since the data shows that Facebook and LinkedIn are the main social media channels used by students. Thus the branding done by colleges in these channels will give higher returns compared to the traditional channels.

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