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Research Article

ATTITUDE OF MBA ASPIRANTS TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SELECTING B-SCHOOLS- A STUDY IN THE CITY OF KOLKATA

Gautam Sardar¹ and Saroj Kumar Datta²

¹Department of Business Management University of Calcutta

²Dr. Datta's Academy, Geater Noida, UP-201310 Academic Advisor & Chair Professor, Department of Management, Tecnia Institute of Advance Studies, Rohini, New Delhi-110085

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ABSTRACT

Management institutes in India have been undergoing lots of uncertainties in respect of profitability and desired growth. In the last two decades, the sector have been experiencing inadequate new enrollment at under-graduate and post-graduate level of management studies. Institutes are trying to find and maneuver latest marketing channels with suitable strategies accordingly.

Among all other marketing strategies, Social Media marketing appears to be latest and completely different from others. Social media marketing has become one of the most popular and tested marketing method for education marketing. But the literature review reveals definite research gap in the areas of customer intention towards social media marketing and its subsequent effect, in the area of B-school marketing.

This research aims at the Behavioural aspects of the students as customers. The research also tries to investigate the impact on Social Media Marketing on students to create value by the marketer, Emotional Attachment, Community Building, Information Spreading, Service Branding and also to create the Emotional Attachment with the organization. In the process the research tries to find the connection between Social Media marketing with Customer Relationship and Purchase intention.

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INTRODUCTION

India has opened up its Technical and Management education sector for private investors since the end part of last century (Balaji S, 2012). Afterwards, good numbers of such institutes have been established, due to very good ROI from these privately managed institutes. However, since the beginning of the current decade, this sector has been experiencing huge inter-industry competition. Private sector management Institutes are trying to reduce a number cost factors in recent years, which they never looked at previously (Balaji S, 2012).

Unlike Government colleges, these privately run technical and management institutes totally depend on own marketing efforts to get new students for admission (Luminita N, 2009). In earlier days, institutes had to depend on advertisement in news papers, magazines, hoardings, banners, television ads, etc as the primary means of publicity (Balaji S, 2012). Social media has changed the entire dimension of advertisement world since the beginning of current century (Sharda G, Anita D & Pragya G, 2013). Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter,

Lynkdin, Wikipeda, search engines etc. have been dominating the higher education marketing like any other service business (Egle S, Nijoile B, 2015).

This research has been trying to get a very clear insight on social media as a means of marketing for privately managed educational institutes. Functions of social media as compared with traditional media are distinctly different due to inherent technological superiorities (Sharda G, Anita D & Pragya G, 2013). Social media have successfully incorporated customer feedback mechanism, which has not only made the system superior than the traditional system, but also leading to intimacy and trust of the customer (Angella Jiyoung Kim & Eunju Ko, 2012). Customer relationship management with proper information systems can easily create purchase intention (Egle Seleviciene, Nijoile Burksaitiene, 2015). This study also tried to understand the operational aspects of social media marketing to deal with customer relationship management.

*Corresponding author: **Gautam Sardar**

Department of Business Management University of Calcutta

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing for Education Business in India:

Education has never been treated as a trade or business in India. At the same time, education has acquired the highest level of admiration by every Indian citizen since its early days of civilization. Education with business motive is the new phenomenon in Indian society and so is also its marketing. The common Indians had little faith in the private-sector educational institutes in regard to its service quality and effectiveness. In order to overcome such negative attitude, the private sector, educational institutes are constantly experimenting with new generation marketing tools to apply them on the prospects.

Among all the latest marketing concepts, Social Media is the fastest growing medium for the marketer to reach the prospect (Egle S, Nijoile B, 2015). The greatest advantage of this marketing tool is direct feedback from the customer, as it allows the marketer to have B2C contact with the customer. The Social Media account of these Institutes in Facebook, Twitter, etc. are used to post news and events regularly for brand marketing with no restriction in time, place or medium (Angella Jiyoung Kim & Eunju Ko, 2012).

Social Media has the great advantage to deal with the attitude of individual customers (S Hudson, S. Roth, Thomas J. Madden, R Hudson, 2015). Everything posted or shared on social-blog, micro-blog, etc. such as comment, picture, text or video, it depicts the attitude stream of the user which may also deliberately create some messages for the marketer (Miller, Fabian, and Lin, 2009). Students being, so much so active and involved in Social Media are can easily be connected the with the stream of B-School marketing and also can take the organization a step ahead in the competition.

Social Media and its Functionalities

Building Community: Management Institutes can easily promote its upcoming course by its loyal customer community. Social media can act to engage its customer with a common interest in a group and maintain relationships through shared information on group interest (Stelzner, 2009; Hartshorn, 2010).

A social media community leverages its member to network, form partnership; create a trustworthy relationship (Paul Lachapelle, 2011). Educational institutes can easily earn new student admission from its own student community in social media.

Create an Emotional Attachment: Companies can sell anything to its customer when they are emotionally attached (B Batia, P Philippet, B Mesquita & S Boca, 1991). Emotional attachment is the best way to make the target customer believe in whatever the organization is saying. The social media platform has inherent capacity of creating communities by emotional connection (T Wang, R Yeh, C David, M Gabrielle, 2016). Students, anywhere in the world are always prone to be influenced by emotion. Emotional attachment often leads to loyalty as a customer. Students and parents always prefer to select the same college for admission where they have family members as student, alumni or some distant memory with the college (Balaji S, 2012).

Spread Information: One of the biggest advantages of social Media is the sharing of knowledge and information between different groups of people in the online space (P Lachapelle, 2011). The Internet has changed the means of information consumption and communication, especially in respect of speed and spread among the target audience (T D Baruah, 2012). Students being the target customer of the B-Schools need to be informed about the available scopes of management education in the city.

Creating Value to Marketers

Every organization needs loyal customer to survive in the long-run. B-schools must have loyal students who will share positive experiences of his/her own institutes. Creating and delivering value to customers is not an easy job for marketer anywhere in the world (Angella Jiyoung Kim & Eunju Ko, 2012). It is not only difficult, but involves a lot of expenditure for marketing planner (Balaji S, 2012). Social media itself can create value to its existing student and also can facilitate them to disseminate their experience at zero cost.

Branding Activities: Brands may have direct conversation and interaction with individuals (Montero Torres, 2016). Even the data collected through Social Media can help to get insight of the brand (Graves, 2016).

Organizations, all over the world are using Social Media, to draw customer attention and involvement towards the brand (Graves, 2016). Organizations are using Social Media typically for making more interaction with the brand with customers (Celaya, 2008). Social Media is very much useful for Branding, Acquisition and Retention (Pozin, 2014). For Branding aspect of Educational Institutes; Social media marketing is inexpensive, targetable and measurable than traditional media for the users to create, view, share and comment on the content of the information (Celaya, 2010).

Customer Relationship (Trust & Intimacy): Customer Relationship Management of Social Media Marketing would help to choose channels for better collaboration to serve the client's interest, by knowing their experience and subsequent intention (Jakob Morgan, 2010). Social Media CRM by organization refers to the marketing technique to interact with target customer (Simon Hudson, et al, 2015). Educational institutes are using social CRM to gather and motivate interactive prospects to participate in collaborative discussion (Graves, 2016). For Customer Relationship Management along with other kinds of marketing of the organization Social media can be used effectively, so that so companies adopting CRM social media and other online communities extended centers (Gartner, 2017).

Trust

Trust is the implicit belief that other party will be ceased to conduct any opportunistic behavior as well as undue advantages of situation (Moorman et al 1992 & Gefen 2002). Students being the other part of B-Schools marketing will never expect to be suffered from opportunistic behavior. Trust means a belief of relationship between actors who share similar and compatible interest (Laaksonen et al 2008). Trust is always associated with commitment and together they create co-operation between two entities (Morgan 1994). The content

of Social Media of all B-schools does reflect compatible interest, togetherness and co-operation between students and the institute.

Intimacy

Intimacy relates to self thoughts and feeling which can be shared (Plummer, 2013, Berlant, 1998). It relates to very closeness in relationship with family, friend and ideals etc. and hence a Student in particular can share intimate information with them. Intimate person must be adequately structured to assure the promise of belongingness and emotional connection (Berlant, 2008). Educational Institute can reflect its emotional connection with the students through social media. Intimacy through Social Media being the dominant rhetoric of the industry actually is showing the culture of the society (Ziyad Marar, 2012).

Greatest challenge of social media marketing is its semi-public nature. Often, it needs to share information which is authentically personal or private. Success of Social media depends on its capacity enabling people to keep-in-touch over boundaries of places and time (Lasen & Casado, 2012). In our globalised market space social media can be the only marketing to make the B-schools global connect.

Research Gap

Review of contemporary research papers reveals the fact that, a number of important researches have been conducted in the field of education marketing in recent years. These researches are mainly on the factors which can influence the choice of B-Schools. Some studies have been conducted on customer attitude towards social media marketing. No such studies have been found on the student’s attitude towards Social Media marketing of Management colleges in India. Therefore, our current study is one of the first attempts in this field.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method: Field Survey
 Research Format: Exploratory Research Design
 Data Collection Method: Structured data collection with primary data
 Population: Management students residing in and around Kolkata
 Sampling: Convenience sampling
 Sample size: 139 Respondents
 Data collection instruments: Quartiles
 Data Analysis: SPSS

Research Question

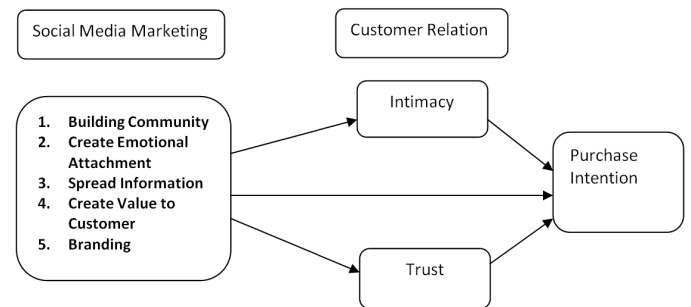
1. How does Social Media Marketing of Management Institutes act to develop a Relationship with the prospective students?
2. How does social media marketing influence the student’s intention to take admission to Management College?
3. What is the relationship between intimacy and trust (developed by social media marketing) with the student’s intention to take admission to Management College?

Hypothesis

H₁: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Customer Relationship

H₂: Social Media marketing has a significant and positive influence on student’s intention for Management college admission

H₃: Intimacy and Trust has a positive and significant influence on student’s intention for Management college admission



Pilot Test

A Pilot study has been conducted with total 14 respondents from two management colleges pursuing BBA & MBA program. Our pilot study was intended to find the relevance of the dependent variable and hence to finalize the questionnaire. It also helped us to finalize the scale of measures for statistical analysis.

We have used factor analysis to find the R values and the level of significance to understand the relative importance of the variables. However, the reliability of questions was calculated by using SPSS 17.0 software and Cornbeach alpha found 97.9%. Multidimensional scaling has been used to detect important variables, which can influence Trust, Intimacy and customer relation on the respondent’s Intention for college admission. On the basis of the result derived from pilot research, we have made some corrections and finalized the questionnaire.

In pilot survey, we have tried to estimate student intention towards Social Media Marketing to build Intimacy and Trust and henceforth creating intention for enrollment to management courses. Preliminary result of Analysis based on Pilot Survey had given indication that Social Media Marketing has influence on Public Relation and Customer Intention. On the basis of such result we have made our final Hypothesis.

Questionnaire Design & Data Collection

In our present research, we have approached students from 6 local management colleges who are pursuing their BBA and MBA program, all are located in and around Kolkata. The study was conducted in the months of August and September 2016. We were intending to collect data from first year students only and also for those students who have used social media to search their college prior to admission and hence we have used Convenience Sampling technique was used for selection of respondents.

Two scales have been used: Nominal and Rating Scale. Nominal scales are used for numbers as tags for classification (Malhotra & Bricks, 2007) and have used for question no 1-5 to record demographic data of the students. For question no 6-22 we have used 5-point Likert Scale; 5 for ‘Strongly Agree to 1 for ‘Strongly Disagree’ which is best for itemized rating (Malhotra & Bricks, 2007) and in our case questions are related to students' intention.

The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of literature review and also from the guidelines received from experts. However, it was intended to address the expected outcome of social media marketing in general; i.e, Creation of Emotional Attachment, Building Community, Spread Information, Create value to customer and Service Branding, We have followed the standard questionnaire developed by Angella Jiyoung Kim & Eunju Ko, 2012 as the standard reference of our case. To determine validity of the questions we have checked the validity of the content at suggested by a pilot study.

We have collected primary data and our final phase of data collection, mostly constituted with mostly on undergraduate B-Schools students because of their recent expose to the marketing system. Very insignificant quantity of data has been collected from the students who have an unclear idea about the use of Social Media but have used it for college search, so we did not consider those samples in our research.

Sampling and Data collection

Demographic Information

Out of total 228 samples we have collected, 139 finally considered for analysis. The majority of the student respondents i.e. 85.3% were undergraduate student and only 14.7% of the student respondents were postgraduate students. Among the total lot of responding students (or guardians on behalf of students), 69% were male and 31% were female. Residence wise, 73.38% from urban and 20.86% from rural 5.75% from semi urban areas responded our interview.

RESULT

We have analyzed our data by SPSS 17 software. We have measured the effect of the Variables of Social Media Marketing on Intimacy, Trust & Purchase Intention and obtained following result:

H₁: Social Media Marketing has a positive and significant influence on Customer Relationship

Intimacy by Social Media Marketing

Variables of SMM	B	t	p
1. Building Community	.132	1.916	.057
2. Create Emotional Attachment	.173	2.272	.025
3. Spread Information	.136	1.653	.101
4. Create Value to Customer	.493	6.171	.000
5. Branding of service/product	.173	2.012	.046

We have evidence, that Create Value to Customer (B=.493, t=6.171, p<.001), Create Emotional Attachment (B=.173, t=2.272, p<.05), and Service Branding (B=.172, t=2.012, p<.05) has a positive impact on Intimacy. Therefore more Intimacy of the students can be developed by Emotional Attachment, Branding and most importantly creating value to the customer. Emotional connection with higher brand value can increase customer lifetime (Angella Jiyoung Kim & Eunju Ko, 2012). The Analysis also proves that more than 74% variation have been explained (R²=.742, p=.000) and also multi-co-linearity does not exist.

Trust by Social Media marketing

Variables of SMM	B	t	p
1. Building Community	.152	2.159	.033
2. Create Emotional Attachment	.156	1.999	.048
3. Spread Information	-.048	-.570	.570
4. Create Value to Customer	.535	6.545	.000
5. Branding of service/product	.262	2.961	.004

In our above result, Create Value to Customer (B=.493, t=6.171, p<.001), Service Branding (B=.262, t=2.961, p<.005), Create Emotional Attachment (B=.156, t=1.999, p<.05), Building Community (B=.152, t=2.159, p<.05) has a positive impact on Intimacy. The analysis also proves that more than 70% variation have been explained (R²=.706, p=.000) and also multi co-linearity does not exist.

Therefore, from our above analysis we can say that, most of variables of Social Media Marketing have significant impact on Intimacy and Trust. Only spreading information has not significant impact on intimacy and it has a negative impact on the Trust. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported for all mediating variables.

H₂: Social Media marketing has a significant and positive influence on student’s intention for Management college admission

Students enroll (Purchase Intention) intention by Social Media Marketing

Variables of SMM	B	t	p
1. Building Community	.190	2.625	.010
2. Create Emotional Attachment	.188	2.342	.021
3. Spread Information	.064	.741	.460
4. Create Value to Customer	.466	5.544	.000
5. Branding of service/product	.239	2.625	.010

Our above table shows that Create Value to Customer (B=.466, t=5.544, p<.001), Service Branding (B=.239, t=2.625, p<.05), Community Building (B=.190, t=2.625, p<.05) has very significant impact and Create Emotional Attachment (B=.188, t=2.342, p<.05) has a less significant impact on Intention for college enrollment. The analysis also proves that more than 72% variation have been explained (R²=.724, p=.000) and also multi co linearity does not exist.

From the above result, we can say that, the variables have a significant impact on student’s intention to enroll and therefore the Hypothesis must be accepted.

H₃: Intimacy and Trust has a positive and significant influence on student’s intention for Management college admission

Effect of Intimacy and Trust on students enroll (Purchase Intention)

Functions of Customer Relation	B	t	p
Intimacy	.458	7.507	.000
Trust	.547	8.600	.000

Our above table shows that Intimacy (B=.458, t=7.507, p<.001), and Trust (B=.547, t=8.600, p<.001) has very significant impact on Intention for college enrollment. The analysis also proves that more than 85% variation have been explained (R²=.859, p=.000) and also multi co linearity does not exist.

Above result shows, positive impact of Intimacy and Trust on student does enroll to B-Schools, which proves the hypothesis.

CONCLUSION

Social Media marketing is the latest trend in the promotion Indian management education. Quick reach, low cost and effective customer feedback have made this technique popular. Indian families’ especially middle income class has already

accepted social media as the most reliable source of information.

Authors of the study have found a significant relation between social media marketing and college student enrollment in management education. However, further study is required in the areas of negative marketing, which can create negative customer intention.

Managerial Implication

It will help B-Schools to achieve trustful, mutually beneficial marketing strategy to enhance customer involvement in its marketing plan. B-schools marketers will get help to build credibility and image of the organization and at the same time properly allocate marketing budget for future periods. B-Schools will use Social Media Marketing in general for customer relation in particular to address business development of the industry.

Research Limitation

Although we have achieved an acceptable response rate larger-scale generalizations were not achieved due to small sample size. We have used convenience sampling in our study. Convenience Sampling is conducive to many polluting factors in group creation; such as poor group creation, wrong administrative evaluation etc. The study was limited in Kolkata and its surrounding area only, socio-economic changes may create differences in respondent's opinion. The study did not cover guardian's opinion in the same aspect, but in Indian society guardians and peer involvement have great rolls on student admission. So we need further consideration and involvement in above areas.

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