



ISSN : 2350-0743

www.ijramr.com



International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research

Vol. 10, Issue 10, pp.8953-8958, October, 2023

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON SELECTION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 08th July, 2023

Received in revised form

20th August, 2023

Accepted 16th September, 2023

Published online 30th October, 2023

Key Words:

Social Media; Advertising; Higher Educational Institutes; Decision Making.

ABSTRACT

Social media advertisements have offered customers plenty of opportunities to adapt to various facets of life. At the same time, prospective students use a range of knowledge sources to go through search of private higher educational institutes in their decision-making and selection process. In fact, it was evident that traditional sources of information, such as print and broadcast media, higher educational fairs and websites of private higher educational institutes were thoroughly influential until the emergence of social media. The prevalence and perseverance of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, as many students interact, network and participate in these online communities, now provides an alternate source of knowledge in their selection of private higher educational institutes. This research seeks to investigate the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes and explains why customers are more impacted by social media advertisements, and why consumers are tempted to select a private higher educational institutes based on social media advertising. The method of data collection was conducted via an online survey questionnaire. Of the sample population of sixty-five (65) students and employees of American International Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka, fifty (50) of them replied to the online survey questionnaire and expressed their views. The results show active involvement of the respondents in social media and the role of social media advertisements in influencing their decisions on the selection of private higher education institutions and meeting their knowledge needs. Overall, because of the influence of the use of social media advertisements, this study contributes to the awareness of the selection of higher educational institutions among the survey respondents. The importance of this study also offers feedback for managers of private higher education institutions to devise plans for active involvement in social media.

INTRODUCTION

According to D'Souza and Moore (2017) the Sri Lankan higher education industry has fifteen (15) higher educational institutions under the supervision of the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka and under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education. The industry has seven postgraduate institutes in addition, to the tertiary-level training institutes functioning under the Ministry of Education, such as teacher training institutes and the National Education Institute (D'Souza and Moore, 2017). Due to the shortages in the student enrolment capacity at state owned universities, the number of private higher education institutions in Sri Lanka is steadily developing. Private higher education institutions can be granted degrees or program-based recognition by the Ministry of Higher Education. The University Grants Commission, currently lists eleven non-state institutes with degree status on its website, as well as six non-state organisations with approved degree offerings (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015).

Furthermore, there are a range of unregistered providers that escape the long and costly recognition processes defined by the University Grants Commission and by taking advantage of a regulatory loophole that allows them to work by pursuing association with overseas universities (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015). Under current Sri Lankan legislation, affiliated institutes can enter into franchising and validation agreements to offer both under-graduate and post-graduate degree programs in partnership with overseas universities (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015).

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH: Aims and objectives are the significant elements that give the set motivation for moving towards an achievement. Having said that, the intent of this research is to Investigate the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: To tackle the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes, the researcher has prepared the following research questions which will be answered by completion of this research:

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- Which social media networking platforms are used by survey respondents to look for a private higher educational institutes?
- Which social media networking platforms does private higher educational institutes actively use to enroll prospective students?
- Which social media networking platforms influence the selection of private higher educational institutes?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter of literature review critically evaluates the relevant literature and past research related to the current research topic. It then fuses, synthesises, and incorporates the related literature and previous studies from these fields. The primary purpose of this chapter is to grasp the chapter effectively and properly understand the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes.

Advertising: Advertising is a means of communication that enables an audience to make purchase decisions for goods or services and to provide audiences with data. It is seen as a main and important part of advertisers and businesses' economic growth (Hee and Yen. 2018). Advertising is traditionally a paid form of marketing or promotion through various traditional channels such as television, commercial radio ads, newspapers, magazine mail, contemporary channels such as text messages, websites and blogs or outdoor advertising reached by any supporter (Fatima and Lodhi, 2015). Marketers have often responded to evolving business conditions when it comes to producing new ads. In the 20th century, the use of advertisements grew dramatically as the availability of manufactured goods was expanded by industrialisation (Haider and Shakib, 2017). In the early 80s, advertisements were mostly limited to newspapers, radio, television and billboards. In modern times, businesses, especially social media and mobile advertising, are leaning towards digital advertising (Hee and Yen. 2018). The primary goal of advertisements is to have an influence on purchasing behaviour; but, through memories of people, this brand effect is also altered or enhanced. Associations linked to the consumer brand name build brand memories. These brands constantly influence consideration, appraisal and, ultimately purchases (Haider and Shakib, 2017). Consumer behaviour has always had so much value and space in the study of the effects of advertising on its effectiveness. The behaviour of the customer much of the time depends on the consumer's acceptance or rejection of the advertisements of the promoted product (Fatima and Lodhi, 2015). Better-quality advertisement is likely to influence buyers to purchase the product, while low-quality advertisement may do the opposite (Hee and Yen, 2018).

The Phenomenon of Social Media: Every organization is revolutionised by the developments in information technology. In the early 2000s, through sharing and following, the world experienced the phenomenon of internet networks being the bridge for global ties. The social media phenomenon on the Internet has exploded into the mainstream over the past few years (Tanwar, 2017). Communities have shifted with the growth of Web 2.0 technologies and increasing internet communications to start their largest involvement in social networking experiences such as forums, wikis, blogs, twitter, social networking websites such as Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, video hosting services such as YouTube and MetaCafe (Gulzar and Maqbool, 2018). Today's social media marketing strategy has changed dramatically and created new resources and opportunities for marketer interactions with

other consumers to raise consumer awareness (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Kohli, *et al.*, (2014) have described social media as consumer-generated media that includes a broad range of new sources of internet data, produced and used by consumers who want to share information with others on any topic of concern. Social networking provides a unique opportunity for a wide audience to utilise word-of-mouth marketing across a large social network, facilitate consumer to consumer (C2C) interaction, and advance brand knowledge (Kohli, *et al.*, 2014).

Social Media and its Advertising Efforts: In their social communities, social media provides advertisers with notable ways to meet consumers and build more private interactions with them. The way brand content is created, circulated and consumed has been transformed by social media, shifting the power to form brand images from advertisers to online interactions and customer content (Singh, Bansal, and Bhatnagar, 2019). Social networking offers the latest news and hot discussion topics, as well as main product search platforms. Consumers turn more often to various forms of social media in order to collect data, as they view it as a more accurate data source than corporate-sponsored contact through conventional advertisements (Putter, 2017).

Innovation of the Social Media Platforms: At the beginning of the 21st century, new technological technologies were introduced, and social media sites, which are just to name a few Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest offers a variety of communication resources to people (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman, 2015). According Zechariah and Eissa (2019) the social media phenomenon has transformed the views of our society and people. The use of social media resources has been identified by Zechariah and Eissa (2019) as a new upsurge in the information and communication technology network that is commonly known as ICT. Consumers use creative, innovative and interactive social media sites to supply information and also to retrieve information (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). Chivandi, *et al.* (2019) described social innovation 's digital creativity as the value-added result that emerges from a range of methods of involving connections between people in which people dynamically come together and share insightful information (Chivandi, *et al.* 2019).

Through extremely creative, innovative and interactive social media technologies, most vloggers and bloggers are able to share their products and services ideas and perspectives with their foreign audiences (Chivandi, *et al.*, 2019). Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) in particularly referred to the need for customers to communicate on social media in order to gain relevance, awareness-discovery, inequalities in infotainment, and psychological development, and to sustain personal and social contact with different people around the world, meeting the need for individual interaction (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman, 2015). Chivandi, *et al.* (2019) also have observed that users use media to fulfil interpersonal requirements, including needs arising from offline media satisfaction, such as protection, ease of comfort and leisure, according to previous studies on the influence of social media advertisements (Chivandi, *et al.*, 2019).

Interaction of Social Media: Zechariah and Eissa (2019) see social networking as an essential motivator for creating content created by users. In social media contact, engagement between brands and consumers is essentially changing. As well as space for debate and sharing of ideas, social media may provide help

for consumers (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). According to Zhu and Chen (2015), social networking describes customers who connect to brand-related social media sites to meet, communicate and discuss particular products and or brands with others (Zhu and Chen, 2015). The participants are linked to information topics and the primary objective is to enable users of social media to engage with the related information and topics (Zhu and Chen, 2015). Profile-based social media promotes interactions because the person behind the profile is involved in them. On the other hand, social media focused on content focuses on the content, debates and comments (Ertemel and Ammoura, 2016). Tanwar (2017) reflected on the fact that in the coming decade, there is one important advancement in social media, known as YouTube, that will not only thrive but succeed in all probability. This innovation has mirrored much of what we have come to define as social media since 2000, and it shows no signs of slowing down (Tanwar, 2017).

Types of Commonly used Social Media Platforms:

Facebook: Undoubtedly the world's biggest and one of the most commonly used social networking sites. With around 1.59 billion active users per month, Facebook was probably the first to reach the benchmark of 1 billion user accounts. In addition to the ability to network with friends and relatives, users can even advertise or promote a brand and products using paid Facebook (Spencer, 2020).

Instagram: As a unique social networking site that was totally focused on sharing images and videos. This social networking picture sharing software helps you to catch, with your phone's camera or any other camera, the best moments of your life and turn them into works of art. With about over 400 million active users per month, it is now part of the Facebook empire (Spencer, 2020).

Twitter: This social networking site allows you to post short text messages commonly known as tweets, containing up to 280 characters, to communicate your message to the world, with about 320 million active users every month. Twitter also makes it easy to advertise your businesses and even shop directly via tweets, with the growing craze for online shopping (Spencer, 2020).

LinkedIn: With approximately 100 million active users per month, one of the most popular professional social networking sites or applications is readily available in over 20 languages. It is used by all types of professionals around the globe and serves as an ideal forum for communicating with various firms, finding and recruiting ideal applicants, and more. It is composed of over 400 million members (Spencer, 2020).

YouTube: Operates as one of the subsidiaries of Google, the world's largest social networking video sharing platform that allows users to upload, display, comment on and like videos, and share them. Every month, more than 2 trillion logged-in users visit YouTube and people watch over a billion hours of video every day and create billions of views. This social network is available across the world and also allows users to create a YouTube channel where all their digital content can be uploaded (Spencer, 2020).

Social Media for Private Higher Educational Institutes: For each and every person, education is important. Education is more important than every other need for any teenager.

Teenagers today show a lot of interest in spending time on social networks, but social networks have a positive and negative effect on education (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015). Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan (2015) have identified five interlinked literacies relating to social media-supported educational activities and these focus, engagement, cooperation, knowledge of the network and critical ingestion (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015). According to recent Sri Lanka's literature survey, 100 percent of private higher education institutes use at least one form of social media platform for day-to-day activities. Earlier research has shown that more than 90% of students from private higher educational institutes around the world use social networks (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015).

With our understanding of full-blown social media, more digital content can be pushed into the open web. It is now more common to use social media on mobile devices than to use computers to access them. Continuous advances in mobile technology help to keep society linked and linked at all times. Social consumption shows potential growth among communities in parallel with the development of mobile consumption devices. Because of its incorporation into society, the Internet and social media can no longer be censored or ignored (Thuseethan and Vasanthapriyan, 2015).

Social Media Advertising: The way advertisement messages are distributed and received has been altered by media dissemination. Advertisers are moving away from television and engaging in new media, such as social network sites, to meet their target audiences due to the high cost of providing a mass audience (Putter, 2017). The rise of social media has assisted businesses engage in immediate, accurate, cost-effective and timely end-consumer engagement compared to traditional communication tools. Social media advertising is also more useful not only to major multinational corporations, but also to small and medium-sized corporations, as well as to government agencies and even non-profit organisations (Gulzar and Maqbool, 2018). Consumers may actively engage with advertising with the assistance of social media platforms, allowing customers the ability to "like" those advertisements, follow advertisements, on Twitter, share them with friends, and know-friends like the ads. In order to check for product information and make buying decisions, many customers use social media platforms more frequently. Therefore, many experts conclude that social media should be used as an integral part of the Integral Marketing Communication method of the company (Chivandi, *et al*, 2019). The key advantage of choosing advertising social network sites is that the advertiser can use the demographic details of the user and target their advertising accordingly (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019).

Social media has given consumers enormous strengths that they have never seen on the market before; at the same time businesses have no measurable impact on the content, duration and frequency of interactions based on social media (Tanwar, 2017). With the emergence of social media advertising, the relationship between companies and clients is shifting. Social networking is affected by various types of consumer behaviour (Singh, Bansal, and Bhatnagar, 2019). In order to build a sincere partnership with their customers, companies are expected to improve their marketing strategies. There has been a drastic change in the purchase habits of online customers that indicates that most of them choose to buy from social media (Diehl, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the research, the data was gathered mainly from students and employees of American International Campus. The age limit of the population was at least 17 years and the size of the total population is 65. Secondary data sources including employee master file and student registers were used to establish the population. The researcher has adopted simple random sampling technique. The sample size was 50% for students and 50% for employees. The researcher will gather primary data on the using an online questionnaire. The data collection was carried out online using Google Forms. The research questionnaire was segregated into three components namely, demographic information, social media presence and its influence of the selection of higher educational institutes. The demographic information segment consist of four items, whereas the segment on social media presence consist of three items and finally the influence of the selection of higher educational institutes segment consists of four items. The researcher has analysed data, identified trends, patterns or relationships using an IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software application by conducting a variance analysis, reliability analysis, normalcy test and regression to test the research hypothesis.

RESULTS

Out of sixty-five (65) respondents from the identified sample, only fifty (50) has responded to the survey questionnaire. The summarised data and their feedback of the fifty (50) respondents were very helpful in explaining the main purpose of this research.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.083	2

Reliability Analysis: For the single dependent variable of selection of a higher educational institutes and the independent variable of social media advertisements, a reliability analysis was performed.

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Statistic	Std. Error
Social Media Usage	50	1.33	5.00	2.6267	1.19265	1.074	.337	-.069	.662
Selection of Higher Educational Institutes	50	3.00	6.25	5.0750	.94390	-1.143	.337	.797	.662
Valid N (listwise)	50								

Correlations			
		Social Media Usage	Selection of Higher Educational Institutes
Social Media Usage	Pearson Correlation	1	-.523**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Selection of Higher Educational Institutes	Pearson Correlation	-.523**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Cronbach's Alpha approach was used to verify the reliability of the results. In order to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the data obtained, the Cronbach Alpha is implied and the value must be over 0.70. If the value is greater than 0.70, then the internal accuracy of the questionnaire remains to be regarded and the data collected is accurate (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). Therefore, as seen above according to the relatability statistics the Cronbach's values fall into the appropriate range, it is regarded as the data collection is acceptable.

Normalcy Test: Using the Normality test with IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, the determination of If the sample data represents the normal distribution is administered along with the independent and dependent probability variable. The values of kurtosis and skewing can vary from -1 and +1.

While both values are in the range of -2 to +2 and are still considered acceptable in this situation, verification of the data set is still believed to be a normal univariate distribution (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). Consequently, provided that the data obtained in this analysis is of normal distribution, the column of skewness and kurtosis comprising all the statistical values falls within the acceptable range.

Correlation Analysis: Correlations between scale variables were investigated. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to evaluate relationship between dimensions.

Regression Analysis: R, R Square and Adjusted R Square, which are the markers for calculating model fitness, were tabulated in the Model Summary. The R value provides the coefficient of correlation between the value being predicted and the value being observed. The R Square value provides the percentage of variance within the regression line of the total variation (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). Based on the data shown in the above table, the R Square value equal to .523 represents 52.3 percent of the variance in the Entrepreneurial Intent (dependent variable), interpreted by variations in the independent variables. The appropriate range of R Square above 0.81 is important, 0.50 is moderate and 0.25 is deemed poor (Zechariah and Eissa, 2019). Therefore, the R Square falls above 0.81 in this analysis, denoting a highly significant range. The P-Value (Sig) needs to be below 0.05 in order to be important, according to Zechariah and Eissa (2019). Therefore, the Sig value equal to 0.000 denoting the model is highly important in predicting the effect of social media advertising, as seen in the table above.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.523 ^a	.274	.258	.81284
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Usage				

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	11.942	1	11.942	18.074	.000 ^b
1 Residual	31.714	48	.661		
Total	43.656	49			
a. Dependent Variable: Selection of Higher Educational Institutes					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Usage					

CONCLUSION

The emphasis here is on the research objective which is to investigate the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes and conclude the influence of social media advertisement on the selection of private higher educational institutes by the collection of data from 50 respondents from the American International Campus, Sri Lanka using an online questionnaire. Few shortcomings can be found in this research project and the researcher is optimistic that the data obtained can sustain research for future studies. In addition, the limited sample size of 50 respondents in this study should certainly be increased in order to have a higher precision rate in the results.

With more time, the survey and data collection would have higher quality data with greater accuracy compared to the limited and insufficient time allocated for data collection and survey for this study. In order to undertake a wider analysis of this topic, resources and time were limited. As such, more time can be allocated in this study to obtain more detailed data that is very relevant for better conclusions for Sri Lanka's private higher education institutions. Finally, it is proposed for future studies to obtain more data from a wider pool of private higher educational institutes. In addition to mediating variables, it is also recommended to include more variables that may affect the selection decision of private higher educational institutes in Sri Lanka, with additional research on the influence of social media advertisements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My first and foremost appreciation goes to my Almighty creator for giving me the power and confidence to undertake and perform this research as a part of my Master of Business Administration (MBA) education. I am also fortunate to have a caring family including my parents, my dearest better half, Fathima Rahmath, my kids Hayaa, Hamdh and Hudha, to support me during my studies both morally and psychologically. Their encouragement, advice and support encouraged me to make an effort that allowed me to complete this research study effectively. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Mr. Manone Perera, my module leader and Ms. Kushal Sumanasekara, my research supervisor, who guided me to prepare this research report. I was not only supported by their criticism, invaluable patience, analytical encouragement and support to achieve this report, but also to come up with the anticipated expectations. They genuinely deserve the gratitude and appreciation. In addition, my gratitude also goes to all those in one way or another who have contributed to this study, such as the supporting staff Human Resource Management Institute (HRMI), Sri Lanka, my fellow students and others in the preparation of this research. Last but not least, I would like to thank Mr. Amila Kulatunga, Chief Operating Officer, of the American International Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka for his cooperation and support extended during the entire duration of the report this research.

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