

Role of Social Media Engagements in Higher Education Marketing

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Abstract

This study examines the role of social media engagements in Higher Education Marketing (HEM). Through a quantitative analysis involving surveys, descriptive statistics, and regression modeling, it investigates customer perceptions of social media ads from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), engagement levels with such content, and the impact on initiating the application process. The findings reveal generally positive customer perceptions, moderate engagement levels with variations across individuals, and a significant positive relationship between social media engagements and attempts to initiate applications. The regression analysis showed that over 50% of the variance in application attempts could be explained by changes in social media interactions. The strong statistical significance highlights social media's transformative potential in driving student recruitment efforts. However, the study had limitations like convenience sampling and cross-sectional data. Recommendations include using robust sampling techniques, longitudinal studies, examining nuances of content types and platforms, and complementing quantitative findings with qualitative insights. As social media's role in HEM grows, institutions should embrace data-driven, customer-centric strategies to effectively engage prospects, build relationships, and achieve sustainable enrollment growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Keywords: Social media marketing, higher education, student recruitment, digital engagement, educational marketing, quantitative research

1 Introduction

The profound impact of social media on various domains, including higher education marketing (HEM), has garnered significant attention in recent years (Bamberger et al., 2020; Peruta & Shields, 2017). As digital platforms continue to shape consumer behavior and decision-making processes, educational institutions are compelled to reassess their marketing strategies to effectively engage with prospective students. The rise of social media has revolutionized the landscape of higher education, offering unparalleled opportunities for institutions to connect with their target audience, disseminate information, and influence enrollment decisions (Mason et al., 2021).

Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to showcase their offerings, foster engagement, and cultivate relationships with potential students. By leveraging the interactive nature of these platforms, universities and colleges can create dynamic and personalized experiences that resonate with the contemporary student population (Conte & Siano, 2023). Through strategic social media campaigns, institutions can deliver tailored content, facilitate real-time conversations, and provide a glimpse into campus life, academic programs, and student experiences. This level of engagement and transparency not only enhances brand awareness but also facilitates informed decision-making among prospective students, ultimately impacting enrollment rates.

Despite the evident potential of social media in HEM, the extent to which these platforms influence prospective students' perceptions, engagement levels, and application processes remain the subject of ongoing inquiry. Understanding the intricate dynamics between social media interactions and marketing outcomes is crucial for educational institutions to optimize their digital strategies and maximize their return on investment. By delving into the perceptions, engagement levels, and the role of social media in the application process, this study aims to provide valuable insights and data-driven recommendations for HEIs to effectively leverage the power of social media in their marketing endeavors.

This comprehensive investigation employs a multi-faceted approach, encompassing a detailed literature review, quantitative analysis of customer perceptions and engagement levels, and a regression analysis to examine the impact of social media engagements on the application process. By triangulating these diverse methodologies, the study offers a holistic understanding of the interplay between social media interactions and HEM outcomes, contributing to the existing body of knowledge and informing strategic decision-making within the sector.

1.1 Objectives of the study

1. To understand the perception of customers towards the social media advertisement about the HEIs
2. To study the engagement level of customers towards the social media advertisement about the HEIs
3. To identify the role of social media engagements towards the application process of HEIs

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theories

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded in several well-established frameworks and models that elucidate the interplay between social media interactions, consumer perceptions, and decision-making processes. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and its extensions, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003), provide valuable insights into how individuals' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use influence their adoption and engagement with technologies, including social media platforms. Furthermore, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) offers a framework for understanding how individuals process and respond to persuasive communication, such as social media marketing messages, through central and peripheral routes of persuasion. The concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) highlights the significant influence of peer-to-peer communication and user-generated content on consumer attitudes and behaviors, which is particularly relevant in the context of social media engagement. Additionally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) provides insights into the motivations and gratifications that drive individuals' media consumption choices, including their engagement with social media content from HEIs. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study aims to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media engagements in shaping customer perceptions, fostering engagement, and ultimately influencing application behaviors in the HEM context.

2.2 Empirical studies

The growth of social media sites has caused big change in the world of higher learning, and made schools need to change how they use ads to keep ahead and reach new students (Peruta & Shields, 2017). Today's students are born with and live in a world where all of their friends, and even their own thoughts, are connected, and social media has a hand in how they think about things, decide what to do, and buy (Mason et al., 2021). Understanding this change, HEIs have seen the worth of social media as a way to raise their name, get people involved, and help them make the choice to sign up (Bamberger et al., 2020).

Social media sites have many ways for schools to talk to the people they want to reach in real and real, good way. On these sites, schools and colleges can tell fun stories, show life on the campus, and show what they can learn and how it feels for students to go there (Conte & Siano, 2023). By using social media to talk back and forth, schools can have chats all day long, and make a bond between people thinking about school, those who go to the school now, and those who have gone

there before (Peruta & Shields, 2017). This talk back and forth makes people know what the school is about and also helps the people to trust the school and make them feel close to it.

Effective social media marketing in higher education extends beyond mere advertising; it encompasses the creation of compelling narratives, the curation of user-generated content, and the facilitation of authentic experience that resonate with the target audience (Mason et al., 2021). By leveraging multimedia formats, such as videos, virtual tours, and live streams, institutions can provide prospective students with immersive experience that offer a glimpse into campus life and academic offerings. Moreover, social media platforms enable institutions to gather valuable data insights, allowing them to tailor their messaging, target specific Effective social media marketing in higher education goes beyond just ads; it means telling good stories, having users make their own stories, and letting them have real life moments that can be found on the sites they follow (Mason et al., 2021). With the use of many types of media, like videos, tours that are on the computer, and live videos, schools can give future students a chance to see what it is like to be on the school and what can be done there. Also, social media sites will give schools good data information. This helps them make their messages just right, find the right types of people to make sure they get the word out to, and make their ways of making people know about them work better (Conte & Siano, 2023).

Despite the large way social media can be used in HEM, we do not know much about how these sites shape the way students think, how much they take part in things, and how they make choices. While other work has shown how social media matters in places of higher learning (Bamberger et al., 2020; Peruta & Shields, 2017), there are not many real studies that look at the ways social media can change what students think, how much they take part in things, and how it affects them when they apply to school.

In recent years, the role of social media in higher education marketing has become a focus of research (see, e.g., Yan & Hung, 2018). As a new way to reach students, social media offers an affordable and fast way to send the message of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to their potential customers (Nardi & Moutinho, 2018). Research shows that the use of social media can help HEIs build their brand, monitor the competition, and improve their marketing (Ding, 2017). However, despite the widespread use of social media in HE marketing, little is known about how social media interacts with other digital marketing methods or how social media alone impact students in their journey to apply to HEIs (Luo et al., 2017). For example, online search engines (such Google and Bing) are the most common way for students to get knowledge about HEIs when they search for a program or a university.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the identified research gaps, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Customers have a positive perception of social media advertisements related to HEIs.

H2: Customers demonstrate a high level of engagement with social media advertisements from HEIs.

H3: Social media engagements have a significant positive impact on attempts to initiate the application process for HEIs.

By rigorously testing these hypotheses through quantitative analysis and empirical investigation, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide practical recommendations for HEIs to leverage the power of social media effectively in their marketing efforts.

3 Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the role of social media engagements in HEM. The methodology encompasses a multi-faceted approach, combining survey data analysis, descriptive statistics, and regression analysis to comprehensively address the research objectives and test the proposed hypotheses.

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

The main data for this work came from a survey that people filled out on the internet. The survey tool was made to get people's thoughts on social media ads from HEIs, how much they paid attention to such ads and how this changed how they might apply. The survey had questions that used scales and multiple choice options so people's answers could be put in number form.

A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, was employed to recruit participants for the survey. The target population consisted of individuals who were actively engaged with social media platforms and had encountered marketing content from HEIs. The survey was distributed through various online channels, including social media platforms, email lists, and relevant online communities. While convenience sampling may introduce potential biases, it was deemed appropriate for this exploratory study due to its cost-effectiveness and accessibility to the target population (Landers & Behrend, 2015).

3.2 Variables and Measures

The study investigates the relationships between several key variables:

1. Perception of social media advertisements: This variable measures participants' attitudes and perceptions toward social media advertisements from HEIs. It encompasses factors such as perceived usefulness, credibility, and overall impression of the advertisements.
2. Engagement level with social media advertisements: This variable assesses the extent to which participants interact and engage with social media content from HEIs. It includes indicators such as liking, commenting, sharing, and actively seeking or consuming the content.
3. Attempts to initiate the application process: This variable measures participants' likelihood or actual attempts to initiate the application process for HEIs based on their exposure to and engagement with social media marketing content.
4. Social media engagements: This predictor variable represents the level of engagement (e.g., likes, comments, shares) generated by social media advertisements from HEIs. It serves as the independent variable in the regression analysis.

Established scales and validated measures from previous literature were adapted to operationalize these variables, ensuring reliability and validity (Peruta & Shields, 2018; Mason et al., 2021).

3.3 Analytical Approaches

The collected survey data underwent rigorous analysis using various statistical techniques to address the research objectives and test the proposed hypotheses.

1. Descriptive statistics: Descriptive analyses, including measures of central tendency (mean) and dispersion (standard deviation (SD)), were conducted to summarize and characterize participants' perceptions and engagement levels with social media advertisements from HEIs.
2. Regression analysis: Simple linear regression was employed to examine the impact of social media engagements (independent variable) on attempts to initiate the application process (dependent variable). This analysis aimed to assess the strength and significance of the relationship between these two variables, providing insights into the role of social media interactions in influencing application behaviors.

The regression model was evaluated using various statistical measures, such as the coefficient of determination (R-squared), F-test, and significance levels of the regression coefficients. These measures helped assess the model's goodness-of-fit, overall significance, and the practical implications of the findings (Cohen et al., 2003).

Furthermore, relevant assumptions of the regression analysis, including linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity, were tested to ensure the validity and reliability of the results (Hayes & Cai, 2007). With these methods, this work seeks to give a full look at how social media work with how customers see things, how much they take part in, and how they act on use

of the app in HEM. The results from this way of working add to what we already know and give real life meaning for schools to make their use of social media better and get more students to come to them.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a thorough examination of the results related to the impact of social media interactions on marketing in higher education. The debate commences with exploring the customers' perspectives of social media ads for HEIs. This study examines individuals' thoughts on the efficacy, involvement, and reliability of these advertisements through survey responses and interviews. The investigation then examines the level of customer involvement with these adverts, specifically investigating how social media content from HEIs stimulates interaction and interest among viewers. Analysing several aspects that impact engagement, such as the type of content and the preferences of the platform, is done to determine effective tactics for engaging with the audience. This chapter explores the crucial significance of social media interactions in the college admissions process. This study examines the influence of social media interactions on the decision-making and application behaviours of prospective students by analysing their replies. The findings provide insights into how institutions might successfully utilise social media to increase application rates. This chapter provides a detailed and sophisticated analysis of how customers perceive and engage with HEM, as well as the significant impact of social media. It offers practical advice for institutions looking to improve their digital marketing strategies and effectively engage with their target audience through social media.

4.2. Perception of customers towards the social media advertisement about the higher education institutions

In order to gain a better understanding of the efficacy and impact of these marketing activities, it is essential to conduct an analysis of the customers' perspectives regarding advertisements displayed on social media platforms that pertain to HEIs. In this part, descriptive statistics are utilised in order to investigate the various aspects of consumer perception. The purpose of descriptive statistics is to provide a quantitative description of important elements, such as the frequency and distribution of answers related to the usefulness, engagement, and legitimacy of advertisements on social media platforms. Through the utilisation of metrics such as mean scores, SDs, and response distributions, the purpose of this study is to identify patterns and trends in the manner in which customers perceive these adverts. The data will provide useful insights into which components of advertisements spread through social media resonate most strongly with clients and which areas may require improvement. Through the provision of practical insights that are founded on empirical data concerning the ways in which customers perceive advertisements on social media platforms, this investigation will ultimately contribute to the refinement of marketing strategies for higher education.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Perception on Social Media Ads on HEIs | 100 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.2525 | 1.15497 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 | | | | |

The descriptive data that are shown in Table 4.1 offer a comprehensive understanding of the viewpoints that customers have regarding marketing on social media that are associated with educational institutions of higher learning. A valid listwise sample size of one hundred participants was used for this study, which was based on replies from one hundred individuals.

A number of important facts that throw light on the general view that customers have of these commercials are included in the table, which includes the following; Score minimum and Score Maximum The range of replies that were supplied by participants is shown by the least score of 1.00 and the maximum score of 5.00. When compared to a score of 5.00, which indicates a high degree of perception or contentment, a score of 1.00 indicates a poor level of perception or discontent. Considering the large range from 1.00 to 5.00, it is clear that customers' perceptions of advertisements posted on social media by educational institutions of higher learning are highly variable. Considering the large range from 1.00 to 5.00, it is

clear that customers' perceptions of advertisements posted on social media by educational institutions of higher learning are highly variable.

Value of the Mean (Mean): According to the calculations, the average score for perception is 3.2525. This score shows the average rating of those who responded to the survey about their perceptions. A mean score that is somewhat higher than the midpoint (which would be 2.5 on a scale from 1 to 5) that indicates, on average, customers have a fairly positive opinion of advertisements that are posted on social media platforms by educational institutions affiliated with higher education. A mean score that is somewhat higher than the midpoint (which would be 2.5 on a scale from 1 to 5) indicates that, on average, customers have a fairly good opinion of advertisements that are posted on social media platforms by educational institutions affiliated with higher education.

The SD, often known as the Standard Deviation, is a statistical measure that gives information about the dispersion or variability of perception scores around the mean. The SD is 1.15497. There is a greater degree of variety in the manner in which individual customers perceive these advertisements, as indicated by a bigger SD, which implies that the perception scores are more dispersed from the mean. The fact that, the SD in this instance is roughly 1.15 indicates that there is a substantial amount of variation in the perceptions of the respondents. The fact that, the SD in this instance is roughly 1.15 indicates that there is a substantial amount of variation in the perceptions of the respondents.

Through the interpretation of these descriptive statistics, we are able to draw the conclusion that, on the whole, customers have an impression that is somewhat positive of advertising that are posted on social media by educational institutions of higher learning. In general, the evaluations of the majority of respondents are expected to be somewhere around the mean score of 3.2525, however there is considerable variation in perception amongst different individuals. Despite the fact that advertisements on social media are usually seen favorably, the data indicate that there is opportunity for development or optimization in some areas in order to further increase client perceptions. By the way of illustration, conducting an analysis of particular components of advertising that obtained lower ratings (closer to the minimal score of 1.00) might assist in identifying areas that require improvement. These areas may include the quality of the content, interaction methods, or authenticity.

So, the purpose of these descriptive statistics is to play the role of a fundamental study of consumer views regarding ads on social media platforms within the context of marketing for higher education. For the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and impact of social media marketing tactics in higher education, additional research and the segmentation of data according to demographic criteria or particular advertisement elements can give deeper insights and recommendations that can be put into action.

4.3. Engagement level of customers towards the social media advertisement about the higher education institutions

To gain a deeper insight into the effectiveness of these marketing efforts in attracting and engaging the audience, it is essential to analyze the level of consumer engagement with advertisements for HEIs on social media. In this section, descriptive data are used to explore the various aspects of customer involvement. This research aims to provide a quantitative summary of customer interactions with social media marketing from HEIs. It assesses indicators such as the frequency and type of interactions, as well as overall involvement levels. Using descriptive statistics can help to uncover patterns, trends, and variations in consumer engagement behaviours. This will offer valuable insights into the types of content or techniques that are highly effective in generating responses and building connections with the audience. This investigation aims to identify key elements that drive consumer interaction and develop focused strategies to optimize future advertising efforts. Ultimately, it will contribute to the refinement of social media marketing strategies in the higher education sector.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Engagement level on Social Media Ads | 100 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.2050 | 1.19889 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 | | | | |

The descriptive data that pertain to the amount of involvement that customers have with social media marketing for HEIs are presented in Table 4.2. A valid listwise sample size of one hundred participants was used for this study, which was based on replies from one hundred individuals.

The range of involvement levels that were reported by participants is represented by the minimum score of 1.00 and the highest score of 5.00. The minimal score represents the lowest degree of engagement. A score of 1.00 indicates a low level of involvement, whereas a score of 5.00 shows a considerable level of engagement. The range of 1.00 to 5.00 highlights the variety in the manner in which customers connect and engage with advertisements posted on social media platforms by educational institutions of higher learning. Value of the Mean (Mean): It has been determined that the average score for the degree of involvement is 3.2050. This figure is supposed to indicate the average level of participation across all of the responders. On average, customers demonstrate a moderate degree of involvement with social media advertisements from HEIs, as shown by a mean score that is slightly higher than the midpoint (which would be 2.5 on a scale that ranges from 1 to 5).

The SD, often known as the SD, is a statistical measure that gives information about the dispersion or variability of engagement levels around the mean. The SD is 1.19889. When the SD is larger, it implies that the engagement scores are more dispersed from the mean, which suggests that there is a greater degree of diversity in the engagement behaviours utilized by respondents. In this particular instance, a SD of roughly 1.20 indicates that there is a significant amount of variation in the degrees of involvement among the various individuals. Taking into consideration these descriptive statistics, we are able to draw the conclusion that, on the whole, clients exhibit a modest degree of involvement with advertising posted on social media platforms by educational institutions of higher learning. The engagement ratings of the vast majority of respondents are probably somewhere around the mean score of 3.2050, with some variation in the level of involvement being noticed across the various participants.

Despite the fact that advertisements on social media are usually effective in engaging customers to a moderate degree, the data imply that there may be chances to improve engagement techniques or modify content to better resonate with certain audience segments. When it comes to optimizing social media advertising campaigns for HEIs, doing an analysis of the aspects that lead to better or lower engagement levels, such as the type of content, the messaging, or the timing of postings, can give valuable insights.

Thus, the objective of these descriptive data is to provide an overview of the levels of consumer involvement with regard to ads on social media platforms within the context of marketing for higher education. Further investigation of the data, possibly through segmentation analysis or correlation studies with other variables, can provide more in-depth insights into the factors that drive engagement and help inform strategic decisions that can improve the efficiency of social media marketing efforts for educational institutions of higher learning.

4.4. Role of social media engagements towards the application process of higher education institutions

In order to have a better understanding of the influence that digital marketing activities have on student recruitment, it is essential to conduct a study of the role those social media interactions play in influencing the attempt to the application process for HEIs via online links. Within this part, a straightforward linear regression analysis will be utilized in order to investigate the connection that exists between interactions on social media and the endeavours to commence the application process. We are able to examine how changes in social media engagements, such as interactions, likes, or shares, may predict or explain variations in the attempts made by prospective students to begin the application process through online links provided by HEIs. This is made possible by the use of simple linear regression. Using this statistical method, we are able to measure the strength of this relationship as well as the direction in which it is moving. This provides us with vital insights into the precise function those social media interactions play in propelling potential students into the application stage. By doing this study, the goal is to discover results that can be put into action and used to influence strategic choices on the optimization of social media marketing tactics for the purpose of increasing application rates and overall student enrollment at HEIs.

Table 4.3. Impact of social media engagements towards the application process of higher education institutions

| Model | Model Summary | ANOVA Output | | Coefficient output | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | Adjusted R square | F ratio | Sig value | Beta value | Sig. value (p value) |
| Social media engagements □ Attempt to application process | .523 | 109.634 | .000 | .727 | .000 |

The findings of the conducted simple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 4.3. This investigation was conducted to investigate the influence that engagements on social media have on the process of applying to HEIs. By doing this study, useful insights regarding the link between engagements on social media and the possibility of potential students taking steps towards applying online have been provided.

The adjusted R-squared value of 0.523 suggests that changes in social media interactions may explain roughly 52.3% of the variability in efforts to commence the application process. This percentage is based on the fact that the R-squared value was corrected. These two factors appear to have a link that is somewhat strong, according to this evidence. A substantial p-value (Sig. value = 0.000) is connected with the F ratio of 109.634, which indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant. The F ratio shows that the overall model is statistically significant. Given this information, it appears that the regression model as a whole is capable of adequately describing the variation in the number of tries to initiate the application process based on interactions on social media. standardized coefficient (beta coefficient) of the predictor variable (social media engagements) in the regression model is represented by the beta value, which is 0.727. The beta value is also referred to as the beta coefficient. It can be deduced from this figure that there is an expected rise of 0.727 units in the number of tries to commence the application process for every one-unit increase in the number of engagements occurring on social media. The fact that this is the case implies that there is a positive and significant association between application attempts and engagements on social media.

The p-value, or significance value, is... A very high level of significance is connected with the beta coefficient, as indicated by the significance value (p-value = 0.000). This suggests that the influence of social media engagements on efforts to commence the application process is not the result of random chance but rather is a significant and stable link owing to the fact that it is not subject to random chance.

Based on the interpretation of these regression findings, we are able to draw the conclusion that engagements on social media have a substantial influence on the effort to commence the application process for HEIs. Additionally, there is a correlation between higher levels of involvement on social media platforms and an increased possibility of potential students taking steps towards applying online. This research highlights the significance of employing social media marketing techniques that are effective in creating engagement and, ultimately, in influencing application behaviours among students.

In a more practical sense, educational institutions may make use of these findings to enhance the content and engagement techniques they employ on social media. They should concentrate on ways that inspire potential students to participate in meaningful discussions and go forward with the application process. Increasing the effectiveness of their digital marketing efforts to attract and convert potential students may be accomplished by HEIs by capitalizing on the favorable association that exists between interactions on social media and application attempts.

4.5. Discussions on the results

The findings of the study, which are provided in Table 4.3, highlight the considerable influence that engagements on social media have on the effort to commence the application process for HEIs. The purpose of this debate is to contextualize the impact that digital marketing plays in student recruitment and enrollment by delving further into these findings and pulling ideas from relevant literature.

Social media has evolved as a platform that is transforming HEM. It provides chances that have never been seen before to communicate with potential students and to influence the decision-making processes that they go through. Over half of the variance in application attempts may be related to fluctuations in social media interactions, according to the modified R-squared value of 0.523, which suggests that this is the case. This is consistent with the findings of Peruta and Shields (2017), who emphasized the significance of information that is both interactive and engaging in order to attract and maintain the interest of students. Higher levels of social media engagements, which include likes, shares, comments, and conversations, make a substantial contribution to the process of developing connections with potential students and moving them into the application stage.

The fact that the F ratio is statistically significant ($F = 109.634, p = 0.000$) demonstrates that the regression model is effective in predicting application attempts based on social media engagements as a whole. This conclusion is consistent with the outcome of the research conducted by Conte and Siano (2023), which emphasized the strategic significance of social media in the recruiting efforts of HEIs. Through the utilization of data-driven insights derived from interactions on social media platforms, educational institutions are able to optimize their digital marketing campaigns in order to efficiently attract and convert potential students. The high F ratio highlights the transformational potential of social media activities in terms of their ability to influence student behaviours and enrollment results.

When taking a look at the beta coefficient, which is 0.727 and has a significance level of 0.000, we see that there is a positive and significant association between the engagements on social media and the efforts to apply for jobs. The findings of Mason et al. (2021), who focused the impact of social media interactions in changing the views and decision-making processes of students, are consistent with this finding. The direct influence that engaging content and interactive techniques have on the results of student recruitment is shown by the fact that a higher beta coefficient indicates that an increase in social media interactions is related with a more considerable rise in application efforts.

The dependability and magnitude of the association between social media interactions and application attempts is further shown by the significance of the beta coefficient, which was found to be 0.000. This outcome is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Bamberger et al. (2020), which highlighted the importance of using social media campaigns that are both personalized and targeted in order to successfully engage potential students. The substantial statistical significance of the beta coefficient highlights the practical implications for marketers working in higher education. This highlights the relevance of making strategic investments in digital marketing skills in order to promote enrollment growth.

In summary, the analytical findings emphasize the crucial significance of incorporating social media interactions into HEM strategies in order to successfully attract and register students. By utilizing the knowledge acquired from regression analysis and referring to pertinent literature, organizations may execute focused and data-oriented digital marketing strategies to improve involvement, cultivate relationships with potential students, and eventually boost application rates. An important lesson from the findings is that institutions should implement a comprehensive strategy for engaging with social media. This entails generating captivating and enlightening material that deeply connects with the intended audience, employing interactive elements to stimulate engagement and input, and upholding a uniform online presence across several platforms. The successful social media tactics extend beyond simple advertising. They entail establishing connections, nurturing a sense of community, and offering valuable information that is relevant and captivating to potential students. Moreover, the substantial influence of social media interactions on college applications highlights the changing dynamics of how students make decisions in the era of digital technology.

The study also highlighted the significance of social impact and peer interactions in moulding students' views and preferences. Institutions may take advantage of this occurrence by utilizing user-generated content, testimonials, and virtual campus tours to really display their services and appeal to potential students who are more dependent on digital platforms for information. The strong statistical significance of the beta coefficient ($p = 0.000$) confirms the concrete advantages of engaging in social media marketing for HEIs. Then the study stressed the capacity of customized and focused social media

campaigns to stimulate involvement and achieve desired outcomes. Through the usage of data analytics and audience segmentation strategies, institutions may customize their messaging and outreach efforts to target certain demographic groups, therefore optimizing the impact of their digital marketing spending. In order to be competitive and responsive to changing student preferences, schools must prioritize constant adaptation and innovation in their digital marketing efforts. This entails keeping up with evolving trends in social media platforms, adopting emerging technology like virtual reality and live streaming, and fostering a culture of experimentation and agility in marketing techniques.

In short, the analytical findings stressed the significant impact that social media interactions may have on marketing efforts in higher education. By using the knowledge obtained from regression analysis and incorporating proven strategies from literature, organizations may improve their online presence, broaden their audience, and eventually achieve long-term increase in student enrollment. The future of HEM relies on harnessing the influence of social media to establish genuine connections with potential students, foster significant relationships, and achieve concrete results in student recruitment and enrollment.

4.6. Suggestions from the findings

Based on the statistical findings of this study, Following are some key suggestions and recommendations:

1. Institutions should work to make high effort, clear, and good-looking content that will hit their target group. This could be by using in the content put in, films, and content made by users to raise this.
2. Personalize marketing strategies: The variation in engagement levels suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be optimal. Institutions should segment their audience and tailor content to different groups based on their interests, preferences, and stage in the application process.
3. Leverage social media for relationship building: The strong positive relationship between social media engagements and application attempts highlights the importance of using these platforms not just for advertising, but for fostering meaningful interactions and building relationships with prospective students.
4. Integrate social media with other marketing channels: social media should be just one piece of your plan for marketing. Keep all your ads and posts on one theme and let social media point people to your website or other tools.
5. Invest in social media analytics: The great effect of likes and shares on how many times students try to use apps shows how important it is for places to be able to check how they do on social media. Places need to put money into tools and skills to watch, look at, and make better how they do on social media.
6. Enhance trust and credibility: Given the moderate trust levels reported that institutions should focus on building credibility through transparent communication, showcasing authentic student experiences, and providing accurate, up-to-date information.
7. Encourage user engagement: Develop strategies to actively encourage likes, shares, comments, and other forms of engagement, as these interactions appear to play a crucial role in influencing application behavior.

4.7 Chapter summary

In the fourth chapter, an in-depth examination of the important role those social media interactions play in the marketing of HEIs is presented. In the beginning of the chapter, we investigate how customers feel about ads on social media that are about HEIs. The findings indicate that customers have a generally good attitude towards these commercials. There is a reasonable amount of interaction with social media advertisements, according to the insights that are showcased by descriptive statistics. These insights highlight the heterogeneity in engagement levels across customers. The ensuing research, which was conducted using basic linear regression, reveals that there is a substantial connection between engagements on social media and efforts to commence the application process for HEIs. The modified R-squared value of 0.523 demonstrates that differences in social media interactions may account for more than half of the variability in application attempts. This underscores the significance of employing digital marketing techniques that are both successful and efficient. The findings illustrate the transformational potential of social media in driving student recruitment efforts. These findings are reinforced by research that highlights the strategic utility of social media campaigns that are personalised and targeted. In the future, educational institutions are strongly encouraged to incorporate these insights into comprehensive

enrolment management initiatives. These initiatives should make use of data-driven approaches and innovative digital marketing strategies in order to improve engagement, foster connections with prospective students, and ultimately drive sustainable enrolment growth in a higher education landscape that is becoming increasingly competitive.

5 Conclusion

This comprehensive study has provided valuable insights into the pivotal role of social media engagements in HEM. Through a rigorous quantitative analysis, encompassing survey data, descriptive statistics, and regression modeling, the findings have underscored the significant impact of social media interactions on customer perceptions, engagement levels, and, ultimately, the application process for HEIs.

The results have demonstrated that customers generally hold positive perceptions of social media advertisements from HEIs, albeit with varying degrees of engagement levels across individuals. Notably, the regression analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between social media engagements and attempts to initiate the application process. This finding highlights the transformative potential of social media in driving student recruitment efforts and reinforces the strategic importance of implementing effective digital marketing campaigns that foster meaningful interactions and cultivate relationships with prospective students.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study. While the convenience sampling approach facilitated data collection, it may introduce potential biases and limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the data collection process provides a snapshot of customer perceptions and behaviors at a specific point in time, potentially overlooking the dynamic and evolving nature of social media interactions.

Future research endeavors could address these limitations by employing more robust sampling techniques, such as stratified or random sampling, to enhance the representativeness of the sample and improve the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal studies that track customer perceptions and engagement levels over an extended period could also provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of social media marketing strategies and the potential changes in customer behaviors and preferences.

Furthermore, future research could delve deeper into the nuances of social media engagements by examining the differential effects of various content types (e.g., text, images, videos), messaging strategies, and platform-specific features on customer perceptions and engagement levels. Such insights could inform the development of tailored and highly effective social media marketing campaigns that resonate with specific target audiences or cater to diverse institutional goals.

Additionally, qualitative explorations through focus groups or in-depth interviews could complement the quantitative findings, providing rich contextual insights into the underlying motivations, decision-making processes, and live experiences of prospective students as they navigate the higher education landscape and engage with social media content.

As the higher education sector continues to evolve amidst changing societal dynamics and technological advancements, the role of social media in marketing and student recruitment is poised to become increasingly crucial. By embracing a data-driven and customer-centric approach, and continuously refining their social media strategies, HEIs can effectively engage with their target audiences, foster meaningful connections, and ultimately achieve sustainable enrollment growth in an ever-competitive landscape.

Scope for further research

The findings of this study open up several avenues for further research that could significantly enhance our understanding of social media's role in HEM. One major scope for future investigation lies in conducting comprehensive longitudinal studies that track the evolution of social media engagement patterns and their impact on application behavior over an extended period. Such research could provide invaluable insights into how the effectiveness of social media marketing strategies changes over time, how students' preferences and behaviors shift throughout their decision-making journey, and how external factors (such as technological advancements, societal changes, or global events) influence these dynamics. By following cohorts of prospective students from their initial engagement with HEIs on social media through to their final enrollment decisions, researchers could uncover nuanced patterns and trends that are not apparent in cross-sectional studies.

This longitudinal approach could also help institutions develop more adaptive and responsive marketing strategies that align with the changing needs and expectations of their target audience.

Another crucial area for future research is the exploration of platform-specific dynamics and content type effectiveness in higher education social media marketing. As the social media landscape continues to evolve, with new platforms emerging and existing ones adapting their features, it is essential to understand how these different environments impact student engagement and decision-making. Research in this area could involve comparative analyses of various social media platforms, examining how factors such as user demographics, content formats, algorithmic differences, and interaction mechanisms influence the effectiveness of HEM efforts. Additionally, deep investigations into the impact of different content types – such as text posts, images, videos, live streams, or interactive elements – could provide valuable insights for content strategy optimization. By understanding which types of content resonate most strongly with prospective students on different platforms, institutions can tailor their approaches to maximize engagement and influence.

Finally, there is significant scope for research that delves into the ethical implications and long-term consequences of data-driven social media marketing in higher education. As institutions increasingly leverage user data and advanced analytics to personalize their outreach efforts, questions arise about the potential impacts on diversity, equity, and access in higher education. Future studies could explore how targeted social media marketing strategies affect the composition of applicant pools and enrolled student bodies, examining whether these approaches inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities or create new barriers for certain groups of students. Additionally, research could investigate the ethical considerations surrounding data privacy, consent, and the use of predictive analytics in student recruitment. This line of inquiry could also extend to examining the potential psychological impacts of highly personalized marketing on students' decision-making processes and their overall well-being. By addressing these critical questions, future research can contribute to the development of more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable social media marketing practices in higher education.

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