

Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Strategies in Student Enrollment

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Abstract: *Social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a powerful tool for universities to connect with this digitally-savvy generation. This study delves into the implementation, optimization, and integration of SMM strategies employed by private higher education institutions. It investigates the intricacies of how these institutions develop and execute SMM plans, focusing on content creation, audience targeting, and platform selection. Furthermore, the research explores the optimization techniques used to maximize engagement and reach. A critical aspect of the study involves examining the integration of SMM with other marketing channels, such as email marketing and search engine optimization (SEO), to create a cohesive and comprehensive strategy. By analyzing successful practices adopted by leading institutions, alongside potential challenges encountered, the research aims to provide valuable insights and evidence-based recommendation.*

Keywords: Social media marketing (SMM), Higher education marketing, Private universities, Social media strategy implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of higher education is undergoing a significant transformation. The proliferation of online learning platforms, coupled with a growing student population accustomed to digital communication, necessitates innovative strategies for private universities to attract and retain prospective students (Allen & Seaman, 2017). In this dynamic environment, social media marketing (SMM) has emerged as a powerful tool for universities to connect with a technologically-savvy generation (Jackson et al., 2017). Social media has demonstrably altered the way prospective students gather information and engage with potential institutions. Research by Chakrabarty, Pal, and Sarkar (2019) highlights the rise of "social learning," where students rely on peer-to-peer communication and online communities to navigate the complex landscape of university selection. This trend is further amplified by studies like that of Alahmadi and Al-Masri (2020), which reveal the significant influence of social media platforms in shaping student perceptions of universities, particularly regarding academic offerings, campus life, and overall student experience. In the Philippines, this phenomenon is echoed by the findings of Santos (2022), who emphasizes the growing preference of Filipino students to utilize social media as a primary source of information during their university search. Moreover, the presence of diverse Private Higher Education Institutions offering a variety of academic programs necessitates a nuanced understanding of how each institution leverages social media to attract prospective students.

Private Higher Education Institutions plays a significant role in catering to the educational needs of its youth (Gonzales & Cruz, 2018). Calamba City, strategically located in the Southern Tagalog region, is witnessing a surge in the establishment of Private Higher Education Institutions in recent years. This has resulted in a vibrant, yet fiercely competitive educational ecosystem, where institutions vie for the attention and enrollment of prospective students (Gonzales et al., 2019). In this competitive environment, traditional recruitment methods such as print media and campus visits are increasingly viewed as insufficient (Veletsianos, 2015). Social media platforms, with their inherent ability to reach large, targeted audiences at minimal cost, have emerged as a powerful alternative (Bhattacharya & Dekleva, 2012). Traditionally, higher education institutions relied on print media, campus visits, and educational fairs to reach potential students (Curtis & Dannels, 2005). However, the digital revolution has shifted the playing field. Today's



students spend a considerable amount of time on social media platforms, making them ideal avenues for universities to engage with their target audience. Studies by [Insert Source 1] and [Insert Source 2] highlight the increasing adoption of SMM by universities, showcasing its effectiveness in raising brand awareness, promoting programs, and fostering student engagement. Despite the growing popularity of SMM in higher education, a critical gap exists in understanding the optimal implementation, optimization, and integration of SMM strategies within private universities. Many institutions may lack the expertise or resources to develop effective SMM plans, create engaging content, or strategically target their audience across different platforms. Additionally, the challenge lies in seamlessly integrating SMM with other marketing channels, such as email marketing and search engine optimization (SEO), to create a unified and impactful approach (Constantinides & Louloudis, 2015).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

the conceptual foundations of social media marketing strategies (SMMS) within private higher education institutions (PHEIs). It focuses on understanding the key aspects of implementation, optimization, and integration, drawing upon established theories and best practices. Defining clear objectives for SMM efforts, such as increasing brand awareness, promoting specific academic programs, or attracting prospective students. These goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) (Allen & Seaman, 2017). Understanding the demographics, interests, and online behavior of the target audience allows for tailored content creation and platform selection. Market research and audience segmentation techniques can be utilized (Pulić-Marković et al., 2019), and choosing the most relevant social media platforms where the target audience is concentrated. This might involve a mix of platforms like Facebook (broad reach, community building), Instagram (visual storytelling, influencer marketing) (Pulić-Marković et al., 2019), Twitter (real-time updates, thought leadership), and YouTube (in-depth content, program demonstrations). Each platform offers unique functionalities and caters to different demographics (Constantinides & Louloudis, 2015). As for creating a plan for developing engaging and informative content that resonates with the target audience. This includes content types (e.g., blog posts, videos, infographics), posting schedules, and visual elements (Constantinides & Louloudis, 2015). Content should be informative, visually appealing, and encourage interaction. That is the reason why dedicating necessary personnel and budget to manage social media presence effectively. This might involve hiring social media specialists or training existing staff (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019).

According to Green and Roger (2019), utilizing tools and platforms to track key metrics such as reach, engagement (likes, comments, shares), and website traffic. These metrics offer insights into what content resonates with the audience and what needs improvement (Green & Roger, 2019). As for content performance evaluation, regularly assessing the performance of different content types and formats to understand audience preferences and identify areas for improvement. A/B testing can be used to optimize content performance (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019). Using this data insights from social media analytics to refine the SMM strategy. This can involve adjusting content calendars, targeting strategies, and overall campaign approaches (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019). There is also another importance of cross-channel promotion. Promoting social media content through other marketing channels like email marketing, the university website, and printed materials (Constantinides & Louloudis, 2015). This creates a unified marketing message and increases the reach of social media content. While ensuring a consistent brand voice and messaging across all social media platforms and other marketing materials. This reinforces brand identity and builds trust with prospective students promotes consistent brand messaging. Utilizing social media to drive traffic to the university website for applications, program information, or other desired actions (Pulić-Marković et al., 2019). Clear CTAs encourage audience engagement and conversions. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and more (Li et al., 2020) is a widely-use and great platform utilized by businesses (Mallari & Ibay, 2020) to reach and engage with various customers (Sun, 2022) to effectively promote products and services, it inevitably change the competition among businesses in the local and global markets (Alkhateeb & Abdalla, 2021) through employment of online strategic marketing deeds or activities known as the social media marketing strategy, by allowing the users to easily communicate at their own pace in any areas (Santos, 2020) or engage and even build brand loyalty among its customers



by accessing the reduced cost features of social media marketing (Bruce et al., 2022). According to Santos (2022), revealing the Filipino students' overwhelming preference for social media as their primary source of university information. This insight alone underscores the urgency for Calamba City Private Higher Education Institutions to establish a strong social media presence and engage effectively on the platforms students frequent.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

the research method that was followed and the research design that was used in this study was provided. The purpose of this study and the reasons for this choice were described. Finally, the particulars regarding the sources of data, population of the study, the tools used to collect data, the evaluation and scoring, the procedure on gathering data, and the statistical treatment of data was described.

(i) Research Design - The researcher utilized the descriptive method of research with the help of a survey questionnaire as the main source of data. This approach was chosen because it aimed to describe the current state of social media marketing practices, optimization strategies, and integration levels among PHEIs in Calamba City. The survey questionnaire allowed for the collection of quantitative data on respondents' social media usage, content preferences, and decision-making processes.

(ii) Research Locale - The respondents of the study consist of (30) employees from Private Higher Education Institutions Calamba, City. According to Gay suggests 10% of large populations and 20% of small populations as minimum. Simple random sampling technique was the sampling method utilized in this study. The study was conducted during Academic Year 2023-2024.

(iii) Respondents of the Study - The respondents of the study consist of (30) employees from Private Higher Education Institutions Calamba, City

(iv) Sampling - Simple random sampling technique was the sampling method utilized in this study.

(v) Instrumentation and Validation - The researcher utilized a self-made survey questionnaire validated by field experts. The instrument will be divided into four (4) parts where the first part deals with the demographics, the second part deals with the level of implementation of social media marketing strategies of Calamba City PHEIs, the third part pertains to level of optimization as assessed by PHEIs, and fourth part the level of integration of social media marketing strategies of Calamba City's PHEIs. Since the virtual questionnaire was self-made, a validity test is essential. The questions made on each part were shown to the adviser, statistician, and panel of experts in the related field of study. Through their approval, the virtual self-made questionnaires were forwarded to the respondents. Face validity was established by experts and the self-made questionnaire was pilot tested on a subset of participants (15). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire calculated by the statistician, which led to the following variables: level of implementation of social media marketing strategy= 0.863; level of optimization of social media strategy= 0.894; level of integration of social media marketing strategies of Calamba City's PHEIs = 0.909. The results indicated an excellent consistency in the responses since the calculated values are higher than 0.70.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative research study investigating social media marketing (SMM) practices in Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) within Calamba City. The research aimed to address existing gaps in knowledge regarding optimization strategies, local student preferences, and the impact of social media on student decision-making. The chapter is divided into two sections: Results and Discussion. The data gathered were presented, with analysis and interpretation, in tabular form. Table 1 shows that Roles in the Calamba City PHEIs such as "Admin Staff" and "Admin Officer" both got the highest number of participants (8), while Marketing/Communications Director, Student Assigned in Social Media Managing, Social Media Manager, Alumni and Placement Officer, and Admissions Officer/Marketing Staff got the lowest number of participants, (1) each.



Role in the Institution	N	Percentage
Marketing/Communications Director	1	3.30
Student assigned in social media managing	1	3.30
Admin Staff	8	26.70
Social Media Manager	1	3.30
Admin Officer	8	26.70
Marketing Staff	5	16.70
Marketing Officer	4	13.30
Alumni and Placement Officer	1	3.30
Admissions Officer, Marketing Staff	1	3.30
Total	30	100.00

Table 1- Distribution of Respondents in terms of their Role at their Institution

Length of Involvement	N	Percentage
Less than 1 year	5	16.70
1-3 years	18	60.00
4-5 years	5	16.70
5+ years	2	6.70
Total	30	100.00

Table 2- Distribution of the Respondents in terms of their Length of Involvement in Social Marketing in their Institution

V. COLCLUSION

Based on the relevant findings and conclusion presented in this study, the following recommendations were suggested: The school administrator, manager, and marketer should sustain the very high level of implementation of social media marketing strategy to continuously thrive in the digital market by monitoring and analyzing the business page health and incorporate the acquired insights concerning best practices and techniques in developing innovative strategies concerning customer experience, quality content, and frequency of visit through social media business page benchmarking activities. The Manager and Marketer of a Private Higher Education Institutions should always encourage collaboration between different departments. For instance, the marketing team can share their industry knowledge to assist with creating targeted Twitter content. They should also keep themselves updated with emerging trends such as influencer marketing, short-form video content like TikTok Reels and Instagram Shorts, and the rise of social commerce. It is also important to explore new platforms and content formats that might be more appealing to the target audiences. The school administrator and marketer should continuously capture and boost loyalty by creating social media campaigns that encourage customers to recommend and create optimistic contents; they should also provide reliable business page image by actively noting and immediately acting on concerns and inquiries of customers.

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