

ASSESSING THE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT AND SUGGESTING SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The researcher in this consultancy report has assessed the digital footprint and suggested a social media marketing plan for Educational Institutions. The researcher has also presented an extensive literature review based on previous studies where colleges were successful with the help of social media and digital marketing. The researcher through various research methods such as observational, case study has analysed and collected responses through a questionnaire. The 150 responses were examined through a detailed analysis and interpretation. The researcher has also given various recommendations to Educational Institutions based on the findings.

Keyword: Social Media Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Digital Marketing, Digital Footprint, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram.

1. Introduction

The researcher will be presenting a consultancy report on the topic “Assessing the digital footprint and suggesting social media marketing plan for Educational Institutions”. Through this the researcher aims to suggest and build a digital footprint which includes website, digital marketing plan, social media marketing plan (Facebook, Instagram). The researcher suggesting a social media marketing plan will be beneficial for the educational institution and also in generating leads for admissions as well as new potential students.

1.1 Background of the Topic

Education courses in India have been very traditional, and multi layered. Various Central bodies control the examinations patterns such as ICSE, CBSE, State Boards as well as International. India has the world largest higher education system. In terms of higher education infrastructure there have been colleges as well as universities. The courses have been pen and paper based and not practical. (KPMG and Google, 2017).

The research problem is that the target audience between 18 to 21 years is looking to gather information on various alternate higher education institutions. Various educational institutions are using traditional marketing techniques which the researcher is addressing by giving a research proposal for the digital footprint and social media marketing plan.

ABC College is offering an undergraduate course in Business Management & Entrepreneurship. This course is based on the BELL approach that engages the business course into corporate learning and experimental assignments. The college as an add on has offered various electives in the field of Photography, Mandarin to Literature. This offering of the course of ABC is unlike the course offered at various other Educational Institutions.

XYZ College offers a course from a university in United Kingdom. This course is in the field of Business and Management. This course also offers a 3rd year transfer to the United Kingdom. The course also includes a specialization in various field such as Marketing, Human Resource Management, International Business.

Various Educational Institutions are marketing its courses through traditional marketing techniques such as Word of Mouth Marketing, Offline marketing, Campus Marketing since its inception. The website has not been updated with a good user interface but provides various details regarding the courses and eligibility criteria. The college does not have a unified system to track the admission procedures. For instance, how many students taking admission through Word of Mouth Marketing, Campus Marketing, Offline Marketing. The college does not have a digital footprint and through this research proposal the researcher is suggesting the college to adapt to a social media marketing plan to market its courses.

Other competitors are already having an established digital footprint through various Digital Marketing Techniques such as Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine Marketing, Email Marketing. They also have adapted to various social media marketing channels such as Instagram, Facebook to market their courses.

Various Educational Institutions namely ABC College, and XYZ College have opened their Instagram accounts at an early stage, and have contributed to the success of the college by posting about various events held in the college which are helping them target potential students for admissions. ABC College has 530 Instagram Posts, the college's first Instagram post being on 10th February 2016. They post about every event held in the college as well as live videos to engage with their audience. XYZ on the other hand has 87 Instagram posts, first post being on 27th June 2019. Their follower count is 554 followers.

1.2 Research Aim: To develop a social media marketing strategy for various Educational Institutions.

1.3 Research Objectives:

- To do a comparative analysis of various colleges in terms of social media marketing presence.
- To analyze the behavior of how potential students and parents use social media for information search regarding colleges.
- To make various recommendations for developing a social media marketing plan for the institution.

1.4 Research Questions:

- How social media marketing for various colleges compares in terms of each other?
- How potential students and parents behave towards colleges in terms of social media for information search?
- What further recommendations would the researcher give to the institution regarding a social media marketing plan?

1.5 Research Gap: The extensive literature review reveals that little or no work has been done in the Indian Scenario regarding social media and digital marketing for colleges and universities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This Chapter is to review the literature done by other researchers on usage of social media platforms for information search as well as the importance of social media and digital marketing.

2.1 Traditional Vs Social Media Marketing

Traditional marketing includes marketing the product through channels like Television, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, Direct Mail. According to a research conducted, companies using traditional marketing have a response rate of 0.5% to 2% as outbound, to reach 100 responses the company should contact 5,000 to 20,000 people. (Bhayani and Vachhani, 2014). Through Social media Marketing, businesses can build a network of potential as well as existing customers. It helps to create a long-term bond with the customer as well as building brand awareness, driving organic as well as paid traffic, researching consumer opinions and reviews. The cost of traditional marketing is much more as compared to social media marketing, the cost being almost zero (Chan, 2019).

Companies using Traditional Marketing techniques targets its customers in a different way, youngsters will be more affected by Social media marketing techniques and will relate and buy the product faster. Companies can track and analyse the behaviour of the customers how much time they spend on a page or browsing for a product. (Geraghty and Conway, 2016). However, still many companies use traditional marketing to generate awareness, reach more target audiences. Social Media Marketing tells the story and triggers emotions whereas traditional marketing only gives the message to the consumers. (Čargonja, 2017).

The total media spending for the US as of 2019 is \$109.8 bn for traditional marketing vs Social Media Marketing at 129.34 bn. Another instance of an advertisement for Vouge traditional marketing cost for a full-page ad in a newspaper is \$196,535 with circulated to 1.2 million however ad will be delivered to only 600,000 people and will only be viewed by 180,000. If the same is applied through social media marketing, then the Cost per month will be \$1092 and the cost per impression will be only \$1.09 per impression. (LyfeMarketing, 2019). In the next section the researcher will be highlighting the use of social media for information search.

2.2 Use of Social Media for Information Search

Social Media has been an important part of everyday life. People mostly use social media for socialization purposes or marketing their business. 50% of teenagers and 80% of college students have been using social media for academic as well as everyday research (Kim, 2015). According to a research, social media platforms are used by students for information seeking. 50% of the students used social media platforms for networking, text messaging and streaming videos. Some students receive 20 to 100 texts per day, sending and receiving between 2000 to 3000 texts. However, 86% of the students used for educational information search such as research papers and books. (Williams, 2012).

A research conducted across 3 universities has found that among students and staff, 60% of staff used social media not only for entertainment but also for researching on teaching materials, rescheduling task assignment through Canvas, sharing on important notices on the social media page of Facebook. (Rosmala, 2012).

Another use of social media is for making a purchase decision. Social media provides consumers with a display window of information on various products from social media pages such as Facebook and Instagram or even information, recommendation or reviews from friends, family members regarding to purchase the product or not. Sometimes mixed and biased reviews on social media apps may confuse an individual whether to buy the product or not. (Khan, 2018)

2.3 Use of social media for decision making

Social media platforms help consumers to make purchase decisions as well as businesses to take important decisions such as recruitment of employees through LinkedIn, doing a competitor analysis through Facebook as well as Instagram and also a key driver for Marketing products globally. Research shows that 70% of all adults in the USA consult at least one social media site either Facebook or Instagram before purchasing a product. Studies show that millennials use social media to gain useful information on the product (Cooley, 2019). Businesses are using social media to attract more customers to newer products. Social media presence for a business also means directly engaging with the customer. The customers can give product reviews as well as complaints if they do not like the product. (Prasath, 2018). Research suggests that through social media 35% of consumers discover new products and services, 29% of them compare prices and features, 27% research general information on the product and only 14% of them arrive at a conclusion to buy the product. (GlobalWebIndex, 2019).

An example of a company is GoPro which has an Instagram page following of 16.6 million followers. It relies on user generated content shot by its cameras which are shared by users. Their feed is a source of aspirational content which every user wants to get hence selling its cameras and making the consumer decide whether to buy the product based on the videos uploaded. (Moreno, 2019). Another instance of a brand is Nike which has 87 million Instagram followers and is the 3rd most followed brand on Instagram. Nike uses emotional triggers to engage with its customers through which consumers purchase the product (HopperHQ, 2019).

For decision making regarding university selection, social media is widely used. Students are able to analyse the campus as well as the events and activities held at the universities. It is necessary for universities to have its page on multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. According to a research by 2017 Social

Admissions Report it has been found that 63% of students research for a university through social media and 60% of students follow the university page that they are likely to take admission in. 2 out of 5 students use social media to decide which university to choose. Parents of the potential students can be approached through a Facebook page. 41% of university officials believe that having a social media page will have a direct positive impact on the admissions process and will lead to more enrolment of the students. (National Association for College Admission Counselling, 2020).

2.4 The need for change

Change is a constant phenomenon and is necessary for every type of organization. Every organization needs to adapt to change someday. According to (Armstrong, 2009) the word Change can be defined as “Any changes in structure management, employees, processes and other related activities”. Several factors can influence change in an organization. These include change in government policies, internal policies, technological changes, change in any form of management (top, middle or bottom level) (Jalagat, 2016). Change is good for both employees as well as employers.

Change is a part of life. Organizations needs to change on a regular basis to survive in the competition. Even when businesses are doing well, they need to change their vision, mission, goals and objectives on the basis of the situation. Change is due to mergers and acquisitions, policy changes, reformation of structure (Harvard Business Review, 2018). Change has positive frames; it leads to increasing effectiveness and resources can be used in a more improved way which creates more value towards the organization’s stakeholders. (Jones Gareth R, p. 295).

Technology has transformed the educational sector. There have been various online digital platforms offering learning opportunities such as Khan Academy, Podcasts, Online Learning Websites (Udemy, Skillshare, BYJU’S), Distance Learning online courses via different universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, New York University (Purdue University, 2019).

Educational institutions also need to bring a change and adapt to social media and digital marketing techniques rather than traditional marketing techniques. According to a research conducted at Snow College, it adapted to change its marketing techniques and has received many accreditations based on its social media marketing and digital marketing strategy. (Arave, 2017).

2.5 Digital Footprint

A digital footprint can be defined as an aggregate of data that is generated from the digital presence associated with an individual or a company. It also takes into account the digital literacy and understanding of algorithms at an advanced level and can be as basic as a social media or digital marketing plan for an organisation (Micheli, Lutz and Büchi, 2018). A digital footprint also means to build an online reputation management for an organization and managing an online identity on the internet. Individuals usually create a professional as well as personal account on one platform to make clear distinction between both. For example, Facebook (Stefan, 2019).

Through a digital footprint, organisations can enhance customer experiences, Digital Footprint can be an app, a social media page, digital marketing. This also results in customer loyalty. (Arya, Sethi, & Paul, 2019), An example of a brand successfully engaging with its customer is Starbucks, through its digital footprint, Facebook Page is able to resolve customer complaints, the company also has a Twitter Page known as MyStarbucksIdea in which customers can give valuable ideas for the betterment of the company. (Business News Daily, 2019).

2.6 Importance of Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter existed and were in its early development stages. Nowadays there is a plethora of social media platforms emerging for different variety of purposes such as Travel (Trivago), Food (Zomato), Music (Spotify), Instagram, Snapchat etc. These social media platforms are significant for consumers in their day to day life. For instance, if an employee is hungry, he may open Zomato and take a dig at the various lunch options available. (Appel, et al, 2019).

Customers are using social media platforms extensively. Facebook as a social media platform has 2.3 billion active users and an average usage rate of 50 minutes per day. These platforms have helped the consumers to cut communication costs, sharing important resources and information with others. (Allcott et al, 2019). Several social

media platforms have been created for a special purpose such as Work (LinkedIn), Media sharing sites (YouTube), Blogging Platforms (WordPress). These platforms are fulfilling the need of the consumer. (Khan, and Jan, 2015).

According to latest reports by Statista.com, it has been found that the average number of users for social media platforms are as follows- Facebook (2.41 billion), Instagram (1 billion), Snapchat (3.14 million), LinkedIn (31 million), YouTube (2 billion), WhatsApp (1.6 billion) (Statista, 2019). Consumers are finding the user interface simple and easy to use. Social media platforms are able to generate huge revenue from these.

The main objective of social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube is to connect people and give them a platform for sharing information. Originally Facebook was designed for college students to connect and share on a common platform, however once it became popular it was available to consumers through an email address. (Nyangau, and Bado, 2012). University of Manchester has used LinkedIn as a strategic social media marketing tool via InMail and Sponsored Posts to generate sales and raise awareness about the different courses. The campaign was a huge success with 58% open rates and 6% click through rate (CTR) and performed well above the expected rates the University had predicted. (LinkedIn Business, 2019).

Educational institutions are lately realizing the importance of various social media platforms. Oxford University in the United Kingdom has 3.6 million followers on Facebook. The university has maintained its position in the social media platform by posting regularly, posting about events as well as different workshops happening in the university which acts as a confidence booster in the minds of the potential students. (University of Oxford, 2019).

Monmouth University in New Jersey used hashtags on Instagram to redirect and reach out to prospective and interested applicants through #MonmouthMoment to establish a connect between the university life of current students and prospective students through the posts in the hashtags (Digital Media Solutions, 2018).

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) has also adopted social media marketing which it was not doing earlier. The university has been focusing on the major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn rather than Snapchat, Twitter and Pinterest. The university had to spend much on their marketing through social media. But this has achieved tremendous results for the university. The university has seen an increase in their lead times at only 35 seconds against its competition of Phoenix University. (Inside HigherEd, 2020).

2.7 Rising Social Media Marketing

Companies are now more focused on Social Media Marketing. Advertisements have now gone to a new level and have taken the name of Content Marketing. Earlier commercial advertisements were a part and parcel of marketing. Beer Brand Budweiser had spent a huge sum of quarter billion dollars. Traditional Marketing demanded a lot of money from businesses in the form of infomercials, Billboard and Televisions. (Sharma and Soundarabai, 2017).

Statistics from various companies show that the rise of Social Media Marketing is significant. For instance, Facebook has influenced 52% of consumers to buy products online as well as offline. (The Drum, 2019). This shows that consumers are highly influenced by the online presence of companies on social media. Another statistic shows that 90% of the millennials are younger than 35 years' old who use Instagram. (Science Daily, 2019).

Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have guided companies to better profits and generate sales. Red Bull used Instagram as a platform to market its product and do a brand extension. The company used hashtags of the product to make it popular. The campaign was a huge success and Red Bull made lots of profits from it. (Direction, 2019). Another instance is when Airbnb, an online platform for rented flats had a successful Facebook ad campaign by lowering their acquisition cost by 47% as well as tripling their Return on Investment. (Airbnb, 2019).

Various educational institutions have followed the path of social media marketing and have seen positive results and success. One such example is how University of Westminster has engaged in social media marketing through Instagram by posting about its London campus in Instagram stories and raising a poll "ask here" for more information. This is a smart way to increase sales and to solve queries in the minds of the end consumer through a social media platform. (University of Westminster, 2019).

According to a research conducted by Barnes & Lescault (2011) it has been found that admission officers in various universities and colleges in the USA are using social media platforms such as Facebook to engage student admissions. YouTube and Twitter are also widely used for the process. (Nyangau and Bado, 2012).

Skyline University in Sharjah has engaged in a social media marketing strategy through TINT which provides social media marketing services to companies all over the world such as Nike, Coca Cola, Verizon, Nestle. Through this collaboration, Skyline University has set up digital screen as part of their social media campaign to let students know regarding the life at the University. The results through this were phenomenal, a 448% increase in social impressions on the university page which meant generating more leads by using brand hashtag for over a year. (TINT, 2020).

2.8 Facebook

Presence on various social media platforms such as Facebook has become a necessity for companies. This helps them to market their product, generate publicity as well as engage with potential customers. (Schreiner et al, 2019). There has been a significant increase in smartphone usage at 3.5 billion users as of 2020 (Statista, 2020). Facebook provides advertising for all devices such as Smartphones, Laptops, PC's. The social media platform has paid advertising as an option for businesses. Through this, the organization can boost their posts, increase page likes as well as target new customers in different markets. (Barnes, and Coatney, 2013).

However, Facebook ads depends on Cost Per Click (CPC) which is a budget by the company to derive a cost when someone clicks on the ad. According to a recent research, it has been found that 44% of customers do not click on Facebook Sponsored Posts, only 3% click regularly. Another research by Reuters reveals that 1 out of 5 Facebook users have purchased a product while browsing through a sponsored ad. This is a beneficial way for companies to increase profits. (Duffett, 2015). An example of a company's successful Facebook Ad Campaign is Airbnb which relies on user generated content for its profits. Airbnb also remarketed its rental places to what consumers were searching for. Airbnb was able to triple its Return on Investment (ROI) for Facebook and also lower cost per acquisition by 47%. (Sprout Social, 2018).

2.9 Instagram

Instagram is a photo sharing social media app which has developed rapidly. Instagram has appealed more to the younger generations. Instagram has more than 1 million active users monthly. (TechCrunch, 2020). According to a research conducted, teenagers are likely to spend more time on Instagram rather on Facebook. Instagram has enhanced the online presence of its users and people can easily connect with friends and family through the app (Ting et al, 2015). Using Instagram, users have felt a sense of social belonging which gives them a unique satisfaction. The unique selling proposition (USP) of Instagram is its images platform which sets it apart from other platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn. The image-based platform has a positive impact on its users as it is more related to the well-being of its users. (Trifiro, 2018).

Businesses have also capitalized Instagram to market their products. Consumers are now relying more on Instagram to shop products. Instagram ads are helping businesses to target potential as well as existing customers (Suciati, 2018). Adidas had implemented an Instagram strategy in 2017 with its Hashtag Campaign #ORIGINALis to depict the uniqueness of Adidas shoes rather than other companies such as Puma, Nike, New Balance. (Sprout Social, 2018).

2.10 LinkedIn

LinkedIn was established in 2003 with the aim for professional users creating a network for their employees as well as co-workers. LinkedIn has a clean user interface offering easy accessibility to business connections. Through LinkedIn businesses can keep a track of their contacts and the industry. (Al-Badi et al, 2013). LinkedIn has been a game changer in the recruitment process. More than 1 million professionals have published a post on LinkedIn as of 2017. Job seekers on LinkedIn can look for jobs on the social networking platform. Recruiters also can post to find potential candidates for a job opening. (Koch et al, 2018.). According to a research conducted 79% of LinkedIn users are aged over 35 years. However, LinkedIn is also a useful tool for students to search for internships and placements. LinkedIn also acts as a confidence booster for freshers/ graduates that they can also apply for jobs which require minimal experience. (Dach, 2015).

Through LinkedIn students can find university pages and can acquire more information on the courses. An example of a university opening a page on LinkedIn is Duke University. LinkedIn has helped Duke University through

Sponsored InMail to help prospective students in various regions of the world such as India, Russia and Latin America. The university rolled out an email template that had key value propositions of their unique MBA Programme that generated more than 2000 leads. Their cost per lead was less than 10%, Sales rate increased to over 300%. (LinkedIn, 2020).

2.11 Websites

Websites are now a key aspect for every business. People can search on Google for different websites which has a positive impact on the business. Having a website can increase potential customers and retain existing ones. Businesses can also develop their brand online and increase brand awareness among consumers. (Gandhi ,2017). Websites combined with the company's ecommerce has given the consumers an attractive way to interact with the company. Websites help the company to form a first impression in front of the consumers. However, it is based on the attractiveness of the user interface of the website whether consumers will take a purchase decision or not (Bernal et al, 2018). The key factors for a website are its design, is its usability factor that is the quality, promoting content, accuracy of the information. (Flavian, 2009). According to a research, 38% of users will stop interacting if the website layout is unattractive, Colour of the website improves brand recognition by 80%, 39% of users will exit from the website if it takes too much time to load. (Forbes, 2020).

Superdry, a UK fashion retailer had launched a campaign through Twitter which drove organic website traffic. The campaign went viral and Superdry reached a website traffic of 5.4 million in the first week. Superdry was able to increase its sales in the Indian market. (Zoho, 2017).

An example of an educational institution is Campbell University located in North Carolina, United States. The university has an existence for more than 130 years. However, students, staff and potential students looking to join Campbell University were finding it difficult to search for relevant courses as well as general information. There was no integration of the website and each course page loaded its own website making it difficult to navigate across hence increasing page load time. To solve this Campbell University hired AtlanticBT which is a Digital Marketing agency, which then streamlined the user interface for easy navigation through a user centric content strategy. AtlanticBT unified 8000 web pages and combined it into a digital ecosystem. They also secured the website through Web Application Firewall and setup a CDN Cloudfront to increase response time of websites. This was beneficial for Campbell as its increased visitor traffic by 20% as well as a 36% lower bounce rate. (Campbell University, 2020).

2.12 Importance of Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing is a paid form of advertisement launched by Google for businesses. Various companies are using Digital Marketing for Event Management, Image (Reputation) Management as well as Internet Marketing (Anbumani, 2017). Digital Marketing is an important factor in the promotional marketing mix of a company. Digital marketing refers to promotion of products done online with the help of one or more forms of electronic media. Digital marketing includes various forms such as Email Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Pay Per Click Marketing. (Shirisha, 2018). According to a research done, it has been found that a customer buys more when acquired through a digital marketing platform rather than online or offline marketing. There are different techniques of digital marketing, one technique is through search engine optimization via Google. This is a non-paid (organic) way of promoting the products through different keywords being used in the advertisement. (Ištvanic et al, 2017).

Through Digital Marketing consumers can visit the website of the business and browse products online and intend to buy them. Email Marketing is a form of digital marketing which is suitable for businesses that intend to reduce expenses and connect with potential buyers and increase their profit margin ratio. The major benefit of email marketing is that it reaches a huge number of target audience within seconds. This is a good strategy for educational institutions to market its products to parents of potential students. (Fariborzi, and Zahedifard, 2012). For example, University College Dublin earlier was not using a Digital Marketing Strategy and used traditional marketing techniques. By knowing the importance of a digital marketing strategy, they have adapted to it. The primary objective for the University was to increase leads and market its new programs, improve their outdated website. The University used various digital marketing techniques such as email marketing to monitor Click Through Rates, send mails to potential students. (Single Grain, 2019).

Educational institutions are using digital marketing to increase and generate more leads. For example, DEF College has incorporated a digital marketing strategy through paid search engine optimization on Google. When a user types “DEF COLLEGE” a key word that has been bid for by the institution the search engine appears, and the user is able to browse through the website. DEF College get a revenue from the number of clicks generated as well as it is effective for cost per click basis.

University of Waterloo through its digital marketing campaign enhanced its social media content as well as students live chat feature with targeted keywords such as “student live”, “advice from students” with locational tags showing to prospective students in Canada. This was a huge success and many prospective students were converted into leads (Digital Marketing Institute, 2020).

Most organizations have found that social media marketing as well as digital marketing lowers the cost of tapping into newer markets, reaching new potential and retaining existing customers. Organizations can also build a strong reputation through social and digital marketing in the online world.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

Research Approach is the approach which the researcher will use to conduct the research. These approaches can be classified into Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Qualitative Approach refers to an inductive approach where the researcher discovers meanings as well as in depth insights in a particular situation. This approach helps the researcher to apply high level of detail and observations from actual experience. (Mohajan, 2018). Various data collection methods under this approach are Ethnography, Conversation Analysis, Content Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Constant Comparative Approaches. According to this approach, it studies the behaviour in natural setting or uses people’s observations as data. It also has a key focus on the experiences which cannot be recorded in a numerical way (Hancock et al, 2001).

The researcher has used Quantitative approach to carry out research for the social media marketing plan for various Educational Institutions. The researcher will be circulating a questionnaire to collect Qualitative and Quantitative data from the respondents.

3.2 Research Design

Research Design is often considered as glue of the Research Proposal. It is a systematic plan for a research proposal which gives a specific plan for the information related to the Research Problem. (Akhtar, 2016). Research Design refers to a method in which the researcher clearly answers the research question. There are various aspects of research design which are depicted by the research onion. (Saunders, Mark et al, 2016).

Observational Research Design refers certain observations which are made by the researcher within the place of conducting the research. These observations may be direct or indirect. Through this observational technique, the researcher observes a behaviour and relate to the objective of the research (Library.sacredheart.edu, 2019). There are various benefits of using observational research design such as the observer can record wide variety of phenomena occurring (Observing the attitude of consumer towards a specific car), it is highly flexible and the observer can observe in the environment he/she is currently in (Malhotra, 2014).

The researcher will be using Observational Research Design. The researcher has been observing the activities of competitors of Various Educational Institutions. Competitors are having a digital footprint and online presence. Some competitors have also linked their LinkedIn Strategy to support their Internship and Placements by offering companies to collaborate with their institution. ABC College has the strongest online presence among all the competitors.

The researcher has analysed the previous tactics used by various universities. The researcher has given examples of various universities who have previously not applied social media and digital marketing plans and who have gained success after applying them to generate leads for admissions.

3.4 Research Philosophy

A Research Philosophy consists of an idea about how the information and data will be gathered, analysed and used. Research Philosophy consists of various types such as Positivism, Interpretivism. Positivists are of that belief that reality can be observed and described from an objective point view. Those believing in Positivism think that reality is only dependent on a single variable. (Moksha, 2013).

The researcher has used Positivism Approach as the marketing for Various Educational Institutions is dependent on a single variable that is Social Media Marketing. The researcher is suggesting a Social Media Marketing plan along with a Digital Marketing aspect to it.

Research Method

Questionnaire Method is a research method which is most widely used by researchers to collect data. Questionnaire is a terminology used to depict a series of documents having open and close ended questions which the respondent is asked to fill. Questionnaire may be distributed to respondents via email, face to face, online questionnaire through Google forms. (Rowley, 2014). A Questionnaire may also be used to collect data about the present or past of the respondent based on the research topic. Questionnaires may be designed on some ready-made index or may be built from scratch. Various pre-existing questionnaires are also available on different research topics which the researcher can use as a base (Mathers et al, 2007).

Various key advantages of using a questionnaire method for research, it is cost effective (email), can be sent to various respondents on a large level (more reach), Strong response rate (face to face), less chances of biasness (face to face). (Bird, 2009). However, Questionnaire Method has some disadvantages as well such as during email or online questionnaire element of biasness may be involved, email questionnaires may be deleted or considered as spam email, respondents may leave some questions unanswered (Lefever, et al, 2007).

The research method which the researcher will be using is Questionnaire Method for two objectives the researcher would be presenting a questionnaire to the respondents, Sample size is 150 students and Parents. The questionnaire will be designed with various open and close ended questions. The Questionnaire would be sent through a Google Form which will make it easier for the respondents to fill. The researcher will be collecting qualitative primary data with help of the questionnaire. The researcher through the Google Form will be able to analyze the responses of the respondents in a more accurate way.

The questionnaire which the researcher developed has taken reference from (Arave, 2017). The questionnaire contained 11 multiple choice statements that aimed to get information regarding the frequency of usage of social media, reliance of social media platforms for information search on colleges. The responses were measured through a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from Extremely Likely to Extremely Unlikely were taken. The researcher has used Likert scale as it will be easy for the respondents to understand as well as for the researcher to code and quantify the data.

The respondents were asked close ended questions on seeking of information through social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Email, Newspapers, Word of Mouth, Recommendation from Friends, going through an aggregator. Open ended questions included aspects of a college you would look at (Quality Life, Campus Life, Cost, Scholarships, Location), downloading a brochure of the college, decision making factors such as College reviews, Magazines, Visiting the campus in person, Blogs, Google Digital Marketing, the device used such as Windows, Apple MacBook, IOS and Android to find out the usage pattern of Students and Parents.

The researcher has circulated the questionnaire through different platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Facebook. The time for data collection was 2 months. The researcher got 150 responses out of which 85 responded to the survey saying that they use social media platforms for information search and 65 responded that they do not use and gave various reasons. Out of the 150 responses, 57% of the target audience responded positively. 43% of the target audience responded negatively that they do not use social media platforms for information search.

The hypothesis development by the researcher has been done through the research objectives. The main objective of the questionnaire is to gain insights on the information search regarding colleges for students as well as parents.

Another objective fulfilled through the questionnaire is to analyze the attitude of parents and students towards social media platforms while searching for colleges.

H01 – There is no positive relationship between usage of social media platforms and search for information regarding colleges.

HA1 – There is positive relationship between usage social media platforms and search for information regarding colleges.

H02 – There is no difference between students and parents’ attitude towards social media platforms regarding information search on colleges.

HA2 - There is difference between students and parents’ attitude towards social media platforms regarding information search on colleges.

The researcher will be analyzing the data to derive various conclusions from the hypothesis as well as the literature review.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

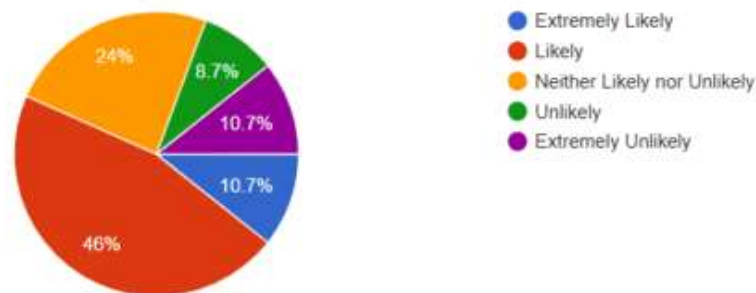
The researcher has collected the quantitative data and analysed through descriptive analysis as well as hypothesis testing.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Chart 1: Reliance on Social Media Platforms for receiving information on colleges

How likely are you to rely on social media platforms to receive information on colleges regarding admissions?

150 responses



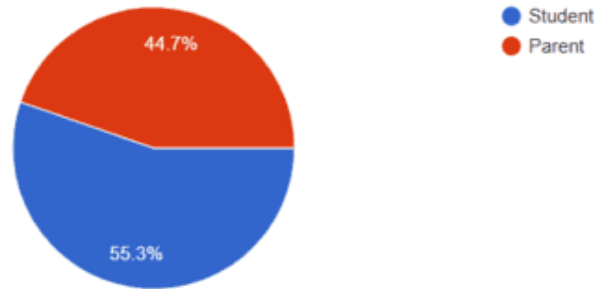
Data Collected: The researcher here aims to know how likely the target audience of students and parents, receive information on colleges regarding admissions via social media platforms.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 10.7% are Extremely Likely to receive information via social media, 46% are likely, 24% are neutral, 8.7% are unlikely to information via social media platforms, 10.7% do not prefer to receive information on social media regarding colleges.

Interpretation: Social media platforms is being relied on by different age groups, even for critical decisions like college choices, social media is being used as a tool, there is still a small percentage which is not likely to prefer to receive information through social media.

Chart 2: Target Audience who uses social media platforms

You are?
85 responses



Data Collected: The target audience for the research project is Students and Parents. On the basis of the answer selected (Extremely Likely and Likely) in the previous question they have been redirected to this section.

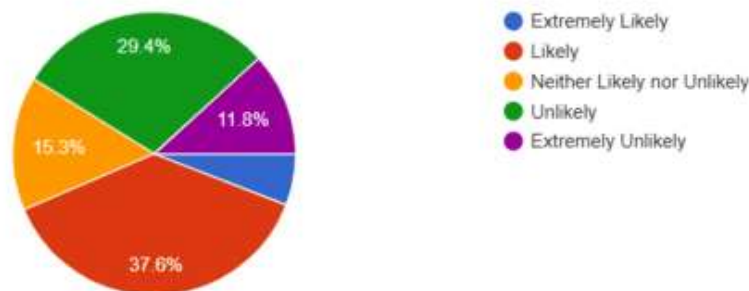
Analysis: From the pie chart, the target audience is 47 Students (55.3%) and 38 Parents (44.7%).

Question	Students	Parents	Total
Rely on social media platforms for	47	38	85 out of 150 responses

Interpretation: Both students and parents are likely to rely on social media platforms for information search on colleges.

Chart 3: Gathering information through Facebook

1. I use Facebook to gather information about colleges?
85 responses



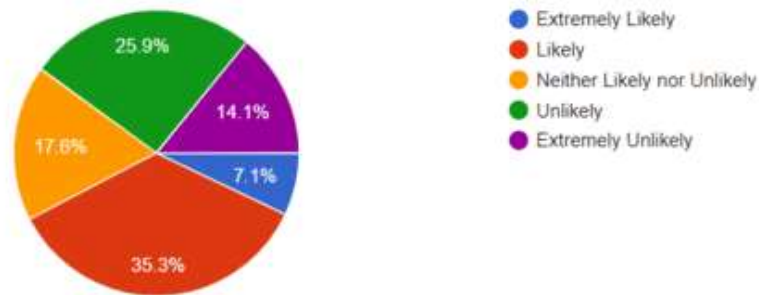
Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Facebook to gather information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 5.9% are Extremely Likely to gather information through Facebook about colleges, 37.6% are Likely, 15.3% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 29.4% are Unlikely and 11.8% are Extremely Unlikely to gather information through Facebook.

Interpretation: Facebook is being relied on to gather information on colleges by the target audience as there are more Facebook users so it will be a best platform to create awareness among the target audience. However, a few percentages of the target audience are not likely to use Facebook for information search.

Chart 4: Gathering information through Instagram

I use Instagram to gather information about colleges?
85 responses



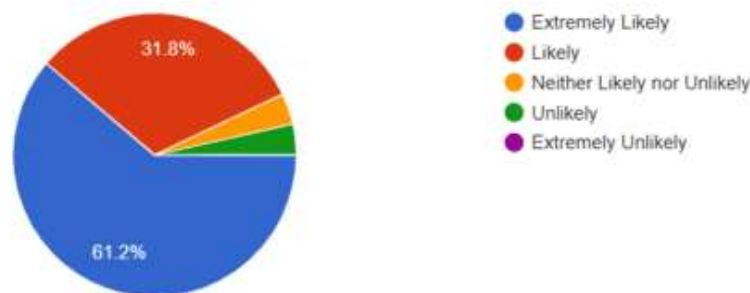
Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Instagram to gather information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 7.1% are Extremely Likely to gather information through Instagram about colleges, 35.3% are Likely, 17.6% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 25.9% are Unlikely and 14.1% are Extremely Unlikely to gather information through Instagram.

Interpretation: Instagram is being used more as it is popular among students and is being used widely to search for various information such as colleges. However, Parents do not use Instagram frequently which is why there is less preference to use Instagram for information search.

Chart 5: Gathering information through Google.com (Digital Marketing)

I use Google.com to gather information about colleges?
85 responses

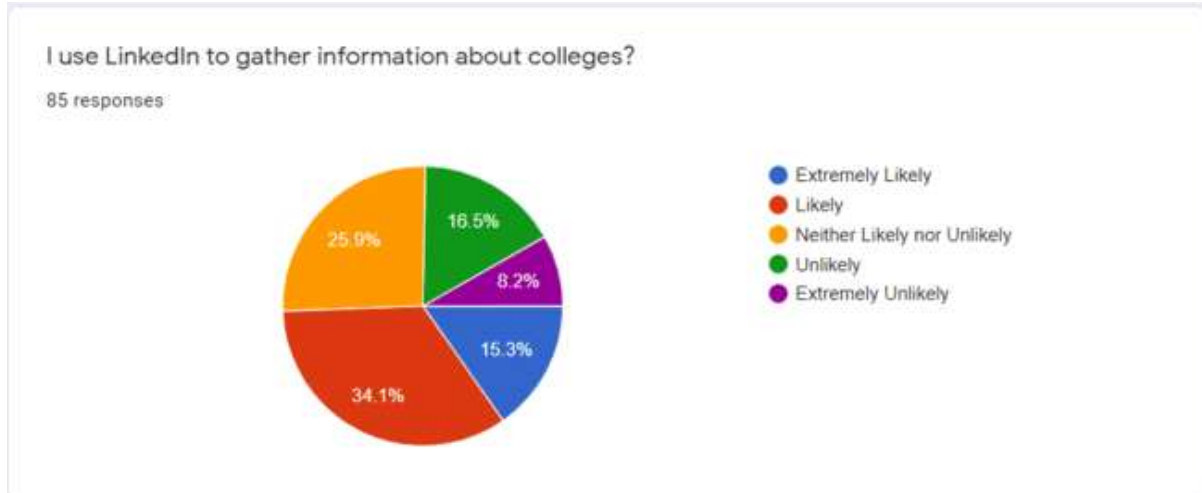


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses to gather information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 61.2% are Extremely Likely to gather information through Google.com (Digital Marketing) about colleges, 31.8% are Likely, 3.5% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 3% are Unlikely to gather information through Google.com (Digital Marketing).

Interpretation: Both students and parents use Google.com on a frequent basis to search for any information. There is a lot of information available such as College website, Photos of the college, Location of the college, Reviews on the college which makes it easier to take decision on the selection of the college.

Chart 6: Gathering information through LinkedIn

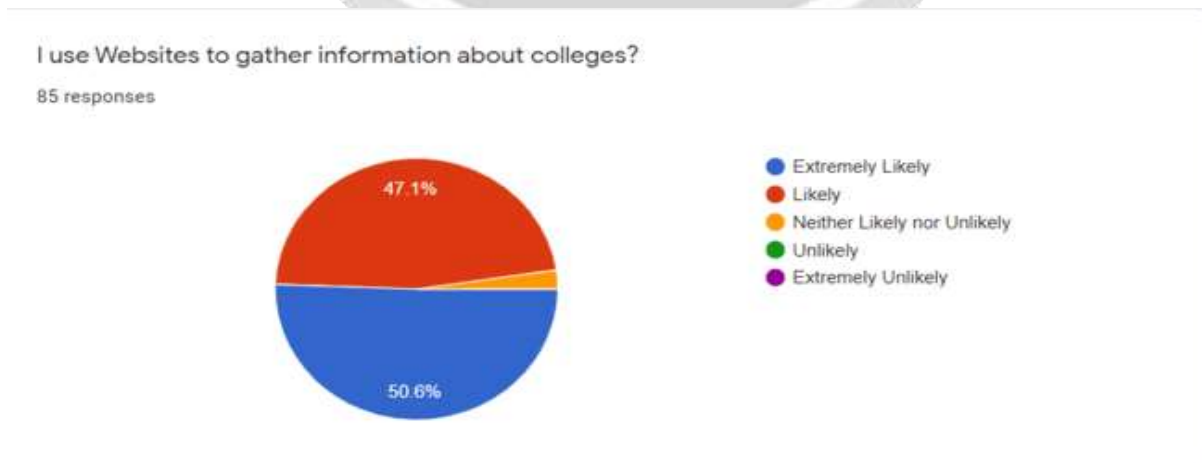


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses to gather information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 15.3% are Extremely Likely to gather information through LinkedIn about colleges, 34.1% are Likely, 25.9% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 16.5% are Unlikely and 8.2% are Extremely Unlikely to gather information through LinkedIn.

Interpretation: Most of the target audience prefers to use LinkedIn. Through LinkedIn the target audience can browse latest updates, reviews as well as updates on college events. LinkedIn is the most trusted platform for the target audience to rely on. However, few of the target audience has selected not use to LinkedIn.

Chart 7: Gathering information through Websites

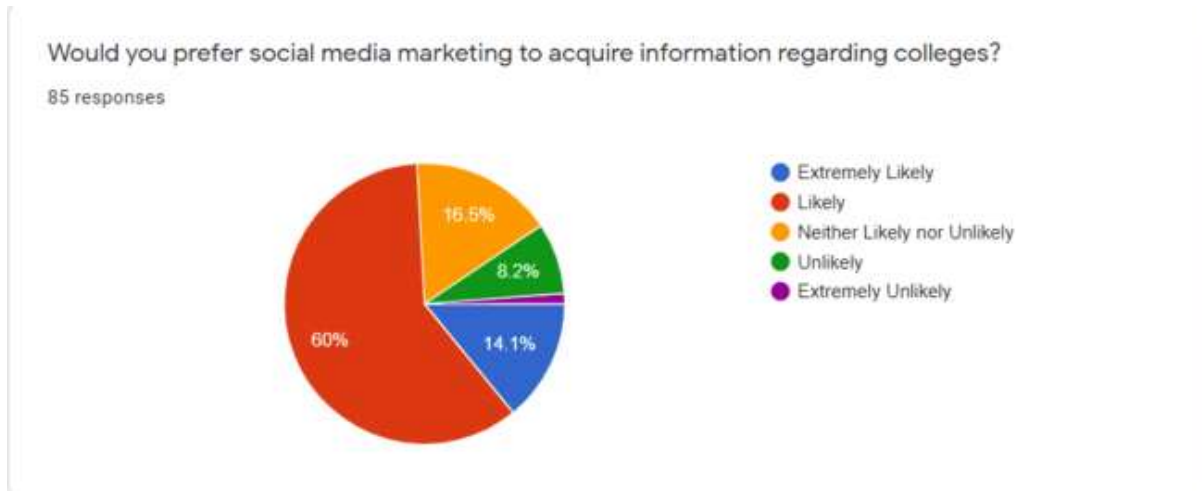


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Websites to gather information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 50.6% are Extremely Likely to gather information through Websites about colleges, 47.1% are Likely, 2.4% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely

Interpretation: Websites are most likely to be used by the target audience as it gives accurate information on the courses, college timings, photos of the campus, Quality of Life.

Chart 8: Acquiring information through social media marketing

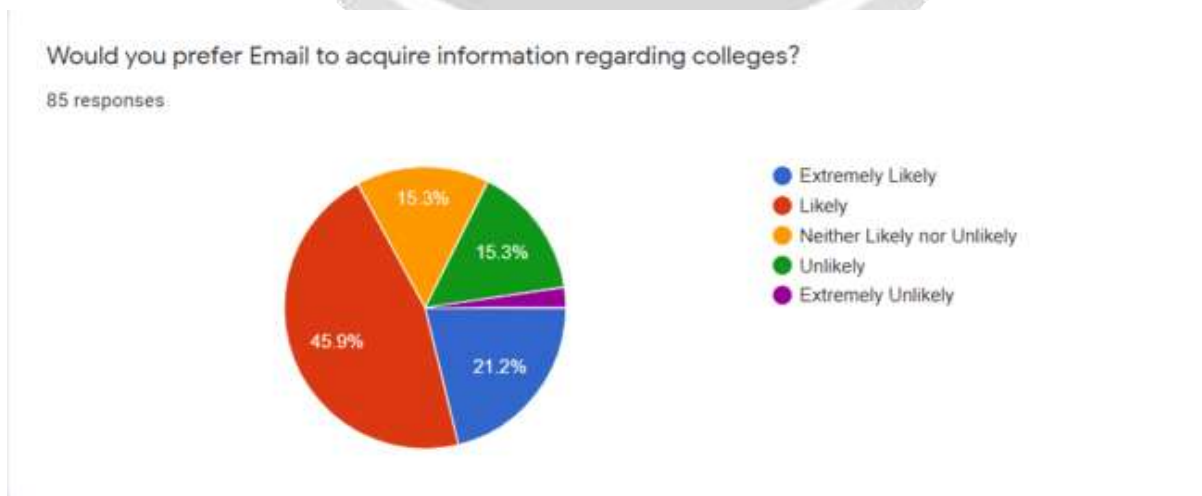


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Social Media Marketing to acquire information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 14.1% are Extremely Likely to acquire information through about colleges, 60% are Likely, 16.5% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 8.2% are Unlikely and 1.2% are Extremely Unlikely to acquire information through Social Media Marketing.

Interpretation: The target audience hereby relies on social media marketing due to all the information being available on various platforms regarding colleges. As most of the target audience uses social media platforms daily, it will help to make the decision faster.

Chart 9: Acquiring information through Email

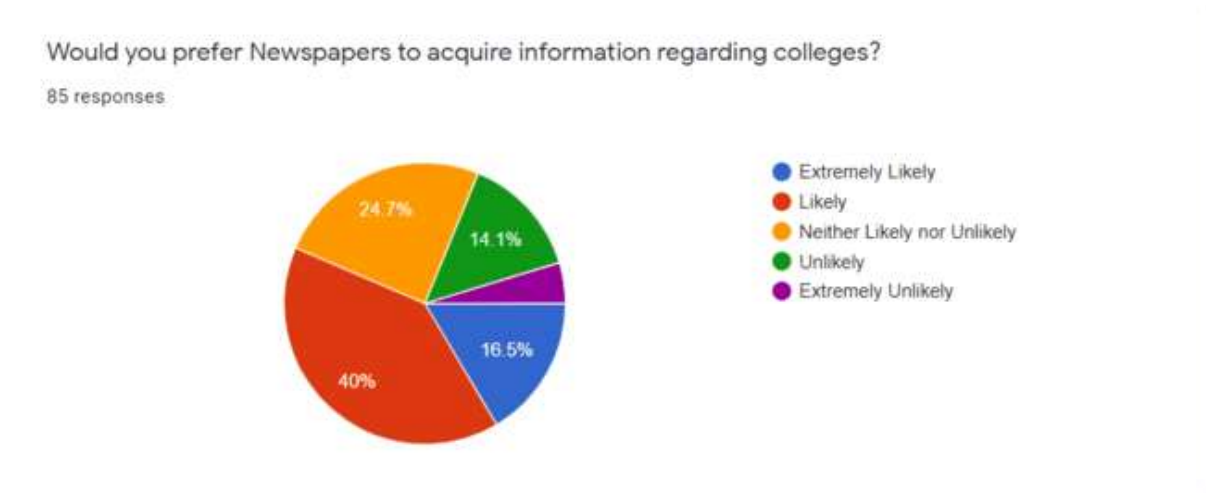


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Email to acquire information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 21.2% are Extremely Likely to acquire information through about colleges, 45.9% are Likely, 15.3% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 15.3% are Unlikely and 2.4% are Extremely Unlikely to acquire information through Email.

Interpretation: Emails are being preferred by the target audience as they use it every day, and to receive information regarding admission process, daily updates.

Chart 10: Acquiring information through Newspapers

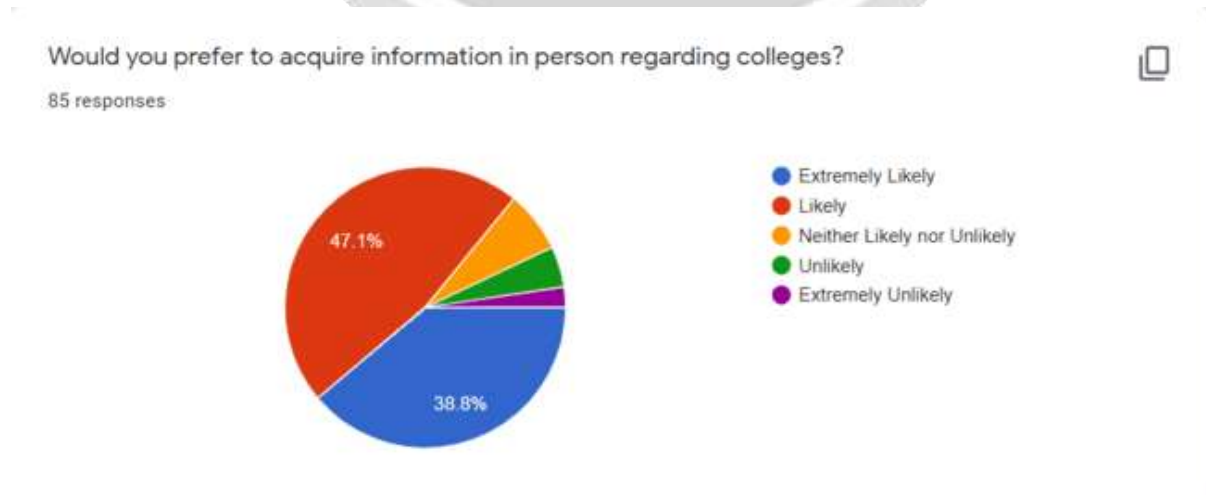


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience uses Newspapers to acquire information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 16.5% are Extremely Likely to acquire information through about colleges, 40% are Likely, 24.7% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 14.1% are Unlikely and 4.7% are Extremely Unlikely to gather information through Newspapers.

Interpretation: The target audience prefers to acquire information through Newspapers as they read it on a daily basis and various colleges have their advertisements published and they can see information on the courses offered.

Chart 11: Acquiring information in person

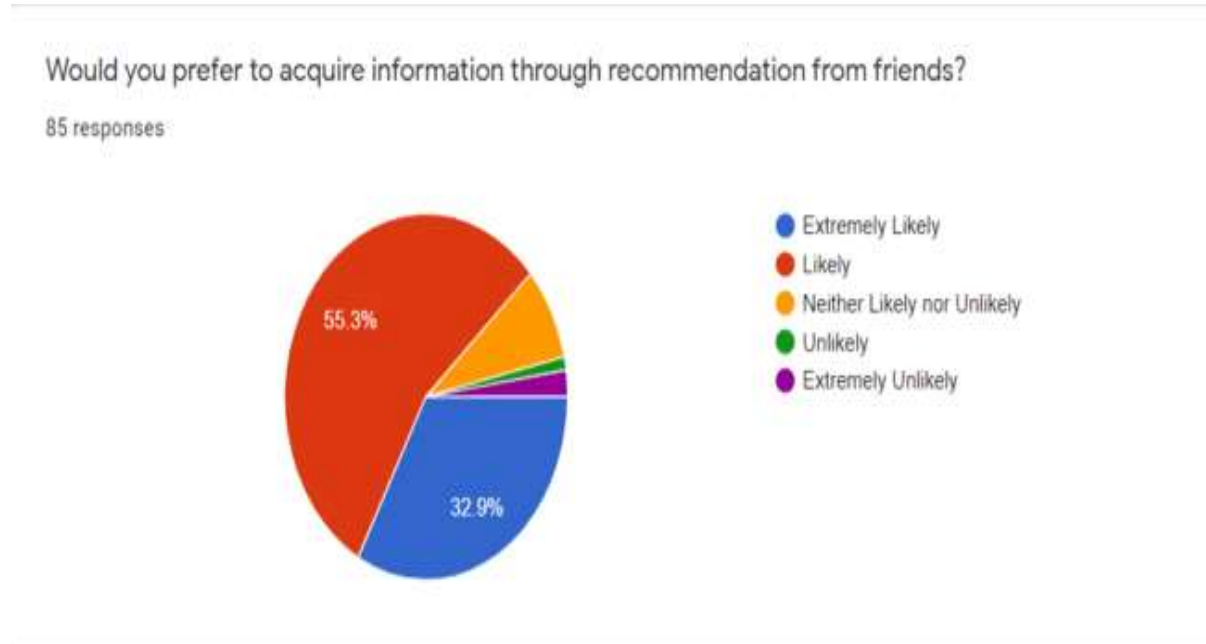


Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience goes in person to acquire information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 38.8% are Extremely Likely to acquire information in person about colleges, 47.1% are Likely, 7.1% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 4% are Unlikely and 2.4% are Extremely Unlikely to acquire information in person.

Interpretation: Most of the target audience has preferred to go in person as social media platforms do not clear each doubt in the mind of the target audience. Any queries which are related to the course has to be cleared in person and not on social media platforms. It will give better clarity to the target audience on the selection of the college.

Chart 12: Acquiring information through Recommendation from Friends



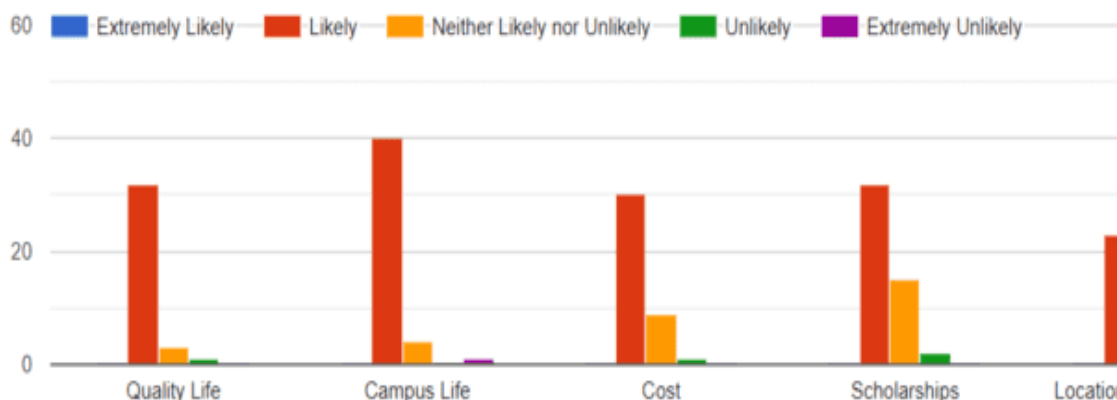
Data Collected: The researcher aims to know that if the target audience considers Recommendation from Friends to acquire information on colleges.

Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 32.9% are Extremely Likely to acquire information considering recommendation from friends about colleges, 55.3% are Likely, 8.2% are Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 1.2% are Unlikely and 2.4% are Extremely Unlikely to acquire information considering recommendation from friends about colleges.

Interpretation: Most of the target audience has preferred to get recommendation from friends regarding college selection. Friends which refer a college have been in the college for a long time and know the in and out of the college and can give better suggestions based on it.

Chart 13: Aspects while selecting a college

3. Which aspect of a college would you look at?



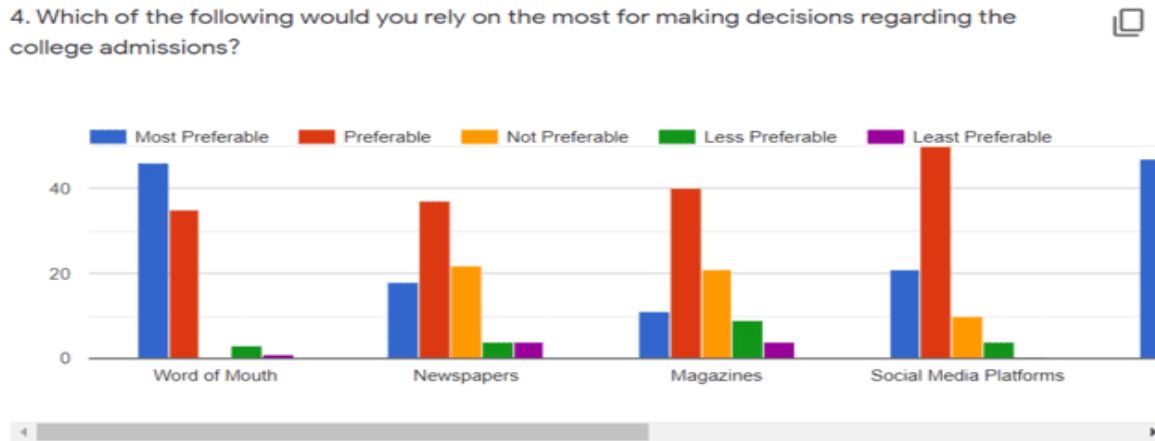
Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know the aspect of the college the target audience would look at.

Analysis: From the bar graph above, it is depicted that the target audience considers these factors:

Number of Students and Parents	Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely
Quality Life	-	32	3	1	-
Campus Life	-	40	4	-	1
Cost	-	30	9	1	-
Scholarships	-	32	15	2	-
Location of the college	-	23	4	-	-

Interpretation: Both Students and Parents would prefer a Quality Life that the college would offer, Campus life of having a huge campus, Cost and Scholarships are a major concern while selecting a college, location of the college is a prime factor in selection of a college.

Chart 14: Reliance of Decision Making for selection of college.



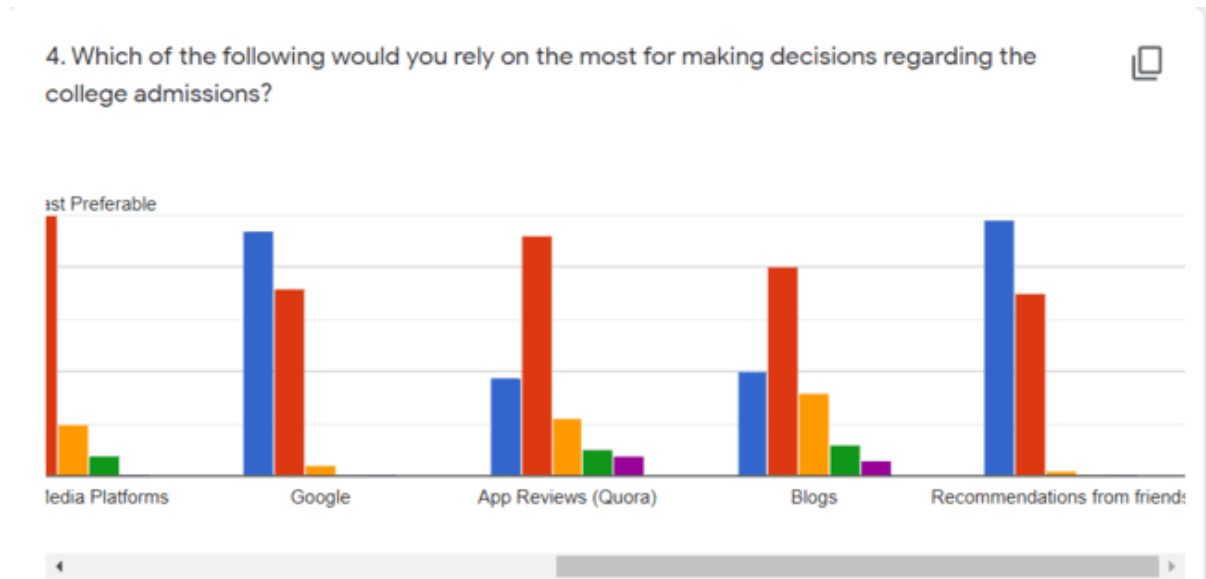
Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know reliance of decision making the target audience would look at regarding college admissions.

Analysis: From the bar graph above, the target audience makes decisions on the basis of the following:

Number of Students and Parents	Most Preferable	Preferable	Not Preferable	Less Preferable	Least Preferable
Word of Mouth	46	35	-	3	1
Newspapers	18	37	22	4	4
Magazines	11	40	21	9	4
Social Media Platforms	21	50	10	4	-

Interpretation: According to the target audience, Word of Mouth as well as Social Media Platforms more preferable due to readily available information from the college itself. Newspapers as well as Magazines give information regarding the various colleges but in person contact with the college is required in case of any queries.

Chart 15: Reliance of Decision Making for selection of college.



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know reliance of decision making the target audience would look at regarding college admissions.

Analysis: From the bar graph above, the target audience makes decisions on the basis of the following:

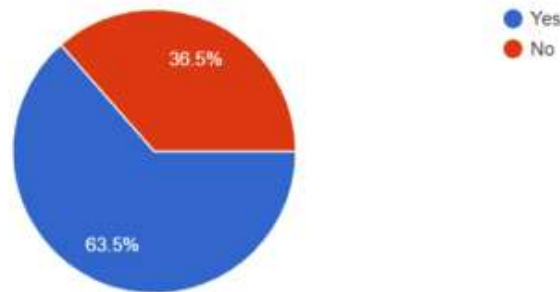
Students and Parents	Most Preferable	Preferable	Not Preferable	Less Preferable	Least Preferable
Google	47	36	2	-	-
App Reviews (Quora)	19	46	11	5	4
Blogs	20	40	16	6	3
Recommendation from Friends	49	35	-	-	-

Interpretation: Google.com as well as recommendation from friends have been considered most preferable due to all the information available at a single place (Google.com) and trust factor (Recommendation from Friends). Blogs and App Reviews are also considered due to the real-life experiences put as reviews however may lead to biasness.

Chart 16: Following a social media page likely to attend

5. Do you follow or like a social media page of a college which you are probable to attend?

85 responses



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know if the target audience follows social media page of a college which they are probable to attend.

Analysis: The target audience has said Yes (63.5%) and No (36.5%).

Interpretation: Majority of the target audience has said Yes as they can get latest updates and notifications if they follow the social media page of the college they prefer. However, a few percentages of the audience do not follow the social media page of a college.

Chart 17: Valuable for a college to have a social media page

6. How valuable is it for colleges to have a social media page?

85 responses



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know from the target audience that whether it is valuable to have a social media page.

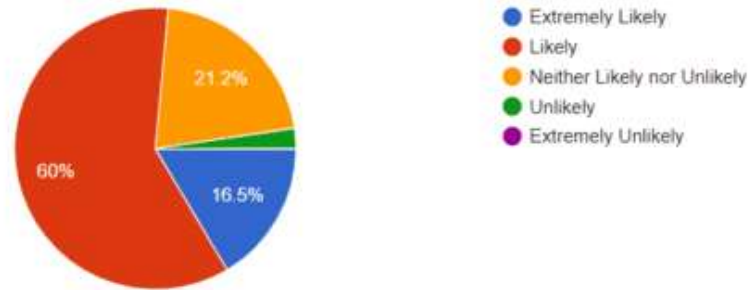
Analysis: The results from the target audience depicts that 45.9% as Extremely Valuable for social media page, 40% Somewhat Valuable, Valuable at 10.6%, Not Valuable at 3.5%.

Interpretation: The target audience considers that it is extremely valuable for colleges to have a social media page due to various updates on the page, to engage with the target audience in a better manner, to advertise regarding the courses.

Chart 18: Aggregator while selecting a college

7. How likely are you to go through an aggregator while selecting a college?

85 responses



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know if the target audience will through an aggregator while selecting a college.

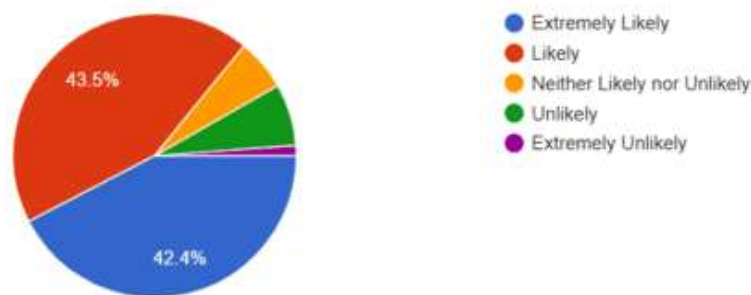
Analysis: From the pie chart above, it is indicated that 16.5% are Extremely Likely to go through an aggregator, 60% Likely, 21.2% Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 2.4% Unlikely.

Interpretation: The target audience considers that going through an aggregator will help to make a better decision on the selection of the college. Various doubts can be solved while going through an aggregator.

Chart 19: Downloading brochure of a course on social media platforms

9. How likely are you to download a brochure of the course you are looking for on social media websites?

85 responses



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know how likely the target audience is to download a brochure on social media websites.

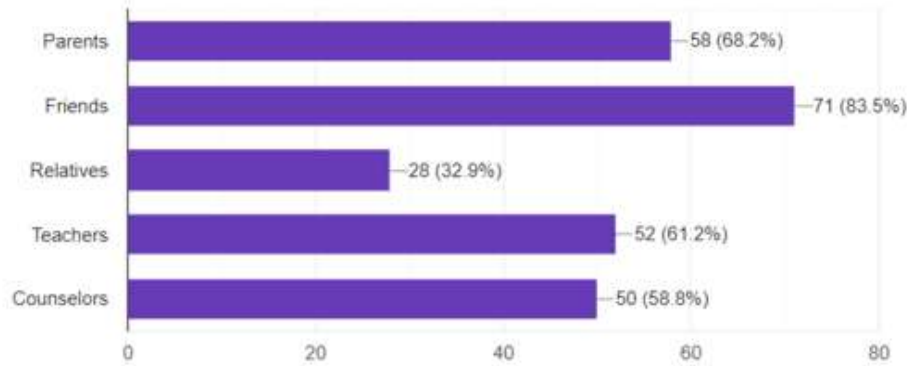
Analysis: The results from the target audience indicate that 42.4% are Extremely Likely to download brochures, 43.5% are Likely, 5.9% are Neither Likely or Unlikely, 7.1% are Unlikely, 1.2% are Extremely Unlikely to download brochures.

Interpretation: Most of the target audience is likely to download a brochure of the courses as they will have accurate information on the description of the course and as to what subjects are offered and the entry requirements.

Chart 20: Following the advice of others in selecting a college

10. While selecting a college do you take the advice of others?

85 responses



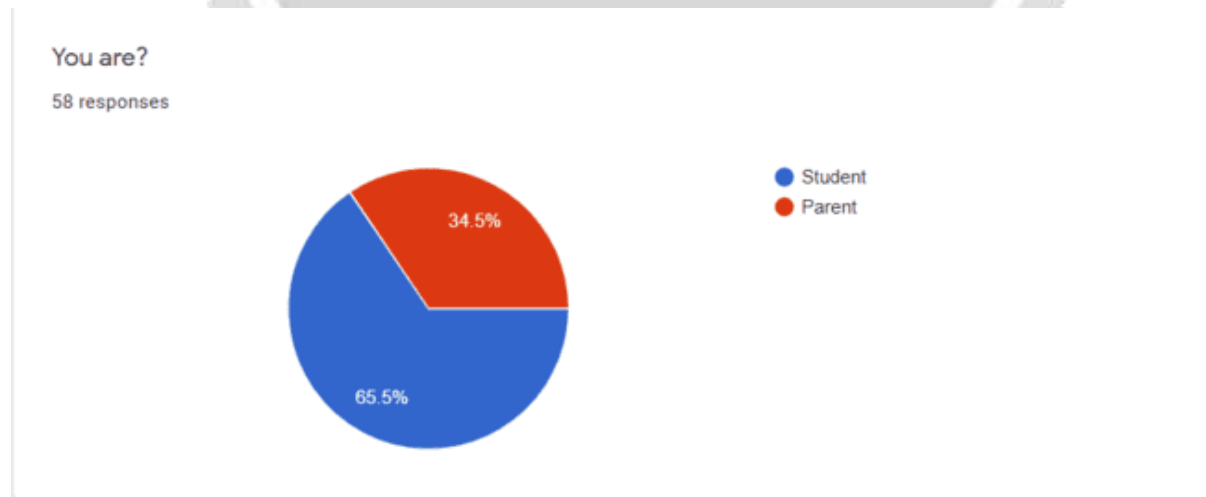
Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know if the target audience takes advice of others while selecting a college.

Analysis: From the above bar graph, the target audience is likely to follow the advice of Parents (68.2%), Friends (83.5%), Relatives (32.9%), Teachers (61.2%), Counsellors (58.8%).

Interpretation: The target audience is likely to take the advice of Friends, Relatives, Teachers Counsellors (Aggregators) as they will offer an advice which is trustworthy without any bias.

Chart 22: Target Audience who do not use social media platforms

Here the target audience gave various reasons for not using social media platforms to receive information regarding colleges.



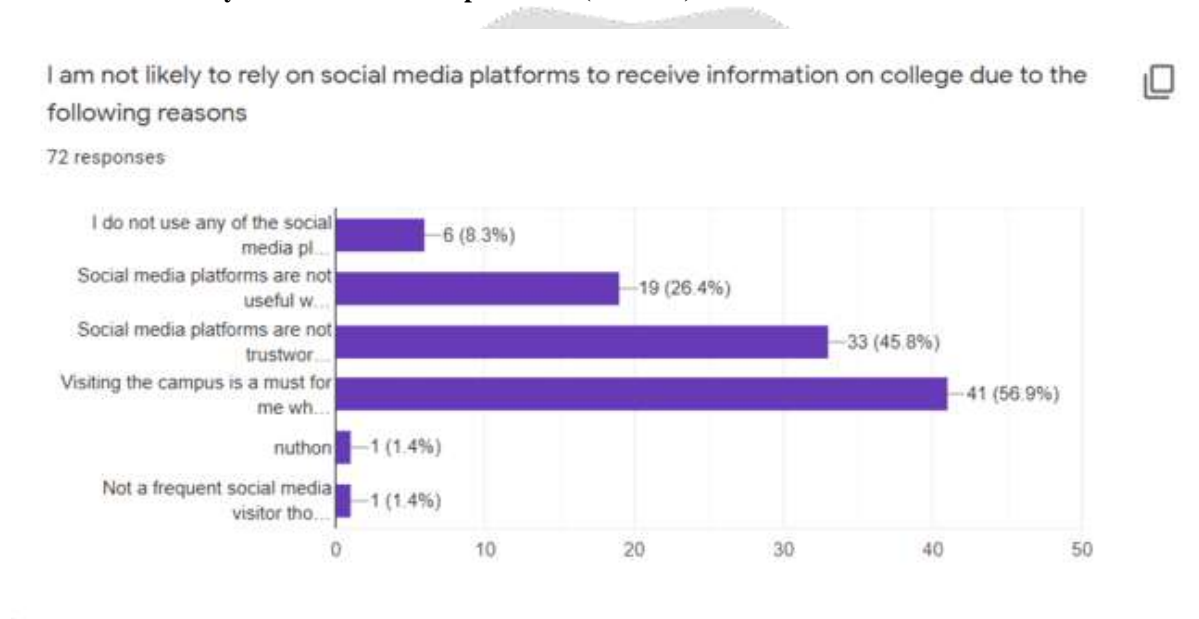
Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know the target audience who are not using social media platforms to receive information on colleges. On the basis of the answer selected (Neither Likely nor Unlikely, Unlikely and Extremely Unlikely) in the first question they have been redirected to this section.

Analysis: The target audience is Students (65.5%) and Parents (34.5%).

Question	Students	Parents	Total
Do not rely on social media platforms for	42	23	65 out of 150 responses

Interpretation: Both the Students and Parents are less likely to rely on social media platforms for information search.

Chart 23: Not likely to use social media platforms (Reasons)



Data Collected: The aim of the researcher is to know the reasons why the target audience is not likely to rely on social media platforms to receive information on colleges.

Analysis: Here the target audience has given various reasons for not using social media platforms.

Reasons	% of Students and Parents
I do not use any of the social media platforms	8.3%
Social media platforms are not useful while selecting a college.	26.4%
Social media platforms are not trustworthy while selecting a college.	45.8%
Visiting the campus is a must for me while selecting a college.	56.9%
Not a frequent social media visitor though sometimes it can have useful information.	1.4%

Interpretation: The target audience considers visiting the campus in person before making a decision on the selection of the college considering the Quality and Campus Life Aspect, solving of any queries related to the course. the target audience thinks that social media platforms are not trustworthy while selecting a college due to lack of accurate information. Some think that social media platforms are not useful while selecting a college due to the lack of personal touch with the college.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Variable 1

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	2.076595745	2.021052632
Variance	0.326179463	0.347652916
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	78	
t Stat	0.437894078	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.331336659	
t Critical one-tail	1.664624645	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.662673318	
t Critical two-tail	1.990847069	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents with respect to gathering of information via social media platforms for college admissions.

H1: There is a difference between students and parents with respect to gathering of information via social media platforms for college admissions.

P Value = 0.66

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Result: We do not reject the null hypothesis

Interpretation: Both students and parents are equally likely to use social media platforms to gather information regarding colleges.

Variable 2

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	2.255319149	2.289473684
Variance	0.357308048	0.711237553
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	65	
t Stat	-0.210529547	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.416956489	
t Critical one-tail	1.668635976	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.833912977	
t Critical two-tail	1.997137908	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents with respect to receiving information regarding colleges through digital platforms.

H1: There is a difference between students and parents with respect to receiving information regarding colleges through digital platforms.

P Value = 0.83

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Result: We do not reject null hypothesis

Interpretation: Both students and parents are equally like to receive information via digital platforms.

Variable 3

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	3.709219858	3.438596
Variance	0.481241649	0.919551
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	66	
t Stat	1.458300335	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.074750152	
t Critical one-tail	1.668270514	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.149500305	
t Critical two-tail	1.996564419	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents acquiring information through offline modes.

H1: There is difference between students and parents acquiring information through offline modes.

P Value = 0.14

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Result: We do not reject null hypothesis

Interpretation: Both students and parents are equally likely to acquire information via offline modes

Variable 4

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	1.460992908	1.517544
Variance	0.176585466	0.322507
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	67	
t Stat	-0.511064229	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.305493058	
t Critical one-tail	1.667916114	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.610986116	
t Critical two-tail	1.996008354	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents selecting a college on the basis of amenities.

H1: There is a difference between students and parents selecting a college on the basis of amenities.

P Value = 0.61

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Interpretation: We do not reject null hypothesis

Impact: Both students and parents are likely to select a college on the basis of amenities.

Variable 5

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	1.744680851	1.644737
Variance	0.4660037	0.336593
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	83	
t Stat	0.729446663	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.233891023	
t Critical one-tail	1.663420175	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.467782045	
t Critical two-tail	1.98895978	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents with respect to costs and scholarships while selecting a college

H1: There is a difference between students and parents with respect to costs and scholarships while selecting a college

P Value = 0.46

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Result: We do not reject null hypothesis

Interpretation: Both students and parents are likely to select a college on the basis of costs and scholarships.

Variable 6

	Students	Parents
Mean	2.14893617	1.677631579
Variance	0.311574931	0.158472617
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	82	
t Stat	4.535217495	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.72E-06	
t Critical one-tail	1.663649184	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000019	
t Critical two-tail	1.989318557	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents with respect to offline modes for reliance on colleges.

H1: There is a difference between students and parents with respect to offline modes for reliance on colleges.

P Value = 0.0000019

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value < Alpha Value

Result: We reject null hypothesis

Interpretation: Students and Parents both think differently with respect to offline modes for reliance on colleges.

Variable 7

	<i>Students</i>	<i>Parents</i>
Mean	1.989361702	1.901315789
Variance	0.293362627	0.464660384
Observations	47	38
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	70	
t Stat	0.647857835	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.259598121	
t Critical one-tail	1.666914479	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.519196242	
t Critical two-tail	1.994437112	

H0: There is no difference between students and parents with respect to online modes for reliance on colleges.

H1: There is a difference between students and parents with respect to online modes for reliance on colleges.

P Value = 0.51

Alpha Value = 0.05

P Value > Alpha Value

Result: We do not reject null hypothesis

Interpretation: Both students and parents are likely to rely on colleges via online modes.

5. Conclusion

The researcher has prepared a consultancy project suggesting a Social Media and Digital Marketing plan for various Educational Institutions as well as its competitors (ABC College, DEF College, XYZ College) in terms of the courses they offer, their affiliation with different universities, marketing techniques which they are currently using. The researcher has done an extensive literature review to analyze literature which pre-existed through the evaluation of its competitors, how other universities have used social media and digital marketing to leverage on the admissions and market the university, compared Traditional vs Social Media Marketing, importance of a digital footprint, rising trend of using social media marketing, importance of social media platforms and digital marketing. With the help of literature review, the researcher decided to do a quantitative analysis as well as an observational research design where the researcher has examined the social media marketing for various competitors by listing their followers and number of posts. The researcher has also mentioned different research methods used such as Questionnaire Method, Observation Method.

The researcher explained the Questionnaire Method in detail with the steps to arrive at the data analysis and interpretation. The researcher has used Google Forms for the questionnaire and collected 150 responses, on the basis of the hypothesis the responses from the questionnaire have helped the researcher to analyse the attitude of students as well as parents which are the target audience towards information search on social media platforms for colleges. The researcher has done coding of the data once the questionnaire was filled by the target audience. Through Coding, hypothesis testing has been done depicting the results on the basis of a null and alternative hypothesis.

Through the Data Analysis and Interpretation, the researcher has analysed through descriptive statistics the various findings, such as the target audience of students and parents are more likely to rely on social media platforms for information regarding colleges.

When comparing to a similar study by Arave A who did a social media marketing plan for Snow College as the researcher has done the same for various Educational Institutions. Both the researchers had done similar studies of circulating a questionnaire on the information search for colleges through social media platforms where the target audience were Students and Parents. Arave A got 119 responses and the researcher got 150 responses. Arave A used the most preferable social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter whereas the researcher used Instagram, Email, LinkedIn, Websites for the questionnaire. Both the researchers have used similar set of questions to get responses.

The various aspects that the target audience would look at are Campus Life (47%) Quality Life (37.6%), Scholarships (37.6%), Cost (35.2%), Location of the college (27%). The target audience would mostly consider the Campus Life aspect of the college, the facilities provided classrooms, library, IT lab etc. Quality Life aspect would consider the crowd of the students joining, number of students in a batch, number of lecture hours per week. Scholarships that does the college provide any. Cost factor how much fees are being charged and the quality of education provided. Location of the college that it should be easily accessible.

The various aspects that will help the target audience to make decision while selecting the college are Recommendation from Friends (57.6%), Google (Digital Marketing) (55.2%), Word of Mouth (54.1%), Social Media Platforms (24.7%), Blogs (23.5%), App Reviews (Quora) (22.3%), Newspapers (21.1%), Magazines (12.9%). The findings illustrate that Recommendation from Friends, Google (Digital Marketing), Word of Mouth Marketing is most preferable by the target audience which relates to offline marketing techniques. Still the target audience considers offline marketing techniques as compared to online marketing techniques due to various factors such as Trust, wanting to visit the campus in person before deciding, having various queries regarding the course.

According to the survey there were 60% of the target audience who preferred to go through educational consultants (aggregator) which helps them to make their decision easier and faster while selecting a college. Sometimes, the information is useful because the major pros and cons which cannot be cleared through the social media platforms is cleared through educational consultants. Therefore, there is a difference in offline marketing such as Word of Mouth and online marketing such as social media and digital marketing.

Mostly the target audience while selecting a college considers the advice Friends (83.5%), Parents (68.2%), Teachers (61.2%), Counsellors (58.8%), Relatives (32.9%).

The researcher through the analysis has also found that there are 72 responses from the target audience who do not rely on social media platforms for information search about colleges. The target audience considers visiting the campus is a must while selecting a college, the target audience does not trust social media platforms and some think that social media platforms are not useful while selecting a college. The college needs to strengthen their offline marketing through posters, banners, word of mouth marketing.

Another set of findings is via the hypothesis testing which relates to that Both Students and Parents are likely to receive information via social media platforms, gathering information about colleges through social media platforms, through offline modes while selecting a college. Both students and parents consider a preferable aspect as Amenities such as Campus Life, Quality Life etc. However, both students and parents are likely to think differently with respect to offline modes while selecting a college.

There are a few limitations of this research project, in which the researcher suggests on what criteria improvements can be done to take this project forward. For instance, the researcher could have conducted a more integrated analysis of each of the social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Websites. The researcher could also have listed down the pros and cons and the cost related to advertise digitally on each of the social media platform. For example, Facebook charges for an average cost per thousand impressions would be Rs 539.25, For Instagram the average cost would be Rs 502.70 for viewing the ad to 1000 people. Another way could be calculating the monthly cost of ads and generate a budget statement depicting the same so that the college authorities would know how much they have to spend. The researcher could also have analysed the best working platform through test marketing of the ads which were made by showing it to a limited amount of target audience and then can roll out on a wider basis. The researcher could target various audiences, students from the age group of 18 to 23 and 40 to 60 years for parents based on the location of the college. For example, Mumbai.

The researcher through this independent project has reflected various personal learnings such as how to develop a social media marketing plan, conducting a literature review from pre-existing literature, learning about different research methods, developing a questionnaire from scratch to analyze the understanding of the target audience through descriptive and hypothesis testing to arrive at various conclusions via data analysis and interpretation whether it would work or not. Based on the findings, the researcher gave various recommendations as to what could the college do to have a higher number of admissions with respect to social media and digital marketing.

The researcher with the help of data analysis and interpretation has formulated various recommendations. Various Educational Institutions should focus on marketing its courses through social media marketing via Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google Digital Marketing.

For marketing via Facebook and Instagram, the educational institutions can have posts scheduled based on various events held such as Republic Day, Sports Day, Independence Day, Diwali, Holi. Daily as well as weekly posts can be scheduled for Teaching in classrooms, facilities offered by the college, various courses offered at the college, links for downloading the brochures for specified courses, guest lectures insights. Live events can be broadcasted through Facebook and Instagram live stories so that the target audience gets a clear idea on whether to join the college or not.

As the target audience prefers email marketing, various emails can be scheduled and the email addresses can be tracked via a Google forms give on the various social media platforms and websites where users would be asked to fill a form for enquiries. Emails can be sent on a weekly basis depicting the interest of the target audience in the college. For instance, Email 1 can be regarding the various details of the college and call to action button for "Apply Now", Email 2 can be regarding the course details more in depth based on the course selected via the Google Form, Email 3 can be for booking a one on one session with the Marketing Coordinator, Email 4 can be regarding the curriculum and various in depth details on the subjects on the course selected. This would help the target audience to make a decision better on the selection of the college.

The websites of various Educational Institutions needs to be updated regularly with pictures of the college, course information and download links of the brochures, a Google form for perspective students who are likely to join, Apply now button which would redirect the target audience to the Google Form.

As most of target audience would use Google.com to search for the website, Various Educational Institutions should opt for digital marketing via Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The audience can be targeted through various keywords such as Business and Management Degree, University degree in your hometown. The ads can be shown to the audiences based on location.

For offline marketing, the college can have small pamphlets distributed via newspapers, online marketing would also help to strengthen Word of Mouth Marketing, Posters and Banners can be put in the nearby areas which would be an eye catcher for the target audience.

6. Acknowledgement

All the information taken for this research project is from publicly available platforms on the Internet and is listed in the Bibliography.

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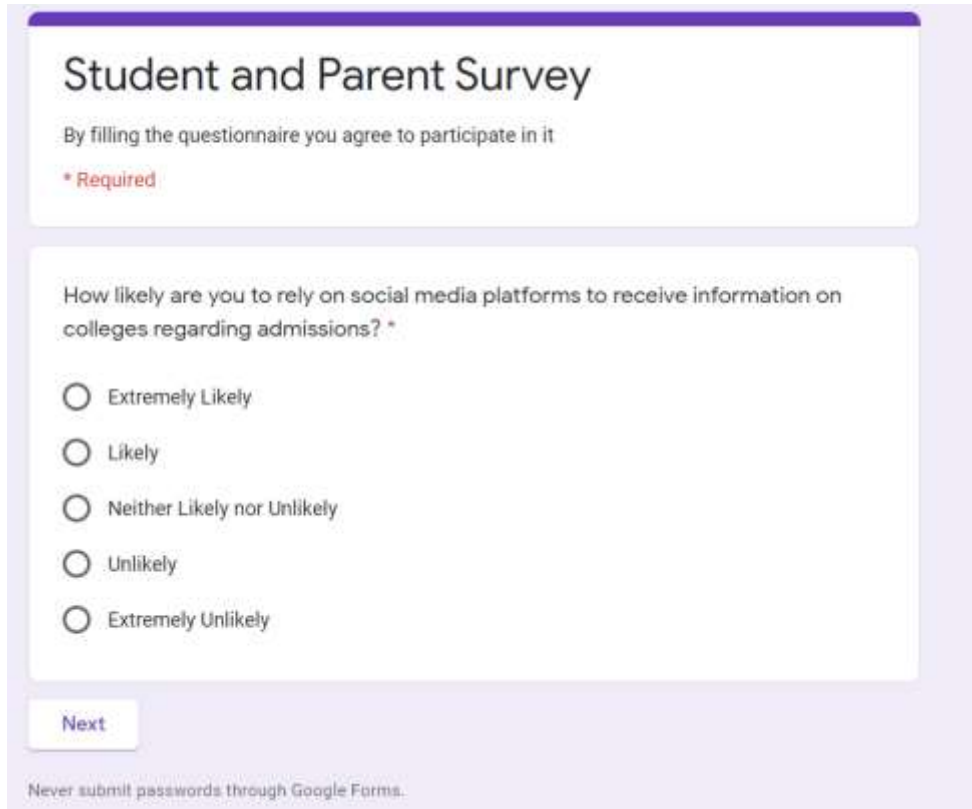
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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Form titled "Student and Parent Survey". The form has a purple header bar. Below the title, it says "By filling the questionnaire you agree to participate in it" and "Required" in red. The main question is "How likely are you to rely on social media platforms to receive information on colleges regarding admissions? *". There are five radio button options: "Extremely Likely", "Likely", "Neither Likely nor Unlikely", "Unlikely", and "Extremely Unlikely". At the bottom of the form, there is a "Next" button and a warning: "Never submit passwords through Google Forms." The form is overlaid on a large, faint watermark of the IJARIE logo.

Student and Parent Survey

By filling the questionnaire you agree to participate in it

* Required

How likely are you to rely on social media platforms to receive information on colleges regarding admissions? *

Extremely Likely

Likely

Neither Likely nor Unlikely

Unlikely

Extremely Unlikely

Next

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Student and Parent Survey

By filling the questionnaire you agree to participate in it

You are? *

- Student
- Parent

1. I use Facebook to gather information about colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I use Instagram to gather information about colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I use Google.com to gather information about colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I use LinkedIn to gather information about colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

I use Websites to gather information about colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

2. Which device do you use for acquiring information on colleges? *

Would you prefer social media marketing to acquire information regarding colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely


Would you prefer Email to acquire information regarding colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
 - Likely
 - Neither Likely nor Unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Extremely Unlikely
-

Would you prefer Newspapers to acquire information regarding colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

Would you prefer to acquire information in person regarding colleges? *

- Extremely Likely
 - Likely
 - Neither Likely nor Unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Extremely Unlikely
- 

Would you prefer to acquire information through recommendation from friends?

*

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

3. Which aspect of a college would you look at? *

	Extremely Likely	Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Unlikely	Extremely Unlikely
Quality Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus Life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location of the college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Which of the following would you rely on the most for making decisions regarding the college admissions? *

	Most Preferable	Preferable	Not Preferable	Less Preferable	Least Preferable
Word of Mouth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newspapers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Media Platforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Google	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
App Reviews (Quora)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Blogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommendations from friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Do you follow or like a social media page of a college which you are probable to attend? *

- Yes
- No

6. How valuable is it for colleges to have a social media page? *

- Extremely Valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Valuable
- Not Valuable



7. How likely are you to go through an aggregator while selecting a college? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely

8. How likely are you to browse through the content of a college while browsing on social media? *

- Extremely Likely
- Likely
- Neither Likely nor Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Extremely Unlikely



9. How likely are you to download a brochure of the course you are looking for on social media websites? *

- Extremely Likely
 - Likely
 - Neither Likely nor Unlikely
 - Unlikely
 - Extremely Unlikely
-

10. While selecting a college do you take the advice of others? *

- Parents
 - Friends
 - Relatives
 - Teachers
 - Counselors
 - Other: _____
- 