SOCIAL MEDIA AND EDUCATION SECTOR: ENRICHING RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract: *Social media platform is changing the way businesses are being conducted. Education sector not being an exception has also been positively affected by the use of social media sites like, Facebook, LinedIn, Google+, instagram, twitter, Youtube etc. Of late many universities and education service providers have reportedly increased use of social media marketing to promote their courses and attract students. Educators are becoming aware of the potential benefits of social media in education. Many faculties had realized the fact that 75% of students are on social media on an average of five hours a day. Social media has made us closer to people from different parts of the world. Use of social media has become a part of the business marketing mix. The year 2011 has witnessed a rise in using social media as a marketing channel. Socializing on social platform has become a part of our culture. Social media has made available a platform where people can discuss and widen their knowledge base.*

Keywords: *Social media, education sector, social media marketing, marketing channel, positive.*

Introduction to education sector in India:

According to S. Ramadorai, Chairman, National Skills Development Agency, "We are a young nation, given the population, we can service the need of not only this country but we can also be a source of employment abroad. We can be the service provider to the world." Education institute in India form a part of public and private sector. India has made progress in increasing primary education. The literacy rate has also improved and this is considered a major contributor to economic development .there has been a steady increase in higher education enrolment but there still exists huge gap with other developed nation. With huge population, India poses opportunity to education sector players. Government of India has supported the cause and increased its investment in the education sector. This has enabled low cost high quality education at all levels. The road to progress has witnessed intensive use of technology in education to stand at par with its counter parts.

Indian higher education system is the third largest in the world next to United States and China. Presently about 22 million students are being enrolled in higher education and more than 46 thousand institutions' are functioning as centers of higher education.

Due to globalization, liberalization and privatization, Indian economy has opened up physical boundaries and doing business globally. This has led to rapid industrialization and in turn has increased the demand of killed labour.

The growth in the education sector has been remarkable. A latest report by Ernest & Young, states that the number of institutes offering higher education in India is 44668 of that 33668 offers various degrees and the rest offering diplomas. The private sector education is booming and India is one such player that has witnessed a shift to private sector institutes. India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. The number has increased but there is lot of scope of improvement and India is striving to get there. 'Skill India Initiative' has been launched for that purpose. The initiative targets to train 400 million citizen by 2020. Government of India has launched, 'Digital Employment Exchange' that will help place jobseekers with right employer.

Education sector have started focussing on e-learning and applying other techniques to make education interesting and profitable as well. Online presence is benefitting education business. Communication through facebook, twitter, instagram, linkedin etc helps in creating connectivity and is a major source of information sharing.

Education is considered an industry as well as service. In today's world, technology, business and education go hand in hand. None of the factors can be neglected. In the digital era, social media helps in promoting and branding institutes.

Source: http://www.ibef.org/industry/education-presentation

Objective:

- Highlighting the factors that enrich relation of faculty-students-institute through the introduction of social media platform in education
- Highlighting the positive effects of using social media as a promotional tools in education sector.

Background of social media:

Social media is basically the interaction and communication between people for sharing and receiving information. It is a web based tool. Man being a human animal, there is always a need of socializing and networking. Use of social media has emerged from advancement of technology. Social media has been used as an important tool to market business in India. It has been used as a platform to share valuable information and have been able to attract attention of prospective customers.

According to report 66% of people aged 15+ have a profile on at least one of the social networking sites. Social media is the platform where education institutes and prospective students interact. This platform helps in promoting activities, getting information and feedback. For education sector, these platform promises connectivity with students, teachers, parents, alumni and other stakeholders.

Social media refers to web-based networking and interaction over an increasing array of websites and networking platforms. Social media helps in getting the attention of, and engaging audience.

Literature Review

Social media cannot be understood without first defining Web 2.0: a term that describes a new way in which end users use the World Wide Web, a place where content is continuously altered by all operators in a sharing and collaborative way (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

The importance of social media as platforms of social interaction, communication and marketing is growing. The rapid ascent of social media across society is a very clear signal that individuals, groups and institutions are rapidly changing their preferences of how they learn, communicate, collaborate and participate in society. The immediacy of interaction, from the simplest response to a Tweet on Twitter to a very thoroughly researched and presented blog post, underscore how pervasive the foundational elements of Web 2.0 design precepts and principles are influencing daily life worldwide today (O'Reilly, 2006).

Social media and education sector

The use of social media has transformed the face of education the face of education industry. This change has positively impacted the students as well as teachers. Today teaching is not confined in the classrooms. It is much beyond that.

It has been argued and believed that there is no need of marketing education services. Students are spending on an average of 6 to 8 hours online searching through social media sites. Information sharing on social media platform has enabled students from different parts of the country as well as the world to come together. The choice of university or education institute depends on online research made by students and parents. Physical visits are not always possible. To cater to this need, institutes have come up with their website and also Facebook page that serves as a promotional platform to highlights happening of the institute.

Over the past ten years or so, there has been a drastic change in the mode of communication. University and education institutes use the social media platform to closely connect with students. Today social media is not just regarded as a platform to connect with friends and family but it is also used for the purpose of business, learning and professional networking.

Social media should be a part of the marketing and outreach campaign. India is third-largest in internet penetration and now parents have become tech savvy and they are more into browsing different forums and blogs before zeroing down on an alternative. Educational institutions are indulging in ambush marketing and participating in various social events, online discussions and all.

Technology has brought about major changes in the education sector. India is riding high on technology in education sector. Changing the face of education, technology has increased the reach of education. Technology has proved to a great enabler in education sector. Use of social media has become the need of the hour. It is much needed for sustainable growth and development of the education sector.

Most commonly used social media platform used by education sector:

Facebook: It is considered as the best platform for self-promotion and interaction with customers. This platform promises most engagement. Content can be put up in front of thousand of people at low cost. It can be used to increase web traffic with more likes and visits. It ensures low cost and helps in highlighting USP of the institute. Files, videos, information, polls ec can be exchanged very quickly.

Twitter: It is a social media site for sending and reading messages. It is an information network. It gives live updates, post relevant news and ensures real-time feedback.

Instagram: It is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them. It helps in highlighting campus life and activities. Promote events, seminars, conference, sports etc.

LinedIn: it helps in building connection with alumni and showcasing alumni success stories. It is a platform for profiling faculty and professional experience. It also helps in highlighting institution's value & merit.

Youtube: It is a platform for video sharing. It enables users to upload and share video. Institutes can upload their video and lectures.

Blogs: It is a type of inline journal. Students can write blogs on campus life and events. Institutes can write on admission procedures.

**The Advantages of using Social media platform for promoting education sector**

- Social networking allows reaching out to potential customers
- Converting potential customers to new customers
- Staying in touch with current customers
- Social networking sites are cost effective
- Wide reach in the market
- Helps in branding product/service
- Creating awareness about the product/service

How to go about promoting on Social media platform:

Right choice of platform: From the numbers of social media platforms available Institutes should make a wise decision in choosing the right mix of platforms after thorough study of the target audience. Given the vast choice it becomes very difficult for institutes to select the best alternatives available. Institutes can go for a mix of platforms, one which compliments each other.

Choice of content: concentration should be on the content posted on these platforms. This becomes an integral part in either making or breaking the image of the institute. Since institutes offer an array of different courses, it becomes imperative to have individual department contents posted on preferred platforms.

Community building task: Faculty, students, alumni and other stakeholders can form community which helps in stimulating knowledge and discussions.
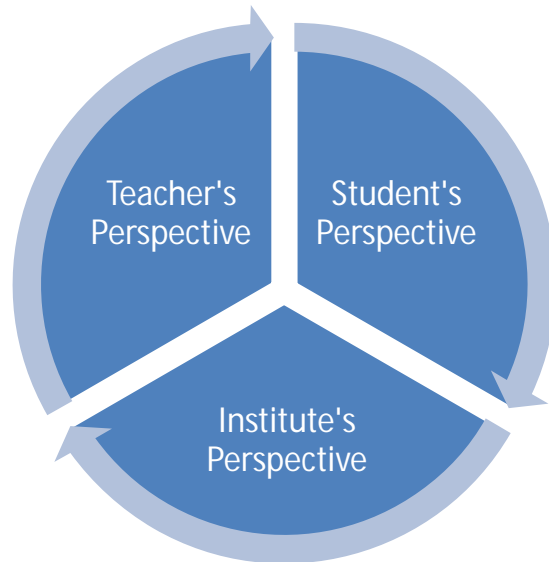
Teacher's perspective:

it is not only those in the age group of 18-28 who are using social media sites, even teachers are doing so.

- Teachers can access information within few seconds and incorporate the same in the content of the lecture;
- They are able to give current happenings as examples and make the class more interesting;
- Teachers can increase the involvement and commitment of the students by using social media inside the classroom
- Better and increased communication
- Skype can be used as a platform for discussion
- Twitter and LinkedIn provides a platform for professional learning network
- Helps in uploading lecture sessions
- Creating connectivity with the students
- Sharing lectures of other faculty and teachers
- Teacher –student enriched relationship
- Off campus connectivity

Student's perspective:

- Gives parents an opportunity to get involved;
- Easier and convenient way of assessing information;
- Ensures better student and faculty interaction;
- Increased student engagements;

- Students are exposed to large information base and hence easier for them to absord information.

Institute's perspective:

- Reaching out to prospective student through these social media sites is easier and faster;
- Enriching relationship with present students and alumni;
- Creating network with professionals and industry experts;
- Getting the best talent in regard to faculty members;
- Highlighting student's achievements and teacher's professional experiences;
- Informing stakeholders about upcoming events and happenings and also recording past events;
- Connecting with international students.

Conclusion:

Social platform has revolutionized the traditional approach. It is used as a publicity tool to connect to its audience. Basically promoting an education institute is through outbound marketing. Now the shift is towards inbound marketing where audience or prospective applicants are pulled towards the institute. The ultimate outcome of inbound strategy is creating a brand name in the market and positioning itself in the minds of the target audience. The trend is that of going for content marketing which promotes an institution through content that speaks for itself. It takes the form of articles, posts, stories and reference. Businesses are finding out ways to harness social media and using it productively. Social media cannot replace traditional promotional techniques, it can be used as a platform to share information, brand its product, encourage word of mouth publicity, encourages customer engagement and interaction.

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