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Published in the USA
Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)
Issued since 2014.
ISSN 1994-4160
E-ISSN 1994-4195
2023. 19(2): 317-328

DOI: 10.13187/me.2023.2.317
<https://me.cherkasgu.press>



Promotional Tool of Indian Academics Through Social Media and Its Implication on Users

Ruma Saha ^a, Sharmila Kayal ^{b, *}, Lakhan Raghuvanshi ^c

^a Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

^b Adamas University, Kolkata, India

^c Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

The Influence and usages of social media in contemporary times is ubiquitous. The phenomenon has changed from its navigation networking to marketing to brand building simultaneously. It is noteworthy to mention that the reach of social networking sites has increased threefold in the Indian context. While mentioning the Indian academics, their promotional tool is very conventional and usually there are hardly any paradigm shifts over the years. But nowadays, there is a shift of technique to reach out to the youths for admission purposes and to enhance the brand legacy. It is quite interesting to look through the lens of promotional tools of academics (which is not very popular and unconventional) usages of social media. The present study will describe the scenario of Indian Academics usages of social media tools for endorsement and its insinuations on the users. The study has adopted thematic interpretive phenomenological analysis to understand the user's perception and behaviour after articulation of their attitude. The content analysis method also been used through NVivo suggests that there is a positive effect on the users to get information about the academics and through its espousal marketing approach they are quite successful to increase the views or likes for their varsity's promotion.

Keywords: media education, Indian academics, social media, media culture, chaos and complexity, promotional tool.

1. Introduction

The academics are always known for their stricture, rules and legacies. Indian varsities with their conventional approach have changed their paradigm by entering into the virtual world. Quintessentially the Indian academics who are vigorously perky on social media may explore the possibilities of better engagement of the public whether they want to take part in any course or not but they likely get influenced by the benefits they intend to provide. It can be seen that the executive programmes offered by *IIMs* (MBA, Leadership courses are on the top list on various social media sites) have gone further to promote their different programmes eloquently for brand promotion and marketing approach. Unlike the foreign academics, it's a gradual shift for Indian academic institutions to understand the pulse of the users or the present times to disseminate its unique feature through the use of SNS.

Influence of promotion in social media, social media marketing triggers viral communications amongst consumers across online communities, brand and fan pages, and

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: sharmilakayal@gmail.com (S. Kayal)

promotion-related content generated by the companies/organizations on popular networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and many others (Jara et al., 2014) define SMM as a new generation marketing tool encouraging higher attention and participation from the consumers through the use of social networks.

The researchers (Ramadhoni, MujiGunarto, 2020) have written a paper on the *influence of promotion in social media and word of mouth on the decision on selection of study programs at private universities*. The researchers found that promotion through social media is effective marketing strategy. In the decision-making process, social media is widely used at the information seeking and evaluation stages (Adam, Gunarto, 2021). Students' use of social media also varies from country to country (Galan et al., 2015). Marketing through social media can enhance the brand experience, because through social media it can increase brand ties to consumers and in the end consumers without realizing it do word of mouth with their environment (Zollo et al., 2020).

J.J. Masele and D.P. Rwehikiza in their research paper titled *applications of social media for promoting higher learning institutions activities in Tanzania* have mentioned about the importance of social media. The study recommends that the universities are active in using social media, but they should focus on financial and managerial resources. The research suggest that Universities need to adopt an integrated marketing approach that brings together all the marketing strategies including those from the units (Masele, Rwehikiza, 2021).

2. Materials and methods

Recent research has taken place on university *Branding During Covid-19: A Study on The Role of Social Media in Promoting Covid-19 Awareness and Building Brand Image* by (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020). The researchers in their study focused on how social media is used for branding of higher educational institutes and Universities during Covid pandemic. Universities have created outreach program where they spread awareness about Covid-19 and promote their brand name. The selected post could be used as case study for other universities for brand building purpose (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020).

Recent research is done on a *Viewpoint on Digital Marketing and Usage of Social Media Tools during COVID-19 Pandemic* by (Patil et al., 2021). The researcher tried to explore the usage effect of digital marketing as well as social media channels by different industries and sectors during pandemic time. The researcher tried to explore both side of usage effect whether positive or negative. The findings reveal how positive effect outshine negative effect of social media usage by organisations during pandemic. Due to which they are benefitted in their business (Patil et al., 2021).

Theoretical Perspective-Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) includes three parts: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographic. Phenomenology is the study of experience. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Idiographic is all about how a particular person makes sense out of their experience (Science..., n.d.). This is one of the useful research methods to explore existential experience. This method of IPA was proposed by Jonathan Smith. It emphasizes convergence and divergences of experiences. It also analyzes detailed lived experiences of a small group of participants. The two objective of this research method is it helps to observe in detail how someone make sense of their experience of life and secondly it helps to give proper interpretation of lived experiences (Tuffour, 2017).

In the current paper this analysis method will help to understand the experiences of few people of a particular sector like Indian higher academia related to media education during social media promotion during Covid pandemic of 2020 in India. The phenomenology perfectly applies to the present research given that the virtual experience is documented in social networking sites.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory, developed by Rogers (Rogers, 1962) is one of the oldest social science theories. It originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system.

There are four main interacting elements of the key concept: Diffusion of Innovations – 1) an innovation, 2) communicated through certain channels, 3) over time and 4) among members of a social system.

According to his research, there are five adopter categories – innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

In applying the diffusion of innovation theory, it is important to understand potential adopters and their decision-making process. Important factors in decision making include who makes the decision, and whether the decision is made freely and implemented voluntarily.

The present study is descriptive in nature which has tried to describe and act as a tool for understanding theoretical ideas of the research problem. Following are the research objectives for this study;

1) To study the selected Indian Universities and premier media Institutes usage pattern of social networking sites as promotional tools.

2) To analyze thematically the preference of social media as a promotional tool for admission during 2020 pandemic lockdown by the academic institutions of India.

Followed by the objectives, the researchers were attempt to answer the research questions;

RQ1. Which is the most popular social networking site used by selected premier Indian Universities and premier media Institute as a promotional tool during admission period in 2020?

RQ2. What are the popular themes identified in the admission post during the 2020 pandemic of lockdown?

RQ3. What is the public engagement scenario of these admission posts by Indian Universities in social networking sites like Facebook?

RQ4. What are the most used words in the admission post of 2020 among selected universities and media institutes Facebook post of admission 2020?

This study has adopted qualitative methodology based on its nature to deal with case studies along with content study on social media platforms. For non-inferential research, the researcher has used purposive sampling in which a different academia of Media and Communication will be selected based on its ranking of 2021 (*Outlook, The Week, India Today, Times*) and the sample will be chosen from the zones (east, west, north and south and central) which includes both government and private institutions. Each zone, one public and private institute has been taken into consideration for this study. The social media page analysis will be done for the year 2020 and 2021. This research has been conducted by using case studies and content of pages of selected institutions/varsities available in social media of the selected zone.

Data Collection Tool: Primary data collection has been done through content analysis method with coding and transcription from *Twitter* and *Facebook* pages. Secondary data collection method includes previous research, data, books, journals and case studies which have given the further idea. Selection of academics of India is based on purposive sampling with non-proportionate data set of the social media pages (*Twitter* and *Facebook*). Transcriptions, coding and analysis techniques have been used for this study and with the interpretation through software like NVivo. Thematic Coding (Themes identified through auto-coding option of NVIVO from FB post analysis of University/Institute FB page).

The researchers have adopted a qualitative method of analysis where NVIVO 12 (1.5.1) Licensed version software tools are used to analyze data and create initial coding themes from the fb post of selected University for admission in 2020. Hashtag #Admission2020 is used to fetch data related to admission from Facebook pages of selected universities and Institute for 2020 period when there was lockdown throughout the country due to Covid-19 pandemic. So, the period of study is from March 2020 to October 2020 and universities are selected on the basis of all India ranking with special reference to media studies. All the posts related to this hashtag are analyzed using NVIVO 12 (1.5.1 version) licensed version software and initial themes are created. Researchers have adopted semantically thematic analysis. The initial themes are based on the percentage of reference code from the posts after analysis on the software. In the next step a broader theme is created which is considered as final code and initial theme code is treated as sub-theme in this stage. This helped us to create a thematic mind map for better understanding of the topic area. Therefore, how Indian Universities and Institutes are using social media especially Facebook for admission promotion is important to be noted.

3. Discussion

In their study of we chat application of academic library usages in China revealed that one third of the libraries in China are using it in ease because of the popularity of social networking sites and advanced marketing promotional tool (Xu et al., 2015).

Discriminative approaches to media study raised two farther problems. First, in fastening so sprucely upon value questions, discriminative approaches tended to pay particularly close attention to textual analysis. Second, held at bay were questions of interpretation and readership (Masterman, 2018).

The dependency of social media application has vehemently increased in various varsities and academic institutions of Indonesia (Rachman, Putri, 2018).

Some researchers (Dudin et al., 2019) study suggested that as a practical result to the thing of adding the overall media knowledge of the population, it's suggested to use inter-network collaboration (social networking collaboration), where Generation Next will transmit applicable knowledge to Generation Last and the social networking administration will support the exchange of knowledge using positive underpinning (for illustration, by assigning special public statuses to active druggies).

The research results (Jian, 2019) showed that the evaluation of classroom teaching learning method and quality was realized through the teaching evaluation system mechanism, thus, the system is of great significance to ameliorate the effectiveness of classroom tutoring.

The study outlines conditions for understanding the digital capability model, which, in the environment of the generally perceived educational process should be holistic. Its support in perpetration is particularly within formal education (Kačínová, 2019).

The dependency of social media among scholars and interpreters has encouraged marketing preceptors to find ways to incorporate social media into their classrooms. Results suggest that actors bettered their professional communication chops while using language that provokes lesser cognitive processes. Counteraccusations for marketing preceptors and unborn directions for the design are also handed (Abney et al., 2019).

This composition presents some reflections as an epigraph of the special issue "Digital learning distraction or dereliction for the future", whose final result has allowed us to group a set of critical exploration and analysis on the addition of digital technologies in educational surrounds (Buckingham, 2020; Gálíková Tolnaiová, 2019; Vrabec, Bôtošová, 2020).

There's a confluence between technologies and media that makes ICTs borrow strategies and forms analogous to traditional media, especially in their hunt to produce influence on citizens. For this reason, curricular objects should include a critical analysis of this new reality in order to train new generations (Galán, 2020).

In their study (Lacka, 2021) findings suggest that scholars are better off without counting on digital technologies. While VL can enhance scholars' HE retentions achievement with fresh inputs, scholars who use SM are the least effective. This encourages farther work to concoct further active use of VL and SM under the HE setting.

The recent research article is done on *Marketing Universities and targeting international students: a comparative analysis of social media data trials* by Bamberger et al., is published in 2020. The researchers analyzed social media data of Facebook posts of two higher education institutes in Israel to explore how they "portray" themselves to appeal to international students. The result showed that there are two types of "Portrayal". One is promoting the brand of the nation and the other one is identified with a divergent approach in crafting these portrayals. Researchers discussed the role of portrayal and approaches in creating students' expectations about the educational experience. The research gives insight into the nexus of international student marketing and recruitment and higher education data (Bamberger et al., 2020).

Hilde A.M. Voorveld published a research article on *Brand communication in social media: A research agenda in 2019*. The researcher through this article proposed an agenda for future research on brand communication through social media. The researcher has analyzed the current situation in research which is stuck in the discussion of conceptual and theoretical challenges in brand communication through social media. The researcher has done a survey of the advertising and media industry to understand their expectations. As a result, the researcher came up with six directions for future research; firstly, social media influencers (SMI); secondly, customized brand content in social media; thirdly, ethical concern about the nature of consumer empowerment and social media content; fourthly, platform characteristics; fifthly, social media included in the media mix and consumer experience; sixthly, real-time data on social media (Voorveld, 2019).

Mason et al., published a research article on social media marketing gains importance after Covid-19 in 2021. Researchers led exploratory research to find out how Covid-19 has changed consumer behavior in the U.S. regarding social media marketing. Researchers performed variance test analysis to understand the difference between consumer use of social media and consumer decision-making tools. Findings revealed that consumers have increased social media usage to identify products, gather information about any product, compare a product, and finally make an

online purchase. As the study is done against the backdrop of covid-19 pandemic scenario so the situation might find similarities in other nations too (Mason et al., 2021).

A recent research article (AlFaris et al., 2018) on the pattern of social media use and its association with academic performance among medical students was published in 2018. Researchers tried to investigate the pattern of usage of social media by students and its association and influence on academic performance. Findings revealed that there is no correlation between the average grade points and the daily frequency of social media usage by students. Results revealed the fact that most students use social media but very few use it for academic purposes (AlFaris et al., 2018).

C. Troussas, A. Krouska, E. Alepis, and M. Virvou published a recent research article on intelligent and adaptive tutoring through a social network for higher education in 2021. The researchers tried to examine the adaptivity of social media as a tool to promote collaboration between students and instructors. To analyze the assessment and adaptivity of pedagogical tools the researchers have presented i-LearnC# (intelligent tutoring application over Facebook, for learning programming).

This Facebook app bridges the gap between students and instructors and provided personalized advice and problem-solving. Further, this application utilized cluster data analysis to suggest the optimal learning group for the students to select. Evaluation is done by this app using statistical hypothesis tests, framework, and system log files. Result showed that i-LearnC# is successful in proving beneficial to students for computing education and its acceptance rate is high and adaptivity in intelligent learning environment (Troussas et al., 2021).

Recent study has taken place on a study on Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Education Sector with reference to Nagpur, India by (Gondane et al., 2021). The study showed impact of digital marketing on education sector as target group (Gondane et al., 2021).

Further research is also done on assessing (The impact) of advertisement on customer decision making: Evidence from an educational institution by (Ali, 2021). The study focuses on finding out factors that influence student's decision during admission. The sample was taken from fresher students of Komar University. The result showed that advertisement done on social media and television was very effective. Moreover, the advertisement copy produced by production unit of university has more appeal to students compared to advertisement produced by any agency (Ali, 2021).

4. Results

The following Tables depicts the ranking and necessary information regarding Indian academics.

Table 1. Universities and Institutes selected on the basis of 2021 ranking (Outlook, The Week, India Today, Times) with respect to media studies

Zone	Academia (Public)	Ranking	Academia (Private)	Ranking
East/Central	Kushabhau Thakre Journalism And Mass Communication University, Chhatisgarh	29	NSHM Knowledge Campus, Kolkata	29
West	Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune	4	Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC), Pune	3
North	Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi	1	Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication, Dwarka, Delhi	16
South	University of Hyderabad (UoH)	5	Manipal Institutes of Communication, Udupi, Karnataka	6

Table 2. Thematic Coding (Themes identified through auto-coding option of NVIVO from Fb post analysis of University/Institute FB page)

Themes / University and Institute FB page Reference code in percentage	A : Files\\ Apeejay Institute Of Mass Communication _ Facebook-Page-2 (%)	B : Files\\ Indian Institute of Mass Communication _ Facebook-page-2 (%)	C : Files\\ Manipal Academy of Higher Education _ Facebook(%)	D : Files\\ NSHM Knowledge Campus _ Facebook-Page -2 (%)	E : Files\\ Symbiosis Center for Media & Communication _ Facebook (%)	F : Files\\ University of Hyderabad _ Facebook-page-2 (%)
1 : admission	0	7.01	0	34.16	0	14.45
2 : admission team	0	0	0	14.68	0	0
3 : approved courses	0	0	0	0	0	12.13
4 : comment	17.12	0	0	0	21.37	0
5 : content	0	0	0	0	11.64	0
6 : courses	0	22.92	0	5.9	0	16.84
7 : date	4.2	14.02	0	0	0	6.34
8 : diploma courses	0	15.91	0	5.9	0	0
9 : eligible candidates	0	0	0	0	0	12.13
10 : engaging talk	0	0	0	0	5.07	0
11 : entrance	15.29	0	0	0	0	4.7
12 : fees	0	14.02	0	0	0	0
13 : institution	0	0	24.24	0	9.73	0
14 : lecture	0	0	0	0	16.58	0
15 : live webinar	0	12.08	0	0	0	0
16 : management	0	0	0	13.72	0	0
17 : media	11.3	0	0	0	7.95	0
18 : merit lists	0	0	0	0	20.41	0
19 : message	0	0	51.52	0	7.26	0
20 : payment	0	14.02	0	0	0	0
21 : placement glimpses	48.76	0	0	0	0	0
22 : postgraduate admissions procedure	0	0	0	14.68	0	0
23 : schedule	0	0	0	1.92	0	0
24 : university	0	0	24.24	0	0	3
25 : visit	3.34	0	0	0	0	1.43
26 : year	0	0	0	9.05	0	16.84
27 : year duration	0	0	0	0	0	12.13

Table 3. Thematic Analysis

Initial theme coding	Final Theme
1 : admission, 2 : admission team, 9 : eligible candidates, 11 : entrance, 18 : merit lists, 22 : postgraduate admissions procedure,	Admission
3 : approved courses, 5: content, 6: courses, 8: diploma courses , 14 : lecture, 16: management, 17 : media,	Courses
10 : engaging talk, 15 : live webinar, 19 : message, 21 : placement glimpses, 25. visit	Promotion
13 : institutes, 24 : university,	University and institute
20 : payment, 12 : fees	Cost
7 : date, 26 : year , 23 : schedule,	Date and time
4 : comment	Miscellaneous

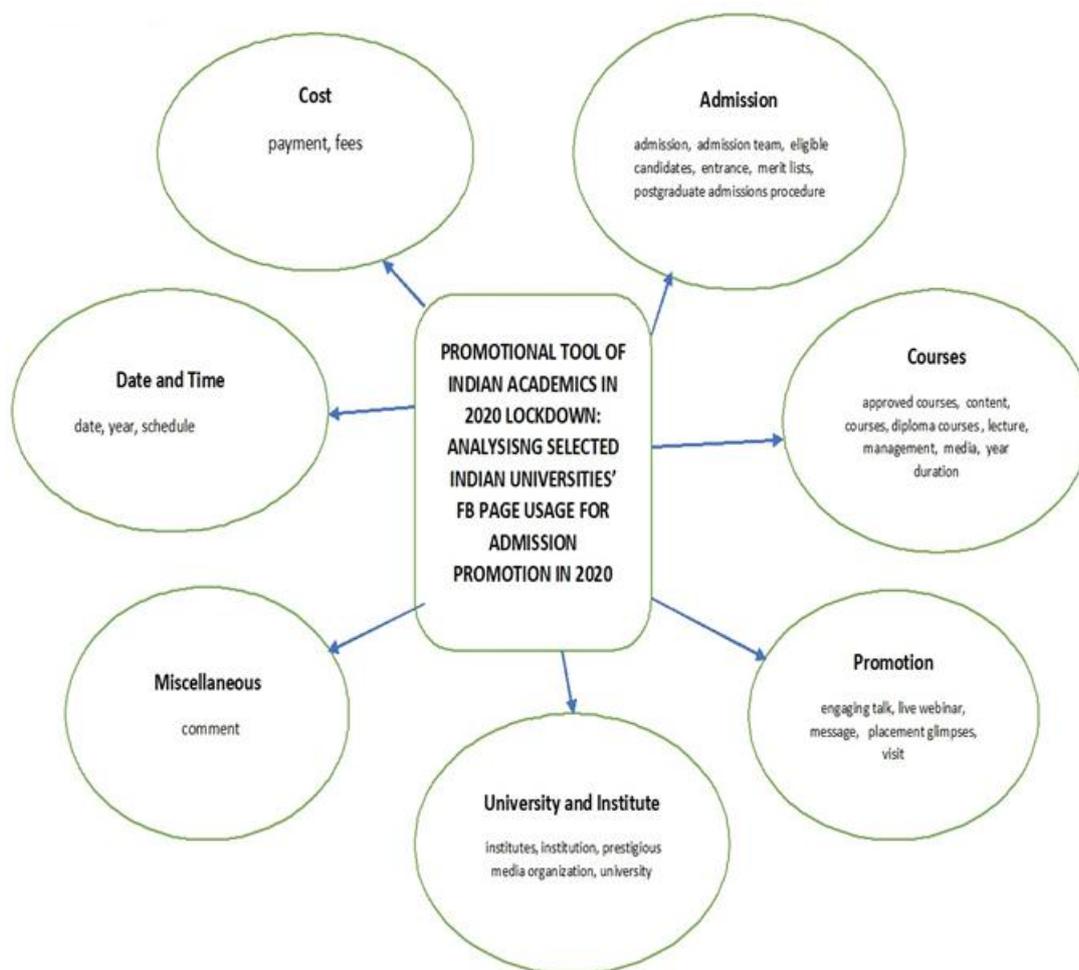
**Fig. 1.** Thematic map of thematic analysis result

Table 3. Content Analysis Report on the basis of themes of Facebook post on official page of Universities and Institutes

Universities and Institute /Theme Used in FB post for admission in 2020	Admission	Courses	Promotion	University and Institute	Cost	Date and time	Miscellaneous
Kushabhau Thakre Journalism And Mass Communication University	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
NSHM Knowledge Campus, Kolkata	present	present	present	NA	NA	present	NA
Savitribai Phule Pune University	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Symbiosis centre for Media and Communication (SIMC)	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi	present	present	present	NA	present	present	NA
Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication, Dwarka	present	NA	present	NA	NA	present	present
University of Hyderabad	present	present	present	NA	NA	present	NA
Manipal Institutes of Higher Education, Udipi	present	present	NA	present	NA	present	NA

NA – Not Applicable

Table 4. Content Analysis report of OFFICIAL Facebook page post of Universities and Institutes

Universities and Institutes	Category	City/Town	Social media page active status (Mainly for Facebook Page)	Last Post Date (to verify active status)	Total post in consideration (on Admission 2020)	Selected Post-date range
Kushabhau Thakre Journalism and Mass Communication University	Public	Raipur, Chattisgarh	Not Active on Facebook	18-08-2017	NA	NA
NSHM Knowledge Campus, Kolkata	Private	Kolkata, West Bengal	Active on Facebook Page	9-10-2021	35	March-November 2020
Savitribai Phule Pune University	Public	Pune, Maharastra	Not Active on Facebook	21-05-2017	NA	NA
Symbiosis centre for Media and Communication (SIMC)	Private	Pune, Maharastra	Active on Facebook Page	05-10-2021	6	June-Oct 2020
Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi	Public	Delhi	Active on Facebook page	09-10-2021	7	Aug-Dec 2020
Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication, Dwarka	Private	New Delhi	Active on Facebook page	04-10-2021	17	March-November 2020
University of Hyderabad	Public	Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh	Active on Facebook page	08-10-2021	8	February-Sept 2020
Manipal Institutes of Higher Education, Udupi	Private	Udupi, Karnataka	Active on Facebook page	10-10-2021	7	May-Aug 2020



Fig. 2. Word Cloud of Facebook post analysed in this research

Thematic analysis results showed certain themes as dominant and others as sub-theme which are depicted through mind maps. Seven broad themes have been identified-admission, course, promotion, university and institute, cost, date and time, miscellaneous. The report of content analysis showed which theme is preferred in the social media message or post by the particular university under study. Further content analysis revealed different categories (public or private) of university using different themes. Also, further analysis revealed which category of university is active on social media and did their admission promotion during 2020. The active status of the university is verified by a query on the date of last post. Then further analysis is done to collect data on the total number of admission posts done by each of the selected universities for the period of 2020. The result showed that two of the prominent high ranked public sector universities did not do any fb post for admission promotion during 2020 and they are not active on Facebook page for quite a long time. This shows lack of engagement in promoting for admission. Further content analysis of fb page posts by selected universities revealed the number to total comments and highest likelihood for a particular admission post of 2020. This shows the level of engagement to each post and how the engagement level differs from one university to another.

Word Cloud-A word cloud is a form of word frequency used to know which words and phrases are mostly used. This is a tool that helps to know what is happening in the data. Word cloud is available in the NVIVO 12 licensed version. The word frequency criteria weredisplaying word 1000 most frequent, with minimum length seven and grouping is with stemmed words. The word cloud shows certain words like admission, comment, Facebook, university, communication, education is the most frequently used words in the post published by selected universities for admission 2020. Surrounding words are associated with most frequent words. According to researchers (Sinclair, Hall, 2008) word cloud is the visual representation of keywords that have maximum frequency in the dataset. Certain words are shown in a bigger front than others thereby indicating higher frequency of those words in the dataset.

From this research and analysis of data it is evident that social media played a vital role in admission promotion by Indian higher education Institutes and Universities. Facebook is seemed to be most preferred social networking medium to promote admission post by Indian higher education Institute and Universities. Out of category private and public University private university showed more active engagement on social networking medium and actively promoted admission related post and events during pandemic lockdown in 2020. Kushabhau Thakre Journalism and Mass Communication University and Savitribai Phule Pune University are not active on Facebook or twitter. Some of the private universities and Institutes are equally active on twitter with their admission post like Symbiosis centre for media and communication affiliated under Symbiosis International, NSHM Knowledge Campus, Kolkata affiliated under WBUT, Apeejay Institute of Mass Communication, Dwarka etc. But from overall survey it is found student engagement with universities are more on Facebook platform than on twitter so their number of admission post is more updated on Facebook compared to twitter. Also matter of concern is student's accessibility to internet facility to participate in social media engagement with universities. Most of the private universities are urban centric and are availed by students with sound financial background who have easy accessibility to internet facility and mobile or laptops. Whereas the students of many public universities do come from rural background with financially

not so sound background to afford steady internet facility or associated device to use it. Though mobile phones are widely available in urban and rural areas but steady network facility is major challenge. This resulted in gap in communication with engaging user on social networking platform. Public universities perhaps also lack the proper manpower to handle the official Facebook or twitter page to update information on regular basis. This resulted in gap of communication with prospective students who seek admission in that university.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that social media usage by Indian academia has shown varied patterns and the platform has revolutionized the traditional approach of academic promotion. The period of study was 2020 from March to November during the lockdown of covid pandemic when every sector tried to work online especially in the education sector which revolutionized their teaching approach to online platforms. The academia transformed to digital education almost overnight and accepted technological innovation as the situation demanded. The user experience is rich and it differs between public universities and private universities. This paper mainly focused on how this academia has utilized this technological innovation during pandemic lockdown to do admission promotion. The result shows that some govt. universities are quite active in social media but not all. Most of the private universities and institutes are equally active in social media for admission promotion. This research shows how public universities and private universities and institutes of higher education are in different stages of s-curve of diffusion of innovation theory. The current research has some limitations. There is not adequate data available for government universities twitter usage. Apart from that they don't regularly update their admission post in Facebook handle. Also, some of the govt. universities hardly have a proper official Facebook page or twitter page which makes it more confusing to get proper and accurate data from there. Not much literature is available on the topic as it is a very current situation. There can be future research possible in the area of twitter hashtag analysis on how Indian academia of different discipline did admission promotion after and on pandemic. Furthermore, empirical and quantitative methodology can be applied to collect user impact and how they accepted technological innovation from a student perspective.

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