

Chapter 13

Exploring the Role of Social Media Marketing in the Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

The educational system across the world is undergoing a transition and is affected by numerous factors encompassing technology to psychology. The traditional model of face-to-face teacher-led learning approach has been gradually shifted to student-centric and outcome-based learning. Though the intellect and learning capacities among students differ in many aspects, personalized attention of the teacher to student and practical exposure to subjects are considered as few significant areas of concern in curriculum and pedagogy. The late 2000s witnessed the dawn of many EdTech companies proclaiming personalized attention and experiential learning through online platforms. EdTech companies make fine use of social media marketing and adopt well-thought-out strategies to reach out to the student segment and parents. The prime objective of this chapter is to study the role of social media marketing strategies in capturing student segments and the influence that makes on parents' purchase decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Pandemic led the way to most of the business activities embracing virtual interaction. Educational institutions across the world have also moved to online modes of teaching and learning. Several programs were commenced by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, including the launching of online portals, direct broadcasting through television channels, and telecasting through radios for students to continue learning (Jena,2020). The online portals include SWAYAM, “an education program initiated by the government of India to provide online learning and reduce the digital divide”

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(Dhawan,2020), DIKSHA a platform offering learning material relevant to the prescribed school curriculum (Datalabs,2020), eBasta a framework to make school books accessible in a digital format. As part of the initiative, these portals connect the publishers with schools. E-learning has been challenged with respect to “accessibility, affordability, quality, flexibility, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, and policy” (Dhawan, 2020). The arguments such as flexibility, personalized attention, and experiential learning of education give a pathway for Ed-Tech companies to target a specific market segment of students and parents. Ed Techs have come upfront and asserted to bridge the gap of knowledge fulfilment and this gap is addressed to a large segment of parents and students by traditional as well as social media. Ed Tech companies use both traditional as well as social media for reaching out to the large population. Advertisements through Traditional media such as print, radio, television possess the maximum reach compared to social media (Dentsu,2020) such as social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, etc (Sharma and Verma,2018), especially Television’s reach has expanded to 96 percent of the total audience. The media share is spent more on television i.e., 39 percent (Rs 26,869 crores) followed by print i.e., 29 percent (Rs 20,110 crores) compared to digital media which is 20 percent (Rs 13,683 crores) where social media spend is Rs 3,835 crores (Dentsu,2020). The social networking user’s penetration in India has escalated from 19.13 percent in 2015 to 54.58 percent in 2021 and by 2025 this is expected to reach 67.4 percent(statista.com). As the pace of social media users is rising, firms must necessitate social media as an opportunity to reach their targeted market segment. Social media as a marketing tool to promote the brand of a product or service, to engage and retain the consumers with an ultimate objective to sell the product or service is known as social media marketing (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012; Constantinides,2014; Pourkhani et al., 2019) and there are different strategies used by different companies on the basis of their product or service. Ed-tech companies as mentioned earlier uses social media and different social media marketing strategies to market their brand and product. In this paper, the prominence is on nine social media marketing strategies by different authors Ananda et al.,2014; Constantinides,2014; Godey et al.,2016; Felix et al.,2017; Parsons and White,2018; Pan et al.,2019; Chen et al.,2021Mishra and Singh,2021; Li et al.,2021 and how the combination or the elements of these strategies are used by four different ed-tech companies naming Byju’s, Vedantu, Whitehat Jr and Toppr to influence the parent’s purchase decision. As Students below eighteen years of age are financially dependent on their parents, accordingly, their educational needs or requirements depend on the purchasing decision of their parents, therefore these strategies are directed towards the parent’s purchase decision.

Significance of the Study

Ed Tech companies pull down the long-standing equity and accessibility gaps by delivering personalized and experiential learning based on the individual capacity of students. The trends influencing the Indian Ed-Tech landscape are Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain Technology, Virtual reality and Augmented reality, Online proctoring or mentorship, Personalised learning, and gamification (Ameer and Vineeth,2021). The pandemic crisis has witnessed a surge in Ed Tech start-ups in the year 2020 and has led them to tap the right opportunity in catering to student needs by providing live sessions (Dhawan,2020). Using social media by Ed Tech start-ups for marketing purposes and promoting their brand in order to influence the purchase decision of parents through social media marketing is discussed in this paper. Overall, nine social media marketing strategies or frameworks by different authors are considered and four leading Ed Tech start-ups are used for describing the use of social media marketing.

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