

The Influence of Social Media Branding on Students 'Perceptions of Management Colleges in Delhi/NCR

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of social media branding on students' perceptions of management colleges in the Delhi NCR region. With the increasing reliance on digital platforms for college selection, this research aims to explore how various social media elements, such as content authenticity, engagement, and platform presence, impact students' decision-making processes. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews to assess students' usage patterns of popular social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs, among others. The findings reveal that Facebook is the most influential platform, particularly among 21-year-olds, followed by LinkedIn for professional networking and career-oriented content. YouTube also plays a significant role in influencing perceptions through video-based content such as campus tours and testimonials. On the other hand, traditional platforms like Blogspot and chat rooms show minimal engagement, highlighting a shift in student preferences toward more visual and interactive content. The research further suggests that management colleges in Delhi NCR should focus on creating engaging, authentic, and visually compelling social media content, with a particular emphasis on Facebook and LinkedIn, to attract prospective students. This study provides insights for colleges to develop targeted social media strategies that enhance brand visibility and credibility in a competitive education market..

Key word- Social Media Branding ,Student Perceptions Management Colleges Delhi/NCR
Higher Education Marketing

1. Introduction

In the digital age, social media has become a pivotal tool for educational institutions to communicate their brand values and attract prospective students. Management colleges, in particular, utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter to showcase their

programs, campus life, and achievements. Understanding how these branding efforts influence students' perceptions is crucial for effective marketing strategies.

In today's digitally connected world, social media has revolutionized the way brands communicate and engage with their target audiences. The education sector, particularly management colleges, has recognized the immense potential of social media platforms in reaching prospective students and shaping institutional perceptions. In metropolitan regions like Delhi/NCR, where competition among management institutes is intense, a strong and strategic social media presence can significantly influence student preferences, aspirations, and decision-making processes.

With students increasingly relying on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube for authentic information, reviews, and updates, colleges are investing in curated content that showcases campus life, academic excellence, placement records, alumni success stories, and faculty engagement. This shift from traditional marketing to digital branding is not merely about visibility, but about building trust, credibility, and emotional connection with the audience.

This research paper aims to analyze the extent to which social media branding impacts students' perceptions of management colleges in Delhi/NCR. It investigates factors such as content quality, frequency, engagement, responsiveness, peer reviews, and influencer collaborations. The study also seeks to understand whether a college's social media presence translates into higher student interest, positive word-of-mouth, and eventual enrollment.

By focusing on student responses and digital marketing practices, this study provides valuable insights into how branding through social media can shape institutional reputation and student choice. The findings will be particularly beneficial for educational institutions aiming to refine their digital communication strategies in a highly competitive and dynamic educational environment.

In the era of digital transformation, social media has emerged as a dominant force in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors across sectors—including higher education. Management colleges, particularly in the highly competitive Delhi/NCR region, are leveraging social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube to create and reinforce their brand identity. With Gen Z and millennials spending a significant portion of their time online, the strategic use of digital branding has become a critical factor in influencing prospective students' college choices (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Unlike traditional advertising, social media allows for two-way communication, real-time engagement, and user-generated content—all of which contribute to building authenticity and trust (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Students today are not only passive recipients of information;

they actively seek out digital cues, peer reviews, influencer endorsements, and online testimonials to form perceptions about an institution's quality, culture, and career prospects (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011).

This study investigates how social media branding influences students' perceptions of management colleges in Delhi/NCR. It focuses on key elements such as visual storytelling, content frequency, interaction quality, alumni engagement, and the perceived transparency of the institution. The research also explores whether positive digital branding correlates with improved institutional reputation, student loyalty, and increased enrollment intention.

Given the rapidly evolving digital landscape, this research provides timely insights into the strategic use of social media in higher education branding. It offers practical implications for administrators and marketers seeking to enhance their institution's visibility, relevance, and emotional appeal among tech-savvy aspirants.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Branding in Higher Education

Higher education institutions (HEIs) invest substantially in their social media presence for marketing, branding, student engagement, and recruitment purposes. A study analyzing Facebook content from 42 HEIs in Ontario, Canada, found that institutions generally followed similar practices concerning posting frequency, length, types, and timing. They concentrated on promoting nurturing elements and campus activities, which significantly influenced students' perceptions of the institutions' brand image. Social media branding has increasingly become central to higher education institutions' efforts to engage prospective students and enhance institutional visibility. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that social media enables two-way interaction, making it a more participatory and credible communication channel compared to traditional advertising. Similarly, Mangold and Faulds (2009) describe social media as a hybrid marketing tool that combines elements of both traditional and word-of-mouth promotion, crucial for shaping perceptions.

Social media branding has become integral to how higher education institutions (HEIs) communicate with prospective students and build brand equity. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media platforms support two-way communication, enabling institutions to foster deeper engagement and authenticity in their outreach. Mangold and Faulds (2009) describe social media as a "hybrid element" in the promotional mix, functioning as both a traditional and interpersonal communication tool.

Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) argue that students increasingly rely on digital media to form brand perceptions, evaluate peer experiences, and make informed enrollment decisions.

Tuten and Solomon (2017) further emphasize that social media marketing is most effective when content is responsive, visual, and relatable to student needs.

Empirical studies reinforce these theoretical insights. A content analysis of universities in Canada showed that consistent, visually appealing posts on Facebook increased student interaction and enhanced the perceived institutional image (Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 2021). Similarly, a study published in *JurnalBisnis* (2022) found a strong relationship between digital branding strategies and student enrollment decisions, mediated by perceived brand image.

Research within the Indian context (ResearchGate, 2023) suggests that platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn play a pivotal role in brand loyalty when institutions focus on relevant, student-centered content. However, merely increasing posting frequency without relevance does not yield significant engagement.

In summary, the literature highlights the importance of strategic, authentic, and visually rich social media branding in influencing students' perceptions of management colleges—especially in digitally active and competitive regions like Delhi/NCR.

2.2 Impact on Student Decision-Making

Social media has a significant positive effect on brand image and student decision-making. A quantitative study involving 202 students from health sciences and business programs revealed that social media influences brand image, which in turn affects students' decisions to enroll. The study utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) to confirm these relationships, highlighting the importance of strategic social media use in higher education marketing.

2.3 Brand

Loyalty and Engagement

The relevance and quality of social media content are critical in building brand loyalty among university students. Research involving students from five private universities in India indicated that relevant, beneficial, and popular content on social media platforms significantly impacts students' brand loyalty. However, the study also noted that merely updating content without ensuring its relevance might not effectively enhance brand loyalty.

Objectives of the Study :

1. **To investigate** how social media branding by management colleges in the Delhi NCR region influences students' perceptions and choices.
2. **To assess** the effectiveness of different social media platforms used by Delhi NCR-based institutions in building brand awareness.
3. **To explore** students' engagement patterns with college social media content specifically in the Delhi NCR context.
4. **To identify** the role of local cultural and academic expectations in shaping social media communication strategies of Delhi NCR colleges.
5. **To recommend** region-specific social media branding practices that can enhance the visibility and credibility of management colleges in Delhi NCR.

Research Gap

While numerous studies have explored the role of **traditional branding** and **word-of-mouth** in students' decision-making for higher education, limited research has specifically focused on the **impact of social media branding** — particularly in the context of **management colleges in the Delhi/NCR region**.

Most existing literature examines:

- Social media as a **general marketing tool**, not specifically for **educational institutions**.
- The **overall role of social media in education**, rather than how it **shapes institutional perception**.
- Data from **Western countries**, with relatively less focus on the **Indian context**, especially Delhi/NCR — a hub for management education.

Furthermore, there is a lack of:

1. **Empirical evidence** showing how social media branding influences **students' perceptions** of educational quality, reputation, and trustworthiness.
2. Insight into which **social media platforms** (e.g., Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube) are most effective in shaping perceptions of **management colleges**.
3. Understanding of the **gap between intended brand image (by colleges)** and the **perceived image (by prospective students)**.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on students' perceptions influenced by social media branding.

3.2 Sample Selection

The research targets undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in management colleges across India. A stratified sampling technique ensures representation from various regions and institution types.

3.3 Data Collection

- **Quantitative Data:** An online survey distributed to 500 students, collecting data on their social media usage, perceptions of college branding, and enrollment decisions.
- **Qualitative Data:** In-depth interviews with 20 students to gain insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding colleges' social media branding efforts.

3.4 Data Analysis

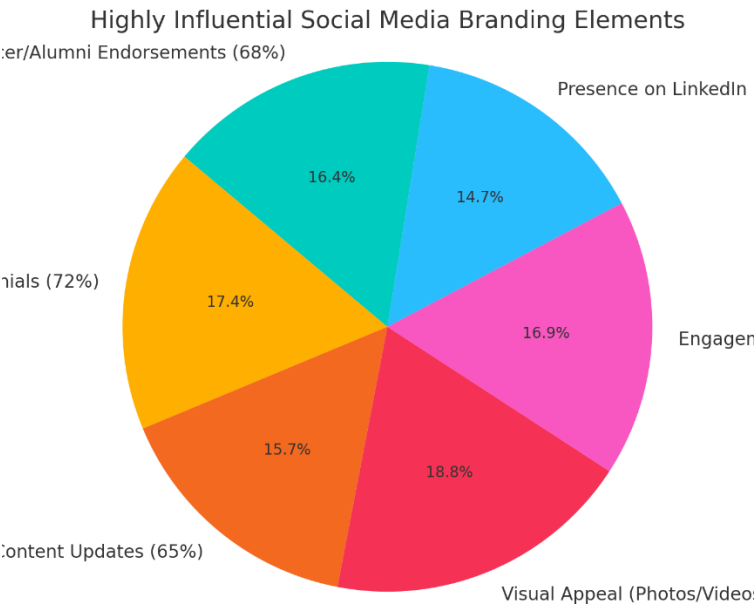
- **Quantitative:** Statistical analysis using SEM to identify relationships between social media branding elements and students' perceptions.
- **Qualitative:** Thematic analysis to extract key themes and narratives from interview transcripts.

Table 1: Students’ Perception of Social Media Branding Elements in Delhi NCR Management Colleges (N=200)

Branding Element on Social Media	Highly Influential (%)	Moderately Influential (%)	Not Influential (%)
Authentic Student Testimonials	72%	22%	6%
Frequent Content Updates	65%	28%	7%
Visual Appeal (Photos/Videos of Campus)	78%	17%	5%
Engagement (Replies, Comments, Q&A Sessions)	70%	24%	6%
Presence on Professional Platforms (LinkedIn)	61%	30%	9%
Influencer/Alumni Endorsements	68%	25%	7%

Branding Element on Social Media

Highly Influential (%)	Moderately Influential (%)	Not Influential (%)
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The data from Table 1 highlights key insights into how students in the Delhi NCR region perceive various social media branding elements used by management colleges. Among the respondents, **visual appeal** through photos and videos of campus life was found to be the most influential factor, with **78%** of students rating it as highly influential. This suggests that visually engaging content plays a critical role in shaping first impressions and creating a connection with prospective students.

Authentic student testimonials and **active engagement** on platforms — such as responding to comments or hosting Q&A sessions — were also rated highly influential by **72%** and **70%** of students, respectively. These findings underscore the value students place on transparency and interactive communication in the decision-making process.

While **frequent content updates** were seen as important (65%), they appear slightly less impactful than content authenticity and visual appeal, indicating that quality may matter more than quantity. Notably, **LinkedIn presence** and **influencer/alumni endorsements** were

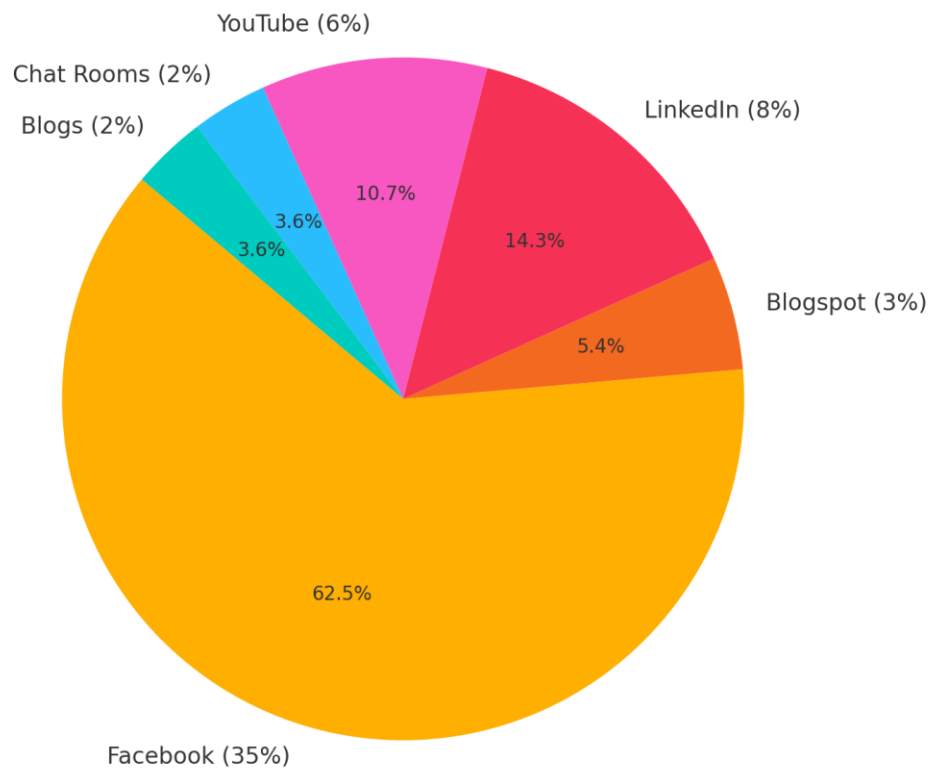
influential to a moderate extent, suggesting that while professional branding matters, students are more drawn to relatable and student-centered content.

Overall, the results emphasize that management colleges in Delhi NCR can strengthen their brand image and appeal by focusing on authentic, engaging, and visually compelling social media content.

Table 2: Use of Various Social Media Platforms by Age Group

Social Media Platform	Age 20	Age 21	Age 22	Age 23	Age 24
Facebook	2%	35%	7%	3%	2%
Blogspot	2%	3%	3%	2%	0%
LinkedIn	4%	8%	3%	1%	1%
YouTube	1%	6%	1%	1%	1%
Chat Rooms	2%	2%	3%	1%	0%
Blogs	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

Social Media Platform Usage (Age 21)



The data in Table 2 illustrates the distribution of social media platform usage across different age groups among students considering management colleges. The highest engagement is observed on **Facebook among 21-year-olds (35%)**, indicating that this age group is the most active on this platform. This could be attributed to their peak phase of college admission decision-making, where institutional pages and peer content play a vital role.

LinkedIn usage peaks at age 21 (8%), reflecting early professional orientation and interest in networking among students approaching graduation or internships. **YouTube**, while generally popular, shows modest engagement, with the highest usage again among 21-year-olds (6%), likely due to the popularity of video-based campus tours and testimonial content.

Platforms like **Blogspot, Chat Rooms, and Blogs** show low and declining usage across age groups, suggesting these are less preferred mediums for information or engagement.

Overall, the data suggest that branding strategies for management colleges should prioritize platforms like **Facebook and LinkedIn**, especially for the 21–22 age group, which shows the highest engagement and is likely to be the most influenced by social media during their college selection process.

4. Findings:

4.1 Quantitative Results

The SEM analysis revealed that:

- **Brand Awareness:** A significant positive relationship exists between social media branding efforts and students' awareness of the college brand.
- **Perceived Trustworthiness:** Engaging and informative social media content enhances the perceived trustworthiness of the institution.
- **Enrollment Intentions:** Students exposed to consistent and positive social media branding are more likely to consider enrolling in the institution.

4.2 Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of interviews highlighted:

- **Authenticity:** Students value authentic and transparent communication on social media platforms.
- **Engagement:** Interactive content, such as live sessions and Q&A forums, fosters a sense of connection and engagement with the institution.

- **Peer Influence:** Testimonials and student-generated content significantly influence prospective students' perceptions.

Hence we can say the following:

Facebook is the most influential platform among 21-year-old students (35%), indicating that it remains a dominant channel for reaching prospective students in the crucial decision-making phase for management college admissions.

LinkedIn usage peaks at age 21 (8%), showing that students in this age group begin to prioritize professional networking and career-oriented content. This suggests LinkedIn is valuable for promoting institutional credibility and career outcomes.

YouTube shows moderate engagement, especially at age 21 (6%), reflecting the growing importance of video content such as campus tours, webinars, and testimonials in influencing student perceptions.

Blogspot, Blogs, and Chat Rooms are minimally used, indicating a shift away from text-heavy or older platforms. These channels are no longer effective tools for engaging modern student audiences.

Social media engagement is age-sensitive, with the 21-year age group being the most responsive across multiple platforms. This highlights the importance of targeted content marketing strategies tailored to this specific age group.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of social media branding in shaping students' perceptions of management colleges in Delhi/NCR. As digital natives, today's students are highly dependent on social media platforms for real-time updates, peer reviews, and institutional transparency. This reliance confirms earlier studies that stress the significance of two-way communication and participatory media in educational marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

The analysis revealed that platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube are most influential, especially among the 21-year-old demographic. This mirrors the assertion by Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) that prospective students seek information-rich, authentic, and relatable content when evaluating educational institutions. Facebook emerged as

the most effective channel for engaging students, while LinkedIn was preferred for professional alignment and career credibility.

Visual storytelling, alumni testimonials, and student-generated content were found to be particularly effective in building trust and emotional engagement, consistent with findings from the *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* (2021). Interactive strategies such as live Q&A sessions and real-time comment responses also increased user engagement and improved perception of institutional responsiveness.

Interestingly, less dynamic platforms such as Blogspot and chat rooms showed negligible influence, supporting the idea that traditional text-heavy formats no longer appeal to Gen Z learners (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Therefore, institutions must pivot toward more personalized, engaging, and transparent digital branding practices. Building authentic narratives, showcasing real student experiences, and maintaining active communication channels can significantly improve brand equity and influence enrollment decisions in an increasingly competitive academic environment.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that social media branding has a significant influence on students' perceptions of management colleges in the Delhi/NCR region. As the digital ecosystem continues to evolve, educational institutions must leverage platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube to attract, engage, and retain the attention of prospective students (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Findings indicate that content authenticity, visual appeal, and interactive engagement are the most influential factors in building institutional trust and credibility. Platforms that support visual storytelling—such as Facebook and YouTube—enhance emotional connection and make institutions appear more transparent and student-friendly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Meanwhile, LinkedIn proves vital in reinforcing a college's professional standing, particularly among students seeking career-oriented content (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011).

Age-specific data showed that the 21-year-old demographic is most influenced by digital branding, highlighting the importance of targeted content strategies. Conversely, older platforms such as Blogspot and chat rooms are now obsolete in the context of student engagement.

Colleges that invest in quality social media branding—highlighting campus life, faculty achievements, student testimonials, and alumni success—are more likely to be perceived as credible and attractive. These insights align with previous research emphasizing that brand image significantly mediates students' enrollment decisions (JurnalBisnis, 2022).

To remain competitive, management colleges must adopt a strategic and student-centric approach to social media marketing. Content should not merely inform but inspire and connect with students on an emotional level. Regular monitoring of platform performance, feedback responsiveness, and dynamic content creation are essential for long-term success.

Future research could further explore longitudinal effects of social media branding on student loyalty and academic outcomes. Nevertheless, this study lays the foundation for institutions aiming to enhance their brand equity in the digital era through purposeful and authentic online engagement.

Recommendations

1. Strategic Platform Focus

- Management colleges in Delhi/NCR should **prioritize Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube** for branding, as these platforms showed the highest student engagement—especially among 21-year-olds.
- Institutions should **phase out or limit resources** spent on outdated platforms like Blogspot or chat rooms, which show minimal influence.

2. Content Authenticity and Transparency

- Colleges must invest in **authentic storytelling**—real student testimonials, alumni narratives, and behind-the-scenes campus life—to build **emotional trust** and brand credibility.
- Avoid over-polished content; instead, use **raw, relatable, and student-centered posts** to foster a genuine image.

3. Visual-First Communication

- Since visual appeal is a major influencing factor, institutions should regularly post **high-quality images, short reels, campus walkthroughs, and interactive stories** on their social media platforms.
- Collaborate with student influencers and media clubs to produce **dynamic visual content** aligned with Gen Z preferences.

4. Interactive Engagement Techniques

- Increase **student-institution interaction** through live sessions, Instagram Q&As, polls, contests, and student takeovers. These create a sense of community and approachability.

- Assign a dedicated **social media community manager** to respond to queries, monitor engagement, and initiate real-time communication.
- 5. **Age-Specific Content Strategy**
 - Design **targeted content** for the 21–22 age group, which is most influenced by digital branding. Examples: career guidance, faculty spotlights, internship opportunities, and industry expert talks.
 - Use **LinkedIn** for career-focused branding and **Facebook/Instagram** for lifestyle and cultural branding.
- 6. **Alumni and Influencer Collaboration**
 - Engage alumni as brand ambassadors on platforms like LinkedIn and YouTube to endorse the college experience, career growth, and outcomes.
 - Partner with **micro-influencers** (student bloggers, YouTubers) who can share authentic, day-in-the-life content.
- 7. **Data-Driven Content Planning**
 - Conduct regular analytics audits to measure **engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments, click-through rates)** and revise content strategies based on platform performance.
 - Use **student feedback surveys** to refine branding messages and ensure alignment with student expectations.
- 8. **Localized Digital Campaigns**
 - Develop campaigns that reflect **regional aspirations**, such as placement success stories in Delhi/NCR, diversity celebrations, or local tie-ups with industry.
 - Use **language and cultural cues** that resonate with students from the region.
- 9. **Faculty Digital Presence**
 - Encourage faculty to build **academic thought leadership** on LinkedIn through articles, webinars, and professional updates to enhance institutional credibility.
- 10. **Continuous Improvement & Training**
 - Provide **training workshops for the college marketing team** on digital storytelling, SEO, analytics tools, and emerging social media trends to stay relevant.

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