

An Empirical Study on the Relation Between the Promotional Strategies of Social Media Platforms and the Decision-Making Process of Admitting New Students to Private Universities

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Abstract: This research paper explores the utilization of social media in the marketing process for private universities like Ajeenkya DY Patil University, in terms of the decision-making process of admitting new students to a private university. A qualitative approach was used to analyze descriptive data from a survey taken by 100 first-year students enrolled in 2022. A probability sampling design with a simple random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The fourth industrial revolution has altered the way business and people interact through digital technology. This revolution is a cyber-physical system (CPS) that merges the virtual and physical worlds, thus giving rise to the concept of a connected internet-based world. Companies must be able to adapt and transform themselves to this new way of life if they want to remain competitive in the global market. Effective communication is a critical component of successful marketing.

1 INTRODUCTION

The academic sector and its outlines have evolved from conventional and offline marketing to totally digital technology because of the technological revolution in the educational industry caused by cyber-physical system, Industry 4.0. (CPS). This technology is potential of merging the digital and physical worlds in order to create a unified internet-based environment. According to the "India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy, Perspectives and Recommendations on the Future of Work" by Niti Aayog¹, in 2023, 60% of the global economy is expected to be digital, and by 2029-2030, 23.5 million of the workforces would consist of contractors or so-called "gig-workforce." Newcomers to the digital economy now can compete with others in this disruptive circumstance. An organization's management must incorporate the marketing philosophy. To compete on a worldwide scale, the organization needs to be able to reinvent itself as a marketing firm. Effective communication is an essential component of marketing. The ability to execute marketing communication with the objective of enlightening becomes feasible in the digital era

because it is no longer limited by place or time. With the help of this marketing communication, it is hoped that consumers will become more familiar with the brand.

In 2022, internet users in India have positively improved. According to the findings, the number of internet users in India have doubled in 2020 in comparison to 2015. As of July 2022, out of a total Indian population of 1.417 billion, there are 833 million active individuals, or around 59.28%, have access to the internet (wikipedia.org). According to the figure 1, in India there will be estimated 974.86 million internet users by 2025, but female, elderly people and remote location population will miss out on the access of internet if the progress is not made efficiently. Considering the development of technology and outreach of technology this estimation might change in the coming future. In the pandemic period the world saw a rapid transaction and growth in the web based users. Various local businesses started establishing their identity on either their own web-based platform or marking their presence on the apps developed for various vendors in the area like Zomato, Amazon, No-broker, OLX etc.

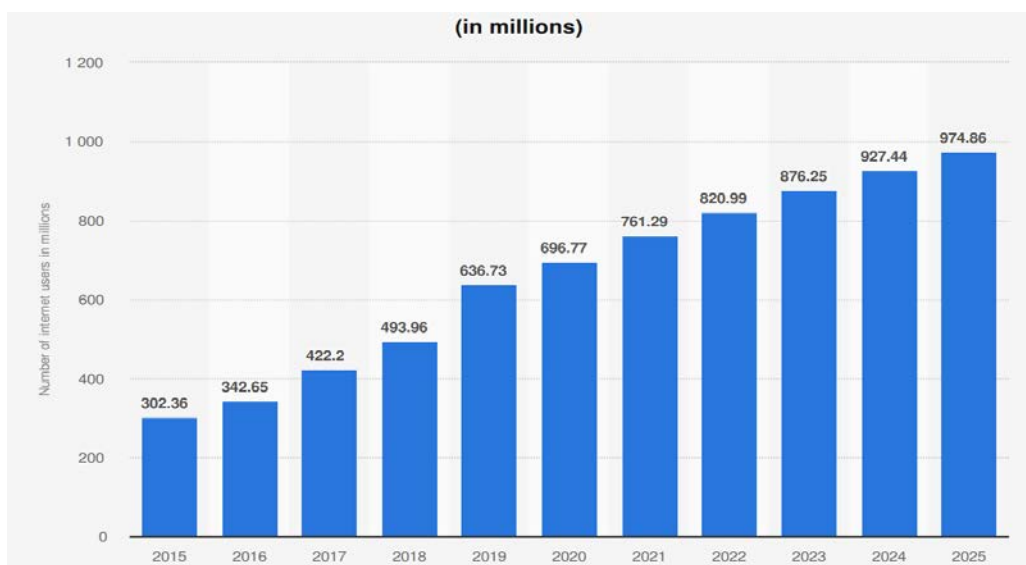


Image Source: Statista

Figure 1. Inter Users in India from 2015 to 2022 with forecast till 2025.

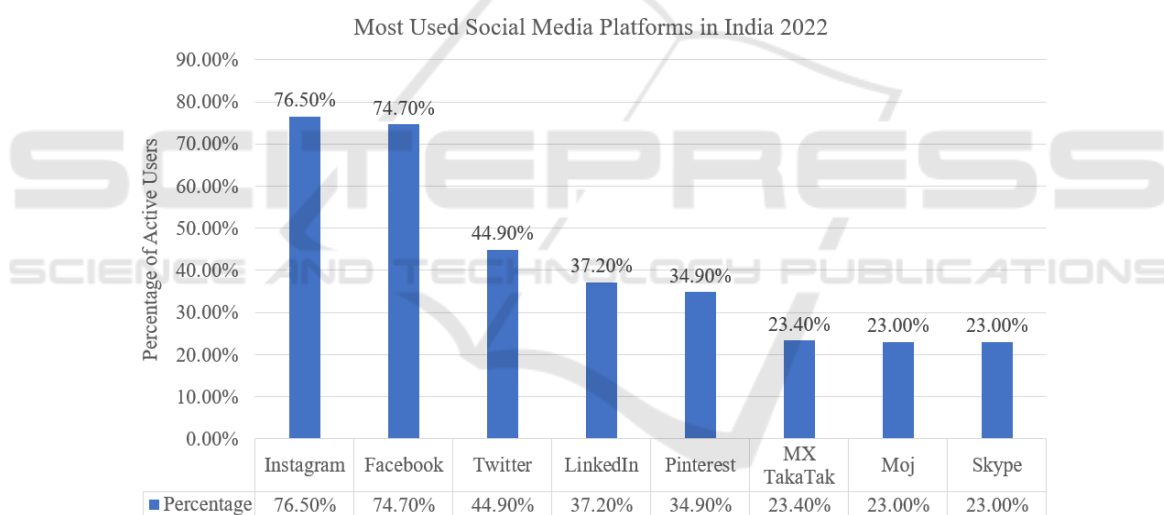


Figure 2. Widely used Social Media Platforms in India in 2022.

According to Figure 2, top 8 social media platforms which were often used in digital marketing to perform the task of social media marketing or social networking were in usage of 20 to 80 per cent (Source: The Global Statistics, 2022). The top result in active Instagram users, were 76.50 per cent (503.37 million) followed by Facebook with 74.70 per cent (491.53) and in third position, Twitter with 44.90 per cent (295.44) and the fifth LinkedIn with 37.20 per cent (244.78).

Between January 2019 and September 2022, the top three social media sites in India in terms of unique visitors were still Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter,

where first two of them are owned by Meta and the third was acquired by Elon Musk in December 2022. In terms of unique visits and time spent, Instagram is quickly catching up to Facebook, it's vital to highlight compared to the previous year and leading its way to the first position. This can be explained by the fact that young people (aged 18 to 34) are using Instagram Reels more frequently. Social networking sites developed locally in India have also emerged in the past few years, like Hike, Sharechat, Meme chat, Chingari etc.

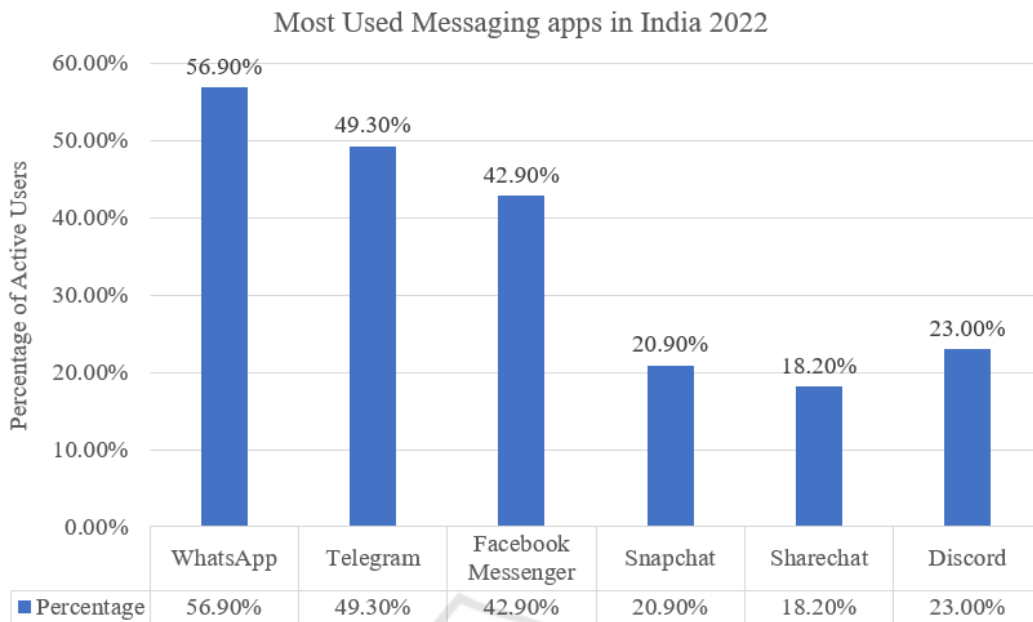


Figure 3. Most used Messaging apps in India in 2022

74.70% of the Indian population have active accounts of Facebook platforms, which makes it the second most platform with 491.53 million users. Facebook is the most popular among corporate entities, the political establishment, and the public in India, and it will continue to be a dominant power for many years to come. Many top brands have used Facebook to interact with their fans. A few new competitors like MX TakaTak (23.40% penetration), a small video forum produced locally and specially by MX Media & Entertainment, backed by Moj (23.00%), an even shorter video app and Skype (23.00%). According to figure 3, WhatsApp messaging platform has remained the most popular messaging platform in 2022 with 534.30 million active users, followed by Telegram with 374.40 users. Facebook messenger, which is popular among teenagers has been listed on the third rank with 324.39 million users and fourth positions stand with Snapchat 282.20 million users followed with new entrants such as Share Chat and Discord. Various facilities like forming groups for various activities, sharing various types of files to one another, sharing status, live locations, etc. is now possible through such messaging apps. Even transferring of money was the latest feature introduced in 2022 by WhatsApp application, which has given boost to active users and new users downloading the application. WhatsApp business also made it possible to publish catalogue or brochure of products and services, broadcasting message about product or offer launches

with a single click of button by the admin. Similarly telegram entered the market of messaging app and acquired the market within a very short period because of the innovative features and facilities provided by the application. The marketing plan for a product is impacted by this disruption. Higher education is one of the businesses included in the product's marketing plan. Brand recognition and understanding are needed through the website. The Universities are actively creating websites, with the goal of publishing details about faculties, academic programs, buildings and infrastructure, recognitions as well as events that have already happened or will happen, accomplishments, and other related activities. Universities can direct users (here students) to this website so they can get through this information without having to physically go there and visit the university. The purpose of this website should be to advertise itself as one of the active media channels that institutions regularly use to engage with prospective students.

As per Philip Kotler et al (1984)⁹, the decisions are actions of consumers who want to buy or not to buy the product. Among the various factors that influence a consumer's choice to purchase a good or service are quality, price, and products that are already well-known to the public and are frequently taken into consideration. Businesses must also comprehend the demands and wants of their customers. Higher education acts as a venue for research and development as well as the creator of an entire new generation of

people with the personality and scientific competence relevant to their specialties.

The decision of which institution to attend also majorly relies on financial factors. The investment must still be beneficial when the student's complete college studies. This is true because college or university education is time-consuming and a costly investment. Therefore, prospective students must have a strategy in place before choosing an authorized university or institution. In the higher education industry, competition for students' business has begun to heat up. To determine the scope of the digital phenomena in India specifically considering Pune city which is also famously known as the oxford of the east, this study was necessary. It used digital marketing with the sophistication of higher education in this age of disruption. Ajeenkya DY Patil University also known as ADYPU, Pune is one of such many educational institutions in Pune which is currently established in the Lohegaon area, located in the northern east of Pune, and is also famously known for the Pune International Airport. ADYPU is an amalgamation of seven schools of specialization, including Law, Management, Engineering, Film and Media, Design, Liberal Arts and Hotel Management, providing Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.

Based on the above-mentioned background of the University and digital marketing, this study was conducted and was able to analyze how social media is utilized towards the decision of admitting new students in the private universities of Pune. Furthermore, the study also explains the impact of marketing communications and digital marketing strategies of Ajeenkya DY Patil University, when it came to admitting new students at the institution.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is a method of expanding and improving traditional marketing functions by utilizing the web and information technology. The utilization of the web and other interactive platforms for and linking interaction between identifiable organizations and consumers is also referred to as digital marketing (Coviello et al., 2001)². Branding activities include the use of web-based channels such as blogging, company websites, e-mailers, ads words, or social media. Certainly, digital marketing does not refer solely to internet marketing.

2.2 The Advantages of Digital Marketing

From the viewpoint of the user, online marketing is a means of acquiring knowledge, leisure, socialization, buying goods or services, exchanging ideas, and forming communities. The following are the specific benefits of employing digital marketing: Targeted marketing is offering to the right consumers and groups. A tailored message is one that is given in response to the needs and preferences of the target consumers. A high level of client interaction is required for interactive capability. A lot of clients who really are looking for a specific item visit certain websites. Information access refers to site visitors who obtain specific information from a product.

The effect of large sales, to which the web is a direct reaction medium. Social Media Customers are progressively adopting social media to engage with, search for, and share information, views, and experiences about brands and organizations. Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp and Twitter are indeed used to share both positive and negative experiences, according to Taprial, V., and Kanwar, P. (2012)¹⁵. Lewis (2010)¹², in contrast, explains that the phrase "social media" refers to a class of digital technology that makes it possible for people to engage, communicate, create, and share content. According to Juju et al. (2013)⁶, and Bajpai et al. (2012)³, social media is currently the sort of public relations that is the most transparent, interesting, and interactive.

Social media tends to attract attention more quickly than exchanges in person.

2.3 Buyers Buying Decision

In educational institutions, registration requirements are sometimes known as purchase decisions. Concluding to a particular decision requires careful consideration of all available possibilities. Consumer's buying decisions are made by selecting the most desirable brand from among several alternatives; nevertheless, two factors can exist among purchase intents and purchase decisions (Kotler et al., 2010)⁷. According to Kotler (1984)⁹, consumers' choices to purchase a product or not are actions. Among the various factors that influence a consumer's choice to purchase a good or service, quality, price, and products that are already well-known to the public are frequently taken into consideration. Buyers often go through several stages before making a purchasing decision, including:

- Understanding the problem,
- Searching for the relevant information,
- Evaluating the best possible alternative,
- Making a purchase decision,
- Engaging in post-purchase activity.
- Buyer Decision Making Procedure



Figure 4: Decision Making Process 2022

The buyers decision-making process, according to Kotler et al. (2010)⁷, entails the following series of actions: Needs Identification, Information Search, Alternative Evaluation, Purchasing Decisions, and Post-Buying Behavior. It indicates that each time a buyer makes a purchase, they go through all five stages. But while making a typical transaction, customers may skip or go back through a few steps. To illustrate all the factors that come into play when customers encounter challenging new purchasing circumstances. As per, Kotler et al. (2010)⁷ steps can be drafted as shown below. Details of Ajeenkya DY Patil University

In the case of selected institutions, a regular bachelor's and master's degree course is offered under seven different specializations. The Bachelor's degree course is provided to the students to those who want to continue the education after their high school and master's degree admits the students who have completed the required bachelor's degree. In addition to using traditional means of marketing, digital marketing is also used by ADYPU to offer details of the institution to potential students who are looking out to enroll themselves in various degree course. This method has been used since 2015 up till the present times.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative research methodology. It was performed on current students, who have already enrolled themselves in some or the other course and re-registered from bachelors to master's degree program at Ajeenkya DY Patil University for the 2022–2023 academic year. Conventional Marketing, Digital Marketing, and the R&D team created the questioner. Furthermore, Google Form was used to distribute the survey, which was intended for the September 2022 student induction. The probability sampling strategy was used, along with a basic random sampling methodology. The Slovin formula (in Bungin, 2013) was used to determine the size of the available sample of respondents. Additionally, the inaccuracy level was caused by the sample tolerance, which was placed at 5%. It was discovered that there were 100 responders.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad (1)$$

n = sample size; N = population size; e = margin of error

Moreover, the Theoretical Structure of this research can be seen in the following mentioned figure 5, which is illustrated in detailed format.

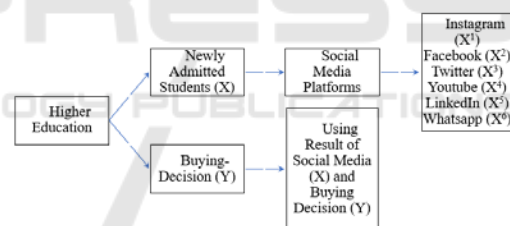


Figure 5: Theoretical StructureThe hypothesis in this research was divided into the following variables' relationships to Y: X1, X2, X3, X4, X5 and X6, is explained as follows.

H1: There is a correlation between social media platforms and the consideration to register for new students at private universities.

H2: There is a correlation between social media platforms and a boost in the number of fresh students enrolled in private universities.

H3: The utilization of the most influential social media platforms on enhancing the admission decisions and the number of new students at private colleges.

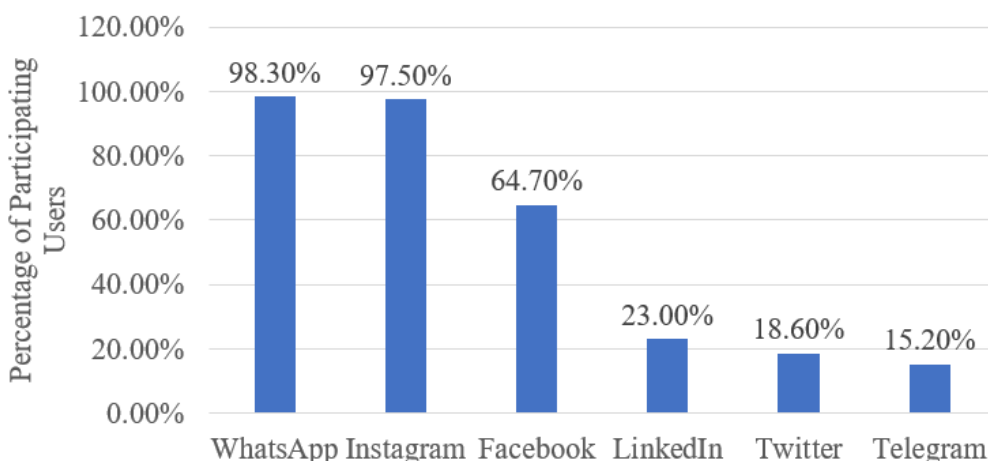


Figure 6: Percentage of Participating user across several platforms.

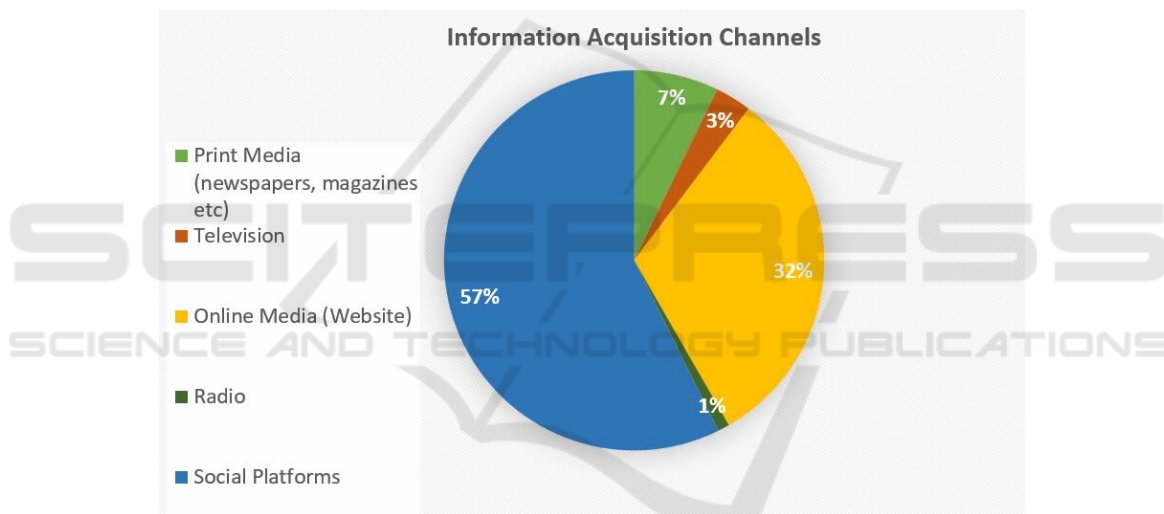


Figure 7 Information Acquisition Platforms used in this study 2022

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding presents the critical analysis of the relevant outcomes. Out of the sample size of 100 participants, there were 60 male students (or 60% of the total), compared to 40 female students (or 40% of the total). While it was noticed that 35 (or 35%) of the participating subjects came from the management study program, there were 35 (or 35%) from the engineering study program, 7 (7%) from Law study program, 5 (or 5%) from Design study program, 18 (or 18%) from Film and Media study program, 6 (or 6%) from Hotel Management study program, and 9 (or 9%) from Liberal arts study program. 99.2% of

the participating respondents confirmed that they have used social media for both personal and professional interactions. As a result, digital marketing should be significant in complementing traditional marketing in the Revolutionary 4.0 digital age. Furthermore, promotion through digital events must always be carried out.

WhatsApp was the most used social media platform by the participating students, with 98.3% of all the respondents, followed by Instagram with 97.5%, Facebook with 64.7% and online media, including the Web and online advertising, also receive a value of 41.8%.

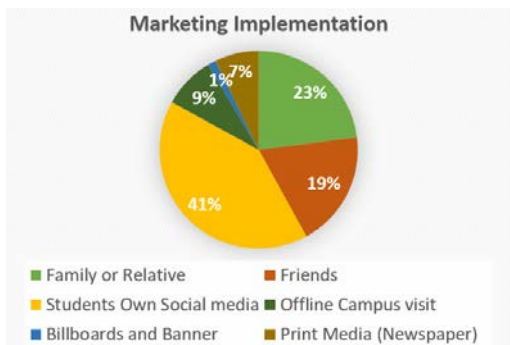


Figure 8: Marketing Implementation in this study 2022.

This number could be used to establish the plan and objective of Digital Marketing strategies by the private universities. It can also be used as a basic aid for planning the advertising campaign when it comes to traditional marketing. Figures 7 and 8 provide additional details on the visual data.

According to the findings mentioned in figure 9, the 100 participating student respondents found that the form of marketing implemented by the institution was appropriate considering the future forecast of marketing implementation plan. The results of the study have showed that 23% of the students learned about the institution from their family members and relatives, 41% from their own social media accounts, and 19% became aware about the institution from their friend circle.

This study also suggests that the roles of traditional and digital marketing may coexist if balanced properly, as the remaining 17% of students have acquired information because of the traditional marketing activities that are performed by the university. As there are more than 820 million active internet users in India, besides targeting only the potential students in the marketing campaign, the parents and friends circle can also be targeting through social media to enhance the outcome of the Digital Marketing. As the volume of information about an individual, product, or organization that is broadcasted to the community through the channels free of cost, or even without control from the sponsor.

The Ajeenkya DY Patil University staff members and existing students participated in the Word-of-Mouth publicity, by spreading good word about the campus to those in their immediate social circles, such as family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. It was anticipated that participants in this exercise would be able to share the information they had learned with others. Peer groups can be among the most successful types of marketing they can prove to be one of the influencing aspect that has a significant impact on

decision-making when considering the age of the customer.

Additionally, the research also found out that university accreditation plays a vital role in attracting new students. The results showed that 54% of the participating student's decision was majorly dependent on the campus accreditation, whereas 16% students' decision was dependent on the affordability in the tuition fees and availability of the scholarship options, where as 11% decision was positively influenced because of the placement opportunities that were given to the previous or current students of the institutions. Campus accreditation was taken into consideration as the primary support in the information delivery for conventional and digital marketing counsel in the future marketing plan. In the prospective marketing plan, campus accreditation was the major support in the sharing of information for traditional and digital marketing counsel. One of the vital tasks of promoting an educational institution is to develop a corporate image. The communication duty is carried out by all aspects of the institution (employees and leaders), who all contribute to the construction of this image, whether acknowledged or not. Furthermore, a positive opinion was a significant step toward the institution's reputation in the eyes of the consumers. The results of the above finding are mentioned in figure 9.

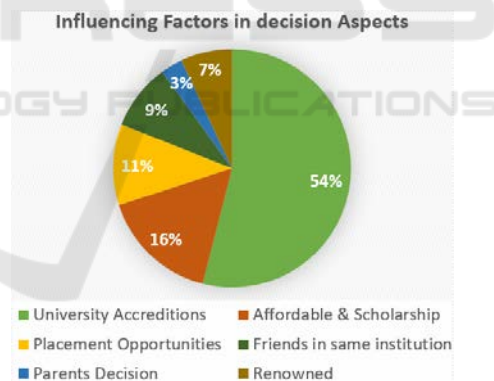


Figure 9: Influencing factors in Decision Aspects.

Irawan (2003)8, Modern Marketing Management, stated that one of the several variables that affects as to how well the promotion variables are determined, is the budget of the organization considered while promoting themselves traditionally or digitally. The budget or promotional money is one of the impacting factors; if the business or institution had a sizable promotional fund, there would be considerable chance to use national level advertising and get more results along the way.

5 CONCLUSION

The researchers' team conducted this study, which included 100 respondents, which were the newly admitted students of the participating institutions. Users of WhatsApp made up 98.30% of all responses, followed by users of Instagram (97.50%) and Facebook (64.7%). In addition, 41% of respondents said they became aware about the university, which influenced their admission decision, was from their own social media accounts (WA, IG, FB, etc.). Moreover, the second highest source of information, with 23% was family members or relatives, and 19% from the friend's circle. Campus accreditation played a vital role in decision aspect with 54%, 16% due to cost effectiveness or various scholarships options available at the institution, 11% from the placements given to the previous students of the institution. It was discovered that digital marketing approaches had an influence on promotional processes in this chaotic era of marketing promotional activities on the enrollment of new students at the universities.

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