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INBOUND MARKETING WITH COVID -19 IN EDUCATION SECTOR

Mrs. Indu Bommana¹ and Dr. Sreenivasa Rao Behara²

¹Asst.Professor, BS&H Department, Miracle Educational Society Group of Institutions, Miracle City, Bhogapuram, Vizianagram, A.P.

² Dean & Professor, MBA Department, Miracle Educational Society Group of Institutions, Miracle City, Bhogapuram, Vizianagram, A.P.

ABSTRACT:

The vast variety of ways in which colleges and universities actually make admissions decisions reflects the rich heterogeneity of higher education in this country. While some institutions have long-established practices that are well entrenched in their collegiate culture and underlying missions, the general state of admissions has become increasingly dynamic. Changing demographics, economics, and the political, legal, social, and educational environment of the times have prompted many institutions to review and modify their approaches to selecting students. In addition, shifts in traditional admissions conventions (such as the increase in early decision and early action applications) and technology e.g., online applications, electronic transcripts, and imaging, have pressured and undoubtedly will continue to pressure institutions to rethink how to manage their applications.



Currently, higher education contributes to nearly 60% of the market size. India has managed to enroll nearly 70 million students to higher education in the last two decades and to cater to that population many institutes have mushroomed around the country. The Covid-19 virus spreads in various different ways. But the main carriers are the humans themselves. Due to this reason, reducing human contact became essential and so were the imposition of social distancing norms. Paper reveals the same contents in broad manner.

KEYWORDS: Admissions, Conventions, Environment, Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The vast variety of ways in which colleges and universities actually make admissions decisions reflects the rich heterogeneity of higher education in this country. While some institutions have long-established practices that are well entrenched in their collegiate culture and underlying missions, the general state of admissions has become increasingly dynamic. Changing demographics, economics, and the political, legal, social, and educational environment of the times have prompted many institutions to review and modify their approaches to selecting students. In addition, shifts in traditional admissions conventions (such as the increase in early decision and early action applications) and technology e.g., online applications, electronic transcripts, and imaging, have pressured and undoubtedly will continue to pressure institutions to rethink how to manage their applications.

The education sector in our country is booming. India has the largest student population in the world, a staggering 315 million students. To put that in perspective India's student population is nearly the same as the entire population of the United States of America. The education sector in India is poised to witness major growth in the coming years. Its market value is expected to be around US\$ 180 Billion by 2020. Since India is such a huge player in the education sector globally and it is touted to become the talent supplier of the world, global investment in the Indian education sector is increasing. Thus, the education sector in India is poised to witness major growth in the coming years.

Currently, higher education contributes to nearly 60% of the market size. India has managed to enroll nearly 70 million students to higher education in the last two decades and to cater to that population many institutes have mushroomed around the country. There are more than 10,000 higher educational institutes in India. With this, it has become essential to attract potential students to your institute with new cost-effective avenues. But all this was before the Covid-19 virus outbreak and the lockdown period began in the entire world.

We all are aware that the Covid-19 virus spreads in various different ways. But the main carriers are the humans themselves. Due to this reason, reducing human contact became essential and so were the imposition of social distancing norms.

The pace of the educational activities slowed down for some time. But then the mighty Technology made an appearance in the education sector and the educational activities regained the pace. Following the social distancing norms was crucial and so was carrying out the educational activities. Thus, all the educational activities started taking place indoors in an online mode. Since then, online classes and online examinations as also online admissions became the new normal.

A potential student truly deserves an institute that can make justice with his/her caliber, and it's equally important for an institute to reach out to this potential enthusiast with the right approach. But, doesn't this technique sound a little out tracked??

In this digital era, when a student can sit in a chair and get to know about every little aspect of the institute just by gliding his fingers over his/her phone; how easier has it become to reach these cream wisdom hunters?

This is where Inbound marketing comes into the picture!

What is Inbound Marketing?



Inbound marketing is a marketing technique that is intended to draw visitors and potential customers in, instead of outwardly pushing a brand, product or service onto prospects in the expectation of producing leads or customers.

In terms of Digital Marketing, this means utilizing a mix of marketing channels – most ordinarily Content Marketing, SEO, and Social Media – in imaginative approaches to pull in individuals' attention. The point of a fruitful Inbound Marketing effort is to increase reach and drive quality traffic, engagement and changes utilizing 'earned' and 'owned' media.

It is a marketing technique that utilizes various strategies like Content Marketing, Blogs, Events, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media Marketing, etc. to create brand awareness and attract business. Contrary to outbound marketing, where marketers try to find potential customers, inbound marketing garners the attention of potential customers and creates brand awareness.

This technique creates an online presence of the company, brand, product or service, making it easy to be found.

Why is Inbound Marketing trending these days?

Since the evolution of the internet and consequently social media, we live in a world where information is abundant but internet users do not have the patience to read it. According to IBM, we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data each day! 90% of the data in the world was created only in the last few years. Thus it is evident that the pace of creating information is increasing and it has already bypassed the consuming potential of the average internet user.

Consumers are empowered by the internet. They have access to information about anything and everything. Similarly, they have a lot of options and choices. They can access the details, specifications, pricing, reviews and alternatives to any product, service or brand around the clock.

As per Hindustan Times survey, the use of internet rose by 13% nationwide especially during the lockdown phase.

To stay relevant, you have to adopt various strategies and techniques to attract the attention of your target audience and make your brand more relatable, trustworthy and attractive than your competitors. Simplification and Automation, these two are the key factors to master the art of Inbound Marketing.

Leveraging the Digital Marketing efforts through right channels and with prominent content simplifies the Marketing Process. Automation of Admission Process is something that makes it more convenient and user-friendly for the students who are seeking admissions.

Let's see what Inbound Marketing has into the bucket for us to explore!!

The admission process of any institute is one of the most important things which creates an impression on students. Having a simple, hassle-free admission process is of great benefit to the institute.

Having a free-flowing admission process means that students enroll for admissions easily and it acts as an added advantage to get more admissions just because of that simple and hassle-free admission process.

The admission process should be designed in such a way that students are updated about any changes in the process and given alerts about admissions, merit lists, cut-offs, entrance exam dates, etc. on a regular basis via SMS or email. Entire administration activity of the admission process can be managed with technology. There would hardly any manual assistance needed to execute the admission process online. The entire process is carried out in a paperless manner.

Hence, online admissions prove very advantageous to maintain social distancing by diminishing the need for human intervention. As the entire process is carried out in a paperless manner, such as online fee payment or online document upload, there is hardly any human contact involved. It is not just about eliminating the paperwork or maintaining social distancing, but it is also about automating and shortening the tedious process. Such an all-rounder and beneficent platform for online admission is one of the best example to display that today's

Platforms like ePravesh have been used by hundreds of institutes and universities across India for managing online admission process. The platform includes best practices followed by various reputed universities and institutes across India.

The simplified admission process would save a lot of time for parents and students. Technology-driven admission creates a positive perception and brand image of institute among students and parent's community. It can be pivotal for institutes to get started with the online admission process.

This vibe of faith adds up a great value when students walk into the web portal of such an institute. It adds credibility on the account when a student tries to evaluate the managerial discipline that the institution is following.

Alumni Testimonials & Alumni Networks

Many institutes fail to develop a strong alumni network. An alumni network works hugely in favor of the institute. It is very useful in networking and making connections across the globe.

This network makes connections across the globe and it refers to the institute to potential admissions. It can function across various platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

Prospective students can connect with this network and ask questions, conduct discussions and clear any doubts or queries. The legacy inherited from these social platforms works as a boomerang to boost the institutions credibility over a student's mind.

These social platforms are nothing but the right pitchers for your educational institutes and they deliver their best at every single time. Students source the required information about the institute from generously genuine mediums like Linked in and Facebook.

Therefore, the presence and testimonials from Alumni's on such portals add commendable value to the institute.

The alumni network can also organize events and reunions to attract attention and create a presence in the local mass media.

These social gatherings are highly effective and such events reflect the culture and cohesively that the institute cherishes.

Alumni testimonials, on the other hand, are a great way to build students trust in the institute. Testimonials are natural, relatable and effective mediums to advertise the institute and build trust.

Easy & Effective Communication with Students

Effective communication is the key to the smooth functioning of any organisation. This helps in resolving queries in real-time. Mediums like SMS, WhatsApp, Email, Google Hangouts, etc, can be used for this purpose. This is a practical and efficient way to communicate notices, updates and alerts to all students. No student will thus miss out on any critical attention.

There have been numerous cases, where many students miss out an opportunity of their dream just because of the lack of conveyance. It is of vital importance for both the student and institute to keep up with the updates regarding the admission process.

Automated communication alerts or triggers can be sent to send alerts about admission, merit list publishing or such notifications over email, SMS or push notifications. It would help students to be informed about key events related to admission or education institute related courses.

Multiple mediums to avail the updates about the process can definitely cut down the consequences caused by the lack of conveyance.

Articles & Blogs

Blogs and articles are an effective way to create brand awareness. This is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to advertise the institute. Institutes can start a new blog section on their website or create a separate blog website about the institute.

These articles and blog sites can be used to create awareness about the institute. Institutes can talk about the facilities they provide, their educational programs, events they conduct and college events.

Great content can take you leaps and bounds in this digital world. Weapons like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) are really disastrous to glide around the world of computer networks, known as the World Wide Web.

Blogs being a written piece of content is very vital and highly resourceful when it comes to building a reputation and spreading a word about your product or service.

If you manage to figure out what your target audience is interested in reading, what are they expecting from you; you are halfway there! You just need to produce relevant content and keep on feeding the needs of your audience.

The more quality and informative content, higher the Google Ranking!!

Google Ranking is decided on the basis of things like quality & relevancy of the content as well as search terms used by the user. If your content is the most searched content, then you will see that your institutes ranking is climbing higher and higher subject to Google Ranking and Search Results.

With Search Engine Optimization (SEO), your institute's blog can achieve a good google ranking. This is a great advertising activity which is very effective in creating awareness and advertising at a minimal cost. This can be also done creatively and innovatively to be more attractive.

This platform can be used to talk about the success stories of students. This is a great way to showcase the talented students and their achievements. Prospective students are attracted to success stories and they are a great way to prove your institute better than others.

Social Media Marketing



Social media marketing is one of the best ways to attract students. Indians on an average spend three hours daily on a smartphone; which is exactly 12.5 % of his/her day!!

This is considerably a great point to do brainstorming about because being a service provider we should always analyze which mediums are actually essential and worth investing to grab the perfect target audience.

Social media is the largest platform where almost 80% of the population gathers and spends a considerable chunk of their 24 hours. What else could be the greatest medium than this to advertise about your institution?

The average internet user will devote 70% of the total time spent on the internet to social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Twitter. Having an attractive and innovative social media handle is sure to attract student's attention.

Institutes should really take advantage of this medium. A creative, attractive yet intelligent social media presence works to great advantage in creating a robust social media presence and getting attention.

Institutes can use this platform to create hype about their brand by posting about events, college fests, achievements, field visits, etc.

Organize College Fests

Institutes should conduct annual college fests. This will be events of magnificence and grandeur. Various competitions across various fields and interests can be conducted.

These fests are something students wait for a whole year and are excited to organize them. Some institutes conduct college fests which are very famous and students and colleges from across the country participate in them.

These events help not only in boosting the students' morale but they also create your institute's presence in newspapers, educational magazines and the greater mass media by extension.

Apart from the mass media, as discussed prior your own social media handles should blossom these events out to the audience. Today's youth parallels compare these activities as a considerable choice while choosing an institute for themselves. Give them a reason to choose your institute amongst all the others!

Video Marketing

The youth of today prefers video content over written content. Dedicating your energy and intellect towards video marketing, you can easily exploit the potential of video marketing.

Interactive videos, informative videos and other innovative videos are the key to attract the attention of your target audience, the students.

As we have been talking more about the digital era, where we know content is the king, video content ranks itself above the others, being self-sufficient. People tend to interact with and share this type of content over the other types of content.

Video Content is ruling the marketing segment from a year and so and will continue to rule till the next few years. It is essential to take up the advantage of the same and utilize for the better reach of your educational institute, in order to seek more number of admissions.

Being an educational institute, there is immense scope to produce content that will talk about Infrastructure & Amenities, Courses & Curriculum, Events & Happenings, Alumni & Students who can share their experiences about the college, Professors & Managerial Committee who can express a lot about the foundation.

These are just some pieces of themes, which are only the tip of the iceberg. You can come up with innovative concepts to express how your educational program is different than others in the run.

Once you are done with producing creative video content for your educational institute, make sure you channelize it effectively through your social media handles.

YouTube being the contemporary medium for video marketing, hold the highest share for the scope of performing the marketing activities. Having a prominent YouTube SEO in place can be considered as the first move in the era of digital marketing.

You need to have the video content published on you YouTube channel before you channelise and publish it through the other social handles. As YouTube offers the viewers higher credibility towards the brand they are looking at.

After following these seven ways, you can rest assured that your institute has penetrated the social media and reached your target audience. These ways will help you achieve stupendous brand awareness.

The EdTech market in India is expected to grow to 3.5 billion USD by 2022. India's higher education is estimated to increase to 35.03 billion USD (Rs.2,44,824 crore) by the end of 2025. This will be possible only through better marketing techniques and adoption of better platforms for education.

Today's students are techno savvy, you need to share contents using technology to reach out to the students and simplify admission process to attract more number of students for your institute.

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