



University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Course: BA Business Management

Dissertation on:

Is Digital marketing the future for recruiting students to UK

Universities?

The lessons learned from Covid

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Digital marketing is a type of marketing that has been around for some time but it gained more prominence in the year 2010. The aspect of the digital market takes similar principles to normal marketing. It is a novel means of marketing products that companies use to approach customers and comprehend their behaviours. According to Bala and Verma (2018), the digital market is the process that companies or business people take to sell and promote products and services using online or digital marketing tactics such as email marketing, search marketing, and media marketing. The companies engaged in digital marketing embrace electronic devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones to pass promotional information and measure their impacts on consumers (Bala and Verma, 2018). Digital marketers use videos online, search engines, display ads, social media posts, and paid social ads in digital marketing.

The implementation of digital marketing in universities gained prominence in recent years, especially, when Covid-19 broke out in the year 2019 (Khlystova *et al.*, 2022). Covid-19 brought opportunities for institutions to begin operating virtually, instead of physical operations. Schools' online recruitment of students to join their institutions to solve issues such as close contact and offer classes to students based on distance learning processes (Perez, 2020). Institutions that were flexible and had enough capital transformed into digital marketing platforms to meet the needs of students who shifted to the use of digital platforms. Students are fond of using social media channels such as Twitter, Tik-Tok, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Facebook. Institutions of higher learning such as universities conduct online marketing via social media network to reach students who need information or ways to conduct virtual learning processes to meet their needs. Schools conduct content marketing via online brochures, eBooks,

and look books, engage in affiliate marketing processes, Pay-per-click, and email marketing to meet the needs of students (Skikne, 2020). Digital marketing finds its usage in different institutions of higher learning in the United Kingdom (UK).

For example, institutions of higher learning such as universities use digital marketing to recruit students to schools. The institutions use digital marketing to market their courses and identify students who aspire to pursue their careers in such institutions. Little information explores the extent to which digital marketing tools are important to universities. Besides, little information reveals strategies that universities use to embrace digital marketing to the extent that it can be perceived as the future for recruiting students in UK universities. "Respectively this paper aims to raise the question Is digital marketing the future for recruiting students to UK universities?"

Purpose of the Study

The implementation of digital marketing for recruiting students in universities in the UK gains prominence. The study's goal is to examine the institutional environment of London, especially, universities, and investigate how digital marketing has become imperative in recruiting students. In such cases, the research expounds on the advantages of digital marketing based on the data collected in the study. It is focuses on a real-life case study of Elizabeth school of London which is an educational institution in London, founded back in 2014. The paper explores how the institution uses digital marketing tools in its recruiting efforts.

Aim of the Study

The present study aims to demonstrate how Elizabeth School of London uses digital marketing in recruiting students in the UK to reveal if using digital marketing to recruit students is the best strategy for UK institutions in the post-Covid-19 era.

Objectives of the Study

The study fulfils the purpose above by achieving the following objectives.

- i. To explore the merits and demerits of digital marketing in recruiting students in universities in the UK focusing on Elizabeth School of London
- ii. To examine the various tools and channels that Elizabeth School of London as a recruiter uses in recruiting students to universities in the UK
- iii. To understand more about the required resources needed to implement digital marketing strategies in recruiting students to universities in the UK
- iv. To explore how digital marketing becomes a future for recruiting students to UK universities

Research Question

The study achieves the above objectives by answering the below questions.

- i. What are the advantages and disadvantages of digital marketing that Elizabeth School of London faces as a recruiter of students in UK universities?
- ii. What are the different digital tools and channels that Elizabeth School of London uses to recruit students to universities in the UK as a recruiting agent?

- iii. What are the required resources that Elizabeth School of London needs to implement digital marketing strategies in recruiting students to universities in the UK?
- iv. What factors make digital marketing tools to be the future for recruiting students to UK universities?

Elizabeth School of London

Elizabeth School of London was established in 2014 in Canary Wharf, London. The institution has specialties that include university admission, student accommodation, student finance, world-class education, and universities (Navande *et al.*, 2022). The institution is a recruiting agency that offers education, counselling, and support to students. It is a bridge between the universities in the UK and the student seeking admission to such institutions of higher learning. Students get information including the process of application, criteria of admission, loan maintenance, scholarship, courses, university fees, and employability.

Research Gap

The outbreak and spread of Covid-19 disrupted the physical learning of students in various universities. The increasing use of digital platforms has transformed the preferences of students to seek information online. Universities currently use digital marketing tools to approach a student who seeks information on the various universities and courses they want to pursue in their careers. Covid-19 led to the closure of schools which affected learners globally.

A challenge arose on how the student can be recruited to universities in the UK without physically availing themselves in the various institutions and to comply with Covid-19 measures on social distance.

The rationale of the Study

The research gives a better understanding of digital marketing in recruiting students in various universities in the UK with a focus on Elizabeth School of London which is a recruiting agent. It provides an understanding of the importance of digital marketing in institutions of higher learning, especially its benefit during the Covid-19 pandemic that hampered the schooling of students. The study gives various digital marketing tools and resources that institutions require to fully implement the resources for marketing the universities to recruit students. Lastly, the study enriches literature by exploring factors and reasons why digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to universities in the UK.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter provides information on digital marketing as a future tool for recruiting students in universities focusing on the case of Elizabeth School London. As part of that, the section addresses Keller's brand equity model offering its applicability to the topic. The chapter addresses information from past studies concerning the topic as indicated in the below subheadings.

Keller's Brand Equity Model

Brand equity in this study describes the value of the brand (universities) as determined by the perception and experience of the students with the given institution of higher learning. Accordingly, when students (customers) have a high perception of the universities in the United Kingdom (brand), it reflects the positive brand equity of the universities in the UK market (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019). According to Keller's model of brand equity, sometimes referred to as Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE), a product's reputation is shaped by how its target market feels and thinks it. Universities (enterprises) build the right experience on their facilities and courses (brand) to encourage students to develop positive thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions on the universities. The fulfilment of such attributes of students enhances their chances of enrolling in the courses (buying the product) and recommending other students to enrol in such universities. In such cases, the students, parents, and guardians develop trust and become loyal and the universities win more students in terms of enrolment from the competitors. Keller gives a summary of how to develop brand equity using the below model.

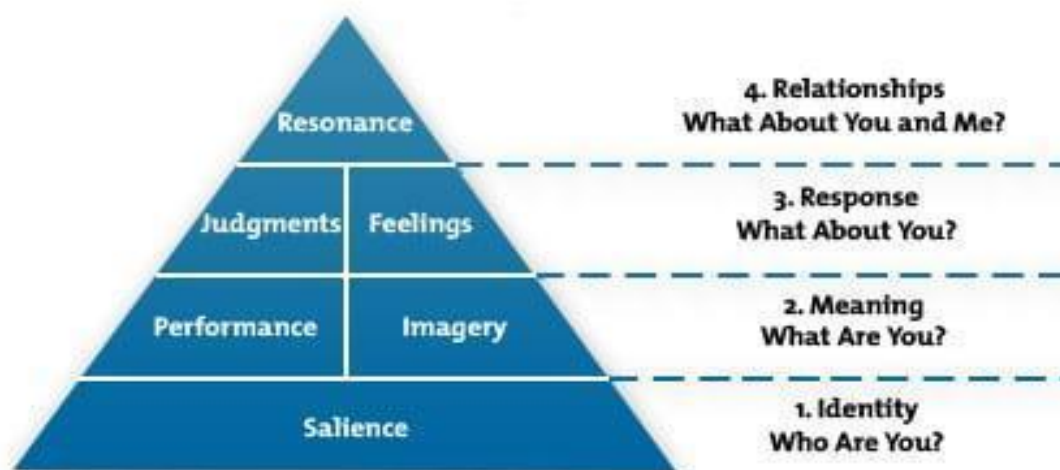


Figure 1: Illustrating the brand equity pyramid model by Keller. (Keller et al., 2011).

Digital Marketing

Bala and Verma (2018) describe digital marketing as the process of promoting brands to enhance their connection with prospects and more customers via social media platforms, emails, and web-based pages used for advertising items and services. Institutions of higher learning currently embrace search engine optimization (SEO), mobile apps and social media for digital marketing because of their usability in electronic devices such as computers and Smartphones (Bala and Verma, 2018). According to the authors (Bala and Verma, 2018), institutions use digital marketing tools to enhance cost efficiency, increase large geographical reach to customers, enhance personalisation, and increase growth and convenience (Bala and Verma, 2018). Smith (2011) further expounds on digital marketing by elaborating on the various types of digital marketing or strategies that institutions such as universities use in an advertisement. The author attributes the ease of enrolment (business) among institutions due to content marketing, display advertising, mobile marketing, email marketing, search engine marketing, influencer marketing, and affiliate marketing among others (Smith, 2011).

A report produced by Mail Chimp (2022) on digital marketing indicates that it is effective for both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customers (B2C). The B2B concept fosters long-term relationships leading to long channels of enrolment (sales) while B2C responds quickly to short-term messages and meeting students. Besides, the B2B concept requires experts because it relies on evidence and logic while B2C focuses on the emotional aspects of the marketing process (Mail Chimp, 2022).

Digital Marketing during Covid-19 Pandemic

The outbreak and spread of Covid-19 in 2019 transformed how universities conduct marketing activities globally to attract students. The pandemic brought adverse impacts on various learning systems worldwide affecting education and enrolment. Universities experienced hardships in enrolling new students overseas or from within the localities. Issues such as economic downturns and the closure of schools made some institutions collapse due to a lack of students joining such colleges. Some universities transformed their enrolment techniques from a physical locality to a digital environment. According to Khlystova *et al.* (2022), businesses took realised Covid-19 as an opportunity that required a high level of flexibility to gain success on digital platforms. Many universities took advantage of technological advancement to offer a frontier for operations. A study by Perez (2020) reveals how the digital revolution changed the lives of people including institutions of higher learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report indicates a rise in the use and subscription to mobile apps and computers at 67 percent in 2019 alone with more than 65 percent of online users subscribing to smartphones. Institutions currently have digital apps for marketing as a response to the over 3.8 billion customers using apps on their smartphones as of 2020 (Perez, 2020). The high numbers of the app's users are students who aspire to increase or develop their careers further.

How Digital Marketing can enhance recruitment of Students in Universities

Marketing is important for universities because it helps in expounding on the programs and services that such institutions offer to students. Students become interested in exploring the services and careers that they want to pursue. Institutions do not use the best marketing strategies to reach many students. Some universities cannot compete well in getting students that enrol

because of poor marketing strategies. The use of social media channels has been important to reach students during the Covid-19 pandemic when ensuring social distance was a health measure that helped to curb its spread. Universities began to embrace innovative ways to market their products and services to students using online platforms.

According to Carballo (2022), the student recruitment process is marketing and attracting students to join such higher institutions to train in given courses that such institutions offer. The recruitment process takes place through the marketing of the school to many potential students interested in joining the institution in the future. An institution can conduct recruitment based on the aim of the institution to learners who qualify for a course of their interest or a profile of their choice (Carballo, 2022). Universities are currently adjusting their marketing and recruitment approaches during the Covid-19 pandemic. Such schools engage in diversity recruitment, conducting interviews virtually with students, and conducting large-scale virtual recruitment. Universities in the UK currently explore the perception of students regarding their future enrolment in schools in the post-Covid-19 era (Carballo, 2022). In such cases, the use of digital marketing becomes imperative for various recruitment initiatives.

Skikne (2020) notes that the universities have changed their recruitment and marketing strategies after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The institutions now use digital marketing platforms beyond recruitment to include teaching and issuing of assignments. Institutions currently have digital marketing platforms such as virtual campus tours, webinars, and online counselling (Skikne, 2020). The author attributes the use of digital marketing tools to recruit students during the Covid-19 because of the reduction in the pool of students at the international level which warranted the use of digital marketing tools to attract more students. Universities now consider the shifting market of students alongside the financial capabilities of

the students to travel to such institutions (Kusumawati, 2019). The universities continue to experience a change in the market of students in terms of both their numbers and financial capabilities due to Covid-19. The need for information among students has been on the rise towards digital trends concerning their journey of enrolment. Institutions receive many questions from students and a high level of uncertainties which call for more attention on how to solve such challenges (Skikne, 2020). Universities now consider the use of digital marketing tools to reach the students to solve their problems which fosters more usage of digital marketing tools for recruitment and offers more support for future students engaging in virtual learning processes. Institutions such as Elizabeth School of London became recruitment agents that have redesigned the experience of students in the recruitment process instead of separating parts or channels in ensuring students get quality information. The institutions changed from the physical face-to-face engagement of students by using various social media channels, using videos for promotion, and virtual tours to attract students (Kusumawati, 2019). Such approaches are opportunities that help universities offer differentiated and tailored services to get more students compared to their competitors. In such cases, the universities identify gaps and opportunities by mapping the services they offer in the current situation to fill the gaps and provide relevant services that students require.

Vicente-Ramos and Cano-Torres (2022) attest that the management of the relationship between students and universities during the covid-19 pandemic was crucial. The study analysed and determined the impact of digital marketing tools in the management of the relationship between universities and students. The quantitative survey that recruited 400 students from the Huancayo University of Peru indicated that content marketing is important in influencing the operational management concerning customer relationships and high levels of collaboration

between students and universities (Vicente-Ramos and Cano-Torres, 2022). Accordingly, social media marketing attracts parents, students, and their families to explore courses and services that universities offer compared to their forms of marketing.

Webb *et al.* (2021) researched moving learning online as a response to the covid-19 pandemic. The study expounded on the various issues affecting the universities and how they shifted to online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study examined academic and policy writing on digitalization and online learning at universities, as well as qualitative worker interviews on the topic in Scotland institutions. (Webb *et al.*, 2021). The results from the study revealed that digital marketing helped universities to meet the needs of students during the covid-19 pandemic amidst challenges that institutions strive to address such as privacy, pedagogy, and inclusivity in online learning processes.

Rodrigues and Martinez (2020) affirm that universities have realised their target market, especially the young people who want to join colleges. Besides, the institutions have realised competition for the students because of the limited numbers that arose due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The universities use robust digital marketing techniques to keep up with the competition while reaching out to students (Rodrigues and Martinez, 2020). The various ways of digital marketing that institutions use include video marketing, mobile marketing, live streaming, influencer marketing, and emailing among others. Similarly, an institution such as Elizabeth school is a recruitment agency that attracts students because of its robust usage of digital marketing tools. The institution conducts digital marketing using Tik-Tok, Instagram, blog posts, Facebook, emails, website, and online magazines to reach students.

Prihadini *et al.* (2020) researched the role of digital marketing to promote private universities during the covid-19 pandemic era. The authors aimed at answering the question of

the digital experience of every university in conducting digital marketing activities during the covid-19 pandemic period and assisted in recruiting students. The study enumerated the challenges when using digital marketing tools and how the institutions managed to get students during the time (Prihadini *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly, the study followed a phenomenological approach using a semi-structured interview process to explore more experience of the respondents entailing marketers of various private institutions in Bogor, Jakarta. Tangerang, Depok and Bekasi (Prihadini *et al.*, 2020). The study revealed the immense importance of digital marketing tools to promote private institutions and recruitment of students during the covid-19 pandemic period. It noted significant differences between universities with experts that carried out digital marketing and the institutions missing such experts (Prihadini *et al.*, 2020). The number of students admitted to universities during covid-19 the pandemic using digital marketing platforms increased compared to universities that did not use digital marketing tools.

Rajkumar *et al.* (2021) affirm that digital marketing has an impact on the decision-making process of students regarding their choices in university selection processes. The systematic review shows how the Indian education system was affected by covid-19, especially the admission of students to universities. The high level of competition among the different universities for the few students led to more investment in the advertisement, branding, and PR activities (Rajkumar *et al.*, 2021). The research expounds on digital marketing tools as ways of helping students to decide on admission to various universities. The author of the study recommends that universities should use digital marketing platforms to reach prospective students to enhance their enrolment or admission by continuously engaging with the students based on the user-generated content, videos, text, info graphics, images, and podcasts (Rajkumar *et al.*, 2021).

Techniques that are used in digital marketing

Digital marketing tools help universities through recognition by the students. A school posted on various digital media platforms using different techniques of digital marketing possesses high brand recognition leading to an increase in the strength of its recognition (Mongkol, 2014). In such cases, students have a high chance of choosing such schools over competitors.

King's College London

King's College London uses various techniques to market its brands and courses to students online. First, the institution optimises the student recruitment plans to enhance its SEO. The institution has been gaining an advantage by using digital marketing to recruit both local and international students. The SEO reveals a 3-pack appearing as a graph with a map relating to the services offered online to students. So students get the information they need and view the ranking of the institution in England in terms of the courses that suit their career prospects. SEO enhances the high recognition of King's College London leading to an increasing enrolment rate for students in the UK. The institution currently applies techniques such as content marketing to recruit students to high institutions of learning (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019). Content marketing aids in the digital branding process by detailing how the universities design their brand using online marketing platforms via apps, websites, videos, live chats, and social media.

Separately, King's College London applies digital branding as a technique of digital marketing that combines platforms online to help in developing a brand on such online platforms (Ortagus and Tanner, 2019). Digital marketing affects the dimensions and elements of services

or brand equity such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality of the brand, and brand alliance. (Tambini, 2018).

The go-to email templates are techniques that are specific to the mails of universities or compute the brands via emails to enhance and maintain the brand identity (Francis *et al.*, 2019). In such cases, universities create email templates to keep the designs specific for messages ensuring brand identity (Bala and Verma, 2018). The emails enhance strong brand recognition via digital branding and emails to promote their brands to the correct category of students. The universities develop content marketing strategies attractive to students and offer solutions such as convenience, solving distance problems, and costs.

The King's College applies brand meaning by examining the meaning of the courses and other products such institutions offer virtually using video conferencing, digital image marketing, and telling their stories on digital platforms. In such cases, the institutions communicate the meanings to the students and provide customer training, giving feedback and ensuring constant engagement to revive the empathy and interests of the students (Ahuja and Loura, 2018). Accordingly, the institutions provide their stories using videos, Instagram, and YouTube, how they have progressed in their performance, and how they offer lucrative courses that resonate with the aspirations of students (Francis *et al.*, 2019). The universities succeed in creating awareness and educating customers or students on how the students can benefit from online learning processes. In such cases, universities communicate the meaning of their brands and what they stand to the students. The management of the universities considers the brands and courses in terms of performance that define how the courses and services meet the needs of students in terms of quality, reliability, efficiency, effectiveness, cost, and market (Ahuja and Loura, 2018). On the other hand, digital techniques foster brand meaning through imagery based

on the psychological and social needs of the customers based on their experience with the services, products, or courses in the job market (Francis *et al.*, 2019). The experience of the courses offered by the institution leads to the performance of the university in producing students who are productive in the market.

King's College London uses digital marketing tools, online surveys, social media tools, SEO, lead enrichment strategies, landing page tools, and graphic tools to enhance brand response. The universities that recruit students to track the feedback of students on various social media platforms and identify areas of dissatisfaction among students, fix the problems, and conduct surveys on the perception of the universities (Ahuja and Loura, 2018). The institutions offer scholarships or special offers for tuition as marketing tools to enhance the bonding of students with the universities.

University of Southampton

The University of Southampton embraces digital marketing to get students by ensuring that it receives a brand response from the students. The school first views the brand response judgement from students to identify any issue for correction (Harvey and Harris, 2012). The university explores what a student feels or thinks about the university. The students respond to the courses and other services that the institution offers which fall into their feelings and judgments conforming to quality whereby the students judge the brand based on the quality of courses. The University of Southampton improves the quality of courses, services, or brand. In such cases, the actions taken by the university fosters credibility whereby students focus on the likability of the institution, trustworthiness of the school, and expertise in terms of innovation (Harvey and Harris, 2012). The management of the University of Southampton works on ways to

improve the institutions through research on how they offer quality courses that are marketable and suit many careers of students (Harvey and Harris, 2012).

The University of Southampton considers the aspect of consideration as a factor that students use to judge the university based on their unique preferences and needs. The university uses digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter accounts to communicate and clarify the needs and support students require meeting their academic and careers (Harvey and Harris, 2012). The management of the University of Southampton develops methods of measuring their competitors to identify ways to beat their competitors and offer superior and high-quality services on digital platforms to win more students in recruitment processes. The institution offers more services and engaging information to surpass the expectations of the students and ensure that they remain independent third-party institutions to enhance the promotion of the activities and courses to enhance fair trade.

The University of Southampton becomes aware of the target students and promotes its efforts by participating in different fair-trade events (Keller *et al.*, 2011). The institution engages in social networking frameworks to involve students in their fair trades and build forums on the website to discuss issues with students (customers). University achieves brand resonance when the students have deep feelings and have developed a psychological bonding within the courses or services that the universities offer online. Students develop behavioural loyalty and recommend other students to the institution or enrol in more courses. The students value the courses and services as the solutions to their challenges (Keller *et al.*, 2011). The students develop a sense of community within the institution and with other students associated with the school, courses, or services of the university leading to their active engagement and loyalty.

Resources required to develop digital marketing strategies at school

The use of digital marketing strategies for digital marketing and recruitment of students in universities require resources. Institutions use software such as TweetDeck, BuzzSumo, Google Analytics and FollowerWonk for marketing (Schoenstedt and Reau, 2010). Such tools help the marketers in the institutions to cover different zones and plan for operations. The Google alerts enhance reception of alerts among universities concerning operations, services of courses, students, and new services that students consider when selecting institutions while Hootsuite helps universities to schedule posts across different social media platforms because it can integrate with Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to reach many students (Harris and Rae, 2011).

According to Sujatmikanto *et al.* (2022), Covid-19 brought too much healthcare crisis globally. School marketing is an area affected by the pandemic due to the reduced direct meeting between students and institutions. Digital marketing became the new way of promoting the institutions to increase the awareness and interest of students. The researcher conducted a systematic review of the various marketing strategies that institutions use to attract students during the covid-19 pandemic (Sujatmikanto *et al.*, 2022). The study indicated that universities require resources to develop the best programs, gadgets that help in availing internet media to promote the universities, and resources that enhance the relationship between parents and schools.

Summary and Research Gaps

The literature review expounds on how other related studies handle digital marketing as a future for recruiting students. Accordingly, much of the reviews delve into the impacts of Covid-19 and how it ignited digital marketing. Digital marketing enhances the brand equity of universities as explored in Keller's brand equity model leading to stronger brand recognition. The review discusses case studies of the University of Southampton and King's College London revealing the different techniques that the institutions use in digital marketing to recruit students. Most of the studies have not addressed the aspect of how Elizabeth School London uses digital marketing tools for recruiting students. The study fills the gap by exploring the advantages of digital marketing tools used in the institution. The research examines the needed resources to implement the various social media strategies and investigates the advances in technological tools that institutions should use to recruit students but such information does not indicate whether Elizabeth School London uses such resources to recruit students.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

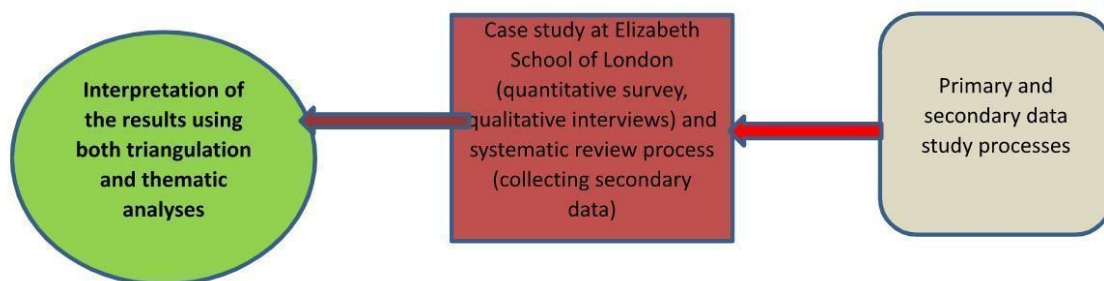
Research Methods

According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), a researcher selects a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed design method because of the technique of data collection to be implemented in the study process. The researcher in the present study uses a mixed design method which entails a quantitative survey and qualitative interview based on the positivist philosophical approach that enhances the management of scientific evidence concerning the area of study.

The mixed methodology design is imperative because it allows the researcher to collect genuine and original data from the respondents including students and staff within the Elizabeth

School of London. The researcher then compares the information with the data from secondary sources concerning the implementation of digital marketing tools to recruit students by the institution on behalf of universities.

The mixed design brings the aspect of the primary data collection approach whereby the researcher engages directly with the respondents when collecting data through surveys or conducting interviews while the secondary approach (systematic review) involves gathering data from peer-reviewed journals, articles, books, government documents, online sources, and videos. The researcher uses a mixed methodology to provide comprehensive conclusions due to the in-depth data derived from both the primary and secondary sources triangulated to offer insights on the topic.



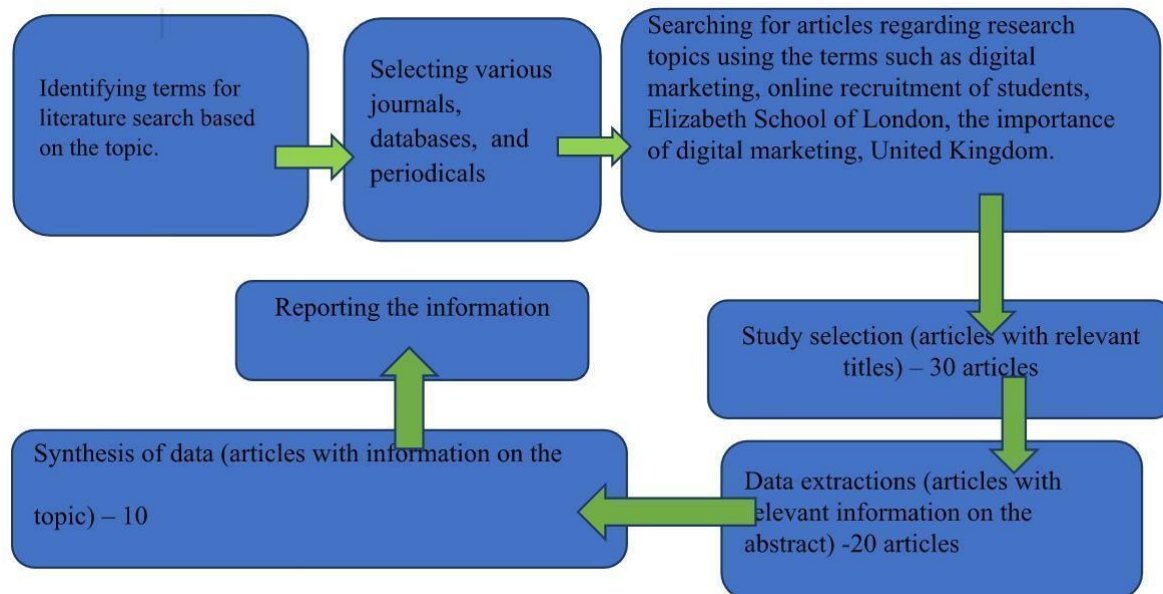
(Figure 1, source: Prepared by Zoya Danailova, 2022).

Sample Size and Sampling Method

The researcher uses sample sizes for both primary data and secondary data collection processes. The researcher applies the probability sampling technique in the primary data collection process focusing on randomisation to give equal chance for the participants to engage in the study process (Balcázar *et al.*, 2001). Probability sampling helps in the minimization of sampling errors. Equal opportunity to participate in the survey is provided by the random

probability sampling approach, which also helps to prevent biases in the study's selection process and sample errors.(Balcázar *et al.*, 2001).

The researcher uses a systematic review to select the relevant articles (samples for the secondary data collection process) to be included in the study process. The systematic review is crucial for comparison with the primary data collected through interviews and surveys. The systematic review is a methodology that follows criteria for inclusion and exclusion of articles to ensure the authority of authors, the credibility of sources, reliability of the information, and currency of data (Tomaszewski *et al.*, 2020). The investigator used keywords such as the United Kingdom, Elizabeth School of London, digital marketing, and online recruitment of students during covid-19, and digital marketing.



(Figure 2, Source: Prepared by Zoya Danailova, 2022).

The researcher uses the purposive sampling technique when selecting the articles for the secondary data collection process based on the above framework for the systematic review. In such cases, the researcher uses his judgement when selecting only relevant articles to the topics to address the research questions and objectives (Bowling, A. and Ebrahim, S., 2005).

Data Collection Process

The study embraces both a survey and an interview to collect data from primary sources. The survey questionnaire covered 50 diverse respondents within the Elizabeth School of London addressing ten questions for students regarding the topic and related research questions (Dewaele, 2018). The researcher presents 3 questions for the agents to collect data via an interview with 3 respondents. Further, the researcher collects secondary data from online databases using ten articles obtained through the systematic review process. The survey questionnaire and the interview form will be distributed using the internal email database of Elizabeth school of London.

Data Analysis Methods

The researcher implements a data analysis technique depending on the types of data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The study follows quantitative data from the quantitative survey and qualitative data from both qualitative interviews and systematic reviews. The researcher follows descriptive statistics to summarise the information using tables and graphs (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The paper embraces thematic analysis for the data collected from interviews and non-numerical data. The researcher familiarises themselves with the data, describes the content, and searches for themes for the codes. The researcher follows a thematic analysis of the textual data after triangulation of the results on the mixed methodological design to develop themes for discussion.

Research Ethics

The researcher fulfils all the ethical requirements for the primary and secondary data collection processes. First, the institutions mandated to grant permission for the study process have permitted the researcher to conduct the research. Secondly, the researcher abided by the IRB standards regarding the use of humans as subjects in the study process (Israel and Hay, 2006). Secondly, the researcher asked the participants to voluntarily engage in the study by providing them with consent forms that they signed before engaging in the study process. The investigator ensured the security of data by keeping the softcopy of information on a password-protected computer, maintaining the anonymity of the respondents, and ensured the integrity of information and privacy of the participants. Lastly, the researcher ensured that the information is only available for academic purposes and assured respondents of safe disposal after completion of the course after six months of data collection.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The researcher collected data from 49 respondents using an online survey and interviews within Elizabeth School of London. The online survey was produced with the help of Google Forms. The Google Forms software was also used for the production of the graphs and charts showing the collected primary data. The researcher distributed the questionnaires via social

media and emails to the respondents and engaged three agents or investigators to conduct the online interview via video conference with three respondents to gather data using the interview schedule. Lastly, the researcher collected secondary data using a systematic review that identified ten articles on the topic (See appendix 1 below).

<https://forms.gle/cqeHhaDm9dnsyZfT8>

(Link to the primary data collection survey)

Primary Data

Results from Survey

Gender

The respondents that have participated in the study are 49. Accordingly, 59 percent account for females while 41 percent are males.

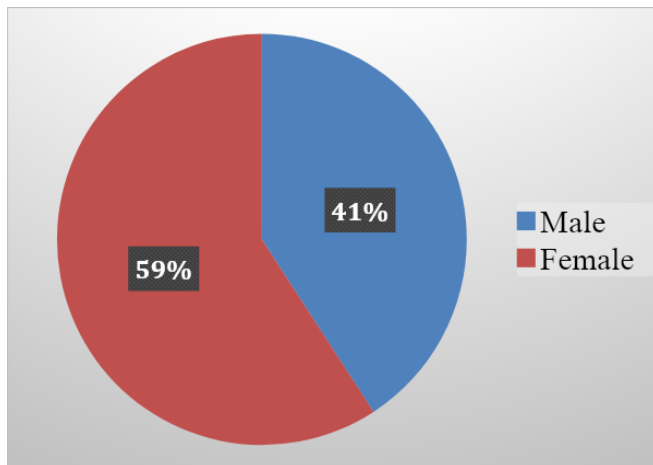


Figure 3: Percentage of respondents in terms of gender

Age Categories of the Respondents

The majority of the respondents included in the study are in the 30-39 years age bracket accounting for 39.13 percent followed by the 18-29 years category accounting for 34.78 percent then 40-49 years accounting for 26.09 percent.

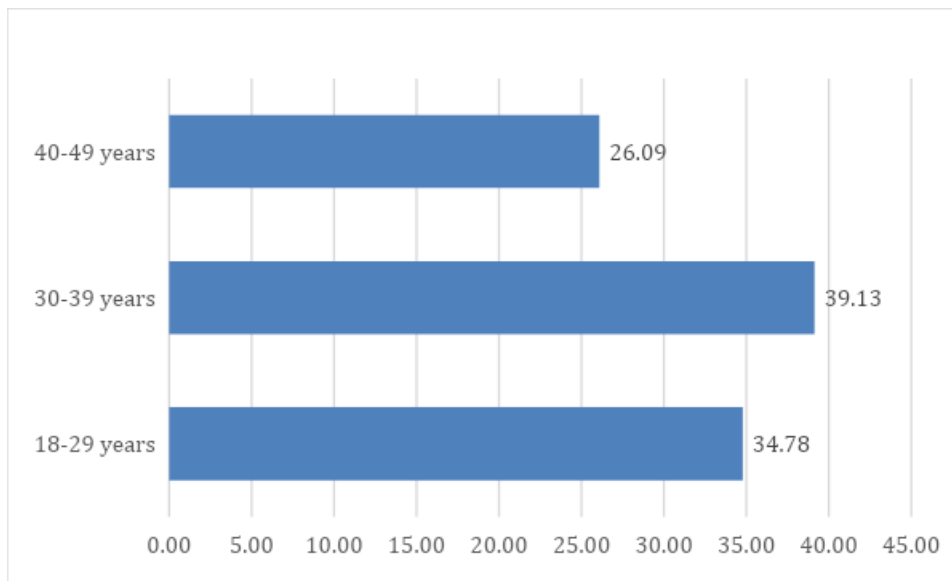


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents as per their age categories

Question 1: Whether social media posts influence the decision to choose a university

The respondents in the study indicated that social media influence their decision to choose a university. Accordingly, 51 percent of the respondents strongly agree, 29 percent agree, 18 percent remain neutral, 2 percent disagree and zero percent strongly disagreed with the statement.

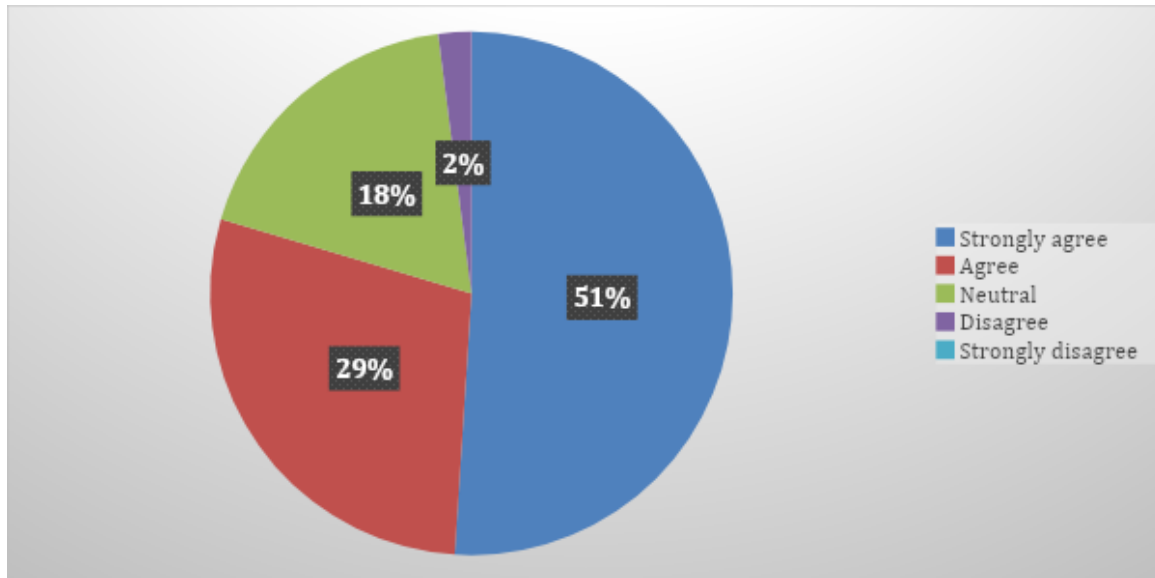


Figure 5: Percentage of respondents noting whether social media posts influence the decision to choose a university

Question 2: What social media do you use most

The study shows that respondents mainly use Facebook at 41 percent, followed by Instagram at 22 percent, YouTube at 18 percent, TikTok at 9 percent, LinkedIn at 5 percent, and Twitter at 4 percent.

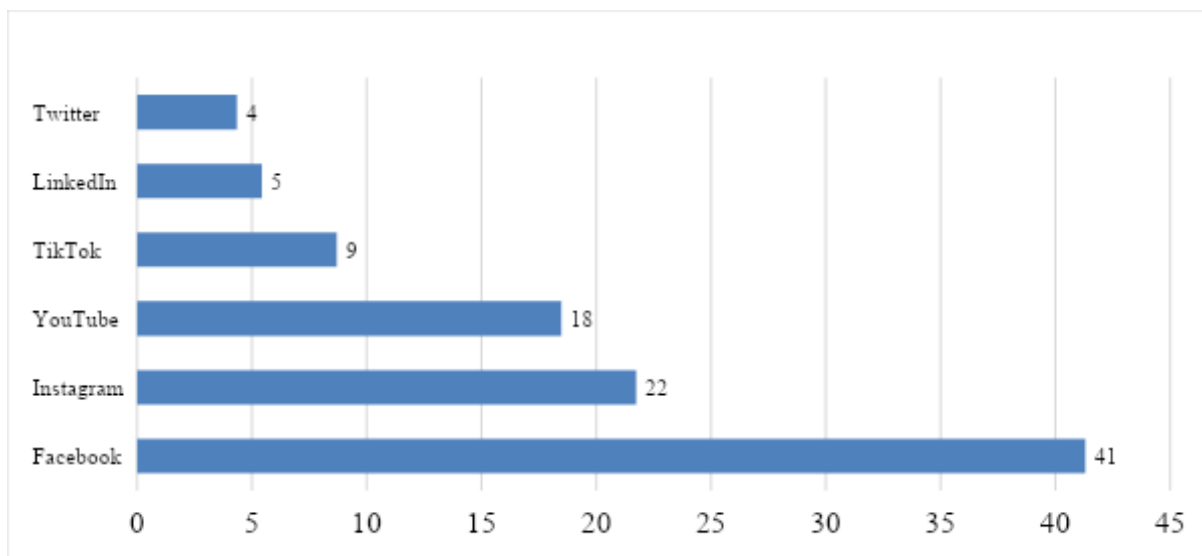


Figure 6: Percentage of respondents on their utilisation of the types of social media platforms.

Question 3: Whether paid add-on search engines have an impact on the decision when choosing a university

The respondents appreciate paid search engines and note that it has an impact on their decision in choosing a university. The study results indicate that 18 percent strongly agree, 47 percent agree, and 22 percent remain neutral, while 6 percent of the respondents both disagree and strongly disagree with the sentiment.

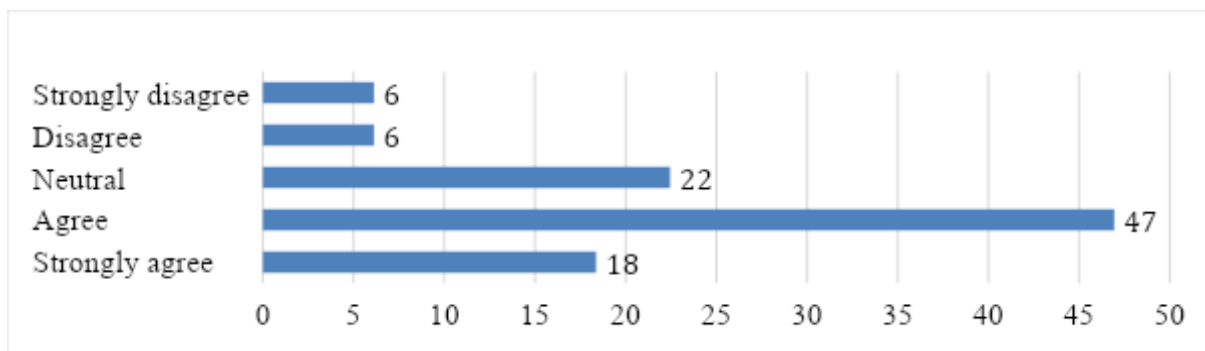


Figure 7: Percentage of respondents on whether paid add-on search engine has an impact on their decision to choose a university

Question 4: What search engine respondents use

All the respondents in the study consent that they mostly use Google as their most preferred search engine.

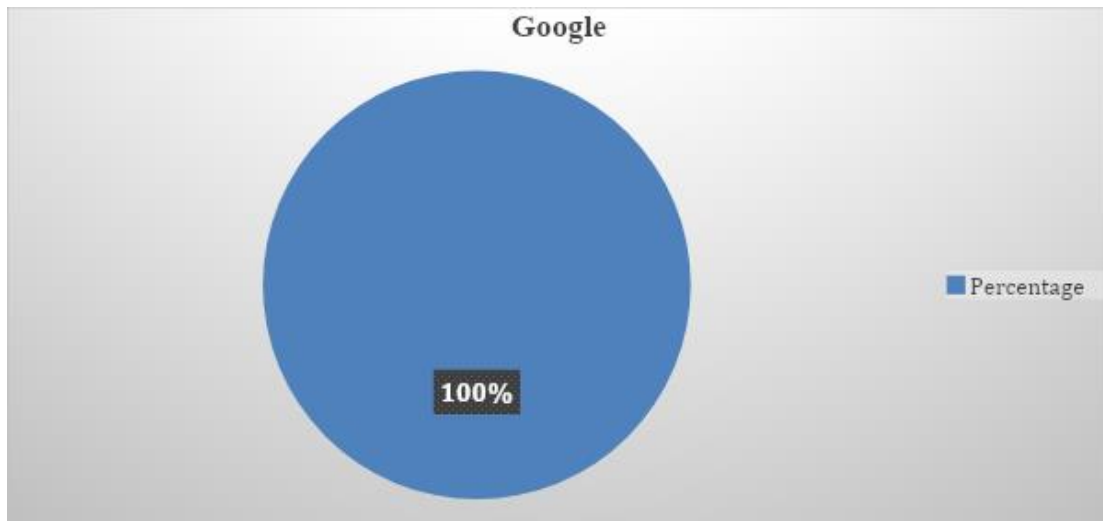


Figure 8: Percentage of respondents showing their most preferred search engine

Question 5: Would you say that your decision to join your current university has been influenced by digital advertisement?

The study shows that 38 percent of the respondents strongly agree, 35 percent agree, 17 percent are neutral, 8 percent disagree, 2 percent strongly disagree.

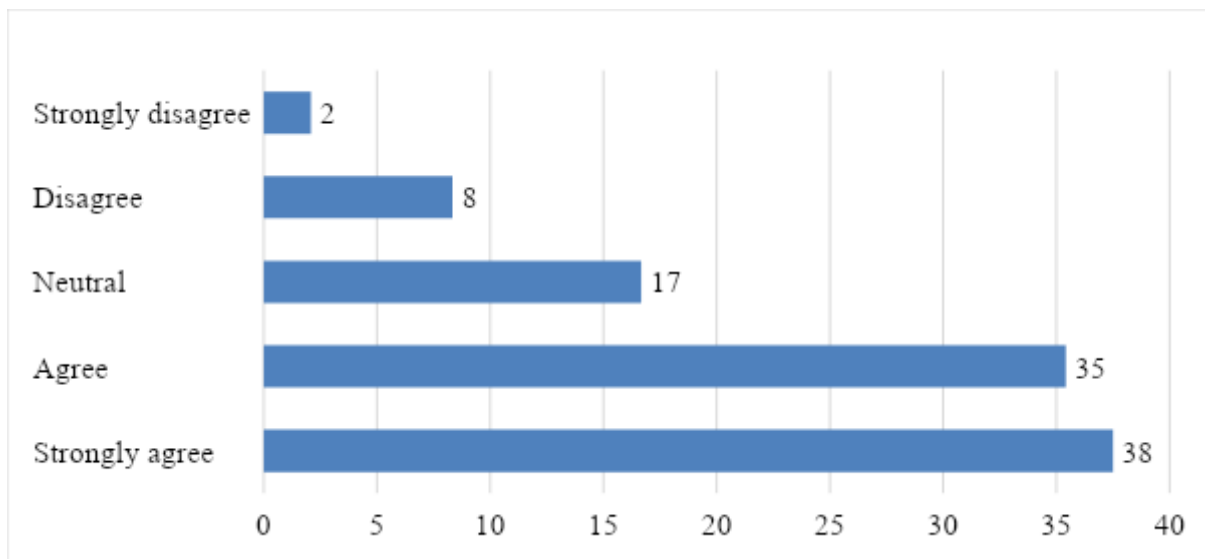


Figure 9: Percentage of respondents indicating that their decision to join current university has been influenced by digital advertisement

Question 6: Would you say that decision to join your current university has been impacted by an influencer?

The study results indicate that 39 percent strongly agree, 29 percent agree, 20 percent remain neutral, 8 percent disagree while 4 percent strongly disagree.

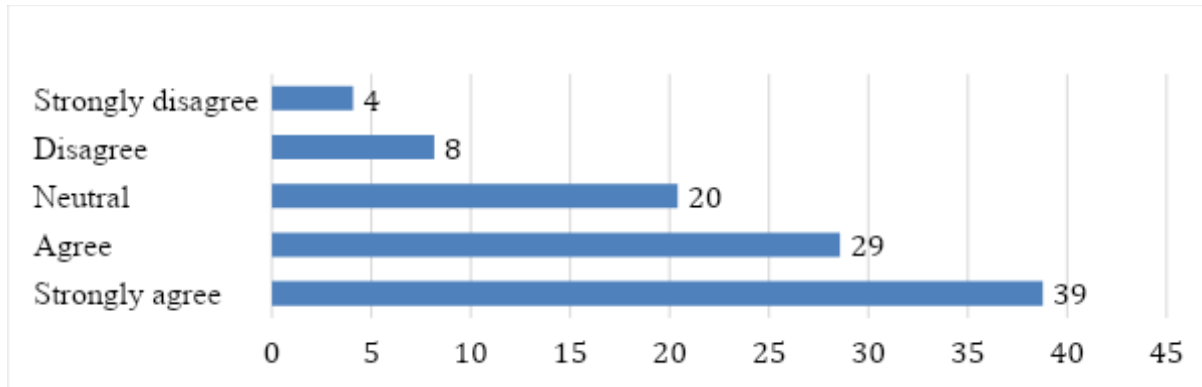


Figure 10: Percentage of respondents indicating that their decision to join your current university has been impacted by an influencer

Question 7: Would you say that your decision to join your current university has been impacted by an email you received from the university

The study shows that 31 percent disagree with the sentiment while 25 percent strongly agree, 17 percent remain neutral while 8 percent strongly disagree.

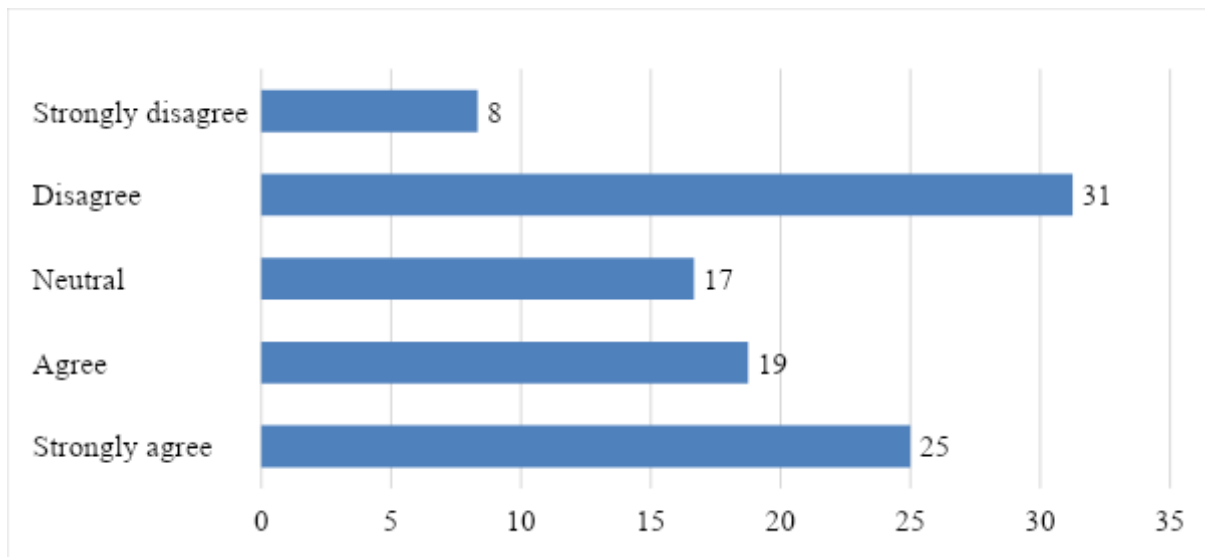


Figure 11: Percentage of respondents indicating that their decision to join your current university has been impacted by an email you received from the university.

Question 8: Would you recommend a certain university to a friend by judging the university based on its social media image

The results from the study question show that 42 percent strongly agree, 29 agree, 15 percent are neutral, 8 percent disagree, and 6 percent strongly disagree.

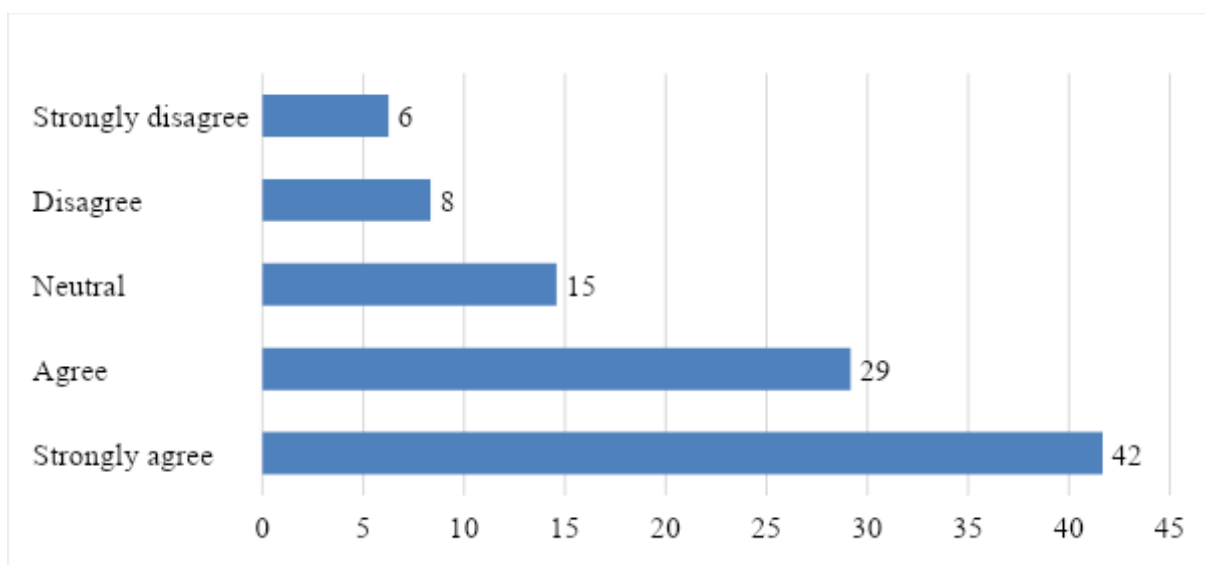


Figure 12: Percentage of respondents indicating that they would recommend a certain university to a friend by judging the university based on its social media image.

Question 9: Do you believe that digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to UK universities?

The majority of the respondents accounting for 57 percent strongly agree, 33 percent agree, 8 percent neutral, and 2 percent disagreeing.

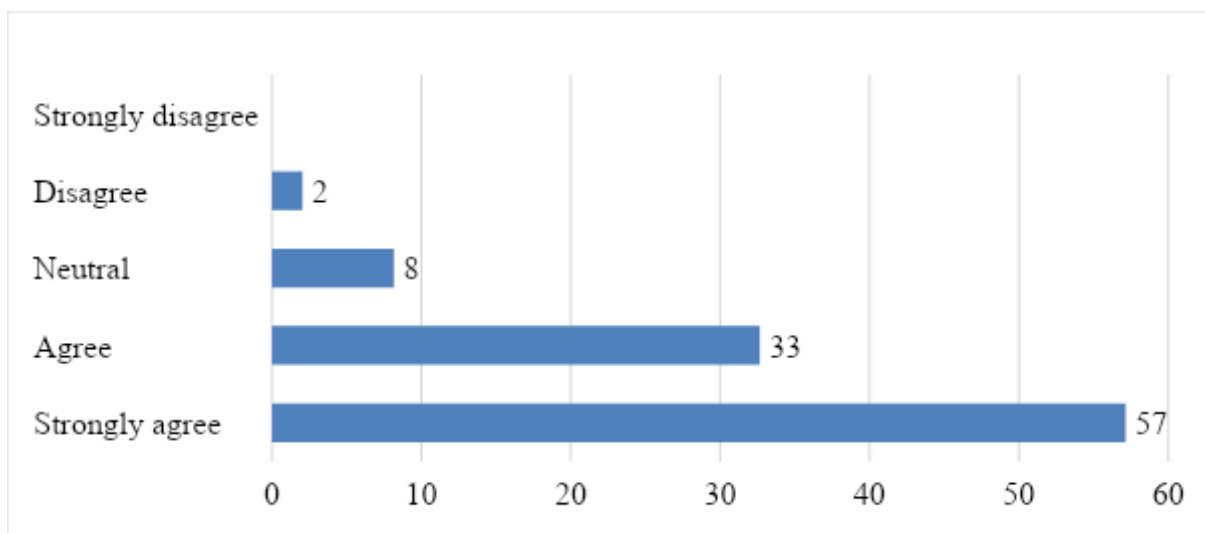


Figure 13: Percentage of respondents believing that digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to UK universities.

Result from the Interview

First Interviewee

Sarah Stewart who is an administrator is pleased to note in the interview that she is using digital marketing to recruit students. Stewart says, “Yes. I rely on the various tools made available by digital marketing as part of my students’ recruitment process. I can say that I have noticed significant progress in the recruitment activities since I started implementing digital

marketing” (Stewart, 2022). The interview mentions that she uses Facebook and believes that digital marketing is relevant for the recruitment of students (Stewart, 2022).

Second Interviewee

Ana Nichols who is a training manager confirms that she uses digital marketing to recruit students. Nichols says, “.... I am using traditional and digital marketing, but mostly I am focused on digital marketing because it is a very powerful tool for any business, not only in our industry” (Nichols, 2022). She is fond of Instagram in digital marketing and notes, "... I am more focused on Instagram or Facebook. On Instagram, I already have a community of almost 10000 followers" (Nichols, 2022). Lastly, Nichols agrees that digital marketing has improved the rate of recruitment of students (Nichols, 2022).

Third Interviewee

Maria Staneva, who is a marketing officer, agrees that digital marketing is important for recruiting students. She uses Facebook and Instagram frequently while TikTok in some cases. On whether digital marketing has improved the rate of recruiting students, Staneva says, "Definitely! The use of digital marketing has improved the students’ recruitment rate several folds. I found it much more effective than traditional marketing and I aim to make the best out of it daily” (Staneva, 2022).

Data validation in triangulation

When it comes to research, triangulation is used to address a particular research question by comparing a set of multiple methods, data, theories, and researchers. At its core, triangulation is a type of research strategy that helps to improve the credibility of the researcher's findings. In the current study, the researcher compared the data through a cross-examination between the results obtained from the primary data (3 interviews and a survey) and the secondary data (2 peer-reviewed articles). Each evaluator explored the data by observing the questionnaires and selected articles where the researcher identified themes. The researcher then compared the findings of each evaluator, revealing consistency in a thematic theme, such as digital influencers for decision-making, marketing and recruitment, and social media platforms enhancing the image of institutions.

The responses of the three researchers (or interviewees) can be seen in Appendix 4. As for the 2 selected peer-reviewed articles, the researcher chose Mogaji, et al. (2021) and Shola and Zia (2021). According to Mogaji, et al. (2021), universities were found to engage with the public by regularly presenting media showing their activities to build reputation. Shared media coverage is also used to encourage and motivate students who further share their success stories and pass on the motivation to other students. This is further supported by Šola and Zia (2021), who postulate that universities have recognized the importance of social media as a tool for providing information that is used to target and recruit students, as well as to advertise curricula and courses to future students. The authors (Shola and Zia, 2021) also found that students tend to use Facebook and Instagram to analyze the information of a particular academic institution to make an informed study decision. The survey and interview results are the same.

From the current triangulation analysis (between survey, interview and case studies) of data, it can be concluded that digital marketing is the future of UK university student recruitment

in the post-Covid-19 era. The most used social media in this regard is Facebook, followed by Instagram.

Thematic Discussion (Secondary data)

The researcher has undertaken systematic review to collect secondary data from ten peer-reviewed articles (Appendix 1). The researcher addresses themes developed from the articles which include decision making, recruitment of students, university marketing and branding. The primary data section in the study reveals how respondents strongly agree and agree that digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to the UK. The secondary sources share the same sentiment that social media and other digital platforms help to recruit students (Mogaji *et al.*, 2021; Chen and DiVall, 2018; Johnson, 2022).

Secondly, the researcher reveals from the systematic review (appendix 1) decision making as a theme that has featured in several of the secondary sources (60%). The finding is similar to the primary data both in the interview and survey (figures 9 and 10).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The study investigates whether digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to UK universities focusing on the lessons learned from Covid-19. Digital marketing is a type of marketing whereby companies use electronic devices such as smartphones, computers, tablets, and other electronic gadgets that access the internet to pass promotional information and measure their impacts on the consumers. The study investigates the merits and demerits of digital marketing in recruiting students to universities in the UK focusing on Elizabeth School of London. The study examines the different digital tools and channels that institutions such as Elizabeth School of London use in recruiting students to universities in the UK. The study

explores the various resources needed to implement digital marketing strategies in recruiting students to universities in the UK. Lastly, it explores how digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to universities in the UK. The study embraces a mixed methodology design to collect primary and secondary data. The primary source of information includes data from a survey among the students at Elizabeth School of London and data collected after interviewing staff in the academic institution. The study has secondary data from ten articles systematically selected to identify themes that the researcher has related to the primary data.

The results from the primary data shows that social media influences the students' decision to choose universities. The study indicates the majority accounting for 51 percent of the respondents who strongly agreed. The research indicates that Facebook is the most used social media platform by students accounting for 41 percent followed by Instagram at 22 percent. The results reveal that students value search engines with 18 percent of the respondents strongly agreeing after 47 percent of the respondents indicated that they agree. Equally, all of the respondents stated they use the Google search engine. Similarly, the results from the interview indicate that social media is crucial for the recruitment of students in universities, especially, the use of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Digital marketing has improved the recruiting rates for students that became effective compared to traditional marketing. Equally, the results from the systematic review reveal thematic topics which include recruitment of students, university branding, and the decision of students to join a college. A thematic discussion of the topics compared to the primary data shows similarities in terms of digital marketing tools such as social media as the main influencers for students to decide on selecting or joining colleges and universities. Both the primary and secondary data show that digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to UK universities.

Recommendations

Universities and other institutions of higher learning should recruit students via digital marketing in the present and future processes. Digital marketing could be more effective in the future because the process will allow the prospective students to have a sense of personality and university culture. After all, digital marketing showcases special information or unique interests of the college or university.

Secondly, schools should embrace the digital marketing recruitment process because it will help institutions meet their target students who hang out on the social media platform and digital space on their tablets, smartphones, and laptops.

Separately, a digital marketing platform will provide the best level of interaction and engagement among students and recruiters at high levels. The recruiters will use live videos, competitions, polls, and comments to get the conversation flowing between recruiters and students.

Universities should embrace digital marketing for recruiting students because it enables the institutions to experiment with their efforts in various markets and be available to prospective students everywhere using the limited available budget.

The use of digital marketing to recruit students in the future is imperative because it will help institutions of higher learning to structure and organise their ways of recruiting students more than the analog way.

Lastly, the universities should embrace digital marketing as a future recruiting tool for students because it assists students in making decisions and selecting their preferred institutions. This strategy is an opportunity for the institutions to engage in robust marketing and remain present online for prospective students.

The study indicates some limitations which include a relatively small sample size for generalisation. The study focuses more on descriptive data irrespective of the small quantitative survey. Perhaps this happens because of the inclusion of both interview and systematic review which cling more towards descriptive data. Future studies on the topic should focus on quantitative primary data among all universities in London instead of focusing on Elizabeth School of London to increase the scope of the research.

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CHAPTER 7: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Peer-reviewed articles

Peer-reviewed Article	Theme / main focus	Type of Study
Mogaji, E., Watat, J.K., Olaleye, S.A. and Ukpabi, D., 2021. Recruit, retain, and report UK universities' strategic communication with stakeholders on Twitter. In <i>Strategic corporate communication in the digital age</i> (pp. 89-114). Emerald Publishing Limited. http://jultika.oulu.fi/files/nbnfi-fe202104079572.pdf	Recruitment of students	Descriptive study
Towers, A. and Towers, N., 2020. Re-evaluating the postgraduate students' course selection decision-making process in the digital era. <i>Studies in Higher Education</i> , 45(6), pp.1133-1148.	Decision-making (Digital Influencers)	Exploratory study
Wazed, S. and Ng, E.S., 2015. College recruiting using social media: how to increase applicant reach and reduce recruiting costs. <i>Strategic HR Review</i> .	University branding on social media	Review

Šola, H.M., and Zia, T., 2021. SOCIAL MEDIA AND STUDENT'S CHOICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION. <i>European Journal of Management and Marketing Studies</i> , 6(4).	Influence of social media	Survey
DiAna, K., 2014. The impact of social media on college choice.	College decision	Quantitative study
Sutherland, K., Terton, U., Davis, C., Driver, C., and Visser, I., 2020. Academic Perspectives and Approaches to Social Media Use in Higher Education: A Pilot Study. <i>International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education</i> , 32(1), pp.1-12.	Type of social media and decision making	Survey
Sandvig, J.C., 2016. The role of social media in college recruiting. <i>International Journal of Web Based Communities</i> , 12(1), pp.23-34.	Making college decisions using social media	Online survey
Purewal, S., Ardiles, P., Di Ruggiero, E., Flores, J.V.L., Mahmood, S. and Elhagehassan, H., 2021. Using Social Media as a Survey Recruitment Strategy for Post-Secondary Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <i>INQUIRY: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing</i> , 58, p.00469580211059305	Making college decisions using social media	Online survey

Chen, E. and DiVall, M., 2018. Social media as an engagement tool for schools and colleges of pharmacy. <i>American journal of pharmaceutical education</i> , 82(4).	Marketing and recruitment	Systematic review
Kumar, V. and Raman, R., 2020. Social Media by Indian Universities--Does It Convince or Confuse International Students in University Choice? <i>International Journal of Higher Education</i> , 9(5), pp.167-180.	Making college decisions using social media	Interview and survey

Appendix 2: Link to Facebook page of Elizabeth School of London

https://www.facebook.com/elizabethschooloflondon/reviews/?ref=page_internal

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Primary data questionnaire

Thank you for taking a few minutes of your time to fill out the following survey!

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect first-hand data which will be used to investigate whether digital marketing is the future way to recruit students in UK universities in the post-Covid-19 era.

Please only continue with the survey if you are a student of Elizabeth School of London.

You can rest assured that your personal information will be kept fully confidential under the UK Data Protection Act 2018. You have the full right to opt out of the questionnaire at all times.

Thank you very much once again!

Question 1

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Not specified

Question 2

What is your age?

- 18 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 and above

Question 3

Do social media posts have an impact on your decision when choosing to join a university?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 4

What social media channels do you use the most?

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Tik-Tok
- YouTube

Question 5

Do paid ads on search engines have an impact on your decision when choosing to join a university?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 6

What search engine do you use the most?

- Google
- Microsoft Bing
- Yahoo
- DuckDuckGo
- Ask.com

Question 7

Would you say that your decision to join your current university has been influenced by digital advertising?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 8

Would you say that your decision to join your current university has been impacted by an influencer?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 9

Would you say that your decision to join your current university has been impacted by an email you received from the university?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 10

Would you recommend a certain university to a friend by judging the university based on its social media image?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 11

Do you believe that digital marketing is the future for recruiting students to UK universities?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix 4: Interviews

Interview 1

My dear colleagues

Thank you for taking a few minutes of your time to fill out the following interview!

The aim of this interview is to collect first-hand data which will be used to investigate whether digital marketing is the future way to recruit students in UK universities in the post-Covid-19 era. I need this for my dissertation at UWTSD on the topic: *IS DIGITAL MARKETING THE FUTURE FOR RECRUITING STUDENTS TO UK UNIVERSITIES? THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID*

You can rest assured that your personal information will be kept fully confidential under the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Thank you very much once again!

Interview form

Your full name: Maria Staneva	
Your job position: Marketing Officer	
Time and date: 13:30 h, 10 August 2022	
Question 1: Do you use digital marketing for your students' recruitment purposes?	Please answer: Being a marketing officer myself, I use digital marketing in my everyday job activities for the purpose of recruiting students.
Question 2: What digital marketing tools do you use in order to recruit new students?	Please answer: I would say I mainly use Facebook and Instagram, and in some cases TikTok. Through the years of experience I have found these social media channels to be most effective in my recruitment work.
Question 3: Would you say that the use of digital marketing has improved your students' recruitment rate?	Please answer: Definitely! The use of digital marketing has improved the students' recruitment rate several fold. I found it much more effective than traditional marketing and I aim to make the best out of it on a daily basis.

Interview 2

My dear colleagues

Thank you for taking a few minutes of your time to fill out the following interview!

The aim of this interview is to collect first-hand data which will be used to investigate whether digital marketing is the future way to recruit students in UK universities in the post-Covid-19 era. I need this for my dissertation at UWTSd on the topic: *IS DIGITAL MARKETING THE FUTURE FOR RECRUITING STUDENTS TO UK UNIVERSITIES? THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID*

You can rest assured that your personal information will be kept fully confidential under the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Thank you very much once again!

Interview form

Your full name: Sarah Stewart	
Your job position: Admin	
Time and date: 3.30 pm, 12 of August, 2022	
Question 1: Do you use digital marketing for your students' recruitment purposes?	Please answer: Yes. I rely on the various tools made available by digital marketing as part of my students recruitment process. I can say that I have noticed significant progress in the recruitment activities since I started implementing digital marketing.
Question 2: What digital marketing tools do you use in order to recruit new students?	Please answer: I use predominantly Facebook as it allows me to accurately target the preferred customer base. I also use email marketing with the help of Mailchimp. I also use Whatsapp for easier communication with my clients.
Question 3: Would you say that the use of digital marketing has improved your students' recruitment rate?	Please answer: As I mentioned earlier, I have experienced a significant improvement in my students' recruitment rate since I started using digital marketing. I believe that digital marketing and its tools are the future for recruiting students to UK universities.

Interview 3

My dear colleagues

Thank you for taking a few minutes of your time to fill out the following interview!

The aim of this interview is to collect first-hand data which will be used to investigate whether digital marketing is the future way to recruit students in UK universities in the post-Covid-19 era. I need this for my dissertation at UWTSD on the topic: *IS DIGITAL MARKETING THE FUTURE FOR RECRUITING STUDENTS TO UK UNIVERSITIES? THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID*

You can rest assured that your personal information will be kept fully confidential under the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Thank you very much once again!

Interview form

Your full name: Ana Nichols	
Your job position: Training Manager	
Time and date: 11.44, 13 august, 2022	
Question 1: Do you use digital marketing for your students' recruitment purposes?	Please answer: Marketing is very important nowadays. Not using it for recruitment students will be a big mistake and a big loss. I am using traditional and digital marketing, but mostly I am focused on digital marketing because it is a very powerful tool for any business, not only in our industry. These days people are spending a lot on social media and it is the shortest way to make you visible, trustful and to communicate with them. So, yes. I am using digital marketing for recruiting students, almost every day.
Question 2: What digital marketing tools do you use in order to recruit new students?	Please answer: Even though TikTok became very famous and some of my colleagues use this social media very successfully, I am more focused on Instagram or Facebook. On Instagram I already have a community of almost 10000 followers. They used to see me every day, to understand, to trust me and to recommend me to other people. Most of my potential students are from Instagram, even though I also use Facebook for marketing. But still, Instagram stays in 1st place, as there, showing daily life and successful stories of students, it is easier to win the trust of people.
Question 3: Would you say that the use of digital marketing has improved your students' recruitment rate?	Please answer: The answer is 100% yes. As I mentioned, digital marketing became a very strong and powerful tool in promoting. Also, social media is possible to cover a biggest number of people and from different communities. Traditional marketing is still alive, but day by day, digital marketing is winning more territory in influencing, promoting, and satisfied people needs and wants