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Educational Institutional Websites: A study on effect of gender factor in the influential variables for selecting a College with special reference to Kottayam District.

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Abstract

Education has never been cheap. Students and the parents are always aware of the rising cost of education irrespective of mushroom growth of educational institutions. Already there is cutthroat competition among various private educational institutions. However, the success of these institutions will be possible only by building customer loyalty through customer satisfaction and it has become a challenging one. A well designed educational marketing strategy is the need of the hour for ensuring success and survival in the market. Right communication strategy at the right time can ensure easy approachability.

The purpose of this paper was to explore whether the role of the internet and educational institutional websites plays in male and female students while selecting a particular college. The findings from this study support previous research on the increased use of the internet in the decision-making process and selection of colleges by potential students. It emphasizes the need for colleges to have attractive and clearly understood web pages with readily navigable information on such characteristics as programs, course offerings, location, and relevant accreditations. This is critically important as visiting the website and what was found there was a precursor to a decision to visit the campus. This paper examines whether gender is a dominant factor in decision making of selecting a college. This study concluded that the selection of the college by both male and female students purely based on the critical evaluation of the influential variables shown in the website of the colleges and not by their gender difference.

Key Word: Influential variables

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Introduction

As we know in this technology era, the passion of internet is boosting among the students. For any search they usually like to use the Google to collect the information. Similarly in the case of education, it is often helpful to use education websites as a means of collecting the relevant information about the concerned courses and colleges. Today the many institutes and colleges in India are developing their own sites to offer the clear concepts to the students. With the help of these education websites, student can search any colleges across the country. Every year thousands of students make a decision that will have a significant impact on the rest of their lives. They choose which college to attend. This decision will affect their career, earnings, and professional development. This decision is equally important to the institutions that depend upon students' tuition revenue to operate. Where are prospective students going for information about colleges? Are they are evaluating college websites? The purpose of this paper is to examine how students are using these websites and what particular information they are gathering from the college's website. We then provide recommendations for colleges to assist them in making their websites better tools for "selling" their institutions.

It is well said "Action Speaks Louder than Words"; in the same way education institutional website will speak volume for students. At present there are some great education websites are available which directly conveys the useful information. Students have become more conscious about their career, so that picking right course is necessary as it is the merely way that ensures their good professional life.

As a whole the dependence on education websites are increasing, and has become an essential part of our society

Literature Review

The selection of an institution of higher education can be categorized as the purchase of a high involvement, credence type of service. The choice is high involvement since it involves a great deal of financial risk, psychological risk and social risk. Higher education is a credence service since it is difficult for the consumer to evaluate the service even after some trial has occurred (Zeithaml 1981). For this type of purchase we can expect a greater information search prior to purchase and the internet is a primary tool for the information search (Benjamin and Lee, 2005).

A recent study by Tucciarone (2009) found that students rely on information from college websites in evaluating the institution. The most common information sought by the students was majors, cost, ranking of school, size and location. Some colleges are utilizing specialized recruitment software which uses instant messaging type software to engage visitors who visit their website to increase recruiting opportunities and the interactivity of the website itself (Benjamin and Lee, 2005).

The usefulness of social networking sites for educational promotion became apparent along with the growing popularity of these sites among teens or prospective students. Roblyer et al. (2010) emphasized that colleges are also using SNSs for university marketing campaigns. However, Roderick et al. (2008, p124) found in their research on low social economic status urban students from Chicago, that the use of university websites had not significantly influenced the students in their decision making process because there was very little evidence that students were using resources such as these to help guide their college search. Although this research dismisses cyber networks owing to their statistically low presence on





students search and decision to attend college, a recent survey from Eduventures, Inc. has shown the increasing trend of high school students' use of on-line cyber networks as sources of information over the past few years. They also noted that 80% of the college bound students who were involved in this study indicated that their college search began on-line (Ashburn, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. In the present era, students give much priority in selecting a college. It has been noted that educational website are influencing the students to select the respective colleges in their academic careers. But in Indian context, how these websites are influencing customers to select the college. Hence, this study is to examine whether gender factor in the influential variable affects the decision making of selecting a college in Kerala with special reference to Kottayam District.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine whether gender is a dominant factor in decision making of selecting a college by the students.

Significance and Scope of the Study

The prime objective of the project is to study the influence of educational institutional websites among students and whether gender has any effect on selecting a college. The sample is 60 students based on the random sampling technique. Different questions are asked on the basis of structured questionnaire.

The study also helps to know how much information is provided by the college websites such as geography, fees structure, academic excellence and reputation, programme or courses offered and accreditation.

Research Methodology

Research design

A research design is conceptual framework where the research is conducted. It is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with students' opinion. The study is both exploratory and analytical in nature.

Universe of the study

For the purpose of this study, the universe is limited to the college students of Kottayam District.

Sample Procedure & Sample Size

Random sampling technique is adopted to collect the data. The sample size selected for this study is 60 students; 30 from male students and 30 from female students randomly in the Kottayam District.

Data Collection

The primary data were collected from students of Kottayam town. Methods of data collection to be based on structured questionnaire. A pre-determined structured questionnaire is administered for students.



Hypothesis

Research hypothesis: Is there any significant gender wise difference between influential variables in selecting a college

H0: There is no significant gender wise difference between influential variables and selecting a college.

H1: There is significant gender wise difference between influential variables and selecting a college.

ANOVA test is used for testing the hypothesis of this study.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of the study are:

- Data collection is conducted with limited youth.
- Time spent will be limited due to which the exhaustive study cannot not be conducted.

Theoretical review

Influential variables

For taking every appropriate decisions, all have to critically analyze the variables available from the sources and also some other factors such as gender, age , family size etc to be considered before taking the decisions. For the purpose of this study the influential variable are categorized into five, such as ;

1. **Geography** – Location is significant in many students' minds, either because they want to live in a certain part of the country or because of financial constraints.
2. **Fees structure** –The availability of financial aid heavily influences college selection. The fees structure of the course and other fees for the career also influence the students to choose the college.
3. **Academic Excellence and Reputation** – Although students see academics as important, they are not only looking at ranking lists to judge them. Students prefer broader academic reputation that leads their decision-making such as competent faculty, infrastructure facilities, excellent opportunities in skill development etc.
4. **Programme or courses offered**– it is a important that the number of courses offered by the college before taking the decisions. It is also noted that many colleges are offering value added courses to enrich the quality of the students.
5. **Accreditation** – Accreditation is the act of granting credit or recognition, especially to an educational institution that maintains suitable standards. It is necessary to any person or institution in education that needs to prove that they meet a general standard of quality.



Data analysis an interpretation

Testing of hypothesis

H0: There is no significant gender wise difference between influential variables and selecting a college.

H1: There is significant gender wise difference between influential variables and selecting a college.

Table 1.1 showing the result of ANOVA

	SS	d f	MS	F Value
Between	27	4	6.75	1.7763
Within	19	5	3.8	
Total	46	9		

Note: The level of significance is 5%

Since, the calculated F value is within the acceptable limits, so we accept the null hypothesis. That is there is no significant gender wise difference between influential variables in selecting a college by the students.

Findings, suggestions and conclusion

This study examines, whether gender is a dominant factor in decision making of selecting a college by the students of Kerala. The result of this study shows that there is no significant gender wise difference between the website influential variables such as geography, fees structure, academic excellence and reputation, programme or courses offered and accreditation in selecting a college.

This study does not considered the other dominant factors such as age, income of the family, family size, educational qualifications, parents and peers etc which have a relative role in decision making for selecting the college. This study suggested that there is a wide scope of conducting a detailed research on this area.

This study concluded that the selection of the college by both male and female students purely based on the critical evaluation of the influential variables shown in the website of the colleges and not by their gender difference.

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