



National  
College *of*  
Ireland

**A study on ‘social media’ a digital marketing tool, influencing Indian international students to choose Ireland as a higher education destination.**

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**MSc in International Business**

**Submitted to National College of Ireland**

# Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Johney Cyriac

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# 1.Introduction

## A. Background of the research.

The realm of computer is developing at a rapid phase, and new editions of products are being added to this world as days go on Dave Evans (2008). Social media is such a word that stands as an umbrella to the new generation of internet applications which are now subjected to vigorous talks and commercial interest. The aptitude of social media as educational environments is one of the main subjects that are put forward for these discussions. It creates integrated, targeted, and measurable communication. Li, F., Larimo, J. and Leonidou, L. C. (2021). We can see that peer-to-peer communication and user participation is encouraged as social media is a platform that focuses on user-generation control rather than supplier-generated. Also, social media marketing is the most important platform as it permits firms to interact with clients worldwide (Constantinides and Stagno, 2012).

Online digital marketing is being encouraged by the authorities as it demolishes the lines of demographics and psychographics and enables to reach new customers. The international education platform is one such platform that makes use of social media. Digital marketing can be called an act of promoting goods, selling, and providing services by leveraging, namely social media marketing, email marketing and email marketing Malesev, S. and Cherry, M. (2021). Now replacing most of the traditional markets digital market has started to be in the very fabric of our lives, and institutions cannot exclude the presence of it. A growing number of international students are being instated through the institutions from sending market, and these collaborations bring pedagogical benefits. KYUNGHEE MA (2021) Ireland, which had not been the first choice for international studies, has gained popularity due to the economic growth that it had gone through since 2013.

It can be seen that Ireland is being settled behind the others in this field as they rely on recruitment agents Zizhen Wang and O'Connell, P. J. (2020). Through social media, international students are impacted by the new culture they must experience and hypnopaedia. The colleges in Ireland have been selecting international students through essays, recommendations, resume and interviews (mbacrystalball, 2019). Typically when admission is called for, they utilize their maximum opportunities to accept the child. Virtual strategies can help to decrease cost hence influencing the student's decision making and further cutting down a vast amount of national and international market. Paranawithana, D. L. S. et al. (2020). The increasing competition in the education sector and the government's deregulation has pushed the educational institutions to market themselves to cope with the national and global market. Comprehension of the business sector, the needs of clients, influencers, threats and opportunities, advertising channels and brand positions rely upon the executives.

## B. Research problem

This research has focused the void when it comes to descriptive approach exploring social media as a digital marketing tool in influencing Indian international students to choose Ireland as a higher education destination and to obtain a reasonable conclusion which can help future international business to adopt strategies based on the results.

### **C. Justification of the study.**

Over the past few decades, the number of international students is getting bigger and broader. In comparison with the other EU member states, Ireland ranks itself in 13<sup>th</sup> position with a share of over 8.880 % of international students around the globe (OECD (2020)). With the advent of the internet, people around the world become connected, and they get to know what they wish to know. Digital marketing became a key factor after the establishment of social media (West,2021). India is one of the biggest sending markets of International students across the world. The technical advancement that India had achieved over the past had enabled the younger generation to look up to European countries for their higher education Pawar, S. K., Dasgupta, H. and Vispute, S. (2020). Social media platforms like Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram had a great deal of impact in attracting young people to have Ireland as their higher education destination (digital marketing institute,2018). Technology-based marketing had a tremendous impact in bringing international education into prominence. Following that, there arises a situation where the position of India as a sending market and Ireland as a host country got strengthened. India Blooms [HT Digital] (India) (2019). It is high time to investigate how social media had influenced the Indian students in choosing Ireland as a primary choice among their study destinations. Thus, the research aims to examine the role of Social Media' as a digital marketing tool in influencing Indian international students to choose Ireland as a higher education destination.

### **D. Research Questions.**

How Indian students used social media and social networking sites for selecting the country and University? Does social media play a vital role in selecting the desired course? How active are the Indian students in the social media playground? What are major social media websites used by students, if so, which social media is most preferred? How does communication through social media (with institutions and alumni and current students) influence the selection process? Was education Ireland and its social media platform were helpful in the selection process? Comparing traditional and social media marketing, which was the most helpful for the selection process?

## 2. Literature Review

### A. Ireland in International Education.

There is a rapid increase in the mobility of international students, and it is getting diversified. Through studies, it can be noted that Ireland is becoming a hotspot for international students. According to Migrant Network (2020) EU has reported that Ireland stands with an 8% of international students when compared to the other EU state members, although it stands behind France, the UK and Germany. In the past decade, Ireland has gone through an inclining economic growth which laid the path for the internationalization of its education sector. In an article by OECD (2020), it is stated that, if a comparison is made between the EU member states, it can be seen that Ireland only has 8.880% among the others and that the country is placed 13<sup>th</sup> in the world ranking. The country must focus on the marketing area of the business, which will pull up Ireland's position shown in the reviews and ratings it has received in the past years. According to the latest reports, Ireland has managed to escalate to 45% in a three-year time, that is, from 2013-2017. Although it can be considered a great success, Ireland still has to travel a long way to catch up with its rivals and competitor countries. There is a drastic change the Irish government and institutions are planning to bring about by aiming for quality recruitment of international students. An example of the improvement in the education marketing strategy can be noted through the article realised by the Higher Education Authority (2021), stating that the government is offering scholarship programmes for Bachelor, Masters and PhD level international students. There are 60 scholarships under this initiative, and these scholarships are offered to students from non- EU/EEA countries. The students will receive a stipend of €10,000 for one year's study along with a complete fee waiver of all tuition and other registration expenses at higher education institutions. Scholarships like this will attract more students to the country, as the expenses are one of the main obstacles a self-supporting student should face. Through scholarship like this, the government hand to hand with the universities is paving an opportunity for an international student to reconsider his/her financial situation.

### B. Indian Students in International education.

From the past decade, students from Indian are more prone to graduating and acquiring degrees from foreign countries, and the numbers have been inclining as the day goes by. The most significant number of international students are sent aboard from the Indian market. *Monitor (2019)* reports that in 2018 an estimate of 7,80,000 students went across the world for their higher education and in a country like India known for its population rate, especially for the increased number of the youth population, and according to *Gopinath (2015)*, these estimates will escalate to a massive 245 million by the year 2025. The tech boom that India had gone through the past decade happened as the accessibility of internet connectivity was affordable to the middle-class society. The internet, which was meant for the wealthy and privileged, became available to the commoners. This technical advancement brought about a change in the lifestyle of the youngsters as they started spending most of their time online, resulting in the extensive usage of the internet over the country. *Charan, Puri, and Bansal (2017)* state that the increased usage time helped bring a significant impact on social media marketing platforms. This was a potential space created for the foreign institutions, as they utilised the increased internet usage time. In the words of *Groarke and Durst (2019)*, in the Irish education market, Indian students rank second, and when contemplated, it can be understood that the extensive use of social media by the younger population of Indian has made this booming of the potential Irish market possible. Some students prefer Ireland regarding the tuition fee, which is lesser when compared to the USA, UK and Australia. Also, in Ireland children can find universities

in different range, from the ones that have costly education to colleges which offer cheaper classes. Although this is the case that is seen, Ireland lacks in some cases, which are drawing it behind its competitors.

### **C. Social media importance.**

The Internet has gone through a revolutionary change over the past decade. Cluley, Green and Owen (2019) state that the invention of smartphones and the entry of 4G technology has made the modes of communication more accessible, creating a significant impact on the marketing platform. This served as a key for target marketing, as the companies could access big data, which indeed brought prominence to digital marketing. The key factor contributing to this phenomenon was the social media and the influences the platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat provided for the youngsters worldwide. Frod (2019) says that the advantage for the education market lies in the direct target market where they can directly influence consumers' decision-making. This has become a milestone in the international education business, as institutions across the globe can market their course to the students who wish to pursue their degree, and Vail (2018) states that the digital platforms have become a critical step for these institutions to take for the development and growth of their business. This will help the universities and institutions to build a broad audience and collect a few quality students around the world, helping to achieve their target and reduce the cost incurred on the traditional market. Social media is a platform that helps in the marketing for the universities; it also provides a space for student-teacher interaction. Even before a student receives his/her offer letters to join a university, they can access the faculty of the institution and get to know about the course better along with that the faculty, that is both teaching and non-teaching, can create a better understanding for the student about the location and physical factor which are alien to an international student.

### **D. Higher educational prospective of Social media marketing.**

The virtual world has greatly influenced the selections made in the field of higher education. Digital marketing platforms like social media are a great choice of promotions. Fujita et al. (2017) state that Countries, universities, and colleges that are in the field of advanced education find it essential to utilize the opportunities of digital marketing platforms to promote and popularize themselves. Social media promotions are described as advancing brands through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc. (Xiong et al., 2018). It aims to reach out to potential students, hike the brand mindfulness, encourage and empower buyers, trigger and drive conversations. Eaton and Pasquini (2020) state that the latter can be made possible by conversing with clients and listening to their preferences on online networking. These objectives can be achieved in specific ways. In networking media stages, advertisers initiate battles with the help of coordinators and set up advance paid to publicize using outsiders on informal organization destinations. In spreading the brand image, advertisers highly rely on positive e-WOM (Electronic word on the mouth) from present users (Pinar et al. 2020). Brand experience can be encouraged using intuitive advances. This entices the client to explore more about the brand.

Data are the key factors in modern marketing. Social media are a massive source for advertisers to collect data about their objective markets. The specific algorithms the social media use help them to cater target driven consumer advertising (Balteanu,2019). ‘The platforms managers and its partners have tremendous data to look at as the market is competitive. Both the training and examination on digital platforms have expanded enthusiasm from the key personas from the university administrators across the world’ (Ardiansyah and Nilowardono,2019).



Ning (2019), after considering the circumstance, comments that the communication meant for educational purposes can be improved by using social networking sites. ‘The exploration additionally focused on the requirement for Social networks adopted strategies, because the contemporary web upgraded data innovation and the ensuing SNS stages improve the Key data limit, which thus builds advancement limit in large business and the boarding procedure’ (Rialti et al. 2018).

Since the economic growth in 2013, international students have been attracted to Ireland, not the previous state. Ireland was not considered an essential destination for studies. As per the article reported by Irish times, 385 million euros per year is contributed by international students, and an estimate of 1700 international students was enrolled in universities and colleges across Ireland in the year 2019. *O’Brien (2020)* say that when observed, the country relies upon recruitment agents in comparison with others, and this provides an insight into how competitors travel way ahead of Ireland. Living in a world that revolves around the digital universe, one should walk along the path of development, especially in institutions, to be the more specific educational institution in the case we are discussing. When the internet makes the advertising of the university to the admission procedures happen in the click of a finger, there is no doubt that universities and educational institutions which continue with recruitment agents might lack behind. *O’Reilly, Hickey, and Ryan (2013)* say Ireland must adapt to the systematic changes towards the modern approach. Excellent execution of targeted social media marketing can be observed in the case of Australia; a well-laid plan presented by their government have made their institutions a number one destination chosen by the international students. *Hyett et al. (2019)* say that the primary goal of international education is to maximize bilateral trade liberalization in education to provide excellent productivity gains, export opportunities, market competition, and FDI in the sector. *Islam, Shawkat and Pundarik (2012)* state that the economic growth of both the countries will be accelerated through this bilateralism where the mission is to generate a domino effect on other WTO members, contributing a multilateral liberalization across the globe.

#### **E. Traditional student recruitment marketing strategies.**

The marketing managers could find reliable students through the rapid and fluctuating market of the education industries. In an article written by *Naidoo and Wu (2011)*, they say that the countries stated as perfect examples for the execution of the traditional marketing methods are Australia and New Zealand, as both the countries understood the potential of the educational industry and joined forces with the governments. The on-school campus visits, Public relation activities, brochures, media advertisements are the other traditional methods. In *Vrontis, Sakka and Amirhanpour’s (2015)* words, the number of agents and recruiters increased along with the universities when the market expanded into multiple markets, and the rise in internet technology then improved the engagement with consumers directly through websites. Before introducing the internet, traditional recruitments were very effective, but they had their downside. Back in the day, before the invention of the digital marketing, the amount of student that was aware of the international admission was meagre. Also, the admission procedures were considered tedious and treated as an impossible job for an average person. Only the most prolific students, which are only a handful, were selected in the home countries and send abroad through scholarships.

## **F. Push-Pull Factors**

The push and pull effect of international education is caused by the home country's lack of educational resources and economy, which will choose to school and seek education abroad. *Gbollie and Gong (2020)* state that the country will take advantage of their full potential to pull students towards their institutions, and this strategy is the pull factor the host countries will adapt. *Mazzarol and Soutar (2012)* say that depending on the host country, the different factors affecting the decisions will change like economic situation, the reputation of the university, career opportunities of the country and educational system. *Azmat et al. (2013)* note that among these factors stated above, the pull factor of Indian nationals is based on the economic situation, education, career freedom and vast opportunity around the world. The digital world changes a developing nation, and a country like India, which has an excellent technological infrastructure, should be influenced. India, a country blessed with its younger generation, who are a significant contributor to the higher education business. As mentioned above, we should gather that a host country like Ireland should focus on improving their digital marketing and gather focus on countries like Indian through social media to attract young minds and talents. Benefits will be for both the countries in terms of economy and skilled workforce. The more students migrate to Ireland, the more the economy and many other factors improve. One of the factors which are often missed when talking about focusing on a country like India is that it not only has an increased amount of youth population but the people in India are drawn towards education. The psychological mindset of the people has changed from the previous era, where only the privileged was educated. Nowadays, it's infrequent to find a child who does not have primary education. As social media and its platforms have a significant influence on potential students' universities should get more adapted to new technologies when it comes to recruitments.

## **G. University's engagement in social media platforms.**

Over the past decade, the rise of social media and digital platforms has revolutionised business. According to We Are Social, *Hootsuite and DataReportal (2020)*, the statistic report as of July 2020 states that the worldwide social media engagement has surpassed the one billion user mark. Facebook is the digital media platform that is still leading with 2000 million active users followed by Facebook messenger, WeChat/ Wixin, Instagram and Tik Tok and can be noted that the Universities also should get engaged in Facebook there is an ample amount of user utilising that platform. When a student searches for Universities on their search engines, the websites which recommend universities create hyperlinks for the user to know more about the University. When the hyperlink guides them to Social media, especially Facebook, they will be happy since they have already taken access to it. 'The content could include anything from videos of student testimonials and student events such as homecoming to an article on "everything you need to know about choosing the ideal university for you"' (*Marx, 2020*). Almost 1 billion people have downloaded Tik Tok, the upcoming social media Chinese app from the play store. Therefore, it is advisable to show the presence in this app also as this strategy can influence the younger generation, which is the dominant population in India, China, and the USA. It is a primary method to establish a marketing strategy through LinkedIn, attracting professional talents more to the comprehensive courses.

## **H. Implementing successful social media strategies.**

In the present world of digital marketing, the development in technology had done the marketing primarily to social media. 'A successful social media campaign can end in better

results' (Social Business by Design: Transformative Social Media Strategies for the Connected Company, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the focus needs to be on Facebook since it is the most popular and easily accessible social media. Facebook offers a variety of features to its users. For business purposes, the advertising platform has a tremendous reach to its members; thus, creating a broader market among the customers. Along with that, the target-driven advertising offered by Facebook helps in data analysis and they are by influencing customer's decision making. Gioti et al. (2018) observe that majority of Social media platforms offer data analysis.

YouTube is famous for video sharing. This has a desktop and app version as well. YouTube is an excellent influence in the case of teenage students. When they search for their higher education options, YouTube offers them search results that help them to create more profound insight into the universities and campus life.

To understand the university policies, microblogging sites like Twitter comes to the help of students. With the photo-sharing features, Instagram will help students understand how universities look like in real (Sheth, 2020). The data collection will be made possible by the Chinese app Tik Tok with a better algorithm which the application has for it. When it comes to the matter of data analysis, google analytics will help the user to understand and analyse the collected data. There are several social media sites in the online world. Each carries a vast number of users too. Thus, the Universities and education institutes find it difficult to manage activities on all the websites. So, in such a condition, They have created a team to focus on their promotional strategies. The universities which are Successful in social media management engage a fully-fledged team for it.

Another strategy is with the help of previous students. 'Prospective students want to see genuine content from the people who know your university best because they've experienced it. A great way to boost engagement and reach on social media is to allow existing students and alumni to get involved with your social media' (Marx, 2020). Thus, the opinions shared by the alumni have authenticity and have more value among students than their paid testimonies.

## **I. Social media engagement of international students.**

The average age band of students enrolling into international university is between 18 and 30. The age band can be divided into two categories; the Millennials and Gen Z. These two groups are well exposed to the revolutions in the smartphone industry and social media. The majority of university students comes under these two groups (Fadhrullah et al. 2020).

Ammigan and Laws (2018) observe that, regarding the engagement in communication, the recent decade witnessed much research aiming to go deeper into Third-level graduate students, particularly social media life. Innovation is an unavoidable process. The research revealed several positives of social media. Social media is a great medium to bring together loved ones together, establish a fresh system and examine and identify precious data (Starr, 2014)

Virtual campus tours are something social media could offer on an innovative basis; by incorporating different social media and audio and visual aids, the universities could initiate a real-time walkthrough of the campus. They can use the media like YouTube and Instagram to relate this illusion. Thus, the students will be facilitated to create a virtual experiencing the campus without visiting that place. Thus, the Students could save their money and time while researching their destinations.

In a study conducted by Saw et al. (2013) on the social media preference of international students, the results reveal that Facebook, followed by YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn, is the primary and popular preference when it comes to communication. With its latest release of the market-oriented version of Facebook, the space for online digital marketing is high. Personalized advertisement and feeds are brought into the user's wall without his consent, letting the user go through them without knowing the strategies behind it. It also negates the claim of selective access to the market. The study reveals some extra findings as well; the institutional and individual interest in social networking media is scrutinized here. It says that 33% of graduates wish to keep their scholarly and social carrier independent (Saha and Karpinski,2016).

## **J. Features of social media.**

As understood from the above portion of the literature review, it needs to be recognized that most of the theoretical studies had attributed profound importance to social media. Like we know, social media have a variety of features to their name. These features are vital and turn out to be a crucial factor in their survival as well. From the business point of view, these features can be divided into three based on their importance.

**Engagement-** When we talk about customer engagement, it needs to be stated that “Online consumer engagement (CE) is interactive, and co-creative experiences of the customers with online or offline that leads to a precise psychological state of customers and identify the intention of customers in purchasing patterns” (Abrar et al.,2019). The present-day online engagement can be measured. This measuring procedure is mainly catered through three ways; Likes, shares and comments. They are dependent on the scenario. According to the research done by Jintao et al. (2019), it is observed that the increase in quality content is resulted from the friendliest communication happening in the online media platforms. An exciting thing to be noted is the tendency of the customer to denounce any sort of authoritarian style commanding upon him. This affirms the leaning described above towards friendly communications. Creating Social groups within a media is a necessary thing since they can be modified to pass quality information to the participants. Marbach et al. (2016) state that the effectiveness of groups over-promotion is proven.

**Collaboration-** Social media’s popularity had united people with similar interest. Liang and Pang (2019) examine that these unions can also promote specific individuals and brands. Collaborations are an effective method to get the upper hand over the competitions. There are a variety of types of collaborations on offer. The universities or colleges could collaborate with a renowned brand, agency, or celebrity. Over brands, celebrities have more influence on people in countries like India. So, the universities or colleges can decide which type of collaboration is effective and should be carried out based on their target geographical area. Unlike the traditional marketing methods, partnerships and Online collaborations are comparatively cost-effective and possess a high degree of penetration to its viewers. Olcay et al. (2019) find that Collaborations can be initiated through the communication made with the help of messengers and emails. In higher education, host countries create an alliance with universities and colleges in other countries to facilitate quality recruitments.

**Communication and communities online-** from the factors mentioned above, a new term comes into the limelight, Communication. At the same time, when social media act as a medium of communication, it also creates the factor of trust among the customers (Sullivan et

al. 2020). The communication process in traditional marketing was a face-to-face interaction, and the circle was limited to close friends or relatives. With the advent of Social media, the majority of the traditional marketing techniques were replaced. "Online communication is the new method of creating trust" (Shao and Ni 2019). Online customers, mainly those in social media, can have a detailed insight into customer feedback in the form of comments and can communicate with people in other nations and create a detailed outlook on the product and preferences of others as well. Creating a strategic business model will be effective since they can increase the value of the products in the communication platforms existing inside social media.

### **K. Challenges of social media.**

Social media has several advantages. But keeping that aside, there are certain drawbacks too. First, Hubinová (2015) observes that due to lack of proper monitoring, there arise a conflict in interest and public concerns. To carry on online marketing, social media must regularly track the user's interactions and activities in and outside the social media. Yagci (2014) explains that these controls and monitoring are an indispensable part of the social media framework.

Sharing the aspects posted by Universities to others is a bit of a task. Universities cannot do anything in this process. For that, the Universities and colleges need to have support among their audience; in this case, it is the students. The Universities need to create a sense of reliability and originality among their audience. For that, they must stick to matters which are original and authentic. Testimonies and experiences of alumni and present student are some essential factors in this process. When people find things to be legitimate, they automatically start to promote the content offered by the University even without them requesting to the audience. (Salamader, 2020)

Since social media have been selected as one of the recruiting strategies by colleges and universities, the researchers observed specific problems within the structure. For instance, 'The students' low content contribution, and little impact of social media use on the decision-making of prospective students' engagement of the organizations at a low level and lack of theoretical models, lack of an acceptable environment for getting to know the student's needs, etc.' (Xiong et al., 2018).

### **L. Decision making.**

There is a continuous evolution happening to the landscape of higher education, help in better decision making among university students. According to Bowers and Pugh (1972), the traditional research conducted previously investigating the process of decision making before the introduction of social media influencing the cultural factors, social factors of the university and word-of-mouth advertisements. The university's reputation, quality of education provided and the courses that they provide were the main contributing factors to the selection of universities. Before the introduction of social media, even the information about a university was transferred to students through the word. So, only highly famous and traditional institutes were known to students. And even when they knew about these institutions, the further details about them were unknown primarily or vague to them. This made the opportunity of new institutes dim to invite students to their campus.

The second generation of decision-making strategies began in the 2000s when a gradual improvement in technology such as telephone, email and websites began to develop,

influencing universities to adopt different marketing strategies like cold calling, email marketing and promotion of websites in search engines through paid advertisements. According to Conard & Conard (2000), more universities emerged and started attracting various talented students through this strategy. Through the introduction of these media, students got to know more information about the institute they would like to visit when compared to the previous centuries. The course and fee structure were explained along with the modules they would have to study and scholarship if they were qualified.

Communication became more comfortable through the introduction of Facebook, which gained its popularity in the '20s, gaining more people spending time online and gradually helping people to make better decisions through features like messenger, likes, comments, and group chats, according to Clark, Fine, & Scheuer (2017). Including some traditional marketing factors, technologies weigh a lot in decision making, and the end, influencing students to pick universities and country of their liking.

### **M. Paid social media marketing**

Modern social media-based advertisement is an essential feature that will aid business to place an advertisement on their platform where organizations and brands pay for content placement online. A major perk to this advertisement is that students going for higher education do not have to follow or like these pages. This will help the intuition meet with potential higher education students who may not have heard about the University or their modules. The social media sites offer designs, ad campaigns and targeting demographic, which enable the institute to focus on geographical position, age, employment, interests and others. As per Shields A B and Peruta A's (2019) thoughts, segmentation should be used by the organization, which will help describe themselves. The target demographics and customized content campaigns are designed to suit the audience's liking. 'If the first era of social was engagement, the new era is acquisition and conversion. Social commerce has been growing over the last few years, but in today's climate, that growth has rocketed. '(Gurd, 2020)

An example can be placed to help understand how paid to target market works; when a student search for courses in Dublin, the search engine will provide the list of universities in Dublin as a result. As soon as the student visits a web page, an institute with a higher social media advertising budget will be able to use their cookies of the page to target that student, placing their advertisements on that page and through this process, demographics, age, nationality etc., can be collected. Even though it's an intrusion into the student's privacy, the process is ethical and harmless by any means. The web pages might charge the University and college handles with a small amount for collecting collected data. The University and College handle to use this data to send invitations and advertisements to the students either through their mail, Through social media as advertisements or both.

### **N. Conclusion**

Throughout this section, we came across many statements, points, and problems the universities and educational institution must face when dealing with the marketing strategy of their institutes. The virtual strategy will assist the university to reduce cost along with the broad reach in the domestic and international market, and the target marketing strategy results in influencing students to take decision accordingly. Hsueh(2018) states that strategic management activities are intensifying through innovation, information and relationship, which the executives will bind together, creating an ineffective global institution. The Data

management will rely upon the executives who will come in stand with the comprehension of business sectors, clients' needs and influencers, threats and opportunities, advertising channels, and brand position. According to Biraghi (2017), these points, in addition to the above, will identify with the understanding of products and services and will introduce new products into the market with the capacity to answer to the client's needs conveniently. This shows us to what degree the advancement is supported and empowered. The significance should be given to the brand position, country, and organisation and the concept of utilisation of the capacity of these factors.

Through the arguments and discussions made, one can identify the following faults:

- a. In general, the previous research was focused on traditional marketing methods.
- b. It can be implicated that the researcher does not give the prominence social media gained in the past decade enough attention.
- c. There has not been enough study on Indian, the world's second-largest sending market with the most extensive digital population.
- d. Although Ireland has high popularity as a higher education destination, serious research should be done on the universities and provide improvement in target marketing practices and social media content.
- e. The focus should be on the rising higher education destination and the world's second-largest international students sending markets, as gathered from the given piece of evidence suggest.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION:**

The research that is done presents how crucial social media, social networking site, host, and home country are influencing the technology, especially to the young generation. In the study, the evidence of how the technology can mould the marketing of international education through social media and the potential perks that an Indian student receives, along with the benefits this provides for Ireland. Therefore, for further analysis on the subject, the following research questions should be raised.

1. In selecting country and University, to what extent did the Indian students utilize social media and social networking platforms?
2. Does the selection of the desired course get influenced by social media?
3. To what extent are the Indian students active in the social media playground?
4. What are the major social media websites used by the students? Also, mention the most preferred social media among these?
5. Does social media communication (with institutions and aluminises and current students) influence the selection process?
6. Was the social media and education platforms of Ireland useful in the selection process?
7. When comparing the traditional methods and the social media marketing, which was more helpful in selecting?

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:**

This project deals with an ample number of topics and subtopics which can be contemplated and understood in the different levels of research for obtaining a future in international business. Through this project, a detailed study is conducted to find out how influential social media is among international students, especially Indian students. Also, how Ireland is dealing with the students and their selection process are being discussed. One of the main objectives is to successfully search for answers to the questions mentioned above. A reasonable conclusion will be derived from the collected samples and detailed study, which may help future international businesses adopt strategies based on the result.

#### **RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY:**

A system of beliefs and assumptions regarding the building up of knowledge can be termed as research philosophy. These pieces of knowledge can be picked up when embarking on research for a project. Even when a researcher is not aware of it, in every step of research, one might make several assumptions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). These assumptions may be about human knowledge, the realities that the researcher had to encounter during the process, how your values may influence the research process. Once these findings are made and experienced, the researcher then can fully comprehend the shaping of the research questions, interpretation of the findings and the instrument and the methods used. Credible research philosophy can be built on a consistent set of assumptions which is further underpinned by the methodological choice, research strategy and data collection techniques and analysis procedures, which will construct a coherent research project with all the elements fit together ([Saunders, 2009](#)).



Philosophy can be related to two things, the development of knowledge and the nature of knowledge. In the case of a research problem, it is finding the perfect research philosophy that explores the researcher's strategy for a more satisfactory outcome in a dynamic tech environment that is going through continuous change (Saunders et al., 2011). An inductive way may be utilized, which will help develop the raw data of the researcher, taking a deep look into its similarities and differences searching for an exemplary relationship between the data—collecting data and understanding the nature of the problem, developing patterns, and generating theory without holding any preconception about the researcher's delivery in the relationship, which will, in turn, provide a space for the research subject (Joel Gehman et al., 2018).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

A good literature review always let the researcher in two ways; that is to obtain the views of people participating in it and to read and understand the view of other researchers who had similar topics for their research (Fraenkel and Wallen,2006). An analysis is the breaking down of the totality into parts and understanding the integrity of the totality (Schwandt, 2007). Qualitative analysis studies inaccurate information, which is difficult to obtain and analyze to obtain desired output (Scott,2021). And also, this type of analysis always maintain contrast with quantitative analysis, which mainly focuses on the numbers in survey reports. This method is also used to analyze values based on non-quantifiable information (Scott,2021).

Any sort of literature can be well analyzed using qualitative way of analysis; because a plethora of sources of qualitative analysis can be seen in research methods like the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research, which exist within the literature. Analysis of qualitative data like textual data from interview transcripts is called qualitative analysis. This analysis heavily depends on interrogative skills, analytical ability, and personal understanding of the social conditions from where the data is collected (lumen learning,2019).

Thematic analysis is a type of analysis that contains a group of methods that recognizes meanings that occur in a pattern in a set of data. Thematic analysis is used when you are trying to obtain something from people's knowledge, opinion, values, and experiences which are there in a collected qualitative data like survey reports or interview manuscripts. There are various approaches inside the thematic analysis itself, that is, inductive and deductive approaches. In the inductive approach, the data determines the themes. In the deductive approach, you search for themes that you wanted to find out from the data mainly by utilizing your preconceived knowledge. (Caulfield,2020)

### **DATA COLLECTION:**

The primary data was collected from the interviews conducted through social media platforms. Ten participants were enquired about their experiences, and questions were created from the existing qualitative studies to conduct the interview, which may capture the right perspectives and contemplations regarding selecting their education destination. Six resources of evidence were taken into consideration during data collection, which Yin has talked about along with the four principles of data collection (Robert k. Yin, 2014). The interviewee had consented to go through data collection and understood that their participation was voluntary and could withdraw at any time before the interview. The process of filling up the data forms might have

taken up to an average of fifteen minutes, and Google forms were utilized during this process. Due to the COVID-19 protocols, the interview was not conducted face-to-face, thus conducting it through social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and WhatsApp. The interview provided a tension-free atmosphere to the participant, helping maintain a bias-free atmosphere.

## DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The data analysis was constructed in a chronological way (Gioia, 2013), making sure that all the guidelines of qualitative analysis, mainly the thematic analysis, has been followed. Thematic analysis is the method of analysing qualitative data. In thematic analysis, the researcher identifies common themes, ideas, patterns of meaning, and topics repeated in the textual data. (Caulfield, 2019). This process contains six steps. In the first step, the researcher goes through the collected data and create an overview(Mortensen,2020). The second step includes highlighting certain sections of the text by the researcher(Caulfield, 2019). The selected codes are transferred into the form of a theme in the third section. The fourth step is to review the selected themes and make sure that they serve the researcher's intentions. The fifth step involves naming the themes and defining each of the themes. The sixth and final step involves the write-up processes. The write-up needs to have an introduction that introduces the aims, approaches, and research questions (Mortensen,2020).

Thus by utilizing academic freedom, the thematic analysis produces a highly detailed, complex, and rich account of data through a highly adaptable approach which can be used for a multitude of studies ([Braun and Clarke, 2006](#); [King, 2004](#)).

To understand how students choose the university and how social media factors influenced them, the researcher carried out a well-structured four questionnaires to the research participants, which is the following four.

*1.What social media features do you feel were most helpful when you were selecting a third level degree programme in Ireland?*

*2.What social media platforms do you feel were the most effective at promoting third-level degree programmes in Ireland?*

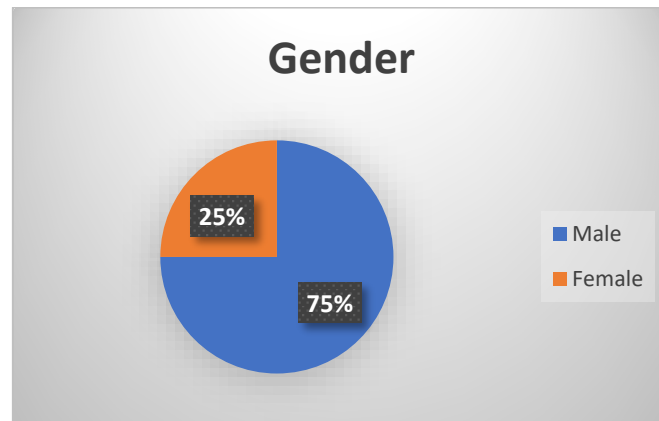
*3.What features of Education in Ireland's website and social media platforms do you feel are most influential to your decision-making when selecting a third-level degree programme in Ireland?*

*4.How do you feel your interaction with alumni and current students through social media influenced your decisions when selecting a third-level degree programme. Ireland?*

The research was carried among 10 participants, with 100% of the graduated or currently a third level student in Ireland. While analysing the data, two demographic factors were also considered A—the age group and B. the Gender.

Age	Participants
21	1

24	1
25	2
26	2
28	1
29	2
30	1



**RESEARCH LIMITATION:**

Due to the current social situation caused by the pandemic, there were difficulties in collecting data. Following the social regulation, there were no possible ways to conduct the interviews face to face. There are definite benefits to a conversation conducted in person, which could not be achieved here as all interviews were conducted online. Another mentionable limitation is the difference in opinion. Each person taken as a sample had different opinions regarding the topic enquired, and this variation in thoughts resulted in a mixed conclusion. When analysed, it can be understood that one limitation complimented in making the other more problematic.

## 4. Analysis

**Features of social media which is most helpful for selecting a third level degree programme in Ireland:** from the interview, it is observed by the researcher that some people stated that rating, reviews and pictures are the most important features of social media with the help of which they can choose Ireland as a destination for higher education. While some people stated that the ability to connect prospective students to alumni or present students to comprehend the details of the course of the third level education and opportunities of the job through Facebook and WhatsApp groups is one of the most significant features of the digital platforms of social media with the help of which one can be able to choose Ireland as a destination for higher education. From the response of some students, it is observed that and honest answers and comments of other people are some great features of the digital platform of social media, with the help of which one can choose Ireland as a destination for taking higher education.

Sobaih *et al.* (2016) stated that social media plays an essential role in academic-related purposes. These days, most of the students rely on the digital platform of social media to select the destination for their higher education. Today's generation spent most of the time on Facebook and Instagram, and many other social media sites. Due to this, at the time of selecting the destination for higher education, students are more likely to select the country through looking at the pictures, reviews and oyster comments. In Addition, with the help of social media, students can gain knowledge regarding the details of the course and job opportunities after completing higher education.

On the other hand, McCabe (2017) satiated that LinkedIn plays a vital role to help students for choosing the destination for completing their higher education. Social media has changed how one can brand himself/herself, appealing for professional satisfaction, rewarding work, and advancing careers. This white paper describes social media marketing strategies related to career advancement and focuses primarily on LinkedIn. It is essentially a descriptive text that summarizes meaningful discussions for social media as a valuable tool for job hunting and career advancement. Nowadays, job seekers are more sophisticated about whom to look for as an employer. Social media and analytics are now linking job seekers to career opportunities. The way employers look for candidates through social media disrupts the practice of traditional recruitment. The author responds to this assumption.

**Most effective social media platforms from promoting third level degree programme in Ireland:** based on this question, it is observed by the researcher that some people through internet and Facebook as a most effective platform of social media with the help of which they are influenced to select Ireland as a destination for higher education. On the other hand, it is felt by some students that Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn are the most effective platforms of social media means of which they can select Irelands as a destination for completing their higher education.

Manasijević *et al.* (2016) stated that in modern times, most students tend to use Facebook for selecting the destination for their higher education. From the study it is studying, it is observed by Manasijević *et al.* (2016) that the purpose of using Facebook comprise social relations, work activities, along with daily activities; with the help of the digital platform of Facebook, students can connect with other students of international universities, and through this, they become familiar with the course of those universities. After knowing the course structure of the international university, they become more likely to pursue their higher education from

there. In addition, Facebook helps the students to collaborate with other students and share their materials which in turn helps the students to complete their higher education.

On the other hand, Boivin (2021) stated that LinkedIn is considered as one of the most effective tools of social media with the help of which students can decide on their higher education. The main aim of this social media tool is to target prospective students, both graduate and undergraduate. As per the report of statistics, it is observed that most of the users of LinkedIn are between 18-34 years of age. When choosing the destination for higher education, these people are dependent on LinkedIn and search various places.

**Features of education in Ireland's websites and social media platform which becomes most influential for decision making of the students at the time of selecting a third level degree programme in Ireland:** with regard to this question, it is observed by the researcher that some of the students stated that comprehensive nature of education and career-related posts are the most important features to select Ireland as a destination for pursuing a third level degree program. From the websites and social media platforms of Ireland, students came to know regarding the length, of course, three years and the sorts of job opportunities they will get after completing their higher education. Some respondents also stated that from the websites and social media sites of Ireland, they came to know regarding the social knowledge and quality of education in Ireland, due to which they tend to choose Ireland, at the time of making their decision to pursue their third level degree program. Most of the blogs and social media sites of Ireland are filled with career-related posts, which is an excellent medium for students to attract them.

From the website and social media platform, it is observed by the respondents that the percentage of placement is quite high in Ireland, in comparison to other countries, so that they will get the tremendous opportunity for job placement.

In this regard, Patni (2020) commented that the education system of Ireland is placed among the top twenty in Europe by the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook. The economic condition is considered a fastest growing economy and many multinational companies are situated in this country, due to this student will be able to get the excellent opportunity in terms of their job after completing their higher education for the universities of Ireland. From the websites and social media sites of Ireland, students come to know that this country has diversity in their education, with the help of which country has built a strong reputation for possessing high standards of education worldwide. On the other hand, Zhao (2021) suggested that the new culture of Ireland is another reason due to which students are most likely to choose Ireland as a destination for completing their higher education. The Irish people welcome them and are known for their friendly approach. In 2017, Ireland was named the 10th most creative country in the world. Until it reaches a family-friendly society and international students. Festivals are also an integral part of Irish culture, characterized by traditions, customs and folk music.

**Interactions with alumni and current students on the digital platform of social media influence the respondents' decision-making procedure to choose Ireland as a destination for completing their third level degree program.** From this question, it is observed by the researcher that some respondents stated that they become incredibly beneficial by talking to other Indian students, who have experienced a good experience as a student of Ireland's university. Through talking to them, some students become able to make decisions as a significant role is applied by the genuine response in decision making. Some respondents felt that they were not benefited by talking to alumni and current Indian students of Ireland University as they did not show much interest to provide any details regarding the advantages

and disadvantages. On the other hand, some respondents stated that even though they gained a good experience through talking to them, it was not only a factor with the help of which they will be able to choose Ireland as a destination for completing their higher education. They consider other factors such as money and environment for making their decisions.

Mercille and Murphy (2017) stated that through talking to current and alumni students, many students gain insights regarding the neo-liberalization of Irish Higher Education under Austerity. Through knowing the restructuring of the education sector of this country, many students become beneficial.

## 5. Discussion

The main aim of this study is to identify the impact of social media as a tool of digital marketing, which is influencing the decision of international students to choose Ireland as a destination for higher education. From the findings of the interview, it is observed that the online platforms of social media which have a significant number of followers and profiles of students comprise Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and other online platforms of social media (Clark, Fine and Scheuer, 2017). From the literature review section, it is observed that these platforms of social media are utilizing for identifying the requirement of university courses through online channels or for gaining initial information search before the specific students visit the institution physically.

From the data analysis part, it is observed by the researcher that not only the digital platform of social media but also the features of social media platforms are also playing an essential role in influencing the decision-making power of the students to choose Ireland as a destination for pursuing their third-level higher education (Clark, Fine and Scheuer, 2017). However, this is not evident that one student can exert more influence than other students. It is not that only one feature of social media is there based on which students are making their mind for choosing Ireland, for pursuing their higher education, but many other features are there (Clark, Fine and Scheuer, 2017). One of the most critical features of social media is that it helps the students to make the right decision by providing pictures and course details of the international university. Based on the reviews and comments of other students, one can choose the destination for higher education. Job opportunities, authenticity and honest answers are essential features of social media based on which students can choose Ireland as a destination for higher education (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017).

Another objective of the study is to identify the effective social media tool with the help of which students will choose Ireland as a destination for pursuing their third-degree higher education. From the analysis section, it is observed by the researcher that some students think that Facebook and Instagram are the most effective tool of social media while many other students think that Internet, WhatsApp are the most effective tool for selecting the destination of higher education. The data analysis section suggests that students tend to utilize many social tools as all of them are compelling enough for helping the students to choose their destination for higher education (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018). From the students' responses, it is observed that the students have used digital platforms of social media for several reasons. From the study, it is found that many reasons are there based on which the students have chosen Ireland as a destination for completing their higher studies. Some of these reasons are quality institutions, innovation, and research and many more. The students observe that most of the students in this country are international students, which means that an excellent study facility is offered by the institutions of Ireland (Chichioco, 2020).

The government of Ireland monitors the quality of education with the help of the National Framework of Qualifications. It denotes that the quality of education becomes the same in all of the universities in Ireland, and students will be able to get research facility in all of those universities (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017). Most of the country's universities are observed to have research facilities in many disciplines such as humanities, health care, social sciences and natural sciences. Due to this, a considerable scope is provided to the graduates and undergraduate for applying to the research programs, driven by invention and great opportunities. This is perceived that inventive thinking, creativity and problem solving are some of the core aspects of the Irish Curriculum (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017).

In terms of the most effective social media platform which helps the students to choose Ireland as a destination for higher education, it is observed that most of the students relied on the Internet and Facebook as it helps them to see the opportunities they will get through studying in universities of Ireland (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018). The students perceive that whether they are applying for a graduate or undergraduate course, a huge opportunity will be found by them; in fact, many of the biggest and best organizations have their critical strategic research facilities. Many multinational companies are situated in Ireland, due to which students will be able to get a job there after completing their high education. All these reasons are there behind the selection of Ireland as a destination for completing the higher study (Chichioco, 2020).

In addition, in terms of the features of education in Ireland's websites and social media platform, which becomes most influential for decision making of the students at the time of selecting a third level degree programme in Ireland, it is observed that most students become benefitted through knowing the length of the course and job opportunities of Ireland. From the study, it is found by the researcher, Ireland is striving to build more world-class universities for the students of other countries, and this country is investing heavily in higher education to facilitate the opportunity for international students (Peruta and Shields, 2017). In this regard, Indian students will gain the opportunity to pursue their higher education in Ireland. The academic recognition which will be obtained by the Indian students from the Irish universities will be recognised worldwide, which will, in turn, help the students to get job opportunities anywhere in the world (Peruta and Shields, 2017). From the websites and social media sites of Ireland university, students also come to know the comprehensive nature of education in Ireland, which helps the students gain knowledge in many things. In addition, at the start of pursuing their education, Indian students will experience the warmth of Irish culture. The overall culture of Ireland is famous for its welcoming and friendly approach (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018). They love their conversations. One important thing regarding Irish education that students will be able to work while learning. Through blogs and social media sites of the university, it is observed by the Indian students that many current students of Irish university are maintaining their study through performing part-time work (Chichioco, 2020).

From the study, it has been found by the researcher that in terms of creativity Ireland is a small island country located in the western part of Europe. Over the centuries, it has created significant challenges for the students in terms of trade, political influence, and creating a place for the people of Ireland in the world. The primary responsibility of the country was to engage in creative thinking and think beyond what is obvious (Mnkandla and Minnaar, 2017). The people of Ireland have many qualities as the headquarters of the world's most comprehensive technology and pharmaceutical companies and the centre of excellence of international banks as the most respected and acclaimed agricultural products in the world, and the outside of the commercial world when scientists and inventors made marks around the world outside of the proportional size (Peruta and Shields, 2017). Due to this deep-rooted culture of creativity and problem solving, many students pursue their higher education in Ireland. From the blogs and social media sites of universities of Ireland, it is observed that many graduates who have completed their education from top colleges every year are highly sought after in various industries and markets around the world. The graduates of Irish universities are not only categorized by skills to deal with today's challenges but are also ready for future jobs and sectors (Mnkandla and Minnaar, 2017).

In terms of pioneering, it is observed that students of Ireland always face competition from a challenging country and more prominent and more developed emerging economies. Instead of trying to imitate what other countries are already doing, they have tackled this challenge by adopting a more advanced approach and creating unique niches and disciplines. After all, they



have become entrepreneurs as a nation and are looking for new solutions to problems that were once considered ineluctable (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). The ratio of self-employed and SMEs not only chases pastoralists but also creates new opportunities for the students of Ireland, which will, in turn, drive further their self-employment efforts. Whether it is business, economics, science, entertainment or the arts, they always value success stories on the world stage and at the heart of each of these successes is a culture that looks to the future rather than to the present. As a result of this culture of entrepreneurship and progressive development, many Indian students tend to choose Ireland as a destination for higher education (Manca and Ranieri, 2016).

It is observed that Ireland is such a nation that has excelled at transforming its direction traditionally efficiently, with possessing an attitude of embracing the prospects and opportunities willingly for the country's students. For instance, it is observed that the country has transformed itself into a worldwide financial service sector within a decade. Many multinational companies are there within the country of Ireland. Due to the enormous opportunity in Ireland, it becomes essential for Indian students to choose this country as a destination for their higher education (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016).

The researcher has found that various online social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and many other sites become beneficial for the Indian students to choose Ireland as a destination for their higher studies. Through surfing various social media sites, Indian students come to know about various career opportunities in Ireland. Numerous great career opportunities are there for the international students as Ireland is the hub of multinational businesses like Microsoft, eBay, and Skype (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). For the Indian student along with other international students, internship opportunities are offered by UCD, which becomes an excellent method for obtaining real-time experience within the place of work which can prove invaluable at the time of searching for a job in any other country (Stephens and McLaughlin, 2020). Recognition from the University of Ireland is widely accepted globally, which becomes an opportunity for the students. From the present study, it is perceived by the researcher that the various online platforms of social media become valuable to such an extent that it offers unpredictable and serendipitous nature of word of mouth (Manca and Ranieri, 2016).

Through using blogs and social media sites of universities of Ireland, Indian students become able to talk to a current student at those universities. By this, they came to know the course details of the university and the way they will be benefited by studying in those universities. It is observed that numerous students are attracted to foreign universities by seeing the picture and various posts (Stephens and McLaughlin, 2020). In this regard, blogs and social media sites of Irish universities are attracting students from other countries through posting pictures and posts continuously. Social media engagement and social media influence are much more than what can be acknowledged by regular students (Singhal, 2020). It is perceived that many international students are more likely to use the online platform of social media for viewing online content with the help of which they will be able to decide which college or university is best for them and will give them better opportunities. Through this, the importance of social media for today's youths in their decision making (Manca and Ranieri, 2016).

Many universities use influential marketing theories for attracting students from various countries. Due to this, Irish universities are attracting students by constantly updating their blogs and social media sites regarding the facility they are providing for higher studies and how students will be able to get job opportunities after completing their studies for those universities.

In addition, from the study, it is observed that many students of Ireland universities are posting course details, fees of the course, the environment of the classroom and other exciting things continuously utilizing which Indian students are tending to choose Ireland as a destination for

completing their higher education. Rather than utilizing traditional procedures of attracting students, universities of Ireland are trying and experimenting with other methods, like posting through the online sites of social media. With the advancement of modern technology and information technology, it is observed that students are more likely to rely on the information of social media and other online sites for decision making (Singhal, 2020). Universities of Ireland, with attracting international students in mind, are creating numerous social media marketing strategies such as blogging, virtual tours, webinar, Cappex and many more. The education system has entirely changed in this fast-paced environment, and therefore universities, along with students, relied on the information of social media and other online sites for selecting universities to complete their higher studies.

From the study, it is found by the researcher that the importance of cross border education among Indian students becomes higher than in previous time. Most of the students are likely to leave their home country to pursue higher studies in other countries. As Ireland becomes the hub of many multinational companies, Indian students are more likely to choose Ireland (Singhal, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion

This study described the importance of social media platforms to influence the decision making of the Indian students for choosing Ireland as a destination to complete higher studies and gain better job opportunities. From the study, it is observed by the researcher that these days, social media and various online platforms of digital media provide universities and students various benefits in terms of their decision making to choose a foreign university for completing their higher education. Social media networks are beneficial for facilitating students' learning and engaging them in higher education. Concerning the present study, it is identified by the researcher, Indian international students are more likely to depend on the information of the social media network for choosing Ireland as the destination for pursuing their third level degree education. Many students and their parents are already using social media and are very good at using the platform, so those who earn the most benefits from higher education rely solely on the online platform of various social media sites. For example, teachers can create a Facebook group dedicated to homework and posting important announcements. In this regard, universities of Ireland post their course details and other helpful information on their blogs and other social media sites. One can also use Pinterest to view student artwork and projects.

The main objective of this study was to identify the ways Indian students use social media and various popsocial networking sites for choosing the country and university to complete their higher studies. From the study, it has been found by the researcher that the importance of social media and social networking sites increased significantly as students at present entering colleges and universities are contemplated digitally native, denoting that they are more likely to collect helpful information through surfing the internet and other sites of social media. Due to the extensive participation of today's generation in social media communities, they are sometimes known as the social networking generation.

In addition, it is observed that universities of Ireland are posting their course details and job opportunities on their blogs, due to which students become benefited. The second objective of this study was to identify whether social media play a critical role to select the desired course for higher study or not, and in this regard, it is founded by the researcher that social media helped the students by providing the details of the course.

With the help of the online platforms of social media, Indian students become able to talk to other students of foreign universities, specifically the students of Ireland University and get to know the scope of the study, the opportunity they will receive after completing their higher study, the scope for research and innovation. Through interacting with other students, Indian students get the details of the course which in turn help them their decision. In order to interact with the current and alumni students of Ireland university, several strategies are used by the Indian students. They use the online platform of Facebook and Instagram to contact them. The Internet and LinkedIn also help the Indian students to interact with the current students and gain insights regarding the course structure of Ireland university.

Another objective of the study was to identify the activity of the Indian students on the online platform of social media. With the advent of digital technology and modern information system, it is observed that social media becomes an inevitable part of the life of Indian students. This not only offers access to helpful information for the students but also helps the students through connecting them with many learning groups and other systems of education for making the systems exciting and engaging for them. From the study, it is perceived by the researcher that for higher study, social media also plays a vital role in helping the students to make their decision regarding choosing foreign universities and colleges.

Regarding the students of India, it is observed that many online platforms of social media are used by them, such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. With the advent

of internet technology, social media has become an integral part of every student's life. It is easy and convenient to exchange information, communicate with each other and keep in touch through social networks. Teachers and students can use social platforms to stay connected and for educational purposes. Social networks allow students and institutions to improve their teaching and learning process. Social media is also a medium that allows students to make valuable connections in their careers. As an educational institution, it is possible to work on many social platforms, helping students to develop better strategies and make learning more interactive and expansive. Professors can use messaging services like Twitter, Facebook handles or WhatsApp to provide live support to enhance students' learning opportunities outside the classroom. They can organize discussions on social media platforms about their topics and class activities.

Regarding the present study regarding the importance of social media tools to influence Indian international students to choose Ireland as a higher education destination, it is perceived that Indian students are more likely to depend on the information of the online platforms and social networking sites. Another objective of this study is to recognize the significant social media websites that are used by Indian international students. From the responses of the students, it is observed by the researcher that Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Instagram are the major social networking sites that are used. With the help of these social networking sites, students can gather the necessary information for pursuing their third level degree education in Ireland.

In terms of the fifth objective of the study, that is, how effective and helpful is the social media platform of Ireland in the selection process, it is observed by the researcher that blogs and social media sites of Irish University are effective enough to attract Indian students. Irish Universities are constantly posting about their course for higher studies, job opportunities, the scope for research and innovation in their blogs and other social media platform, due to which Indian international students are tending to choose Ireland as a destination for pursuing their higher studies.

The last objective of the study was to compare the traditional procedure and social media marketing for the selection process and identify which becomes helpful for the university. It is observed that social media marketing becomes most helpful for attracting many students in Irish universities. Through promoting social media marketing, Irish Universities become able to attract several Indian students to pursue their higher education in those universities.

The main aim of this study was to identify the importance of social media tools in influencing the decision making of the Indian International students to choose Ireland as a destination for higher studies and through taking into consideration the findings of the interview, the researcher perceives that various platform of social media and social networking sites does have a significant impact and a massive influence on the Indian international students to choose Ireland as a destination for pursuing higher studios. Even though the influence or impact does not seems to be overwhelming based on the prolific social media usage, the existence of the Indian students on the sites of the social media and the accessibility of the various information regarding course on the social media sites of the Irish Universities, this can be concluded that the influence of social media platforms generally exists with the traditional source of information in terms of the selection of university course and the procedure of decision making.

## **Future Research Recommendations:**

The insights based upon research has given an idea of how universities can approach students can approach student's social media and how the decision can impact their decision. This also opens to a possibility of broad research among Indian students.

- **Larger sampling-** The research had a limitation because it could not accommodate prominent participants due to the time and the resources. More significant sampling research can be carried among Indian students across Ireland. It can also include more age group and gender as it was hard to find the participants. This can be used for universities and colleges untapped insight, which will help them in education.
- The research was carried out in the qualitative thematic analysis. Future researchers can also have the possibility of researching Quantitatively. A quantitative piece of research emphasises "*quantification in the collection and analysis of data hence, quantitative methods, such as surveys, structured observation, or experiments tend to be preferred for collecting data within the quantitative paradigm*". (Heath and Tynan, 2010). The data can help business to have an insight into statistical data.
- Finally, possible research on quantitative and qualitative description can be carried out on how targeted advertisements can influence students' decision-making power. As artificial intelligence gaining prominence and targeted ads have more influential power as social media plays a key role in modern society.

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