

The use of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education Institutions in Zambia-A Literature Review

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Abstract:- Social Media Marketing is the use of internet technologies based on Web 2.0 to create relationships between businesses and customers. In the education sector in Zambia higher education institutions have adopted Social Media as part of their integrated marketing strategies. Research findings indicate that most literature in Zambia on Social Media has focused on the use of Social Media as a teaching aid and not necessarily as a marketing tool. In countries such as the USA and Australia Social Media has increased revenue for educational institutions and enhanced marketing performance for those institutions. The question of how effective Social Media Marketing is for marketing higher education institutions in Zambia is an interesting area of research. This research is a literature review that gathers facts from literature findings of scientific publications and from existing data on Social Media analytical platforms. The findings show that higher education institutions in Zambia need to develop a model for Social Media Marketing for them to enhance their marketing performance.

Keywords:- Social Media; marketing; institution; engagement; revenue.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social Media Marketing is the use of the big six platforms relevant to most businesses for marketing purposes (Chaffey, 2020). According to Chaffey the big six platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat which he argues are relevant to every business. The combination of the Social Media Platforms is a scientific approach and is determined by the popularity of the platforms in each Social Media target market (Li *et al.*, 2020). While Chaffey argues that all the big six platforms are relevant to most businesses, other researchers are of the view that their use varies.

This article focuses on the use of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Zambia. It examines various literature sources and findings by different scholars who have contributed to the field of study and brings out literature findings to draw a conclusion. Social Media has become an integral part of strategic marketing in many sectors including the education sector (Kumar & Pandey, 2020). In the education sector particularly in Zambia the focus for much scientific publications have been on Social Media as a teaching aid rather than as a marketing aid. Akakandelwa and Walubita conducted a study at the University of Zambia to investigate student's use of Social Media and its perceived impact on social life, this study created a strong foundation for

research in the field of Social Media studies in Zambia (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017).

The education sector in Zambia has not developed models and Social Media Marketing concepts specific to this industry, largely it's because most scientific studies in the field of Social Media have been focused on the use of Social Media as a teaching aid rather than a marketing tool. A study was conducted at the University of Zambia by Mwalimu *et al* to investigate the use of Social Media among Lecturers at that University for teaching and learning. From the study by Mwalimu *et al*, findings brought out the fact that Social Media increased instructiveness among Learners and Lecturers (Mwalimu *et al.*, 2017). The studies by both Akakandelwa and Mwalimu *et al* were not specifically looking at Social Media as a marketing tool but were looking at use of Social Media as an enhancement tool for learning. This study explores Social Media for marketing purposes and makes recommendations on how HEIs can utilize it for revenue generation and brand visibility.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the use of Social Media in higher education institutions in Zambia
- To determine the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing on marketing of higher education institutions.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What Social Media platforms are higher education institutions in Zambia using for marketing?
- How effective is Social Media Marketing for higher education institutions?

IV. METHODOLOGY

This is Desktop Research that looks at what other scholars have done in the field of Social Media and brings out the gaps in these studies to satisfy the research topic. The study is a literature review in design and mainly draws arguments from scientific journal articles published in various journals. The larger concepts in this study are drawn from the literature review of a dissertation submitted at ZCAS University for the award of Doctor of Business Administration.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definitions of Social Media

Social Media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that have been built on principles and technological foundations of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 allows for exchange and generation of content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The definition of Social Media by Kaplan and Haenlein uses the term exchange, implying a high level of interactivity especially that Social Media technologies are based on Web 2.0 technologies. The interactive nature of Web 2.0 makes Social Media highly suitable for marketing purposes since it enables customer feedback to be obtained easily for product improvement and decision making (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). The development of Web 2.0 technologies created a foundation for the development of Social Media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

B. Definitions of Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is referred to as the “new media” in marketing and it now forms part of the main elements for marketing communication (Benedikt & Rudloff, 2010). Communication is an important function in marketing of goods and services and since Social Media offers flexibility and interactivity it becomes a suitable media for marketing communication. Research findings indicate that information sharing is among the most important episode in creating sustainable marketing relationships (Bbenkele, 2007). Social Media makes information exchange easy; this is because of its interactive

nature and flexibility to offer instant feedback. In the education sector Social Media Marketing is slowly becoming a huge component in strategic marketing planning and implementation.

C. Common Social Media platforms

Research conducted in three Nigerian Universities with a sample size of 385, found that Social Media advertising had influence in consumer decisions among young ages of between 18-25 (Ogunyombo *et al.*, 2017). The research by Ogunyombo *et al* also brought out findings that most of the young people viewed their advertising on Facebook followed by YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. In Kenya another study at the University of Kabianga was conducted involving a sample size of 103 and found that WhatsApp followed by Facebook and then Twitter was the most popular Social Media Marketing Platforms at that University (Maweu & Yudah, 2020). The common Social Media platforms in both studies in Nigeria and Kenya are Facebook and Twitter. In Zambia there is scanty scientific information on the most common Social Media platforms in HEIs, particularly those used for marketing purposes. Research in Uganda at the University Business school and Kampala University involving a sample size of 300 respondents found that the most popular Social Media platforms were WhatsApp, followed by Facebook and then Twitter (Mirembe *et al.*, 2019) Table 1 below shows the popularity of Social Media platforms in different countries according to literature findings in these countries.

Kenya	Nigeria	Uganda	South Africa	Morocco	Zimbabwe	Zambia
Facebook	Facebook	WhatsApp	Facebook	Facebook	Unknown	Unknown
Twitter	Twitter	Facebook	Twitter	You Tube	Unknown	Unknown
You Tube	Google +	Twitter	WhatsApp	Twitter	Unknown	Unknown

The information in Table 1 shows that studies in Zambia and Zimbabwe are not well established in terms of the most common Social Media platforms in HEIs. Globally the most popular Social Media Marketing platform among ages of 16-34 is Facebook (Statista, 2022). Facebook becomes the most popular platform among students in HEIs in the countries in Table 1.

A study in South Africa at Vhembe Further Education Training with a sample size of 105 students found that Facebook was the most popular Social Media platform at that institution followed by LinkedIn and then Twitter (Mungofa & Peter, 2015). The findings in the research by Mungofu & Peter are highly like the studies in Nigeria and Kenya and confirm Facebook as the most popular Social Media platforms in HEIs in those countries. Akakandelwa & Walubita in their study at the University of Zambia found that Facebook was the most popular platform at that institution (Akakandelwa & Walubita, 2017), however literature is scanty on the most popular Social Media platforms in HEIs in Zambia and that forms a research gap that this research answers.

D. Successful Cases of Social Media Marketing

At the University of Columbia in the USA Social Media has increased student numbers by 23% in a period of less than a year (Aditya, 2021). The case of Columbia University is empirical evidence that Social Media can increase student numbers. The case also shows that Social Media has ability to work as the most effective marketing tool in the education sector. The case of successful use of Social Media Marketing cannot be extrapolated to the Zambian scenario and therefore scientific research is necessary to determine how HEIs in Zambia are using Social Media and how effective Social Media Marketing is Aman & Hussin conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of Social Media usage in the education sector in Malaysia, the study found that Social Media was highly effective in cost reduction and increasing revenue for institutions (Aman & Hussin, 2018). The effectiveness of Social Media depends on content of platforms and largely on Social Media strategies employed.

VI. RESEARCH DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

From the literature review it seems that Facebook is the most used Social Media platform in HEIs in many countries and has a higher number of users than any other platform. The findings in this research were based on already published statistics from various literature sources, the researchers also used web analytics to gather graphical information across web resources to satisfy the research questions.

A. Use of Social Media in Higher Education Institutions in Zambia

The levels of engagement on any Social Media platform are very important in determining the effectiveness of those Social Media platforms since there is a relationship between Social Media advertising and context effect (Voorveld *et al.*, 2018). Table 2 below shows statistics generated from UniRank an online platform that is used for HEIs online ranking and scientific research publication ranking.

Table 2: Statistics on Social Media engagement in HEIs in Zambia	
HEI	Level of Engagements
University of Lusaka	214,307
Cavendish University	130,480
University of Zambia	76,805
Chreso University	46,585
Rusangu University	46,361

The levels of engagement on Social Media platforms in HEIs a very low, implying that those institutions are not implementing effective Social Media strategies for their Social Media Marketing. The findings also mean that there is need for HEIs to adopt a Social Media Marketing model that can increase their engagement. The levels of engagements in Table 2 are based on accumulated total

engagements on HEI’s Social Media pages including mentions. In comparison to the University of Columbia in the USA the levels of engagements in Figure 1 below are higher than accumulated levels of engagements for HEIs in Table 2. The role of interaction on Social Media platforms is to increase value and create brand visibility (Hamilton *et al.*, 2022).



Fig. 1: Social Media Engagements on University of Columbia Social Media Site

Figure 1 above shows levels of engagements per day for University of Columbia after running brand mentions using Harsh tag analysis (Brand mentions, 2022). Engagement on Social Media platforms is defined as the measurement of comments, likes and shares (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Engagement is an important measure for Social Media Marketing performance. The low levels on

engagement on Social Media pages for HEIs in Zambia implies that they need to change their strategies for Social Media Marketing by first identifying the best platforms to use for marketing. Figure 2 below shows the levels of engagements in the top 10 Universities according to UniRank.

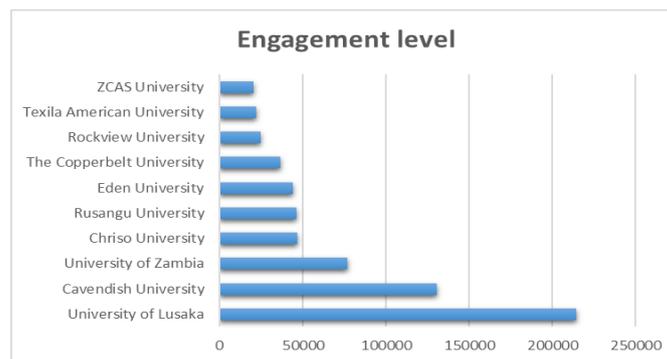


Fig. 2: Levels of engagements in the top 10 HEIs in Zambia

Figure 2 above shows that University of Lusaka is ranked first on levels of engagement followed by Cavendish University and then the University of Zambia. In Social Media Marketing four elements are important in ensuring that the strategy succeeds, and these are Engagement, lead, reach and conversion (Chaffey & Chaswick, 2012). While engagement has been defined, lead on the other hand is any information that someone shares on Social Media that can be

used to follow up with them (Rock, 2021). Reach is the number of people who have viewed or seen a specific post while conversion is when a user or visitor on Social Media does what you intended them to do (Yang *et al.*, 2016). Engagement, lead, reach, and conversion are determinants of Social Media Marketing performance as shown in Figure 3 below.

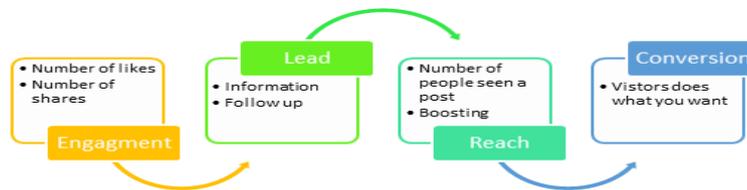


Fig. 3: Determinants of Social Media Performance

When levels of engagement on Social Media are high, it is expected that this will trigger a chain of action to cause the other three elements of Social Media performance to increase, but only when there is deliberate strategy to cause high Social Media Marketing performance (Meon, 2020). The implication of the elements shown in Figure 3 is that the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing is fully dependent on engagement, lead, reach and conversion.

B. Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing has an impact on overall marketing performance as several case studies show. Research conducted by Ezeife looking at Social Media increasing sales concluded that Social Media increases sales revenue for businesses, but organizational leaders lack clear strategies for creating competitive advantage (Ezeife, 2017). In small and medium enterprises businesses revenue seems to have increased because of implementing Social Media Marketing strategies according to research involving several SME businesses in Indonesia (Wardati & Mahendrawathi, 2019). Since Social Media can increase sales revenue in sectors such as the SME and the retail sectors, then the assumption is that it is able to increase overall marketing performance in HEIs in Zambia.

Research conducted by Fomunyam investigated Social Media Marketing of higher education in Africa and found that Facebook alone increased student numbers in HEIs in Africa and it was also able to increase revenue (Fomunyam, 2021). The research by Fomunyam included Zambia though it regarded it as an East African country instead of a Southern Africa country, however the outcomes imply that Social Media is effective in marketing HEIs in Zambia. The limitation of the study though is that it only considered Facebook as the Social Media platform and did not include other popular Social Media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube.

The effectiveness of Social Media Marketing has an impact on the performance of overall marketing in HEIs. If Social Media can increase market share and generate

revenue in HEIs then it is effective in marketing HEIs. Facebook alone has 2.45 billion users and generated close to \$67.25 billion in 2019 (Fomunyam, 2021). Since research also shows that age groups of between 16-34 are the most active on Social Media platforms, Facebook becomes the largest virtual market for HEIs globally.

Social Media enhances consumer engagement and creates brand awareness (Shahid, 2019), since consumer engagement and branding are important elements for marketing performance, the interpretation is that Social Media becomes a strategic partner in marketing HEIs. The ability of Social Media is that institutions can reach a higher number of people within a second (Henderson, 2020). The ability of Social Media

VII. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that Social Media is highly effective for purposes of marketing HEIs in Zambia though the challenge is that strategic leaders in HEIs need to identify the best Social Media mix to use for their institution. Literature has shown that HEIs in the USA, Australia and in Nigeria and Kenya have used Social Media Marketing to increase their market share and to increase revenue. The implications of the findings mean that HEIs in Zambia must develop models for Social Media Marketing that can give them a strategic competitive advantage. The levels of engagement on Social Media in HEIs are very low but advertising on Social Media Platforms has proved to be effective. Social Media Marketing requires planning and aggressive implementation for HEIs to benefit from its suitability for marketing in the education sector. The interactive nature of Social Media and the ability to reach billions within a second provides a basis for sustainable competitive advantage for those HEIs that have adopted Social Media in their marketing strategies.

Identifying the most common Social Media platforms for marketing HEIs is an important undertaking, from the findings WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube seem to be popular Social Media Platforms in the Education

Sector in Zambia. Institutions in the education sector using Social Media for marketing purposes have a higher chance of expanding their market share and generating revenue. However, they need to improve their Social Media strategies so that levels of engagement can increase

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