

Use of Social Media in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Review of Studies in the Asian Region

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Abstract

Higher education institutions (HEIs) and students throughout the world now rely heavily on social media, which has revolutionised the way that admissions, enrolment and academic engagement are handled in the digital age. While students rely on social media platforms to obtain information, connect with current scholars and make educated decisions about their future education, HEIs are increasingly using these platforms to highlight programs, interact with potential students, develop brand equity and share research outputs. The significance of researching social media use by HEIs is emphasised in this study, which also looks at the body of Asian literature on social media use by both institutions and students. This review paper is analysing how Indian PhD candidates use social media to research, assess and commit to doctoral programs would assist HEIs in decreasing false information, improving digital outreach tactics and delivering accurate and trustworthy information. This study closes a significant vacuum in the literature and offers advice to Indian academics, decision makers and universities looking to enhance PhD admissions through reliable and successful social media interaction in the current digital environment.

Keywords: Social Media, Higher Education, Asia, Admission, Enrollment, PhD

1. Introduction:

Social media helps to exchange knowledge, communication, cooperative work and the growth of online learning communities, all of which improve teaching and learning in higher education (Tess 2013). In the Asian region, higher education institutions have found that social media is indispensable for the purpose of attracting students and securing admissions and enrolments. In order to draw students and secure admissions and enrolments, social media has become crucial for Asian higher education institutions. Prospective students and their families largely rely on social media platforms in today's early 21st century's digital age to evaluate possibilities, learn more about colleges and decide where to study.

Social media has a big impact on college enrolment because universities use digital platforms to interact with students during the admissions process, reach larger audiences and share success stories (Sahu & Kumar, 2026). Social media advertising has a significant impact on students choice of private higher education institutions by

showcasing their programs, facilities and campus life to prospective applicants through targeted ads, posts and videos (Mubarak and Jazeel, 2023). Brand engagement on social media has a direct impact on brand equity in higher education in the Asian setting because students develop closer relationships with institutions that actively engage with them, contribute insightful information and foster a feeling of community online (Perera et al., 2023). Higher education institutions can more easily convey admission information, deadlines and support services using platforms that students already use on a regular basis, thanks to social media's influence on students communication habits (Nappu et al., 2026). Undergraduates social identities are shaped by digital mediation through social media exposure and electronic word of mouth i.e. eWOM, which affects their propensity to enrol and choice of university (Ben & Lyu, 2026). Social media promotion and word of mouth have been shown to boost student enrolment at vocational schools in Indonesia, demonstrating that prospective students might be persuaded to enrol

by positive online reviews and shared experiences from current students (Nirmala, 2026).

Digital and social media platforms, which offer quick access to course details, faculty biographies and student testimonials, are crucial for students in India, especially in Coimbatore, who are applying to higher education institutions (Giftson Rajkumar et al., 2023). Similar to this, social media marketing has a big impact on college bound students enrolment intent in the Philippines. Private universities use influencer collaborations, live sessions and campaigns to draw candidates (Espelita & Atento, 2026). From the point of view of higher education institutions in Malaysia, social media marketing communications have an impact on brand equity. This means that an institution's reputation is strengthened and it becomes more appealing to potential students when it has a consistent, interesting and reliable online presence (Tang et al., 2025). Research designs to study the social media of higher education institutions are also changing. Higher Education Institutions assess the results of their marketing campaigns and enhance their admissions tactics (Gamage et al., 2026). All things considered, social media marketing is now an essential tool for Asian higher education institutions to connect with students, establish brand credibility and increase enrolment in a cutthroat academic environment.

1.1. Knowledge Synthesis:

Studying the literature on research done in the Asian region about social media and its use in marketing by higher education institutions for admissions and enrollments is highly important because Asia represents a rapidly growing, diverse and digitally connected market where millions of students choose higher education paths every year. This corpus of work helps academics, policymakers and researchers in comprehending how social media affects student choices in culturally and economically different settings around the continent. Social media has a big impact on higher education enrolment in Asia because universities use digital platforms to interact with potential students during the admissions process, reach larger audiences and share success stories (Sahu & Kumar, 2026). Asian region, social media

advertising has a significant impact on students choice of private higher education institutions. Institutions can showcase their programs, facilities and campus life to prospective applicants by using targeted ads, posts and videos (Mohamed Mubarak & Ahamed Jazeel, 2023). Brand engagement on social media has a direct impact on brand equity in higher education in nations like Malaysia and Sri Lanka because students develop closer relationships with institutions that actively engage with them, share insightful content and foster a sense of community online (Perera et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2025). Asian students frequently rely on peer recommendations, family opinions and online evaluations when selecting universities, making electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and social identity construction important elements in enrolment decisions. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend these regional tendencies (Ben & Lyu, 2026). Word of mouth and social media advertising greatly boost student enrolment at vocational schools, demonstrating that prospective students might be persuaded to enrol by positive online reviews and shared experiences from current students (Nirmala, 2026).

Students looking for admission to higher education institutions in India, especially in Coimbatore, rely heavily on digital and social media platforms because they offer quick access to course details, faculty biographies and student testimonials that enhance interest and trust (Giftson Rajkumar et al., 2023). Similar to this, social media marketing has a big impact on college-bound students enrolment intention in the Philippines. Private universities use influencer collaborations, live sessions and campaigns to draw candidates (Espelita & Atento, 2026). Additionally, the literature emphasises how social media influences students communication habits in higher education, facilitating the dissemination of admission information, deadlines and support services through platforms that students already use on a regular basis (Nappu et al., 2026). Examining Asian research is particularly crucial because it highlights context-specific trends that diverge from Western research, such as the importance of family influence, collective decision making and mobile-first internet usage in nations

like Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India and the Philippines.

Furthermore, social media networking in higher education are developing in Asia, assisting institutions in assessing the results of their marketing campaigns and refining their admissions tactics (Gamage et al., 2026). Universities would lack evidence based tactics for successful social media marketing in varied cultural contexts and would miss important insights into how Asian students Find/ Assess/ Commit to institutions if they did not research this regional literature. In order to create focused, culturally relevant and successful enrolment methods that satisfy the demands of students throughout the continent, it is important to analyse the Asian literature on social media marketing for higher education admissions.

1.2. Significance of Study:

The impact of social media on PhD candidates in the Indian environment for higher academic endeavours is an area that has not received much

attention, which makes this study noteworthy. The use of social media by Indian PhD candidates to connect with present PhD researchers, assess research facilities, identify supervisors and obtain funding information is growing, but little is known about how these platforms affect their admissions choices. Higher education institutions must comprehend this link in order to deliver accurate information, minimise false information and create successful digital outreach initiatives. By ensuring that students make educated decisions about their doctoral journey through reliable social media participation, this study will help Indian scholars, policymakers and HEIs better serve PhD aspirants, improve doctoral enrolment results and strengthen research capacity in India.

2. Literature Review:

Through critical analysis of existing literature knowledge we have tried to identify research gaps for future research directions (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Literature Review

Country	Author(s)	Title	Year	Year of References	Key Topic Discussed	Findings	Research Gaps
Sri Lanka	Ahamed Jazeel and Mohamed Mubarak	Influence of Social Media Advertising on Selection of Private Higher Educational Institutes	2023	2012 to 2019	the influence of social media advertising on selection of private higher educational institutes	The findings demonstrate the respondents active participation in social media and the impact of social media advertisements on their choices of private universities	Study limited to sample size in Sri Lanka, further study recommended with added mediating variables
India	Samuel Giftson Rajkumar, Dr. C. Samuel Joseph, Dr. J. Clement Sudhahar	Role Of Digital And Social Media In Seeking Admission In Higher Educational Institutions (Hei) In Coimbatore, India	2023	2019 to 2021	The impact of social media in decision making of admission in HEI in Coimbatore	Social media marketing has a strong influence in seeking admission in HEI	Impact of Social media marketing can be further studied with additional dimensions in other settings
Vietnam and Sri Lanka	Charitha Harshani Perera, Long Thang Van	Brand engagement on social media and its impact on brand equity	2023	1993 to 2022	How higher education institutions develop customer-	The relationship between user-generated content, firm-generated content and social	Influence of social media content on students for Higher

	Nguyen and Rajkishore Nayak	in higher education: integrating the social identity perspective			based brand equity using social media marketing and social brand engagement	brand engagement was found to be moderated by the subjective norms	Education proposed in other settings.
Malaysia	Kin Leong Tang , Pei meng Tan and Wai Hong Loo	Influence of social media marketing communications on brand equity: from Malaysian higher education institutions' perspective	2025	1988 to 2025	To investigate the impact of Social Media Marketing Communication on customer-based brand equity of Malaysian HEIs among prospective and existing students.	The Consumer Based Brand Equity of HEIs is significantly impacted by Social Media Marketing Communication	Impact of social media marketing can be studied in other countries.
Asia	Nishantha Gamage, Pethigamage Perera, Sangeetha Kutty and Ritesh Chugh	Exploring research designs in social media research in higher education	2026	2004 to 2024	Empirical study of research designs used in examining social media use in Higher Education	Technology-driven analytics, digital wellbeing frameworks, crisis-responsive techniques after COVID-19, theory-guided models, student co-creation paradigms and cross-cultural comparative studies are the six new themes that thematic analysis reveals are influencing research designs	Behaviour based understanding of social media in higher education is further proposed
Indonesia	Syamsiarna Nappu , Maemuna Muhayyang, Faras Dwi Larasanti , Auliya Andira Putri , Resky Affa	The Influence Of Social Media On students Communication Style In Higher Education	2026	2017 to 2025	Use of social media platforms by students for learning language apart from entertainment	Students often employ platform-based language, trendy idioms and slang in spoken interactions because these forms feel comfortable, succinct and socially relevant.	Role of social media wrt trendiness as an influencer in other aspects can be explored.
China	Shaohua Ben and Yi Lyu	Digital Mediation: EWOM and Social Media Exposure in Shaping Undergraduates ' Social	2026	1970 to 2025	This study investigates the role of social capital in shaping students social identity	The results demonstrate that social media exposure, EWOM and social identity are all positively predicted by social capital.	Future study recommend ed to explore digital engagement in the higher

		Identity in Higher Education					education context
Jakarta	Yanti Nirmala	The Effect of Social Media Promotion and Word of Mouth on Increasing Student Enrollment at SMKS Krisanti Jakarta	2026	2009 to 2022	This study aims to analyze the effect of social media promotion and Word of Mouth (WOM) on increasing student enrollment	Findings indicate that, despite the critical role of social media in raising awareness, word of mouth (WOM) continues to be the most influential factor in decision making due to its greater credibility and trustworthiness.	Role of social media to be studied with respect to EWOM
Philippines	Cherry Ann Marie Hernandez Espelita and Ramon George Atento	Social Media Marketing and Enrollment Intent Among College-Bound Learners: Evidence from a Private Higher Education Institution in Region IV-A, Philippines	2026	2018 to 2025	This study examined digital marketing preferences, social media exposure and perceived institutional online presence and tested the extent to which these factors predict intention to enroll/consider enrolling in a private HEI	The results empirically demonstrate that trust outperforms usage-based indicators as a predictor of intention to enroll, thereby reinforcing trust-centered models in higher education branding. The modest impact of social media usage implies that the intensity of usage may serve as an enabling exposure condition rather than the central mechanism.	Further exploration on social media engagement on enrollment intention with median analysis is recommended.
India	Pabitra Kumar Sahu and Rohit Vishal Kumar	Navigating the digital landscape: The impact of social media on higher education enrolment and beyond	2026	1980 to 2024	How the use of social media impacts college choice	The results demonstrate that social media serves as a multifaceted platform for engagement, branding, information dissemination and instructional support in addition to being a marketing tool.	Study was limited to management institutes, further study of the use of social media by HEI can be done.

3. Use of Social Media by Higher Education Institutes for marketing Purpose:

The majority of prospective students and their families utilize digital platforms to discover information or to evaluate possibilities and to make decisions about where to study which makes the use of social media marketing by higher education

institutions for enrolment and admissions crucial. Higher education enrollment numbers are greatly impacted by social media since institutions use digital platforms to interact with students during the admissions process, reach larger audiences and share success stories (Sahu & Kumar, 2026). Social media advertising has a significant impact on students choice of private higher education

institutions by showcasing their programs, facilities and campus life to prospective applicants through targeted ads, posts and videos (Mubarak and Jazeel, 2023). Higher education brand equity is significantly impacted by brand interaction on social media because students develop closer relationships with institutions that actively engage with them, contribute insightful information and foster an online sense of community (Perera et al., 2023). Higher education institutions can more easily convey admission information, deadlines and support services using platforms that students already use on a regular basis because of students communication habits on digital platforms (Nappu et al., 2026). Undergraduates social identities are shaped by digital mediation through social media exposure and electronic eWOM, which affects their propensity to enrol and choice of university (Ben & Lyu, 2026). Social media promotion and word of mouth have been shown to boost student enrolment at vocational schools in Indonesia, demonstrating that prospective students might be persuaded to enrol by positive online reviews and shared experiences from current students (Nirmala, 2026). Due to the fact that these platforms offer quick access to course details, teacher biographies and student testimonials, digital and social media play a significant part in the admissions process for students in India (Giftson Rajkumar et al., 2023). Social media marketing has a big impact on college bound students enrolment intent in the Philippines as well. Private universities use influencer collaborations, live sessions and campaigns to draw candidates (Espelita & Atento, 2026).

Social media marketing communications have an impact on brand equity in Malaysia, which means that an institution's reputation is strengthened and it becomes more appealing to potential students when it has a consistent, interesting and reliable online presence (Tang et al., 2025). Higher education's social media research designs are also changing, enabling institutions to assess the results of their marketing campaigns and enhance their admissions tactics (Gamage et al., 2026).

All things considered, social media marketing is now essential for connecting with students,

fostering brand trust and increasing enrolment in a cutthroat educational environment.

4. Use of Social Media Platforms by Higher Education Aspirants:

Social media platforms have a big impact on candidates decisions to get enrolled in and be admitted to higher education institutions. This influence is particularly significant for doctoral program candidates who require specific information about funding, research opportunities, supervisors and institutional reputation. Higher education enrollment is impacted by social media because it allows universities to promote research success stories, to attract a larger audience and to interact directly with potential PhD candidates via hybrid or completely web driven webinars, posts and direct conversations (Sahu & Kumar, 2026). Social media advertising has a significant impact on students choice of private higher education institutions. For PhD candidates, tailored advertisements and posts highlight research facilities, faculty knowledge and PhD programs that align with their academic interests (Mubarak and Jazeel, 2023).

Higher education brand equity is impacted by brand involvement on social media and PhD candidates frequently select universities with a robust online presence that actively publish research results, conference attendance and alumni accomplishments, establishing credibility and trust (Perera et al., 2023).

Social media also influences students communication methods in higher education. It facilitates doctoral candidates' ability to interact with present PhD researchers, enquire about supervision styles and gain insight into lab culture through casual online conversations (Nappu et al., 2026). Undergraduates social identities are significantly shaped by digital mediation via eWOM and social media exposure. PhD candidates develop their identities as researchers by following academics, joining research groups and viewing online examples of successful PhD journeys (Ben & Lyu, 2026). Positive feedback from current PhD students on funding, mentorship and work-life balance can have a significant impact on decision

making for doctoral programs and social media promotion and word of mouth have been shown to boost student enrolment in Indonesia (Nirmala, 2026). According to Giftson Rajkumar et al. (2023), internet and social media platforms are crucial for students in India who are applying to higher education institutions because they offer quick access to faculty profiles, research publications and previous PhD student results that aid in program evaluation. Similar to this, in the Philippines, social media marketing has a big impact on college-bound students desire to enrol, while PhD candidates use similar platforms to look for research supervisors, grant opportunities and institutional support networks (Espelita & Atento, 2026).

According to Tang et al. (2025), social media marketing communications have an impact on brand equity in Malaysia and universities that have a strong social media research branding are more likely to draw PhD candidates who value both international visibility and high-quality research. Higher education's social media research designs are changing to better understand how PhD candidates use platforms to make decisions regarding further education (Gamage et al., 2026).

5. Social Media and Higher Education in the Indian Context:

Because doctoral studies necessitate careful selection of supervisors, research facilities, funding options and institutional support, it is crucial to examine how PhD candidates in India use social media platforms to make decisions about enrolment and admission to higher education institutions. Social media has emerged as a major source of this information. Social media has an impact on enrolment in higher education by assisting institutions in reaching a larger audience, sharing research success stories and interacting directly with potential PhD candidates through posts, webinars and direct interactions. This is particularly important for Indian PhD candidates who frequently rely on online information before making decisions (Sahu & Kumar, 2026). students choices of private higher education institutions are heavily influenced by social media advertising.

For Indian PhD candidates, targeted posts and advertisements highlight research facilities, faculty expertise and PhD programs that align with their academic interests (Mohamed Mubarak & Ahamed Jazeel, 2023). Indian PhD candidates frequently select universities with a strong online presence that actively publish research outputs, conference attendance and alumni accomplishments in order to establish credibility and trust (Perera et al., 2023). Brand involvement on social media affects brand equity in higher education. Indian PhD candidates can more easily contact with present PhD scholars, enquire about supervision styles and gain insight into lab culture through casual online conversations thanks to social media, which also influences students communication styles in higher education (Nappu et al., 2026). Students social identities are shaped by digital mediation through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and social media exposure. Similarly, Indian PhD candidates develop their identities as researchers by joining research groups, following scholars and viewing online examples of successful PhD journeys (Ben & Lyu, 2026). Digital and social media platforms, which offer quick access to faculty profiles, research publications and previous PhD student outcomes that assist candidates in evaluating programs, are crucial for students in India, especially in Coimbatore, who are applying to higher education institutions (Giftson Rajkumar et al., 2023). Similar to how social media advertising and word of mouth boost enrolment in other Asian nations, positive social media reviews from existing PhD students regarding funding, mentorship and work-life balance might significantly impact decision making for Indian doctorate aspirants (Nirmala, 2026). Because study methodologies in social media research in higher education are changing and institutions need evidence based strategies to effectively reach doctoral candidates, it is critical to understand how Indian PhD candidates use social media (Gamage et al., 2026).

6. Conclusion:

Asian research indicates that brand engagement impacts institutional reputation, social media marketing operations have a substantial impact on

student enrolment decisions and electronic word of mouth influences how students view and select higher education options. Research from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, India and other Asian nations shows that online peer recommendations, digital marketing and social media advertising are important factors when students are choosing between undergraduate and graduate programs. Nonetheless, little study has been done expressly on PhD candidates and admissions to doctoral programs in India. Since doctoral studies necessitate a careful assessment of supervisors, research facilities, funding options and institutional support all of which are increasingly shared and discussed on social media platforms this paper highlights the need to investigate the influence of social media on PhD aspirants' decisions for admission to doctoral programs in India.

Social media use by students and higher education institutions (HEIs) is crucial for PhD program admissions because it fosters a two way relationship that benefits both parties. In order to attract potential doctorate students and increase their visibility in a competitive market, HEIs utilise social media marketing efforts to develop brand recognition, brand image and brand loyalty (BILGIN, 2018; Khan et al., 2019). Social media marketing initiatives foster behavioural engagement among prospective students in higher education. Brand equity serves as a mediator that reinforces this relationship, increasing the likelihood that students will think about particular institutions for their PhD studies (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022). Before making decisions on doctorate admissions, students utilise digital marketing tools like social media to assess universities, weigh their options and comprehend program offerings (Kusumawati, 2019). Because social media platforms offer real information on faculty, research facilities, financing and student experiences, research indicates that prospective students do care about social media presence when making university decisions (Shields & Peruta, 2019). Social media, in particular, enables PhD candidates to learn about supervision styles, connect with current PhD researchers and

determine whether an institution aligns with their research interests and career objectives. All things considered, social media is a crucial tool for HEIs to draw in and educate PhD candidates. Students use it to obtain reliable information, create research networks and make confident decisions about their PhD path, making it crucial for successful admissions in the current digital era.

7. Future Scope:

1. There is little research on this particular topic by Indian scholars and Indian students are increasingly depending on digital channels to make informed decisions about advanced research studies, making an analysis of the social media platforms used by PhD candidates for admission to doctoral programs in the Indian context extremely pertinent.
2. Social media use has an impact on students study habits and offers trends and difficulties that are crucial to comprehend for Indian PhD candidates.
3. In the higher education industry, social network marketing and student involvement have a significant impact on students purchase intentions. Hence the research in this sector will be much appreciated.
4. Higher education institutions have an obligation to provide trustworthy and accurate information on social media platforms to prevent misinformation and support informed choices and Indian scholars should take up this research because understanding local patterns will help tailor interventions for Indian PhD aspirants.

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