The Role of Social Media in K-12 School Brand Engagement Activities

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is thus to ascertain the value of social media in increasing brand interest for K-12 international schools. In the current world, social media platforms have gained significant importance as the channels through which schools, colleges and universities can disseminate their core principles and ideals, their accomplishments and the various activities undertaken in the society. In this paper, the author focuses on the research as to how K-12 international schools making use of social media in narrating the stories of their brand engagement initiatives, developing the community and gaining loyalty from students, parents, alumni and other members of the society in particular. Through analysing different types of social media activities and their consequences the research reveals the efficiency of social networks in creating favorable brand associations. The study provides useful information for the practical application of social media initiatives in areas that do not only contribute to increasing the schools' visibility and engagement but also to improving the general brand reputation of K-12 international schools. This paper offers a synthesis of the present literature and effective practices used by these schools, which can be used as a reference for educational organisations that want to better enhance the efficiency of their engagement with the brand's audiences through social media.

Keywords: Role of social Media, K-12 International Schools, Brand Engagement, Prospect Engagement, Customer Engagement, Parent Engagement, Student Engagement, Social media, K-12 School Brand Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The availability of Social Media platforms has drastically impacted the communication platform of educational institutions especially the international K-12 schools. These platforms have now become essential in creating better and closer relationships between schools and their stakeholders which include students, parents, alumni and members of the society. Facebook, twitter, Instagram, linked and you tube are some of the social tools that can help schools to reach students, parents and other stakeholders while reinforcing a schools' brand identity that aligns with its vision and values. Social media communication is not like the conventional means of communication where information is only passed in one direction as in newsletters, brochures and letters among others. This feature of a two-way conversation allows the schools to address the concerns of the public, answer questions and engage in healthy discourse with the community. For example, the school can post good performances by students, provide information on events and activities, emphasize on key programs among other things in a way that will encourage stakeholders to engage in the discussion via social media platforms. Besides, it creates not only a common feeling of community but also increases the openness and accessibility of the school. Furthermore, the strategic and fluid characteristic of social media make it possible for schools to adapt and be sensitive to the various groups of people. For instance, the parents may be more concerned with content that addresses issues affecting the school, activities, and performance of their children, while alumni may have more concern in content that looks back at their time in school or content that celebrates success stories of fellow alumni. In this way, by identifying the specific preferences and needs of these different communities, schools can develop content which will be more engaging and reflective of the schools' brand. In general, this research will try to offer an understanding of the extent and uses of social media in educational

branding, especially given the intensified competition among K-12 international schools. It aims at providing specific recommendations to heads of schools that wish to improve how they use social media to communicate with their broad audiences

Literature Review
1. Social Media's Development in Education

The advancement of social media for the K-12 international schools has brought change in the way communication and collaboration is done with improved features such as openness, ease of access and interactivity **(Ahmed, 2014; Jauhari, 2024)**. However, this evolution is not without its problems, for examples, dissemination of false information, violation of privacy and cyber bullying **(Ohara, 2023)**. In order to address these issues, the schools must be informed of the various trends and uses of the social media. Social media in K-12 international schools in Mumbai, India has gained a lot of ground whereby information sharing through YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are being used for information sharing, communication, and promotion **(Fitriyanti, 2023)**. This is in compliance with the general usage of incorporating social media in learning as has been observed in some colleges that are associated with the University of Mumbai **(Nair, 2020)**. Another important field involves the effective use of social media for marketing education where an emphasis is put on bringing out the achievements of the institutions **(Nurmalasari, 2020)**. Nevertheless, the nature of social media entails that it has to be constantly monitored and updated to remain effective in the field of education as pointed out by Hensley in the year 2023.

2. Advantages of Social Media in the Process of School Branding

Social media is a very important tool in school branding as it provides the following advantages; visibility, live interaction, and community creation **(Çevik, 2019; Bharti, 2016; Hasri, 2024; Ye, 2024)**. It enables schools to have a larger coverage and contact the students and parents as well as create social relations. These benefits are more apparent in the higher education sector as competition is stiff and hence the need to develop a good brand image. But this has to be done in a strategic way and integration so as to avoid some of the setbacks such as data privacy and information reliability as highlighted by Ye in the year 2024.

3. Effective Social Media Strategies

In general, a number of researchers have explored the use of social media in K-12 education setting. According to both sources (**Cox, 2012**) and (**Joosten, 2012**) indicate on the possibility of increased interactions and enhanced links between school administrators and stakeholders, and on the strategies and best practices in content and interaction. This paper by (**Güney, 2023**) goes a notch higher in analyzing the benefits and risks of social media use in K-12 education and calls for more caution. (**Nurmalasari, 2020**) gives a real-life application of social media as a marketing strategy in a certain field of education, pointed out the advantages of promoting institutional successes. Altogether, these studies indicate that social media could be useful and effective in K-12 education and at the same time, there should be purposeful and systematic integration of social media. **(Augustini, 2014)** also insists on the need of creating high quality and relevant content while **(Jothi, 2011)** stresses on the active participation or involvement of users. Consistency and branding are also very important as has been pointed out by **(Cox, 2014)**. This study is also supported by **(Ashley, 2015)** who points out that the website needs to be updated more often and participants need to be rewarded to encourage them to be active, as well as using such appeal types as experiential, image and exclusivity appeals. All these studies collectively call for a very strategic approach to the content, interactivity and branding on the social media platforms.

The current literature offers a base on which to understand the use of social media in K-12 education, more research is required to establish complex, contextual and holistic approaches towards dealing with the various opportunities and challenges posed by the social media. This entails establishing sound processes of risk control, comprehensive long-term planning of content and activities, and valuable changes to ensure that the schools' social media activities remain relevant and efficient in the long run. Research of such kind would not only help to address the current gaps in the existing literature but also would contribute a great deal to the further development of the practical use of social media in educational context, which in turn will lead to the improved satisfaction of brand values and development of the communities in the sphere of education which is becoming more and more digital in today's world.

Methodology

In support of the conclusions on the effects of social media in learning contexts of this study, secondary data collected from published peer-reviewed academic journals, case studies, and industry reports are used. In this study, a review of peer-reviewed articles is undertaken to generate information on the factors that justify the use of social media in promoting students' engagement based on the literature available in the field. Furthermore, there are examples of such schools with well-developed social media presence and such sources prove the effectiveness of using such networks and increased participation in communication of schools and communities.

The results of the study are substantiated by reports and surveys of reliable organizations with reference to the role of social media in branding and communication of education. In this way, the study provides a balanced analysis based on secondary credible information sources that are combined into a single data synthesis.

Findings
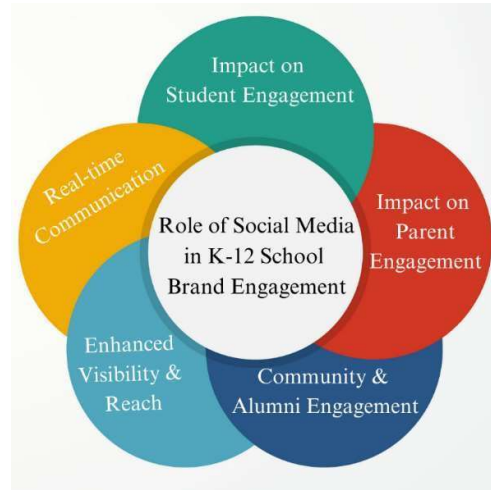
1. **Impact on Student Engagement**
   Social media provides a good platform for students to express their opinions and to take part in school activities. The schools that connect students with social media shows that they engage higher loyalty far quicker than those that don't.

2. **Impact on Parent Engagement**
   Parents like being able to access up to date news from their children's school when it suits them through social media, and they also don't mind schools using it for direct communication. Facebook and Twitter are the most common format for sharing important announcements, event information, student accomplishments etc. Engaging parents through social media also allows for better involvement in their children's education and school community.

3. **Community and Alumni Engagement**
   Social media serves as a powerful tool for connecting with the broader community and alumni network. Schools often use LinkedIn for professional networking and alumni relations, while Facebook groups can foster community interaction and support.
   Successful campaigns often involve showcasing alumni success stories and organizing virtual reunions or fundraising events.

4. **Enhanced Visibility and Reach**
   Social media significantly increases a school's visibility and reach. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube allow schools to share news, achievements, and updates with a broad audience. This enhanced visibility is crucial for attracting prospective students and their families, who often use social media as a primary source of information when researching educational options.

5. **Real-Time Communication**
   Real-time communication is a powerful tool for schools in social media because of its immediacy. This is especially true during crisis management or when there is urgent information to disseminate like student achievements, school achievements, event updates among others.

Discussion
The findings showed that social media influences brand engagement positively in schools. Proper use of these platforms enhances visibility, creates strong community bonds and increases stakeholder satisfaction. However, schools must be deliberate with their social media efforts through quality content generation that seeks consistent

communication and interactive response.

Challenges and Considerations
Social media management poses challenges despite significant benefits it offers. Privacy concerns, fake news and potential negative feedback are major risks. Positive online reputation management through implementing explicit social media policies, training staff on best practices and actively managing school's online presence will help the organization overcome such difficulties.

Conclusion
A school brand's engagement is achieved through social media. By using these platforms, schools can effectively communicate with their stakeholders, develop a sense of community and improve their overall brand perception. A strategic approach that emphasizes meaningful interaction and consistent, high-quality content will be the key to success in this Social Media era. Through this, they have a chance to increase their visibility and interact better with customers thus creating stronger brands that contribute towards success and reputation of the whole institution.

Recommendations
1. **Developing Comprehensive Social Media Strategy**
   Creating an extensive plan outlining goals, target audiences, types of contents and posting times.
2. **Quality and Relevance Matter Most**
   Ensure all content is high quality, relevant and aligns with the schools' brand values.
3. **Incentive for Interactive Engagement**
   Use interactive features like polls, Q&A sessions and live streaming to actively engage your audience.
4. **Monitoring And Adapting**
   Ongoing evaluation of the social media metrics will enable you to measure the efficacy of the approach done as well as make necessary adjustments where needed

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