

STUDENTS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS EXTERNAL MEDIA IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OF GUJARAT

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Abstract

Here, an attempt has been made to explore and study the preference pattern in regards to the usage of external media of engineering students in the private universities in Gujarat. The study also includes student's rationale of various media usage, and also the impact on them based on the sample of 1096 respondents in the selected engineering institutes of Private Universities of Gujarat. The research is essential to evaluate how the preferences of students' will provide inputs to private universities for selecting media for the engineering students. This research will also bring out some unexpected and severe fact of preference patterns of external media. The scope of the study comes under the selected private universities in Gujarat. Survey method has been followed to collect the data from respondents of the study in which 1500 questionnaires were distributed to 1500 students of First year B. Tech programs in engineering institutes of Gujarat. However, out of 1500 questionnaires, only 1250 responded and returned by the students. Out of those questionnaires, 1096 with appropriate responses have been accepted and statistically been analyzed.

The main goal of this research is to identify some significant trends, opportunities, and limitations regarding the usage of external media in higher education based on studying the way students use external media during their admission decision. Like a multinational corporation, a university also needs to communicate with its stakeholders. Students are prime stakeholders of the university. To study preference and consumption pattern of various media by students is of paramount importance for private universities of Gujarat. In this era of rising competition, it is pertinent to recognize the taste of students, their preferences of media, etc. Universities have also been spending enormous amounts on external communication, advertising, and marketing in order to build their positive image, preference in the minds of prospective students, particularly during months of admissions. External Communication, an essential and intrinsic component of corporate communication, provides strategic public and media relations services. It supports various internal and external departments, colleges, and schools throughout a University. They manage the global affairs of a University through its communications. Notably, they also guarantee the value of important messages and the facts image of a University, which are presented consistently in all verbal, printed, electronic, and digital communications. Thus, looking into the importance of external communication in the promotion of a university, the paper focuses upon the preference pattern of external media by engineering students of a private university.

Keywords: Corporate Communication, External Communication, Consumption Pattern.

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Introduction

Globally, 18th Century Industrial Revolution and 20th Century Information Technology Revolution brought about sea changes in all domains of life, including the education sector. Along with several core problems, challenges, and secondary effects, they ushered India into an unmatched growth trajectory. The market moved with rapid speed from socialistic to the capitalist model of the economy. Resultant, the national policies are about Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization. Government of India declared new Education Policy in 1986 along with the enactment of AICTE Act in 1987 in the Parliament. It paved the way for privatization in the Education sector, and hence, brought about the concept of Self-Financed Colleges and Universities offering Programs of Engineering and other Professional Education in India.

Nowadays, Higher Technical or Professional Education has been the top priority for any individual, family, or Society. No doubt amongst the best available career opportunities is an engineering programme to study at degree level in Gujarat. To promote and maintain brand awareness and positive image or perception about university or education, institutes corporate communication comes first. Within the broader paradigm of corporate communication, external communication is not only immediate access to various stakeholders of the university; it is abounding of resources of information and knowledge.

The Concept and Meaning of Corporate Communication

Essentially, Corporate Communication is merely straightforward. It is, actually, the way a corporate body communicates with all. It is more of a process than an entity. Primarily, it helps in problem-solving with futuristic insights. In the same context, Dolphin (2005) gives three critical responsibilities of Corporate Communication:

- To help the management for being an agent of change
- Assistance to express or publish a corporations' role in society at large
- Contribution in the creation of corporate vision and mission along with responsibility

Corporate Communication supports in managing perceptions and warranting useful and timely diffusion of required information; building a positive corporate image and warranting smooth and long term relationship with all stakeholders.

Corporate Communication

Management is described as accomplishing work through other people. Management includes functions such as planning organizing, commanding coordinating, and controlling. Corporate Communication is used in various staff and line functions in an organization. A corporate organization pursues various genres of communication that are handled by respective Specialists.

Engineering Education in Gujarat

Presently, 427 institutions are offering UG and PG courses in engineering in Gujarat. When compared to other states, the number is quite less. Other states like Madhya Pradesh has 556 engineering Institutes, Uttar Pradesh 1165, Andhra Pradesh 825, Karnataka 756, Tamil Nadu 1339, and Maharashtra 1564 have the number of engineering institutes than in Gujarat.

Need of the Study

In this competitive scenario, private universities have to strive hard to exist and flourish. The role of external communication becomes pivotal in this context. Precisely, keeping this in mind, the study is being undertaken to get nuances of the best medium, best media, best message and the resultant media mix that can reach out to the target audience that is students.

Statement of the Research Problem

This study examines the preference and consumption pattern of the students of Engineering of Select Private Universities of Gujarat on media, its usage, and its purpose for external communication.

Objectives of the Research

Broadly, the objective of this study is to identify Students' preferences of External Communication of Private Universities of Gujarat. Specific objectives of the study are to:

- To study students' preferences and Consumption Patterns towards Media for external communication
- To study types of media access like print, electronic, digital, smart and outdoor by the students for various purposes
- To study the preferences of students on the usage of media for external communication in private universities of Gujarat

Research Questions

- What is the preference of students for the usage of various media in private universities of Gujarat?
- Which media students prefer more to access for various purposes?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Looking to the aim and objectives of the research, it mainly includes preferences and consumption patterns of media for external communication of first-year engineering students of elite private universities of Gujarat and that too during 2016-17 and 2017-18 years. A sample size of 1000 has been finalized with that of 500 a year.

Operational Definitions of Terms

- **Preference:** According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, the meaning of preference is 'the fact that you like something or someone more than another thing or person.' As per Oxford Dictionaries 'preference' means 'a greater liking for one alternative over another or others'
- **Students:** Students means a 10 + 2 pass student who is pursuing a B.E./B. Tech program/course in an engineering institute.
- **Media:** Media means Communication channels through which news and messages are disseminated. It also deals with the dissemination of educational activities, entertainment shows and events, data, and promotional items. As an integral part of the print media, electronic media, digital media, smart media, and outdoor media are taken for studies.

- **External Communication:** External Communication is primarily the exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, concepts, and messages between two or more organizations or groups of organizations or individuals with one being outside the formal structure of the organization. Various forms of Media are print media, electronic media, digital media, smart media and outdoor media.

These five media elements, about the following listed five universities, were taken for this study.

- Ganpat University, Kherva (2005)
- Nirma University, Ahmedabad (2003)
- UKA Tarsadia University, Bardoli (2011)
- RK University, Rajkot (2011)
- Charotar University of Science and Technology (CHARUSAT), Changa (2009)

These private universities were pioneering private universities, the first ones to start /impart engineering education in their district or region.

- **Private University of Gujarat:** The Private University of Gujarat is a University established by a sponsoring body through Gujarat Gujarat State / Central Act through a bill in the legislative assembly.

Research Methodology

Mainly, the study is based on two types of data: Primary Data and Secondary Data. The primary data is collected from the Engineering students of the selected private Universities of Gujarat. Similarly, the secondary data have been collected from various sources available online and at the Institution Library. Primary data required for the study has been collected through a questionnaire that was pilot studied. It was distributed to the engineering students in the Gujarat state. Enough time was also given to the students to respond to the questions asked.

- **Questionnaire Design**

The questionnaire has been designed based on the Research Need, Objectives, Hypothesis, Scope, Limitations, and the study of literature. The questionnaire was designed, in line with the International Communication Association (ICA) model, in order to find out the media preferences and consumption patterns of students about the effectiveness of communication with the respective university.

- **Variables**

Every study has variables as these are needed in order to understand differences. Variables are divided into three parts; they are Independent Variables, Dependent Variables, and Control Variables.

- **Dependent Variable**

Dependent variable is a variable that changes as per the changes made in the Independent Variables. In the present study, Students and various Media- namely, Print Media, Electronic Media, Digital Media, Smart Media, and Outdoor Media are the Dependent

Variable. Changes made in the Independent Variable will make changes in the preferences patterns of the students.

It has also been pilot studied before the actual implementation of the questionnaire for the data collection.

- **Sampling and Population**

In all, 1500 students of Engineering Programs pursuing their education in Private Universities in Gujarat have been selected. They were administered the questionnaires. Out of the total 1500 questionnaires distributed, finally, 1250 questionnaires were received back. Out of that 1096, questionnaires with appropriate responses have been statistically analyzed. Convenience sampling technique has been used to limit the number of students for the review. For the study, Students of Engineering pursuing their Graduation at the Private University have been selected.

- **Survey and Sampling Techniques**

In order to survey the Preference of the Students on the Use/Consumption of Media by Select Private Universities of Gujarat for External Communication and to collect data from the individual students of Private Universities of Gujarat, following techniques have been followed:

- Pilot study/survey of the students pursuing their graduate studies in Engineering at Private Universities in Gujarat in an organized manner to study the validity of the Questionnaire

Data Analysis and Presentation of Data

An extensive survey of engineering Students of Private Universities of Gujarat using a questionnaire has been made to understand their preference on the Use of Media by Select Private Universities of Gujarat for External Communication. The data have been analyzed, summarized and presented in tables using totals, percentages, frequency, mean, median, standard deviation, Pearson Chi-Square value, Kruskal Wallis Test, Levene's Test, Mann - Whitney U Test, Kolmogorov Smirnov Test. In order to analyze the data, primarily, basic statistical techniques with the use of Microsoft Excel 2010 along with SPSS are used quite extensively. It also formed a basis for empirical interpretation.

Table 1: Frequency of Demographic Information

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency		Percentage	
		2016-17	2017-18	2016-17	2017-18
Gender	Male	314	322	56.27	59.86
	Female	244	216	43.73	40.14
	Total	558	538	100	100
Name of the University	Ganpat University	106	112	19.00	20.82
	Nirma University	113	104	20.25	19.33
	Uka Tarsadia University	116	102	20.79	18.96
	R K University	105	113	18.82	21.00
	CHARUSAT	118	107	21.15	19.89
	Total	558	538	100	100

Demographic Information

Table 1 shows that the study was carried out with 1096 engineering students of select Private Universities of Gujarat. There were 314 (56.27 percent) male respondents and 244 (43.73 percent) female respondents in the academic year 2016-17. Further, it is also found that there were 322 (59.86 percent) male respondents and 216 (40.14 percent) female respondents in the academic year 2017-18. In total, engineering students who responded to the questionnaire, 636 are males, and 460 are females. It amounts to 58 percent of males and 42 percent females.

Types of External Media Preferred by Engineering Students

Further, it also elucidates the types of media preferred by engineering students at various Universities. The scores mentioned are on a five-point scale related to preference used by engineering students for admission.

Table 2: Types of Media Preferred by Engineering Students

Types of Media	Preference (Percentage)	
	2016-17	2017-18
Print	56.52	57.27
Electronic	56.37	55.33
Digital	65.02	64.28
Smart	65.09	64.16
Outdoor	56.21	54.49

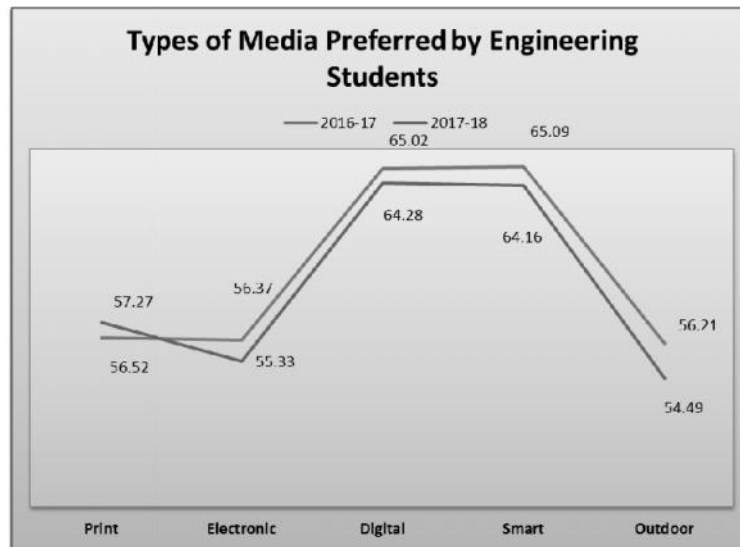


Figure 1: Types of Media Preferred by Engineering Students

From the analysis of the data, it was found out that majority of Engineering students mostly preferred Digital Media (65.02 percent and 64.28 percent) followed by Smart Media (65.09 percent and 64.16 percent) for both (2016- 17 and 2017-18) the academic years. Print Media (56.52 percent and 57.27 percent), Electronic Media (56.37 percent and 55.33 percent) and Outdoor Media (56.21 percent and 54.59 percent) were preferred less by students during the academic year 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Purpose of Media Accessed by Engineering Students – Campus Visit

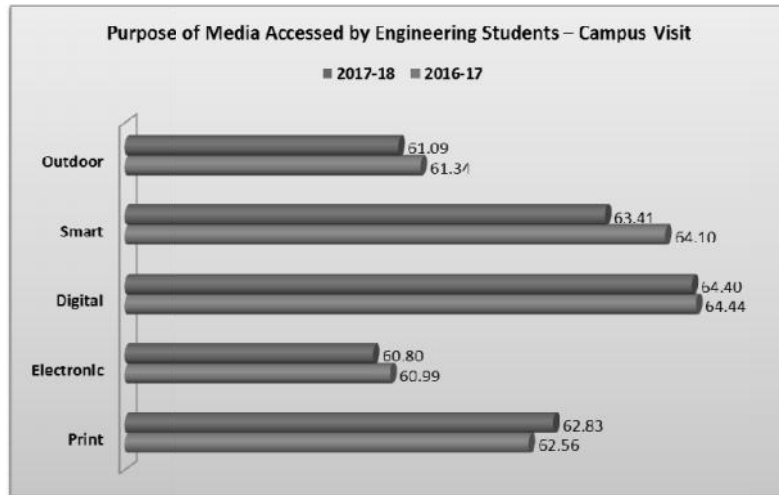


Figure 2: Purpose of Media Accessed by Engineering Students – Campus Visit

Before taking admission, students used to visit the University campus and to know about the University campus, students rely on various Media. From the analysis of data, it was found out that most of the students use Digital Media (64.44 percent and 64.40 percent) and Smart Media (64.10 percent and 63.41 percent) for a campus visit. However, Students also use Print Media (62.56 percent and 62.83 percent), Electronic Media (60.99 percent and 60.80 percent) and Outdoor Media (61.34 percent and 61.09 percent) frequently for University campus visit for the academic Year 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Purpose of Media Accessed by Engineering Students – Admission

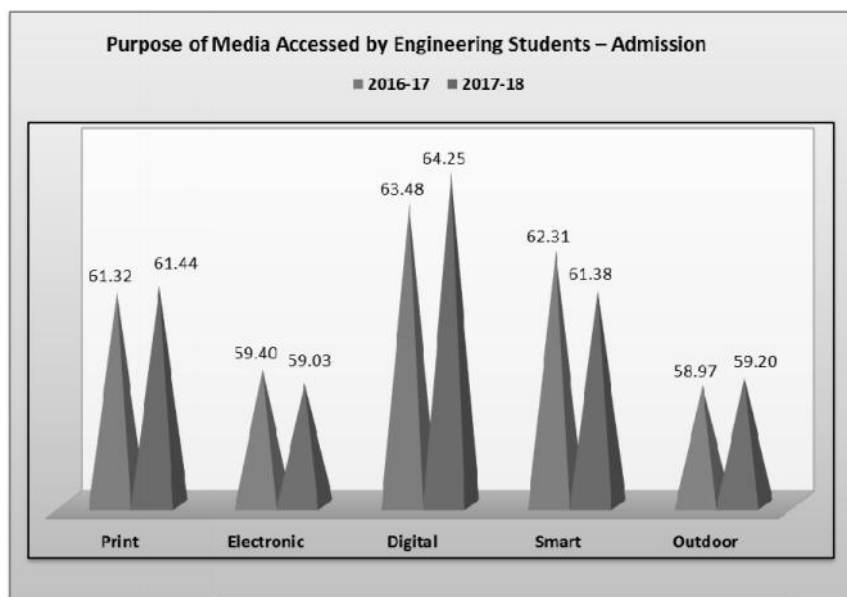


Figure 3: Purpose of Media Accessed by Engineering Students – Admission

Students used various media for admission purpose. Data collected and analyzed derived finding that Digital Media (63.46 percent and 64.25 percent) and Smart Media (62.31 percent and 61.38 percent) were used most of the time for admission purpose followed by Print Media (61.32 percent and 61.44 percent) for the academic year 2016-17 and 2017-18. On another hand Outdoor Media (58.97 percent and 59.20 percent) was least used by students for Admission Purpose during the academic year 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Results and Discussion

The research, in a nutshell, is an endeavour to study and understand various forms of external communication media with particular reference to state private universities of Gujarat. Herein, the Researcher has entered the data of 1096 respondents from 5 private universities. The data analysis and interpretation on the collected data and associations between students' Preference, Access, and Language, the Frequency of Media access, the purpose of the use of Media- particularly, print, electronic, digital, smart and outdoor media have been examined in detail with reference to engineering students' preferences and consumption patterns and also in relation to gender.

Analysis has been performed on the collected data and checked the association between their preference and consumption amongst the various communication media. It shows the importance of media in various fields for different purposes. Media provides a platform for path seekers. Same way, it is also helpful for students in the education field for various purposes like, to get information about the study, courses, and universities where they would like to study. It required the researcher to study the use of media for various purposes for the students.

Data have been collected in 5 point scale. Collected data has been converted into the nominal variable to perform the Chi-square test for association. So was created quartile of the data, was found two categories, High and Low respective. Median and above have been considered as high and below median as low. The overall response rate was higher in the year 2016-17 compared to 2017-18. It is a remarkable thing that in both the years, parents were the most influencing persons for the admission of students in the elite Private universities of Gujarat. It was also found that for the admission the students gave very less importance to print media whereas other types of media such as Digital Media and Smart Media were given more preference whereas the preference given to Electronics Media and Outdoor Media remained inconsistent.

Major Findings

It was further elaborated that an average Electronic Media Consumption, Smart Media Consumption, and Outdoor Consumption Media are the same across the various universities. Media is having the second highest influence on students for decision making for admission. Thus, Media is a vast platform that can influence students for decision making. Thus, it can be resolved that external communication plays an essential role in Private Universities of Gujarat. Media being an element of external communication also plays a vital role in decision making for admission in all five universities.

Conclusion

The study was carried out with 1096 engineering students of select Private Universities of Gujarat. Out of which, there were 314 male students and 244 female students in the year 2016-17 and 322 male students and 216 female students in the year 2017-18. The overall response rate was higher in the year 2016-17 compared to 2017-18. It was also found that for the admissions the students gave very less importance to electronic media whereas other types of media such as digital and smart were given more preference whereas the preference is given to print media and outdoor media remained at last number with some inconsistency. Even for the visit purpose, the Engineering students preferred Digital and Smart media the most. Thus, it can be rightly construed that Digital and Smart media were access more preferably by the Engineering students of select Private universities of Gujarat.

Finally, it can be rightly construed that digital and smart media have been accessed more preferably by the engineering students of select Private universities of Gujarat.

Recommendations

After analyzing the data and giving a comprehensive conclusion, the researcher felt that the following needs to be done by Private Universities of Gujarat, in order to strengthen their Corporate Communication:

- External communication plays an essential role in Private Universities of Gujarat. At this moment, it is evident that Media plays a vital role in decision making for admission in all five universities.
- Thus, it is imperative that Private Universities should lessen their spending on outdoor media, electronic media, and print media for promotional and branding purposes.

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