UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ASSESSMENT OF THE UTILISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN DISSEMINATING STUDENT RECRUITMENT INFORMATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

JOSEPHINE VIDA DARE

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By

JOSEPHINE VIDA DARE

Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration of the School of Educational Development and Outreach, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration in Higher Education.

JULY, 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name: Josephine Vida Dare   Date:…………………

Candidate's Signature …………………………….

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:………..………….... Date:…………………..

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Co-Supervisor's Signature:………………….....…… Date:……………………..

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). The study used three research questions and two hypothesis which focused on the students' level of awareness of the social media (SM) platforms, the types of information students searched for on these platforms and their perception of their effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the UEW.

A cross-sectional descriptive sample survey was carried out using questionnaire. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation, t-test and chi-squared tests. Stratified random sampling and the table of random numbers was used to select a sample of 364 from a population of 7124 fresh undergraduate students of the UEW. Results revealed that students were generally aware of the various channels used to disseminate student recruitment information at the UEW. However, the awareness of the use of SM platforms for such purposes was low. Facebook was the main SM used by students to search for the academic characteristics of UEW. T-test and chi-squared analysis revealed that all students irrespective of gender and age search for different types of information concerning a university on social media.

The study recommends that, UEW should endeavour to use variety of sources; both traditional and modern, to reach prospective students. Again, UEW should actively use SM engagement strategies and ensure that the content on its SM platforms are accurate and relevant to the needs of prospective students.

KEY WORDS

1. Student enrolment

2. Higher Education Institutions

3. Social media

4. Prospective students

5. Student recruitment information

6. Student recruitment strategies

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I would like to thank my supervisors for being so kind as to go through my work

and to my family and friends for their encouragements. I could not have achieved

it without you. I am most grateful.

DEDICATION

To my little "madams": Ayidaama, Sugru and Nyorvaari.

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The higher education landscape in Ghana is increasingly becoming competitive and complex because of the increase in the number of higher educational institutions (HEIs) in the country. This situation means that HEIs will have to compete for qualified applicants who graduate from the various Senior High Schools. Each year, higher education institutions develop strategies aimed at encouraging prospective students to choose their institutions and their programmes. The strategy adopted must be effective enough to attract quality students to meet the projected enrolment target. One student recruitment strategy that is gaining popularity is the use of social media like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. As social media continues to be a growing phenomenon and has become a popular communication channel, it is important that admissions officers stay abreast of techniques to engage prospective students and woo them to choose their institutions and programmes.

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) was upgraded to a full university in May, 2004. The University started as a university college under PNDC Law 322 which brought together seven diploma awarding colleges located in different towns under one umbrella institution. These institutions were the Advanced Teacher Training College, the Specialist Training College and the National Academy of Music, all at Winneba; the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako; College of Special Education, Akwapim-Mampong; the Advanced Training College, Kumasi and the St. Andrews Agricultural Training College,

Mampong Ashanti. The University currently has four campuses located in Kumasi (Ashanti Region), Ashanti Mampong (Ashanti Region), Ajumako (Central Region) and Winneba (Central Region). The University aims to offer clear advice and guidance to prospective applicants to enable them make informed choices and to apply to programmes appropriate to their interests, academic qualifications and potential.

Background to the Study

The main sources of funds for higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ghana come from grants from the Government of Ghana, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), development partners, internally generated funds by institutions, academic user-fees from students, and the private sector (Newman & Duwiejua, 2015). Newman and Duwiejua further indicate that there has been a decline in public funding on account of competition for limited public resources by the various sectors of the economy, between higher education institutions and other sub-sectors of education in Ghana.

Furthermore, the ability of higher education institutions to arrive at adequate funding to ensure the effective administration, teaching and research has become a major obstacle for many countries in the world, including Ghana, because funds from the Government in support of education are not received on time due to ineffective functioning of some of the national institutions in the system (Twene, 2014).

Inadequate funding is not the only problem facing higher education institutions. An emergent phenomenon currently bedeviling the higher education

landscape that is highly correlated with funding is the increased competition for institutional reputation, research grants to step up research output, and bursaries and scholarships for students, especially talented ones (Frolich and Stensaker, 2010).

Given the intense competition in higher education delivery, higher education institutions must compete for students in the recruitment markets (Maringe, 2006). In this regard, institutions that have effective recruitment strategies stand heads and shoulders above their competitors. For, as Beneke and Human (2010) have noted, changes in the competitive environment have forced higher education institutions to become more proactive in terms of student recruitment. Similarly, other writers (Anctil, 2008; Ivy, 2008; Hemsley-Brown, 2011) have noted that declining enrolments and decrease in state funding have contributed to the need for many institutions of higher education to create and maintain a distinct image in the marketplace which is no longer limited by geographical space. Implicit in the creation of a distinct image is visibility of the institution both nationally and internationally and the provision of a wide choice of competitive programmes of study.

In Ghana, competition in the higher education market is mainly due to a significant increase in the number of tertiary education institutions in the country. Currently, there are 212 accredited public and private tertiary education institutions in Ghana (NAB, 2018) competing for the same senior high school graduates. To make matters worse, these institutions offer very similar programmes through similar entry modes (i.e. regular conventional on-campus,

distance, sandwich, evening and weekend modes). The implication of this development is that prospective students have many options to choose from when deciding which tertiary education institution to attend.

The increased competition and decline in government funding notwithstanding, HEIs are still expected to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively by recruiting students and providing services for them. To be able to perform these functions, higher education institutions will have to devise mechanisms to increase student numbers in all their programmes in order to be able to satisfy their internal budgetary needs (Kotler and Andreasen, 1991). However, Paulsen, (1990), argues that enrolment trends in institutions are influenced by the institutions' ability to attract students to their programmes.

The desire to increase students' numbers has resulted in many higher education institutions developing new promotional literature for their institutions, increasing students' recruitment budgets and spending more time, money and other resources on marketing research as well as recruitment efforts which promote not only the institutions' academic programmes, but also enhance the image of the institutions. These student recruitment strategies are intended to provide prospective students with the necessary information about the institution and its programmes, and aid prospective students in their decisions on which institution to attend. In addition, the information provided is expected to be compelling enough to attract sufficient numbers of students with the desired academic grades as well as students who are underrepresented in their institutions

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such as females, the physically challenged and those from deprived areas of the country.

Despite the risk of belabouring the point, it is perhaps important to repeat Ivy's (2008) argument that it is vital for HEIs to differentiate themselves and to adopt innovative ways of recruiting students in order to create a competitive advantage. This is because Hossler, Bean and Associates (1990) suggest that, there is a strong link between student recruitment strategies used by institutions and the number of students who enrol in the institutions. Naidoo and Wu (2011) also support this view by indicating that the ability of HEIs to implement effective recruitment strategies for attracting domestic and international students is a key factor in determining the success and long-term survival in today's global education industry. Thus, at the beginning of every academic year, many HEIs embark on student recruitment drives and use various student recruitment strategies to attract students to their institutions.

The institutions that are most successful in their recruitment efforts are those that understand the current generation of prospective students, learn from previous experiences, use 'gut instincts' from time to time and are willing to improve on their practices (Lindbeck and Fodrey, 2010). Lukic and Lukic (2016) also noted that student recruitment strategies used at a faculty or the university, for that matter, should be enhanced in such a way that they will attract more students to study in the institution. Hossler's (1999) advice is that research and a strong marketing plan are central to successful admissions recruitment because they enable the admissions office staff reach prospective students when they are

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ready to make decisions about colleges and universities. Baker, Irani and Abrams (2011) argue that to be able to entice the highest calibre of students, it is imperative for an institution to measure current communication efforts from a student's perspective regarding what is effective and meaningful and then, based on that, create modern and attractive ways to communicate with prospective students strategically.

Non-traditional communication strategies such as social media are now commonplace (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011; Barnes and Lescault, 2011). In particular, Hesel (2013) has indicated that current research suggests that a significant percentage of prospective students will use social media, especially Facebook, as a resource when trying to decide which college or university to attend. This is so because according to Hesel and Williams (2009) the present generation of prospective students has a large on-line presence and frequently thinks of their social media sites as places to both gather and disseminate information. This explains why the use of social media by institutions of higher education to market themselves to potential students is increasing. The trend is a reflection of the important role that social media play in the lives of the current generation of higher education students.

As a result of this development, several authors have undertaken studies to determine how current students use social media and how higher education institutions are taking advantage of the current phenomenon. Barnes and Lescault, (2011) in a survey of 11,000 high school seniors entering college in 2013, suggest that 75% of students used social media as a resource when deciding which college

to enrol in. Rose and Morstyn, (2013) reported that social media is where the majority of people aged 12-25 will learn about things, via a post made by a friend, an advertisement on the side or just an instant message. This argument by Rose and Morstyn is in line with the recommendation of Kim, Sin, and Tsai (2014) that social media sites should be treated as important sources of information. Smith (2016) revealed that the largest proportion of her study participants (87.5%) were students who use social media.

Martin (2015) concluded in his study that institutions, regardless of size or geographic location, place a high value on social media during the recruitment process. His study also showed that social media were an everyday part of the lives of today's college and university students. He further stated that social spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were effective places for colleges and universities to reach prospective students.

In a 2012 study of social media adoption by university communicators, Kelleher and Sweetser (2012) noted that admissions and recruiting departments rely greatly upon social media based on their job to communicate with younger audiences. Barnes &

 Mattson's (2009) report posits that social media use is increasing as well as the effectiveness of social media in recruiting. The report continued that, admissions offices as well as student interest is growing in social media recruiting, and shows no signs of slowing. A study by Cappex.com (2010) also shows that, there has been a significant increase in the use of social media in college admissions targeted toward prospective students.

In an analysis of the top 100 colleges' websites, Greenwood (2012) found that 92% of these institutions used social media in conjunction with their institutional websites. He concluded that the colleges that did not take advantage of social media and provide easy access to those sites needed to adjust their recruiting techniques. Greenwood continued that social media (SM) played an effective role as a preliminary resource for information gathering to prospective college and university students. Hence, institutions not taking advantage of the free social media sites available are not only missing out on marketing and recruiting opportunities, but are lagging behind their competitors (Greenwood, 2012). Social media campaign should therefore be a key element of the marketing strategy of HEIs.

Given the huge interest and investment in the area of attracting more students into higher education institutions (HEIs) through the extensive use of social media as a student recruitment strategy in the developed world and the fact that almost every student who attends a tertiary institution in Ghana has access to a mobile device or frequently uses one form of social media or the other, it is very important to gauge the level at which social media are used by prospective students to make decisions regarding their choice of HEIs in Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

The Admissions offices on the various campuses of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) are responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures regarding student recruitment and admissions are operated fairly and consistently, and in line with the guidelines of the National Accreditation Board

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(NAB) and the university's strategic aims and objectives. Admissions staff are expected to disseminate student recruitment information to prospective students annually to ensure that a higher number of prospective students get to hear of the institution and its programmes.

Clagett (2012) argues that since the 1980s when enrolment numbers were in a decline as a result of competition in the higher education markets, colleges and universities, both public and private, started allocating a significant share of their annual budgets to marketing strategies and enrolment management. This situation compelled HEIs to embark on various recruitment activities every year either at the institutional, faculty or departmental levels. Some of the recruitment activities for universities in Ghana include sending out university brochures, organising local outreach programmes, organising school visits, participating in educational fairs, sending emails to prospective students, advertising through the university's website, television, radio, on billboards, and using the university's prospectus and catalogues.

However, in recent times, social media have been recognised as a viable method of communication between the institution and its stakeholders who are increasingly more dependent on technology as a communication source. In fact, Barnes and Mattson (2008) are of the view that when it comes to technology and college (university) admissions, there is continued evidence that colleges (universities) are eager to embrace new communication tools to recruit and research prospective students. This mode is mainly preferred due to the easy accessibility of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets which provide

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people with the opportunity to access social media communication applications and texting services at a relatively shorter time and lower cost. Peruta and Shield (2014) are also of the view that at a time when immediacy and personalisation are paramount to student application and retention, social media is seen as a viable method of communication between the institution and its constituents. Consequently, universities are compelled to understand how they can use digital marketing channels to keep students aware of, and engaged with their schools in order to withstand the increasing competition to attract and retain the best students.

In view of this, several authors Kuzma and Wright, (2013), Barnes and Mattson (2009), Barnes and Lescault (2011) Barnes and Mattson (2010), Cappex.com (2010), Merrill (2010) and Reuben (2008) have conducted studies that suggest that higher education institutions have adopted social media as a student recruitment strategy.

In Ghana, there have been reports to suggest that social media is a familiar activity among students in the country as evidenced from the 2016 statistics on African internet usage which revealed that 7,958,675 of Ghanaians were using the internet and 3,500,000 of them use Facebook which represents 13% of the total population of Ghanaians (Internet World Stats, 2014). Lucchetti (2019) in his report also stated that Ghanaians spent considerably longer hours online than their African counterparts which have earned the country the 9th position globally in terms of hours spent on social media. Studies have also been conducted in Ghana to examine the awareness and usage of social media among students. For instance,

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Mingle, Adams and Adjei (2016) undertook a comparative analysis of social media usage and academic performances of senior high school students and found that students used social media and spent between 1-5 hours daily on these sites. Similarly, Markwei and Appiah's (2016) study which focused on the extent of use, purposes, access and challenges of using social media in some selected communities in Ghana showed that social media was popular among the youth and that 76% of them had profiles on these sites and 52% of them spent between 1–3 hours daily on these sites. Furthermore, Ocansey, Ametepey and Oduro's (2016) study examined the impact of social media on the youth, with emphasis on the access and purposes for which the youth use social media. The results revealed that 85% of respondents used social media. Amofah-Serwaa and Dadzie (2015) investigated social media use and its implications on child behaviour in a basic school. Their findings showed that all participants were aware of social media. Even though these studies conducted in Ghana prove that students were aware of and used social media, none of these studies have addressed the issue of social media being used as a recruitment strategy in Ghana.

In line with these observations and findings that students were aware of and frequently used social media, some universities, UEW included have started to adopt social media as a student recruitment strategy in Ghana. Despite this, there is no study that I have come across that seems to assess the use and effectiveness of social media as a student recruitment strategy from the perspective of Ghanaian University students that such strategies are directed towards. This study intends to fill that gap.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the level of students' awareness of the modes of disseminating student recruitment information used by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW).

2. Determine the types of information about the UEW students look for on social media platforms.

3. Examine how students rate the effectiveness of the use of the social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the level of students' awareness of the modes of disseminating student recruitment information used by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW)?

2. What type of information about the UEW do students look for on social media platforms?

3. How do students rate the effectiveness of the use of social media by the UEW as a student recruitment strategy?

Hypotheses

4. H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.

   H1: There is statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.

5. H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.   .

   H1: Statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.   .

Significance of the Study

   Higher education institutions have to develop creative ways of effectively communicating their facilities and programmes offered to their prospective students in order to inform, attract and recruit them. Therefore, this study would be useful in many ways. First, it would be useful to the UEW. This is because over the years, the UEW has depended heavily on traditional means such as brochures, flyers and educational fairs for recruiting prospective students. However, with social media gaining popularity as a student recruitment strategy, this study will draw the attention of admissions officers on the UEW's campuses to take a second look and restructure the methods they use to recruit prospective

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students in future so as to increase admission yield. It will also help admission officers better understand the potential opportunities associated with using social media as a means of connecting with the current crop of prospective students. Moreover, at a time when the Government of Ghana is encouraging institutions to go digital and reduce paper work, the results of this study will provide a basis to save on the cost of paper.

Prospective students will also benefit because they can obtain admission requirements or information without encountering travel expenses and the risks associated with travelling to the campuses when they use social media.

Delimitation

The study was delimited to responses of students enrolled in the University of Education, Winneba, and specifically, in one of the four campuses of the university. Moreover, the study was further delimited to only social media types used by the institution and students of the Winneba main campus of the university, located at the South, Central, and North campuses. The study participants were applicants for the 2018/2019 academic year who were admitted to study for degrees in various undergraduate programmes at the main campus and who had spent more than one semester on campus. This campus was purposively selected because it is the main campus of the university and has students offering similar programmes on the other campuses.

The study only focused on the external factors of Chapman's (1981) college choice model specifically on colleges' effort to communicate with prospective students using social media.

Limitations of the Study

It is common knowledge in Ghana that out of frustration, some students apply to several universities and accept whatever university that offers them a programme of study. Therefore, the assumption that marketing strategies and for that matter social media strategies used by the University of Education, Winneba enticed students to enrol in the institution might not necessarily be the case. In the same vein, the assumption that the targeted students used social media to gain information concerning the University of Education, Winneba which influenced their decision to attend the institution might also not be the case. Information from such students might, therefore, lack fool-proof validity and detract from the validity of conclusions of the study.

In addition to that, this study involved first year undergraduate students who had spent more than one semester in the university. This might result in a situation whereby some students may have forgotten what information sources influenced their university choice decision-making process.

Another limitation is that, the research method did not include interviews with students and, therefore, did not explore their perspectives on the use of social media in the choice of university.

The sample was from one public university and specifically, one campus of a multi-campus university. Therefore, caution should be taken when generalising the findings to the whole student population of the university.

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Organisation of the Study

The thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter One includes the background to the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations.

Chapter Two reviews related literature. Included in the literature review are: History of Ghanaian university student recruitment, theoretical and conceptual framework, concept of social media; awareness and utilisaion of social media for student recruitment information purposes by students, factors accounting for failure by higher education institutions to adopt social media as a student recruitment strategy and perception of effectiveness of social media as a student recruitment strategy.

Chapter Three describes the methods used to collect data and design to use, the population and sample of the study, sampling procedure, data collection instrument as well as the data analysis plan.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the results of the study and Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, draws conclusions, discusses implications for practice, and makes suggestions for future research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates how student recruitment strategies are very important to the survival of HEIs. This is because it enables the University to grow its student numbers, increases the market share of the institution and aids in enhancing the institution's reputation. The chapter also stresses that it is important that all institutions take a critical look at the student recruitment strategy they use

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and how effective these strategies are in helping the institutions achieve their goals. Social media have become an increasingly effective student recruitment strategy that is yet to be taken advantage of by HEIs in Ghana, particularly by the University of Education, Winneba. The chapter underscores the need to assess the use and popularity of social media among students and the potential of social media as a viable student recruitment strategy, using one campus of the University of Education, Winneba as a case study. The next chapter reviews related literature on the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the study was to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba in terms of students' level of awareness of the SM platforms, the type of information students search for on these SM platforms and their perception of their effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the University of Education, Winneba. This Chapter reviews literature on the following related concepts and themes:

a. History of Ghanaian University Student Recruitment Strategies

b. Theoretical Framework: College Choice Model

c. Sources of Information on Admission

d. Gender, Age and type of student recruitment information

e. Concept of Social Media

f. Students' Awareness of and Usage of Social Media Platforms

g. Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education

h. Content, Frequency and Relevance of Information on the Social Media

i. Challenges Faced by HEIs in Adopting Social Media as a Recruitment Strategy

History of Ghanaian University Student Recruitment Strategies

In the past, institutions of higher education were marketed in ways vastly different than they are now (Anctil, 2008). This is especially true in Ghana. When the first university was established in Ghana in 1948, marketing or going on recruitment drive was unnecessary. Students applied to several institutions and the universities decided whether to admit them or not. Subsequently, at a point, quite apart from applying to a university, successful applicants were also invited to write entrance examinations even though they were duly qualified for the programmes they applied for. Every year universities received several applications from prospective students. Universities had a choice to select whoever they wanted and many applications of qualified students were rejected because there were fewer universities at the time. Universities did not need to embark on any enrolment drive activities because the institutions were overwhelmed with many applications every academic year. At that time, the universities simply advertised their programmes in newspapers for prospective students to know that they had started selling admission forms. Then, Ghana's education sector became deregulated. The process started in Ghana in 1993 when a structure for accrediting private universities was formed. Then, some polytechnics were also upgraded to tertiary status.

In the 2002 Ghana Education Reform, a goal was set to increase private sector participation in education services and aligned policies such as tax exemptions on imported books were created. Many private universities were established and the Government of Ghana also established new universities. Many

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diploma-awarding institutions such as the teacher training colleges and some of the polytechnics were converted to tertiary institutions. Private individuals as well as faith-based organisations also established tertiary institutions. In addition, foreign institutions started establishing campuses in the country. Under these circumstances, universities started witnessing a decline in their student numbers due to competition. In response, they started to make brochures, sometimes with CD Roms in addition to the advertisement in newspapers. Later on, representatives of the institutions started to participate in educational fairs and to visit schools and communities to educate prospective students about the programmes they had on offer. The use of technology in any form be it emails to prospective students or other forms of social media was never part of enrolment drive activities in Ghana until the onset of the year 2000 when some HEIs started to explore social media as a student recruitment strategy.

Theoretical Framework: College Choice Model

The theoretical framework selected for this study is Chapman's (1981) college choice model. The college choice model refers to the process that college or university applicants go through during the college or university selection process. Chapman's (1981) model suggests that the student characteristics and external influences interact to create a student's general expectation of college life and how those factors affect the student's choice of university. The model was intended to:

1. "Assist college administrators responsible for setting recruitment policies to identify the pressures and influences they need to consider in developing institutional recruiting policy, and

2. Aid continued research in the area of student's college choice" (Chapman, 1981, p. 490-491).

The student characteristics include socioeconomic status, aptitude, educational aspirations, and high school performance. The external influences are categorised into three general groups:

1. The influence of significant persons in the student's choice process. Those people can be: guidance counsellors, teachers, parents and friends.

2. The fixed characteristics of the institution, for example, tuition fee, scholarship, college's location, programme availability, campus environment/quality of life while a student at the college, school activities, academic quality, future career prospects and opportunities (upon graduation).

3. The institution's own efforts to communicate with prospective students by phone, email, newspaper advertising, digital advertising, campus invites, trial class, peer to peer consultant and quite recently social media.

According to Chapman, the institution's efforts to communicate with students involve systematic marketing strategies to attract students to the university. Therefore, the external influences, particularly, the final category of his model which is "a college's efforts to communicate with prospective students" (Chapman, 1981, p. 498) is the focus of this study. This study focused on the use of social media as a communication strategy because it was assumed that, it was

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the commonest source of information amongst the current generation of students commonly referred to as the millennial generation (Lindberck and Fodrey, 2010), generation Y, generation Z or Digital Natives (Hayes, Ruschman, and Walker, 2009).

Chapman's (1981) model is suitable for this study because it would provide understanding that enables admission officers responsible for developing and implementing student recruitment strategies in higher education institutions work well on the external factors influencing the college (university) decision-making process of prospective students. In Chapman's view, without such a model, admission officers may overlook ways to strengthen their recruiting strategies or even overestimate the effectiveness of current or even future recruitment activities.

External Factors Influencing the College (University) Choice Processes

The study focuses on the external factors influencing college choice decision by Chapman (1981). Therefore, literature was reviewed on those factors which are:

 1. The influence of significant persons in the student's choice process

2. Fixed characteristics of the College

3. College's efforts to communicate with students

The Influence of Significant Persons in the Student's Choice Process

The influence of other individuals such as guidance counsellors, teachers, parents, close relatives and friends can have an impact on a student's college choice decision. Chapman (1981) found three ways in which people influence this

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process. First, significant persons have the ability to influence a student's expectations of what a particular college is like. Second, they offer direct advice about which college a student should attend. Third, and most common, Chapman found that people such as close friends and relatives influence a student by their own college choice decision and where they themselves graduated from.

Johnston, (2010) undertook a survey of 475 undergraduate students to determine the relative influence that various sources of information have on students' choice of university. Results of the survey showed that personal sources of information such as parents were important, and more so than non-personal sources like brochures. The result also showed that parents, along with other family and friends, were the most influential sources of information. Outside of personal contacts, a student's visit to campus was highly influential. Surprisingly, social media was not rated as highly influential compared to traditional media.

Washburn, Garton and Vaughn's (2002) survey at the University of Missouri focused on examining recruitment efforts as they affect the decision-making processes of students, found parents and graduates of the university to be the most influential people for students enroled in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

Rocca and Washburn's (2005) survey of 1,068 respondents pointed out that, parents or guardians, friends in college, and relatives who attended the university had the highest mean influence among students respectively in the choice of university and course of study.

Rogers (2014) surveyed more than 3,000 high school graduates in the U.S. The aim of the survey was to determine how students really decided on which institution to attend. The survey found that majority of students (77%) indicated their parents were involved in helping them decide where to enrol.

Karcher's (2011) survey of 57 fresh undergraduate students of the University of Purdue showed that parents had a strong influence in the decision-making process that potential students go through in selecting a college. With 60% of respondents claiming that their parents were in the top three of influencers of their choice of university. The study also posited that over three quarters of all respondents also specified that parents assisted in the search for a college. Karcher concluded that this demographic factor should be strongly considered in future recruiting strategies.

In reference to significant individuals that influenced their college choice decision, Herren, Cartmell & Robertson's (2011) internet survey of 339 full-time undergraduate students at the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University showed respondents were of the opinion that the most used and most influential individual in their college choice decision-making process was a parent or guardian.

From the studies on the influence of significant persons, it is clear that these significant people such as parents serve as the primary source of information to most prospective students due to personal acquaintance and face-to-face interaction they usually have. These significant people are usually considered by prospective students to have some expertise or firsthand knowledge that make

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them particularly important sources of relevant and credible information that the prospective student needs to make a decision. Therefore, these significant individuals should form an integral part of any social media recruitment strategy developed by any university.

Fixed Characteristics of the College (University)

The fixed characteristics of an institution consist of academic and non-academic factors that may or may not be considered important to a particular student. Non-academic factors of influence include co-curricular and social opportunities at a given institution. The fixed characteristics of an institution include amount of tuition fees, scholarship availability, college's location, programme availability, campus environment or quality of life while a student is at the college, school activities, academic quality, future career prospects and opportunities (upon graduation). According to Chapman (1981) location, cost, campus environment, and the availability of desired programmes are relatively fixed college characteristics. He notes that, while most of these characteristics have the potential to change over time, they are relatively constant in the short-term. Chapman (1981) went on further to state that students select colleges and universities that will provide them with the courses needed to enter graduate or professional school or a career.

LaFave, Kelly and Ford of AnLar (2019) presented a report based on data collected from a nationally representative sample of 23,000 ninth-graders in 2009 in the U.S and a follow up survey of the same cohort in 2012 when most of the respondents were in eleventh grade. The survey conducted on these two occasions

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found that the top three factors with the highest percentages of ratings were academic quality/ reputation (74%) of the institution, availability of desired program of study (74%), and job placement after school (73).

Furthermore, Herren, et al's (2011) 339 respondents also indicated that career opportunities after graduation were the most influential institutional characteristic with a mean level of influence of 4.18 and a standard deviation of .99, this was followed by quality of facilities (mean 3.84) as well as quality and reputation of courses (mean 3.76) and quality of faculty (mean 3.71).

Rudhumbu, Tirumalai and Kumari (2017) conducted a survey on 300 undergraduate students at Botho University to determine factors that influenced decisions of undergraduate students' choice of a university. Results of the study showed that 82.5% of the students were influenced by the academic programmes offered by the institution, followed by image and reputation of the institution at 73.5% and finally, the quality of educational facilities such as classrooms at 73.4%.

A sample of 261 respondents by Agrey and Lampadan (2014) revealed the top three factors that influence the choice of university by respondents to be the learning environment as well as the potential of good job prospects. The second factor identified was student life and activities on campus (this includes appropriate accommodation and a variety of extra-curricular Activities). The third strongest factor was availability of support systems, both physical (bookstore, guidance and counselling office) as well as non-physical (scholarships, transferability of credits).

The literature on the fixed characteristics of the college (university) has made it clear that for any social media recruitment strategy to be effective in enticing students to choose a particular university, it must inform students of what to expect at the institution. Such strategies must involve academic and non-academic features of the institution to give prospective students a glimpse of how campus life would be like. Also, programmes of study being advertised should show the benefits students would attain from these programmes because many students view them as the most important characteristics they look for when selecting a college.

College's Efforts to Communicate with Students

According to Chapman (1981), the first thing that a college or university concerned about its enrolment should do is to "review the way it identifies and recruits prospective students" (p. 498). This external influence was what Chapman considered the most easily altered and plays a major role in the college-choice process.

Chapman continued that, at the time his model was being developed, a large percentage of the research being conducted on the topic of college choice and prospective student recruitment was based on the systematic application of marketing principles. The marketing approach advocated research on an institution's "market position," the implementation of a "marketing plan," and the development of new strategies involving both recruiting programmes and the communication process (Chapman, 1981, p. 489). That is, perhaps, why when presenting his model, Chapman expressed concern that little research existed that

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documented the effectiveness in attracting students to make college choices they might not otherwise have made. This study will focus on the effectiveness of how an institution uses social media to communicate the fixed characteristics and significant persons of the institution to prospective students to encourage them enrol in the institution.

Concept of Social Media

Various authors have tried to conceptualise what social media are. Wang, Yu, and Wei (2012), view social media as online communication platforms which allow users to establish social networks through peer-to-peer communications and connections. Safko and Brake (2009) refer to social media as internet-based applications (collectively referred to as Web 2.0) that facilitate conversation between people. They explain that these tools are used to facilitate links and engage people through communication, collaboration, education and entertainment.

Boyd and Ellison (2008) also view social media as a web-based service that allows individuals to construct a public or a semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) explain social media to be a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers with the intention of educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as a

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group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

From the above definitions or descriptions, one can conceptualise social media as a virtual place, tool or service that link users and provides them with a platform to connect, create and share content, ideas, personal messages and information that could either be in written, visual, audio, audio visual or in a combination of forms.

The five most popular social media networking site used and accepted in the market are Facebook with 901 million users, Twitter with 555 million users, Google+ with 170 million users, LinkedIn with 150 million users and Pinterest with 11.7 million users. Stagno (2010) also identified common examples of social media sites as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and YouTube.

From the website of the University of Education, Winneba and enquiries from the admissions offices of the University indicate commonest social media sites in use to be: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Whatsapp. Therefore, for the purposes of this study these are the sites that would be referenced.

Sources of Information on Admission

Before assessing the level of awareness of social media as a student recruitment strategy, literature was reviewed to determine the ways universities communicated to their prospective students and the sources from which students obtained information concerning a university.

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Wyrwicka and Mrugalska (2015) sampled 1,650 students at the Faculty of Engineering Management at Poznan University of Technology. The purpose of the study was to determine sources of information students used to obtain information concerning a university. The study observed that respondents mainly used university and faculty websites most at 48.76% and 38.84%, respectively.

In a study at Florida University, Rocca and Washburn (2005) surveyed 1,068 undergraduate students to find the most commonly used sources of information. Results showed that the most used source of information was the institution's website and the least source of information was TV, radio, newspaper, or magazine advertisements.

In an internet survey of 339 full time undergraduates at the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University, Herren, et al (2011) observed that, majority of respondents indicated the most useful and most used source of information was visiting campus (87.6%). This was followed by personal conversation with a professor in the institution (71.7%), degree programme information on the institution's website (77.3%) and printed university publications, (72.3%).

Nyangau and Bado (2012) reviewed empirical studies which pointed out that prospective students were still relying on traditional marketing materials (such as e-mails, direct mailing, campus visits, and college fairs) when obtaining admission-related information. The evidence showed that Admissions officers preferred and utilised traditional methods, which could explain why they remained popular among potential students.

Karcher's (2011) survey found 82% of parents utilised a general web search to locate the information needed concerning an institution. This was followed by campus visits (72%) and printed material (67%). Findings of the study also included the fact that 58% of the respondents, indicated that they did not use social media as a source of information for a college. Of the students who did use social media as information source, Facebook was the largest network indicated of having useful information (84%).

Parrot and Tipton (2010) conducted a national survey of 500 first-year undergraduates. The survey discovered that 81% of participants listed the college website and 62% named admissions publications as important sources of information concerning a university. Only 18% said social networking sites were important. The authors were of the view that even though the figure was low, it represented an increase from the previous year's study, and with nearly 60% relying on digital information over print materials, the authors concluded that social media would become more influential in the future in regards to helping students make important higher education choices. Therefore, social media should not be ignored.

Kyung-Sun, Sei-Ching, and Eun-Young (2014) conducted a survey on 845 undergraduates to find out which social media platforms were used as information sources; what the main reasons were for using these social media platforms for information seeking; and the kind of actions that were taken to evaluate the quality of the information gained from such sources. The study found that 98.6% of respondents reported using Wikipedia as an information source. This was

followed by social network sites, such as Facebook, at 95.7 %, user reviews platforms like Amazon.com at 72.1%; and video sharing sites like YouTube at 69.5%. Microblog sites like twitter were the least frequently used source for information seeking at 25%.

De Jager and Du Plooy (2010) conducted a study on 403 students to investigate *the information sources used by South African students when selecting a Higher Education Institution.* The study found that the most important information source to enable students make a decision on which university to attend was the universities' website, followed by campus visits and open days and information from high school teachers.

Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) found similar results when they surveyed 746 students to determine which technologies were most useful to them during the admission process. The top technology identified was schools' websites. The technologies that made up the bottom of the list were social networking sites. Lindbeck and Fodrey contended that these findings could be from admission offices' intentionally using more proven technologies out of familiarity with those media and not being knowledgeable about the newer technologies.

Rudhumbu, et al. (2017) in their study of undergraduate students at Botho University posited that 69.5% of students believed that advertising by the institution (either on radio or TV) highly influenced their decision to enrol at the institution, 69.9% considered career fairs as being influential and 59.3% of the students believed that, visits by university marketing representatives to their

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secondary schools to talk to them about the university and its programmes highly influenced their decisions to enrol at the university.

Shields and Peruta (2019) used survey data from 364 current university students across the U.S. and 12 one-on-one interviews from students at a small liberal arts college in the U.S to help determine sources from which students obtained information concerning a university. The survey results mostly cited a visit to the official website of the institution by 90.3% of respondents, touring campus at 80.7% and speaking to current students at 55.0% as the three major sources of information. Among those who reported visiting a school's social media platforms, Facebook page, was frequently used and was followed by Instagram.

Lubbe and Petzer (2013) conducted a study on 1,290 prospective students in South Africa to find out the key information sources influencing their choice of university. The results of the study indicated that, prospective students were mostly influenced by information they obtained from brochures, their parents and university of interest's website.

The above studies seem to suggest that prospective students obtained recruitment information from diverse sources. Thus, admission officers should endeavour to use as many sources for disseminating student recruitment information as possible.

Gender, Age and Type of Student Recruitment Information

There are studies to suggest that variety of gender and age differences exist when it comes to the selection of colleges/universities. Thus, institutions

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need to be aware of these differences and develop appropriate recruitment strategies for the different gender and age groups.

Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010) conveniently sampled 1, 241 first year students from six South African universities. The purpose of the study was to investigate the choice factors students considered when selecting a higher education institution, with a focus on the differences between gender and language groups. The top ten choice factors were; Quality of teaching, Academic facilities , Employment prospects, Campus safety and security, International links, Language policy, Image of the institution, Academic reputation, Flexible study mode and Wide choice of subjects/courses. The study concluded that irrespective of gender, the most important choice factor for respondents was the quality of teaching at higher education institutions (HEIs). The study also found that the top ten choice factors were the same for both genders. However, the responses differed in the ranking between males and females and these variables were in all instances more important to female students. The authors suggested that since males and females differed according to the ranking of certain choice factors, HEIs should consider different recruitment strategies for each gender group.

Galotti and Mark (1994) undertook a study of 322 high school seniors and first year students to determine the factors they considered in their college choice decision-making process. Several gender differences emerged in the study. For instance females were found to rely more heavily on parents, friends, and classmates for information concerning a college than males. Furthermore, females

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were also more likely to consider dorms/residence halls than their male counterparts, who were in turn more likely to list criteria pertaining to success of graduates when considering colleges. Again, females gave significantly higher importance ratings to such factors as admissions process, academic calendar, racial/ethnic diversity, character and size of the student body, quality of the residence halls, diversity of residential options, social atmosphere, location (including geographic location, urban/rural set ting, and distance from a major city), and on-campus cultural events.

Manfield and Warwick (2006) conducted a study with the aim of examining any differences in the way in which male and female students consider and evaluate colleges. This examination was based on 19 criteria organised into five groups: financial, physical, functional, social, and psychological. The study reported showed five significant differences between female and male students. The females recorded high level means for academics, friendly atmosphere, financial aid, security/safety and religious atmosphere. The study also found similarities between males and females in four of the top five selection criteria. These were academics, tuition, scholarships and friendly atmosphere. The authors found that, the most important criterion for female students was academics and for male students it was tuition. The authors advised that these similarities and differences were important for university officials to note when preparing promotional materials.

Kimmel, Gaylor and Hayes (2016) conducted a study to examine the age differences among adult learners in their motivations and barriers to higher

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education, comparing results from a 2004-2005 study with results from a 2010 study of non-traditional students (age 25 and over) enrolled in four-year colleges that offered academic programs designed for working adults. Significant differences were revealed between both differing age groups over time and same-age groups between periods of time. The study found that, adult students differed significantly by age group in their motivations for seeking higher education. For instance, Students in the 24 or under age group were found to be motivated for seeking higher education due to the motivation from parents. For students in the 25-34 age groups, a desire for a new career was among the motivations for seeking higher education. Students 35+ had several motivations including a desire for pay increase, desire for a new career, desire for more respect from peers. The study also found that, for older workers, career advancement, pay, promotion, and new career opportunities were great incentives for selecting a higher education institution.

The authors suggested that greater attention should be given to the extrinsic value of the degree in any recruitment strategy. It was also reported in the study that, mature students worried about attending classes with younger students because mature students from the workforce perceived their life experiences more significantly different from that of traditional-age students. The authors thus, suggested that, age-cohort driven learning should be considered for many mature students. The study concluded that, universities vying for adults should consider seeking employer inputs for programs targeting adults.

De Jager and Du Plooy (2006) randomly sampled 250 pre-degree and 250 degree students at a South African University. The factors that influenced the selection of a university by prospective students were discussed under four themes namely, operational activities, auxiliary services, reputation of the institution and admission requirements. Under operational activities, security on campus and the availability of public transport were rated as the most important variables in this category. Under auxiliary services computer and library facilities were both regarded equally most important factor in this category. When it came to reputation of the institution, the academic reputation of the institution and the academic reputation of the faculty were the two most important issues considered in this category. Finally, for the admission requirements category, reasonable tuition fees and reasonable admission requirements were rated the most important issues.

Age Factor and Students' Utilisation of Social Media Platforms for Selecting HEIs

Research suggests that the current generation of university students has revolutionised the communication tool that is required to communicate with their population. Benedict, Leach, Winn, & Baker (2016) conducted a thematic analysis of the use of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education. They noted that almost all of the literature on social media marketing indicates that higher education institutions were increasingly using social media as a marketing strategy. Their work revealed that the rising use of

social media was predominant among prospective students aged 18 to 22 years.

The work of Benedict et al. (2016) supported earlier findings by Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) who conducted a convenience survey of freshmen to explore the technologies, they used during their undergraduate recruiting process and to determine how influential these technologies were in their decision to enrol in a particular university. The results revealed that of the 746 students who completed the survey, almost 95% of the participants were 18 or 19 years old. Lindbeck and Fordrey concluded that this generation of students had a constant need to be connected through their social pipelines, preferred to enjoy easy access to digital information and were fully expected to always have that access.

Additionally, Herren, Cartmell and Robertson's (2011) survey of undergraduate students at Oklahoma State University found that more than 94.8% (=309) of the respondents fell between the age range of 18 to 24. The authors however suggested that recruitment efforts should focus on prospective students earlier than high school since a large majority of prospective students finalised their decision in the 12th grade or final year of high school.

Howe and Strauss (2007) cautioned that ignoring the demands and desires of the Millennial /Digital Native Generation would be a mistake for higher education institutions. Therefore, they suggested that colleges and universities should modify their efforts in recruiting prospective students to meet the needs and desires of the Millennial Generation. The authors advised colleges and universities to study the current trends in reaching the current generation of students and devote resources matched with creative marketing strategies in order to outperform their competitors.

Students' Awareness of and Usage of Social Media Platforms

Individuals seek information from varied sources. Some of these sources are printed newspapers, television, and communication with friends, on-line newspapers, blogs, wikis, email, targeted websites, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media. All these communication channels are used to obtain the information that an individual seeks. However, recent studies on higher education marketers seem to suggest that the traditional means of communication, such as brochures and college fairs, were giving way to newer social media methods, such as websites, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Marklein, 2009).

Based on Chapman's (1981) concern and the fact that an institution may want to "review the way it identifies and recruits prospective students" (p. 498), the current study intends to assess the effectiveness of social media as a student recruitment strategy whose use would be intensified in attracting students to choose University of Education, Winneba. The assessment will be done by investigating the level of students' awareness, types of information they search for on social media and perception of their effectiveness as a student recruitment strategy. Armed with this information, it is hoped that an effective strategy to improve the use of social media for the purpose of student recruitment will emerge.

There have been studies cited to reinforce the point that universities' main targets are young people who are exposed to varied social media platforms. But how aware are the prospective students engaged with the institutions' social media platforms? Are they using the same medium for making their decision to

attend a particular institution? Previous research has addressed these questions in other countries and the findings are reviewed in this section.

Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) used online questionnaire to survey 403 future Dutch university students (who were between 16-25 years) in their last two years of high school to provide an insight into the use of social media platform as information source and communication tool. The study also examined the impact of social media on the choice of study and higher education institution.

The study discovered that Hyves was the most popular among future students in the Netherlands (88.4%), followed by YouTube (60.1%) and Facebook (40.3%). In addition, respondents maintained multiple social media website profiles and logged in at least once per day into their profile.

Despite the use of social media by this group of students, the findings of Constantinides and Zinck Stagno's (2011) study showed that future students ranked social media last in a list of information channels that influence their choice of a study and university. Rather, prospective students still relied on traditional methods including campus visits, university websites, and brochures as primary sources of information. The authors explained that the possible reasons for this phenomenon could be lack of relevant contents and low engagement on official university social media sites.

A study conducted by Tkalac-Vercic and Vercic (2013) that surveyed 308 digital natives to learn their social media preferences, found about 91.5% of the study participants responded that they interacted with some form of social

networking platforms, with 90% indicating that they used social media more than once a day, 88% of students obtained information about their college programme through social media, and 62% felt it was important to receive information about their school through social media.

Hesel (2013) undertook a survey of 1,138 students to determine the influence of social media sites on the college search process. The study reported that 77% of respondents indicated that Facebook was the social media site they visited or followed on a regular basis, followed by YouTube (60%) and Twitter (32%). The study also found that 52% of respondents indicated that they did not use social media to search for university information. Of the 44% who reportedly used social media to obtain information or impressions about colleges they were considering applying, 36% of these students used Facebook, 13% Google+, and 7% YouTube.

Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) conducted a convenience survey of freshmen to explore the technologies they used during their undergraduate recruiting process and to determine how influential these technologies were in their decision to enrol in a particular university. Results revealed that of the 746 students who completed the survey, almost 95% of the respondents were 18 or 19 years old. Their results also revealed that although websites and emails were rated as somewhat being very useful student recruitment information source by the majority of respondents, newer technologies (such as social networking sites) were ranked as having the potential to be somewhat useful. The researchers

concluded that colleges' recruitment strategies needed to evolve to the changing desires of potential students.

Hayes, Ruschman and Walker (2009) conducted a case study that showed how one university successfully used a social media tool to compete for students. The study discovered that there was a significant relationship between those who logged into the university's Website and the likelihood of them attending the institution. The same held true for the number of times a potential student had logged into the site and the likelihood of them attending that institution. The study concluded that newer technologies (like social media) were at least somewhat influential in students' decisions to enrol at a particular university.

DiAna (2014) conducted a quantitative study on a sample of 131 first year students at a Midwestern University. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which college students were using social media and how, or if, the students used social media to choose a college. It further explored ways in which students would have preferred to utilise social media in their search process if it was not available at their chosen universities. The research showed that Facebook and Twitter were the dominant social media platforms used by respondents on a day-to-day basis and Tumblr was the least used. Respondents also revealed that the most important interaction on social media was with currently enrolled students and that joining a social media site made specifically for admitted students was of great interest.

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In addition, respondents showed that they were most interested in hearing about student life, on campus activities and events, school information as well as seeing photos of the institution through social media. DiAna (2014) concluded that, there was a need to bring greater awareness of the institution's presence on social media, as a large percentage of students were unaware of the social media presence of the institution.

Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, (2009) examined the reasons why students had used Facebook, how much time they had spent, and what specific actions they had performed while using the service. The authors presented social media as a forum for students' self-exploration, identity establishment, they determined that among their participants, 87% logged in to Facebook more than once per day at varying times throughout the day, solidifying Facebook as a part of the students' normal daily activities. Overwhelmingly, students' primary reason for using Facebook was to connect with existing friends.

Noel-Levitz, (2010) survey was administered online and had more than 3,000 student responses. Key findings included that college and university websites were the number one source for student information during their college search process, i.e. 80% of college-bound seniors and 77% of juniors. Social media was widely agreed upon as a close second resource for students during their college search process, most notably YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Students also noted the importance of video content, social media paid adverts and email platforms among those outreach methods to which they pay the most attention during their search process.

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Rogers (2015) in the Chegg Social Admissions Report administered an online survey to more than 1,611 high school seniors in the US. The goal of the Social Admissions Report was to delve deeper into the digital habits of millennials to determine what their habits and expectations were throughout their college search process. The most notable result of the report was that 83% of students used SM to look for scholarship information, 3 in 4 respondents used SM to search for admission information. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that conversations on social media influenced their choice of college. The two key groups that students identified for these interactions were admission counsellors (77%) and currently enroled students (74%). The report also noted that students used multiple media channels to research colleges including websites, social media, and college review and scholarship sites. The report concluded that Facebook continued to be the preferred social media source among students seeking information relative to their college choice process.

Cantrell (2014) conducted a mixed methods study on 329 fresh students of Pinnacle University, California. The aim of the study was to examine fresh college students' use of social media throughout the college choice process. All of the data seem to indicate that there was an undercurrent of repetitive sentiments from students that social media was not used for business. Students rather used social media for social purposes such as to express themselves and interact with peers and not to talk to adults and seek important information from institutions. Furthermore, it was found that students did not want colleges and university personnel in their social spaces. Also, Cantrell noted that although social media

use was low in the college choice process, prospective students did use it in their personal lives with high frequency. He, therefore, advised that efforts to reach students through this medium should not be abandoned.

Furthermore, Cantrell's (2014) study findings showed that students sought information through internet searches and websites. Therefore, there was no one channel of communication that would reach all students. Accordingly, Cantrell recommended that colleges and universities needed to strategically use as many avenues as possible to market to prospective students.

Lubbe, Roets, van Tonder and Wilkinson (2013) conducted a survey in South Africa to describe and explore some of the social media platforms that could be utilised to recruit students for the nursing profession. They found that even though the participants in their study, namely, the educators, did not unanimously indicate social media as a venue for recruitment of students, the prospective students grew up in an environment where social media were used as tools for communication and information. The researchers went on further to explain that if prospective students think that the videos posted by the institution were interesting, they would forward them to one another without hesitating thus, unknowingly doing the marketing on behalf of the institution. Lubbe et al. therefore concluded that it would be beneficial for the institutions in terms of student recruitment to maintain an online presence and make use of social networks to recruit students.

Noel-Levitz (2010) in a study of over 1000 college-bound students found that 76% of students supported HEIs in creating social media tools for prospective

students. The report also demonstrated that one in three of students searched for HEIs on social media sites and 74% of students thought institutions should have some sort of presence on social media sites. In addition, 80% of students wanted to see both official and unofficial posts on the sites. Two in three of the students found it appropriate for admission counsellors to follow up with them through social media. In conclusion, the report recommended that one way to have more control over a strong connection with admitted and prospective students was to create a social network. In this way, the students connect with other students along with campus officials pushing them towards enrolment.

Fagerstrom and Ghinea (2013) conducted a field study to examine how a university college in Norway used specialised Facebook groups to recruit students. Results of the study showed that most (128) prospective students joined the Facebook groups connected to their programmes of interest. Subsequently, matriculation rates of applicants were 88.8% for those who joined the specialised Facebook group as compared to just 43.3% among the applicants who did not join a specialised Facebook group. The authors concluded that making use of the opportunities provided by social networks could allow institutions to facilitate interactions that create valuable experiences for students, which can lead to a greater conversion rate among applicants.

Wertalik (2017) conducted a mixed methods study to better understand social media usage patterns among college and non-college students in order to apply new strategies to market the college and to gather information that could lead to the development of a strategic social media marketing plan. The research

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examined behaviours associated with social media usage and illustrated how and why people used particular social media platforms. The study found that 47% of students used social media pages run by the college or by departments within the college, compared to 12% of non-students. The study concluded that even though the numbers were low, there was the potential to increase awareness of the college's social media presence among students and non-students, thus increasing usage and interaction between both groups and with the college. The study also discovered that Facebook was the platform most widely used by both students and non-students.

Maguire Associates (2011) conducted a survey on 21,339 high school seniors to determine their preferences and plans in the 2011 Admissions Cycle. The findings of the survey showed that, students most often visited Facebook and YouTube for information concerning a university. In addition, students considered social media to be most important for getting news and announcements about upcoming events and activities in the school, followed by the ability to update others about what they were doing and finding old friends. Furthermore, the study indicated that 22% of the students reported a university's presence on social media makes them more interested in applying to the institution, while 76% reported that social media had no influence on their decision to apply to the institution. About 59% of prospective students used social media to explore their "fit" with colleges and universities they intended to attend.

Again, Shaw (2013) surveyed over 300 potential and current students about what information sources or channels influenced their choice of university

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in the U.K. The study found that although 65% of students use social media channels several times a day, students rated universities' social media presence as less influential and less trustworthy than more traditional sources such as prospectuses or open days. The findings also revealed that university social media platforms did not talk about what students needed to know, neither did the students find enough useful information that related to them. As a result of this, the respondents indicated that they currently did not expect or look for information on universities' social media platforms. What was more, many of the respondents were also clueless as to whether their preferred university even had a Twitter or Facebook account. Accordingly, Shaw advised that universities should look at its social media contents and ensure that it is relevant to new or potential students.

Peruta and Shields (2016) used snowball sampling method to interview 364 college students in the USA to determine where social media fell in the decision-making process to choose a school relative to other factors such as campus visits, tours, meetings with faculty, students, and alumni. The study also sought to determine the types of content that were most effective in encouraging the matriculation decision, as well as any content that may have discouraged attendance. Findings of the study indicate that most potential students reported visiting the school's official website (86.5%), touring campus (77.2%) and speaking to current students (52.6%) as activities they engaged in when trying to select a college. Interestingly, many students did not report viewing a school's social media pages as part of their decision-making process. Of those who did

visit social media platforms, Facebook page (24.6%), Instagram (15.9%) and Twitter (14.3%) but these numbers were still significantly smaller than those who engaged in more "traditional" search behaviours. In terms of the relative level of importance placed on the different platforms, visiting a school's official website ranked highest. This was followed by Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram respectively.

Vrontis, Nemar, Ouwaida and Shams (2018) surveyed 230 non-Lebanese students from different Lebanese universities and found that 97% of the respondents currently have a social media account. The study found that 33.2% of respondents heard about the university course from the university's website, 27.2% from a friend and 15.9% from a family member. The study also found that social media information that influenced respondents most in university course selection were; 69.4% Facebook, 11.2% other and 8.6% Google+. The study also compared the traditional media and social media as a source of information for prospective applicants and discovered that 46.9% of the respondents claim that social media had a high impact on their university course decision and 51.7% of respondents claim that traditional media had a high impact on their university course decision. The top three social media sites recommended for institutions to use for student recruitment are; Facebook (7.81%), Instagram (5.03%), Google+ (4.81%) and YouTube (4.79), respectively.

Even though there have been studies conducted in Ghana which showed that students were aware of social media platforms and Facebook was the commonest social media platform used by students (Ocansey, Ametepey and

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Oduro, 2016; Markwei and Appiah, 2016; Mingle, Adams and Agyei, 2016), the focus of those studies were not on using social media as a student recruitment strategy.

Effectiveness of Social Media as a Student Recruitment Strategy in Higher Education

Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010), and Barnes and Mattson (2010) have shown that young people frequently use social media, and many universities use social media to recruit prospective students. But perhaps the most important question is whether or not the goal for which social media are being used has been achieved. That is, whether students perceive the use of social media to be effective in aiding them in their decisions to enrol in their institution of choice.

Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) advised that institutions should make a conscious effort to increase the use of newer technologies and integrate them into the admission process. This was because social media have the potential to offer information and features about the institution in a way that the millennia student prefers to consume it, making it easier for the students to connect with the institution. The authors however counselled that the increased use of newer technologies must be strategic because a mere presence on social media would not be enough to efficiently drive students into the admissions process, rather admission marketers should use social media to build relationships between students and admission officers. They further suggested that implementing the new technologies into any recruiting strategy requires an understanding of the current generation of prospective students. Such understanding is derived from

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undertaking the proper research on how to best serve those potential students, and being willing to make internal changes to an institution's culture.

Nyangau and Bado (2012) also found in their study that higher education organisations that rushed to implement social media without clear strategic plans did not necessarily see effective results or higher enrolment numbers. They observed that to successfully leverage the potential of social media, admissions officers cannot skip the methodological step of creating a coherent marketing plan with specific target audiences and measurable goals. The authors were of the view that being on social media is pointless unless it was done strategically, as part of a larger coordinated marketing effort that measures outcomes. In their opinion, drafting clear policies and developing systematic marketing techniques with target audiences, goals, and measurement metrics would help institutions be effective, as will investing more resources into social media ensure that the experience on the platform is consistent and informative for prospective students.

Parrot and Tipton (2010) in their study showed an increase in the influence of social media in the lives of students. The authors advised that investments in digital networking should be integrated into a clear social media strategy that reflects an institution's goals.

Contantinides and Zinc Stagno (2010) also advised that university marketers should approach the use of social media in a proactive way by actively and continuously engaging social media in their promotional mix and making conscious effort to understand the online behaviour of potential students. They

also suggested the need for strong institutional commitment by allocating resources to ensure the success of this form of communication.

Shields and Peruta's (2019) survey suggested that to make an institution's social media effective, institutions should endeavour to include student-run or moderated groups in their social media strategy. Furthermore, institutions should use lots of pictures so that prospective students could visualise the institution without necessarily having to go there in person. Also, institutions should use proprietary social media site managed by their university or the private Facebook group established for their class year, to ensure a more controlled environment and to ensure that the site is used for its specific purposes. Respondents reported undesirable actions by institutions on social media to include unprofessionally posts by staff members, posts on the general Facebook site that feel exclusionary, such as those geared towards a small or local audience and posts by institutions that students viewed as forced or begging for interaction.

Additionally, Noel-Levitz (2010) advises that the tone and manner of the language used in the marketing message when utilising a social network should be more personal and sociable than the typical language used on brochures or websites. The rationale for using this type of language is to build a community around promoting, sharing and discussing the institution. In order to ensure that an institution uses social media successfully, the report advised that marketing communicators should be creative in their approach. The report also pointed out that when using social media to market, communication with the target is needed before embarking on selling anything to them. This signifies that traditional

promotions and advertising campaigns should not be forced onto the prospective customers immediately.

Benedict, Leach, Winn and Baker (2016) identified the following as best practices for using social media within higher education marketing methods. They advised that if these strategies were implemented, they would help institutions to be effective in their use of social media as a strategy to recruit students:

1. Be sure to have a presence on social media, and be committed to using it properly.

 2. Link the social media network to the university homepage.

 3. Have a strategic plan.

4. Measure for goal achievement.

5. Monitor the online conversations being held about the institution (p. 26).

They concluded that being on social media is important to ensure that the communication channels are open to prospective students, but it is also vital that universities participate in those channels properly.

Greenwood (2012) stated that once a university has a presence on a social network (or networks), students need to know those platforms exist. One of the easiest ways to "advertise" an institution's presence on social media is by linking the social media platform to the official homepage of the website. Greenwood advised that institutions should utilise space available on their webpage by adding social media links. When this is done, the largest web traffic will see those links.

Still with regard to the effectiveness of the social media, Hayes et al. (2009) noted that social media tools are most effective when they are employed strategically, with a specific intent that includes predetermined measurable outcomes and knowing exactly what to do with the collected data. They advised that institutions would have to allocate resources, structure their organisation and put in place a consistent policy that keeps their social media platforms up-to-date. They further suggested that institutional officials should monitor digital conversations about their organisations because doing this keeps higher education leaders aware of any potential issues and would be strategically responded to. In addition, the institution must understand that different social media platforms may be more attractive to one market than another. In view of that, they drew institutional officials' attention to the fact that no platform was universal in its reach and effectiveness. Finally, the authors pointed out that social media platforms are best used when they are employed strategically and with a specific intent by predetermining measurable outcomes.

Content, Frequency and Relevance of Information on Social Media

Content, frequency and relevance of information on social media platforms will go a long way to determine whether social media will be an effective recruitment tool or not. According to Peruta and Shields (2017) students are frequently searching for information about a college experience beyond the typical information about majors and dormitories. Hesel (2013) also asserts that students are hoping to get a glimpse of how they will fit in, what their everyday life will be like, sense of community in the university and a sense of the activities

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and social life they can expect to find. Thus, content and relevance of information on social media can play a crucial role in helping students make a decision concerning the institution.

Having this in mind, Chock, Wolf, Chen, Schweisberger and Wang (2013) conducted a survey on 61 undergraduates to examine the impact of the addition of social media tools on the college's website. The findings of that study suggested that social media features on a news website matter to younger readers and may have the power to increase their interest in the site and in the institution for that matter. For example, Chock et al. (2013) reported that after the introduction of social media features on the college site, it was discovered that the college students were more likely to identify with other people on the site, felt affected by the site's content, saw the content as valuable, spent longer periods of time on the site and expressed greater likelihood of visiting the site in the future. Results of the focus group discussion in the study also showed, students wanted more interactivity on the site, particularly geared to their interests. To attract these digital natives, the authors recommended that news sites of the institutions must be aesthetically pleasing, easy to use and keep up with trends.

Rutter, Roper and Lettice (2016) conducted a survey of 60 higher education institutions in the UK to find out the social media interaction, the university brand and recruitment performance within the university sector. The survey collected and analysed secondary data found on two popular social media outlets of the institutions; Facebook and Twitter. The study found that establishing a high number of Twitter followers is a strong predictor of student

recruitment success because students endorse the university by following the Twitter feed or by liking the Facebook posts. Rutter et al. (2016) continued that tweeting a large number of messages was not a predictor of performance, instead, the content and types of tweets were more important. Rutter et al. emphasised that the real brand benefit occurred when universities used social media interactively because social media communications were public and were easily taken up by others as tweets.

Further, the responsiveness of the brand to consumers was another aspect of social media interaction where universities that replied quickly and helpfully to questions and statements generated better engagements with followers and potential students. The study concluded that universities that interacted more with their followers achieved better student recruitment performance because social media interaction prior to student recruitment fosters an early sense of belonging to universities.

Shields and Peruta's (2019) survey pointed to the fact that respondents preferred posts focused on student organisations, followed by posts about campus events, posts about entertainment activities available on or near campuses and posts about academic programming. Less popular topics included posts about staff or administration, posts about development or fund raising and posts about faculty accomplishments.

Peruta and shields (2018) collected data from the Facebook pages of 66 higher education institutions in the US. Results suggested that the content of the Facebook posting was a factor in proportional engagement (i.e. actions people

take beyond viewing a post such as liking, commenting and sharing). The study also found that engagement depended on the type of content on a post. These contents included news related items and admissions related items. Content that lowered engagement included campus events, academic events, research and scholarly work and profiles of staff. In terms of format of posts, the results showed that posts containing user submitted content showed higher levels of engagement. When it came to media types, the data showed that photos were the best type of media to use to increase engagement. In addition, posts on weekends received higher engagement than during the week.

The above studies show that current undergraduate students were interested in social media. However, to keep students and visitors interested in the institution's social media platforms and to entice them to always want to know what was happening on the platforms, it is imperative for universities to take a keen interest in the content of the information they post on their social media platforms to make visitors to their sites always interested in going back to see what is on. Universities should also ensure that whatever was being posted was relevant to their target audience to encourage reposting or retweeting which would make the institution more visible. In addition, these platforms must be interactive to keep visitors engaged and interested.

Challenges Faced by HEIs in Adopting Social Media as a Student Recruitment Strategy

Despite the fact that many institutions are adopting social media as a student recruitment strategy, some are also reluctant to do so due to some

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perceived challenges likely to occur as a result of using social media. Reuben (2008) undertook a study on *The Use of Social Media in Higher Education for Marketing and Communications: A Guide for Professionals in Higher Education.* She identified a number of concerns professionals in higher education grapple with when considering using, or even embracing social media. She enumerated some of these concerns to include:

1. Loss of control

2. Time commitment

3. Information overload4

4. Illegal account creation (p. 6).

These points are explained below.

Loss of Control

Blogs are part of the social media and in HEIs, blogs are used by admissions officers to attract currently enrolled students to blog about their lives to attract future students to their college. Faculties in the university also blog about various research projects and courses they are teaching, which attracts currently enrolled students to their courses or areas of research, and prospective students to the college. In blogging there is a "comments" feature to allow two-way dialogue. These forums for comments have the chance of collecting negative remarks or feedback. However, Reuben (2008) is of the opinion that institutions should not be afraid to have a social media presence that has a comments feature because when people post negative comments, it provides an institution with the

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opportunity to clear up the misconceptions and start a conversation to change the existing perception that they did or did not know of.

This feature can also provide the opportunity for unsolicited, genuine positive feedback and clear up misconceptions, which are invaluable for marketers and prospective students alike. Reuben (2008) therefore concluded that while higher education institutions may not be able to control the messages that come on their blogs, or completely control perceptions of their current and prospective students, being engaged in conversations could assist in steering the messages in the right direction.

Time Commitment

Using social media tools as part of a student recruitment strategy means that institutions would have to devote at least one to ten hours per week on these tools. The amount of time spent would depend on how many social media tools are being utilised, how extensive their presence is within these tools and how actively these tools are used by their audiences. In this regard, when an institution decides to, for example, create a Facebook page that institution would have to ensure that it would be able to regularly add content, quickly respond and take advantage of the wall posts. When deciding whether a HEI should start a blog they need to ensure that they would be able to always keep the blog up-to-date by blogging at least once a week and moderate comments on the blog daily (Reuben, 2008).

Managing a social media platform requires a vast amount of time commitment by the administrators of the page. For page administrators to get into

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the habit of regularly posting new updates, they should consider drawing up a schedule where they commit themselves to posting the updates regularly, such as for example, once a week. When the administrators feel that they do not have the time to solely commit to this responsibility, they could consider sharing the responsibility of uploading content amongst multiple administrators, which enables more than one person to upload content.   Analytically, combining managing social media platforms and other official duties prevents HEIs from taking advantage of social media.

Information Overload

Another concern that HEIs face using social media is that use of the social media could result in information overload. With the emergence of social media numerous forms of media have been developed that admission departments and staff members utilise in order to communicate with current and prospective students. This vast amount of media has resulted in Facebook friends, Twitter friends, MySpace friends and people who follow blogs (Reuben, 2008). Implicitly, HEIs find themselves in a situation where they are overloaded with information when trying to be abreast of such traditional media as print publications, e-mail and instant messaging.

When HEIs make use of social media to promote and market their institutions it is important they obtain the correct balance between keeping the content that they upload fresh and not to upload too frequently so that the people who 'like' their page do not become inundated with the brand name in their news feed (Reuben, 2008). By implication, this will make the individuals feel as though

they are overloaded and bombarded with too much information that could lead to them losing interest in the brand.

Illegal Account Creation

The last concern that HEIs face when deciding to use or are already using social media as part of their marketing campaigns is the concern of any individual being able to illegally create an 'official' account for their institution.

The Varsity Outreach Report (2011) has provided some reasons in their study regarding why some higher education institutions were not using Facebook as a recruiting tool. The report found out that: majority (69%) of respondents did not know enough about Facebook. Also, 50% did not see much potential in using social media for student recruitment. Again, 47% reported fear of losing control over their brand/image. In addition, 28% reported concerns about invading privacy. Finally, 16% cited a lack of resources in using social media as a student recruitment strategy. The study concluded that fear of losing brand stemmed from the fact that conversations on social media were very fluid, and as such, an institution may not have control over what users post on their profiles. Arguably, a student who has had an unpleasant experience with an institution, for example, may take to ranting on social media and under such circumstances, an institution could essentially lose control of the conversation. This stems from the fact that online social network users are three times more likely to trust the opinions of their peers over advertising when making decisions.

Barnes and Mattson (2009) also assert that regardless of social media's immense potential and widespread use, social media present new challenges for

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institutions of higher education when they are using them. They observed two issues during their research. The first was a lack of clear policies that guided interactions between prospective students and admissions officers on social media. According to the authors, this lack of ethical guidelines opens the door to potential abuse and the associated public relations disasters for the institutions involved. For instance, a prospective student may, befriend an admissions officer (or the other way around) in the course of their interactions on social media sites, potentially leading to inappropriate contact beyond the official relationship. Such contact may lead to ethical violations that will in turn compromise the entire admissions process. Moreover, in their study it was not clear whether admissions officers could deny a prospective admission based on 'private' information obtained from that prospective applicant's personal profile on social media. Yet, the study suggested that admitting a student who clearly exhibited social issues, based on information on his or her profile at the time of admission, was likely to expose an institution to potential law suits related to negligence should that student eventually cause harm to other students, faculty, or staff.

The second challenge relates to the approach taken by institutions of higher education in adopting the use of social media for marketing, recruitment, and admissions. Barnes and Mattson (2009) opined that institutions of higher education appeared to be in a race to adopt social media without doing the necessary groundwork. Analytically, adoption of social media seemed to be ad hoc and unsystematic, without prior development of coherent marketing strategies or clear goals. Most admissions offices just create a space on popular social media

sites, upload admissions-related information and pictures of their institutions, and expect results in the form of increased enrolment rates. In response to this, Barnes and Mattson advised institutions to leverage the potential of social media effectively. Towards that end, institutions of higher education will need to shift from this ad hoc approach to a more methodical one that systematically integrates social media tools into the overall marketing, recruitment, and admissions strategy.

From the foregoing discussion, to ensure effective and successful social media marketing and recruitment campaigns, institutions of higher education should begin by developing a coherent marketing strategy with specific target audiences in mind and clear, measurable goals. In addition, specific individuals must be tasked with the responsibility of monitoring activities on the various social media platforms to respond to visitors' queries and comments promptly in a professional way.

Chapter Summary

Chapman's Model of Student College Choice (1981) suggests both student characteristics and external influences play an important role in a student's college-choice decision. External influences impacting a student's college-choice decision include significant persons, institutional characteristics, and a college's efforts to communicate with students. Significant persons such as parents, other relatives, and high school and college friends are influential individuals, many institutional characteristics attract and influence prospective students. These characteristics include academic reputation, facilities, scholarships, and

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preparation for employment. Additionally, a college's effort to communicate with prospective students plays a major role in the college-choice process. Some of the most commonly used and effective methods were found to be university websites, campus visits and conversations with professors.

However, the literature reviewed indicates that social media is no longer a trend; it is a permanent fixture in the world of recruiting prospective students. Students are turning to social media outlets for information more and more during their college search process. The literature reviewed suggests that social media should be an integral part of a university's recruitment plan. The literature has also revealed that students from around the world use social media to gather information which potentially influence their university choice decisions.

The literature reviewed has further shown that it is important for admission officers not only to have an active and engaging presence on the popular social media channels, but also ensure that the information is accurate and relevant to the needs of the prospective students. Therefore, universities should consider using social media as an alternative prospective student recruitment strategy. This is the motivation for the present study which seeks to assess the use of social media as a student recruitment strategy in universities in Ghana, using the University of Education, Winneba as a case study. The use of social media in student recruitment is an issue that is, at the moment, under-researched in Ghana.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

The study sought to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba in terms of students' level of awareness of the platforms, the types of information students searched for on these platforms and their perception of their effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the University of Education, Winneba.

The previous chapter reviewed literature in the area of social media that included the themes indicated. This chapter describes the general methods and procedures that I used for data collection and analysis. The sub-headings include: the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling procedures, instrument for data collection, validation of the instrument, reliability of the instrument, methods of data collection and the data analysis procedure.

Research Design

Basically, a research design is a comprehensive plan that shows where, when and the methods that will be used to gather and analyse data to answer research questions or test hypotheses formulated by a researcher (Walliman, 2006; Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). The choice of design is influenced by the researcher's philosophical perspective also known as philosophical worldview or paradigm. The philosophical perspective points to the type of claims associated with an approach to a research study acceptable to the researcher and inform the strategy and research tools and data gathering techniques that the researcher

employs. The postpositivist paradigm requires a quantitative approach. Numeric data are collected on an instrument that measures variables of interest, and the information is analysed using statistical procedures. Qualitative approaches encompass constructivist/advocacy/participatory knowledge claims that come in the form of phenomenology, ethnography, case study and narrative. These require the use of open-ended questions, emerging approaches and text or image data. There are also the mixed methods approaches based on the pragmatic worldview which has three designs; sequential, concurrent and transformative mixed methods design. Each of these variants requires both quantitative data and qualitative analysis.

The present study adopted a quantitative case study approach and used a cross-sectional descriptive sample survey design. This design was preferred because it allows many people to answer numerous questions in a short time period and gives the researcher a picture of what many people think about an issue or report how they are involved in that issue. It also provides room for the research to be generalised to a larger group in order to identify trends in attitudes, opinions, preferences, practices, behaviours or characteristics of a large group of people (Neuman, 2003, Creswell, 2012; Koul, 2013). Even though survey does not determine cause and effect, and cannot be used to analyse behaviour over a period of time (Cohen, Manion and Morrison., 2013), the advantages of a cross-sectional descriptive survey provided a strong basis to adopt the cross-sectional descriptive sample survey design for the present study.

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The Study Area

The study was conducted at the University of Education, Winneba. The University has four campuses located at Winneba, Kumasi, Mampong-Ashanti and Ajumako. The Winneba Campus which is the main campus of the University is spread over three sites – North, Central and South – within the Winneba Municipality (UEW Acts 647 and UEW statutes). The Central Administration is located at the North Campus. The students involved in this study were drawn from consenting fresh students in all the three sites of the University in Winneba. This university was chosen as the study site because, first, the size of the student population provided a large population of students from which data could be obtained. Secondly, the institution is made up of a diverse group of students from different age groups, different programmes and different ethnic groups. Finally, this institution was chosen because it was known that the University intends to intensify the use of social media as a major student recruitment strategy.

Study Population

The target population of this study consisted of all currently enroled first year regular undergraduate students in the University of Education, Winneba main campus. This population was 7,124 fresh undergraduate students, comprising 3,821 (53.64%) males and 3,300 (46.36%) females, admitted in the 2018/2019 academic year. This figure was derived from the matriculation lists obtained from the admissions office of the University of Education, Winneba. First year undergraduate students were used because it was assumed that they

would have a better recollection of the sources of information they used to make a decision on which university to attend.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

There are tables that provide adequate sample sizes (see, for example, Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) that researchers may use to determine the sample size that suits their research. From such tables, when the population size is beyond 5,000, the population size becomes almost irrelevant and a sample size of 400 is considered adequate (Amin, 2005).

Based on the insight provided by Amin (2005), I obtained the consent of 400 out of the 7,124 fresh regular students admitted to programmes run by the UEW at the South, Central and North campuses of its Main Campus to participate in the study. The enrolment statistics were obtained from the Admissions Office. Those 400 students (the accessible population) were those who had shown interest in participating in the study through initial contacts made by me. The number of consenting students was sufficient as a sample for a population in excess of 5,000, by Amin's rule of thumb. The 400 accessible population formed approximately 5.6% of the total population.

Probability sampling technique was used to select a sample for the study. Probability sampling technique was used to ensure that each unit in the population had a fair or an equal or at least known chance of being selected (Koul, 2013). The probability sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. This sampling method was used to ensure that the different groups of the population

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were adequately represented in the sample so as to increase their level of accuracy when estimating parameters (Koul, 2013). Thus, the population of students was put into three strata; North campus, Central campus and South campus based on the number of students who attend lectures on these campuses. Each stratum had the sample size as follows: North campus (5.6% * 3,500= 196), Central campus (5.6% * 1,624= 92) and South campus (5.6% * 2,000= 112). Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each stratum. In selecting the sample for each stratum, the following steps were carried out. To obtain a sample size of 196 students at the North campus, first, I assigned numbers to the North campus sample frame of 3,500 students. Next I used Kendall and Babington-smith (1939) table of random numbers to select a sample of 196 for north campus students. The procedure was repeated for the other campuses till the required samples were achieved.

Copies of a questionnaire constructed for the purpose of the study were distributed to each subpopulation in the strata. The entire questionnaires distributed were completed and returned. However, a perusal of the returned questionnaire showed that 364 of them, 211 males and 153 females, provided information that was sufficient to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses formulated. The other 36 (about 9%) of the returned questionnaire were not complete in every detail and so, could not be used and were therefore discarded without any adverse effect on the sample size since it still remained adequate and was large enough to constitute a probability sample.

Data Collection Instrument

The instrument was designed based on the various modes used to disseminate student recruitment information, the factors that influence college/university students' choice and how to effectively use social media as a student recruitment strategy as identified in the literature. Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire disseminated to the students. Leung (2001), points out that a well-designed questionnaire should be highly structured to allow the same type of information to be collected from a large number of people and for data to be analysed quantitatively and systematically. Sekaran and Bougie (2013), further explain that questionnaires are a familiar method of collecting data because researchers can get information fairly easily, and the questionnaire responses are easily coded. This will provide accurate and good quality information.

However, Lee (2009) explains that questionnaires differ in several ways, from how the populations are contacted, to how each instrument is administered, to the way the surveys are presented to the respondents. He adds that currently, survey questionnaire data can be collected via a traditional pencil and paper method, personal interviews, telephone interviews, self-assessed telephone recordings, or through electronic or computer-based data collection methods.

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire which contained closed items was constructed via pencil and paper method. Close-ended questions were used because participants were more comfortable in answering such questions because they know the parameters of response options, and individuals answered

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the question using the options provided which enabled the researcher to conveniently compare responses (Creswell, 2012).

In all, the questionnaire consisted of 37 closed-ended items. Section A, consisted of two items which were used to elicit the demographic data about the respondents, while Section B, consisted of 16 items which elicited information on how aware the students were with social media as a means for disseminating information in higher education institutions and this answered the first research question. Items in this section were on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from *strongly agree*, agree*, not aware*, *disagree* to *strongly disagree* (Appendix A).

Section C consisted of 11 items which elicited information on the kinds of information students normally search for on the institution's social media platforms and this answered the third research question. Items in the section are on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from *strongly agree*, *agree*, *don't search*, *disagree* to *strongly disagree* (Appendix A). Furthermore, Section D consisted of 10 items and elicited information on the perception of effectiveness on the use of social media in the institution and this answered the third research question. The items were on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from *most effective*, *effective*, *somewhat effective*, *not effective* to *don't know*. (Appendix A).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) indicated that an instrument can be validated through expert judgment. Creswell (2012) defined reliability of a measured instrument as the extent to which the results are nearly the same when researchers

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administer the instrument multiple times at different times. In addition to that, the results should be consistent. Thus, when an individual answers certain questions one way, the individual should consistently answer closely related questions in the same way. The instrument was reviewed for content and face validity. To check the content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was designed and given to my supervisors for their perusal and comments and suggestions. To check face validity of the instrument, the questionnaire instrument was given to colleagues to check whether they could recognise the type of information required by each instrument. The supervisors' and colleagues' comments and suggestions were incorporated in the corrections for the final instrument. That is, ambiguous, biased and deficient items were reframed. In addition, irrelevant items were duly deleted. For instance, questions on how often students used social media platforms were deleted because it was assumed that these items were not necessary in the current study. Moreover, an item that requested respondents to write what information they would like to see on a university social media platform was reframed to give options for students to choose from because it was realised after the pre-testing that some responses were out of the context of the current study.

With respect to reliability, a pre-testing was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument. This study pre-tested both the instrument and data collection process. The pre-testing of the instrument was conducted from July 21, 2019 to July 31, 2019. The questionnaire was administered to 50 students in the University of Education, Kumasi Campus. Participants were asked to provide feedback on the following: completion time, clarity, organisation, and/or any

concerns they experienced. This helped me to familiarise myself with the data collection procedure. After collecting responses, the researcher determined there was no need to make changes to the instrument. The reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaire for the pre-testing and the main study were estimated using Cronbach's co-efficient alpha. According to Ebel and Frisbie (1991), co-efficient alpha can provide an internal reliability estimate for a measure composed of items of varying point values such as essays or attitude scales. Cooper and Schindler, (2006) also states that Cronbach's alpha scores measure the internal consistency of an instrument through scale reliability. According to them, a Cronbach's alpha range between .70 or more is considered reliable and consistent, and all scores above .80 imply good reliability within the instrument. A reliability analysis was conducted on the five Likert-type scale items in the pilot study.

Three variables tested in the pilot study were degree of awareness, kinds of information and effectiveness. The Cronbach's alpha for the sections ranged from 0.750 to 0.866. The Cronbach's co-efficient alpha estimates are presented on Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: *Reliability results for the pre- test*

Section	No. of items	No. of Respondents	Cronbach alpha
Level of Awareness	16	50	.828
Types of information	11	50	.750
Rating of Effectiveness	10	5	.821
All sections	**37**	**50**	**.875**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Table 2: *Reliability estimates for the Main Study*

Section	No. of items	No. of Respondents	Cronbach alpha
Level of Awareness	16	364	.820
Types of information	11	364	.809
Rating of Effectiveness	10	364	.831
All sections	**37**	**364**	**.926**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Data Collection Procedures

A letter of introduction was taken from the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast to the authorities of the selected institution for the data collection exercise. This was after the instrument and other research protocols were approved by the University of Cape Coast (UCC) Institutional Review Board.

The questionnaire was self-administered. On the spot method of administration and retrieval was used to improve the return rate. Data collection took approximately two weeks. The data collection started in April, 2019 and ended in May, 2019.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed as the research was conducted in an institution with human participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013). These norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabricating, falsifying, or misrepresenting research data promote the truth and avoid errors. Anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were taken into consideration in this study. Written permission to conduct the pre-test and research was obtained from the School of Graduate Studies, UCC, upon approval of the proposal by the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA).

Respondents were assured that the information provided would be kept strictly anonymous and confidential. The letter of introduction introduced [Appendix B] the title of the research study, why and how the participants should participate in the study. The participants in the study were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they had a right not to participate in the study or to withdraw from it.

Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected in this study were checked for completeness and coded. The data gathered were statistically analysed using frequencies and percentages,

means and standard deviation, t-test as well as chi squared test (Table 3), using version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The sections in Table 3 show how the data pertaining to the three research questions and two research hypotheses were analysed.

Table 3- Data Analysis Methods

Research Question No.	Research Question /Hypothesis	Type of Data	Analytical Methods
1	What is the level of students' awareness of the modes of disseminating student recruitment information used by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW)?	Quantitative data	Computation of percentage of sampled students who were aware.
2	What type of information about UEW do students look for on social media platforms?	Quantitative data	Taking frequency counts of types of information and computing relative percentages
3	How do students rate the effectiveness of the use of the social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy?	Quantitative data	Computing means and standard deviations of students' opinions.
4	H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on UEW social media platforms.	Quantitative data	Running a test of difference (t-test) in proportions at 5% level of significance.
5	H0: There is no statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of information students search for on UEW social media platforms.	Quantitative data	Run a chi square test of independence at 5% level of significance.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methods used to collect data. The study was a cross-sectional descriptive sample survey nested in a quantitative case study. A sample of 364 respondents consisting of 211 males and 153 females was involved in the study. A paper and pencil self-reporting questionnaire was used. Before the study was conducted in the institution, permission was sought from UEW. To facilitate the negotiation of access, I submitted to the UEW authorities an introductory letter from IEPA. By permission of the UEW authorities, I negotiated the consent of the students to participate in the study. The consenting students accepted copies of the questionnaire and duly completed and returned them for analysis.

Chapter Four reports the results of the analysis done. It also discusses the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba in terms of students' awareness of the platforms, the types of information students searched for on these platforms and their perception of their effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the University of Education, Winneba. Data was collected from a cross-sectional sample of 364 fresh full-time students selected from the North, Central and South wings of the Winneba Main Campus of the University. Descriptive statistical methods were used to answer three research questions posed in Chapter One and inferential statistics were the analytical methods used to test two (2) hypotheses that were formulated.

This chapter presents and discusses the results based on the information gathered from the 364 respondents. Research Question 1 required the students to indicate their level of awareness of the various modes of disseminating student recruitment information to prospective students. It was answered by calculating the proportion of students who were aware of the different modes of disseminating such information by UEW.

Research Question 2 wanted to know the types of information about UEW prospective students look for on UEW social media platforms. It was answered by taking frequency counts of the type of information and summarising the information as frequency distribution tables.

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Research Question 3 was about how the students rated the effectiveness of the use of social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy. It was answered by computing means and standard deviations, after assigning weights to the levels of the variables measured.

The first null (H0) hypothesis tested was that there would be no statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of information they search for on UEW social media platforms. The test was done by running a test of difference between proportions at 5% level of significance. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis if $p \leq 0.05$.

The second null hypothesis tested whether there would be no statistically significant relationship between age of students and types of students' information students search for on UEW social media platforms. It was answered by running a chi-squared test of independence at 5% level of significance. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis if $p \leq 0.05$.

The presentation was divided into two sections. The first section presented the background information of respondents and the second section focused on the answers to the research questions, results of the hypotheses tested and discussion of results.

Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents information on the demographic characteristics of the sample that participated in the study. Of interest were distribution of the respondents by gender and age. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Section A, Item 1 of the questionnaire requested respondents to indicate their gender. Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by gender.

Table 4 – *Distribution of the Respondents by Gender*

Gender	Freq.	%
Male	211	58.0
Female	153	42.0
Total	**364**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Out of the 364 respondents, 211 (58.0%) were males while 153 (42.0%) were females. The figures in Table 4 reflect the disproportionate representation of males in UEW's intake for the academic year of interest. The gender demographics found in this study are proportional with the overall demographics of UEW and in particular the 2018/2019 admission statistics from the main admissions office of the University. This showed that 53.64% of the undergraduate students were males, while 46.36% of the students at UEW were females. Thus, the sample was comprised of more males than females which is consistent with the population at UEW.

The dominance of males over females is not surprising because access to education and enrolments in many higher education institutions in Ghana and many parts of the developing world confirm this fact. This is due to a combination of factors such as socio-economic and cultural which always limit the progression of females on the educational ladder. In fact, the 42% of females in Table 4 is an improvement over previous years during which it was realised from admissions statistics that males almost wholly dominated females in enrolment in almost all programmes in the institution.

Distribution of the Respondents by Age

Section A, Item 2 on the questionnaire requested respondents to indicate their ages. Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents by age.

Table 5 – *Distribution of the Respondents by Age*

Age-range	Freq.	%
15-19 years	96	26.4
20-25 years	179	49.2
Above 25 years	89	24.4
Total	**364**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Table 5 shows the ages of the respondents used in the study. Majority, 179 (49.2%) of the respondents fell within the age range of 20 to 25 years while the minority 89 (24.4%) were more than 25 years. The results in Table 5 show that most 275 (75.6%) of the students in the University were up to 25 years. Rationally, the dominance of the age group (20-25 years) regarding first year student enrolment conforms to the educational ladder in Ghana by which students

complete secondary school at age 18 and enter university or other tertiary institutions subsequently between the ages of 18 or 19, all things being equal. The demographics of this study is in agreement with Benedict et al. (2015), Herren, et al. (2011), Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) and Constantine and Zinc Stagno's (2010) study which revealed that majority of undergraduate students in the university and those who use social media were between the ages of 18 and 25.

Answers to the Research Questions and Results of Hypotheses tested

Research Question 1: What is the level of students' awareness of the modes of disseminating student recruitment information used by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW)?

In tune with Lubbe and Petzer's (2013) assertion that knowing what and who the main influencers of prospective students were, would help universities differentiate on demographic needs, segment their market accordingly, and develop tailored marketing communication plans to meet these different groups' needs, this research question was formulated to ascertain whether prospective students were aware of the various means UEW uses to disseminate their student recruitment information.

Section B, Items 1 to 16 of the questionnaire asked students to indicate their level of awareness of the different modes UEW uses to disseminate its student recruitment information to its prospective students. Respondents were asked to indicate which source they were aware of as being used most by universities to disseminate information, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates

"strongly agree" and 5 indicates "strongly disagree". The results are presented in Tables 6, 7 and 8.

The main findings of the study were discussed by first finding out students' level of awareness of the various modes of disseminating students' recruitment information at the UEW.

Table 6 presents a summary of the frequencies and percentages of students surveyed who indicated their level of awareness of the various modes used by the UEW for disseminating student recruitment information to prospective students.

Table 6- *Distribution of Students' level of Awareness of Student Recruitment Information Modes Used by UEW*

SN	Sources of student recruitment information	Aware Freq. (%)		Not Aware Freq. (%)	
1.	UEW Website	339	(93)	25	(7)
2.	Newspapers	328	(90)	36	(10)
3.	Family members and friends	321	(88)	44	(12)
4.	Radio and Television	320	(87)	43	(12)
5.	Educational Fair	288	(79)	75	(21)
6.	Campus Visit by prospective students	285	(78)	79	(22)
7.	School visit university officials	280	(77)	84	(23)
8.	From alumni	264	(72)	100	(2 8)
9.	Brochures	242	(66)	122	(34)
10.	Flyers	196	(54)	168	(46)
11.	Lecturers	179	(49)	185	(51)
12.	Facebook	129	(35)	235	(65)
13.	WhatsApp	125	(34)	239	(66)
14.	YouTube	115	(32)	249	(68)
15.	Twitter	113	(31)	251	(69)
16.	Instagram	112	(32)	252	(69)

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Table 6 indicates that the top three sources of information that students obtain information concerning the UEW were the university's website, newspapers and family members and friends. The University website was the commonest source of student recruitment information to prospective students of the UEW at a frequency of 339 (93%). This was followed by newspapers at a frequency of 328 (90%). Information from family and friends came third at a frequency of 321 (88%). The least source of student recruitment information that UEW students were aware of was Instagram at a frequency of 112 (32%).

In addition to knowing the general proportion of students who were aware of the various modes of disseminating students' recruitment information I also sought to find out the proportion of males and females, as well as the various age groups who reported that they were aware of the various student recruitment information modes used by UEW.

Tables 7 and 8 give details of proportion of students aware of the various sources of student recruitment information by gender and age.

The following abbreviations appear in the tables and bear the following meanings

A.M.= Aware Males   A.FM= Aware Females

N.A.M= Not Aware Males   N.A.FM= Not Aware Females

Table 7 - *Distribution of Students' level of Awareness of Student Recruitment Information Modes Used Most by UEW by Gender*

SN	Info. Source	A. M. (%)	NA. M. (%)	A. FM. (%)	NA. FM. (%)
1.	Website	199 (94.31)	12 (5.68)	140 (91.50)	13 (8.49)
2.	Newspapers	192 (91.00)	19 (9.00)	136 (88.89)	17 (11.11)
3.	Family & Friends	188 (89.10)	23 (10.90)	132 (86.27)	21 (13.73)
4.	Radio& T.V	187 (88.63)	24 (11.37)	134 (87.58)	19 (12.42)
5.	Edu. Fair	173 (81.99)	38 (18.01)	116 (75.82)	37 (24.18)
6.	Campus Visit	163 (77.25)	48 (22.75)	122 (79.74)	31 (20.26)
7.	Alumni	162 (76.78)	49 (23.22)	118 (77.12)	35 (28.88)
8.	Brochures	153 (72.99)	57 (27.01)	110 (71.90)	43 (28.10)
9.	Flyers	143 (67.77)	68 (32.23)	99 (64.71)	54 (35.29)
10	School visit	122 (57.82)	89 (42.18)	74 (48.37)	79 (51.63)
11.	Lectureres	116 (54.91)	95 (45.02)	63 (41.18)	90 (58.82)
12	Facebook	81 (38.39)	130 (61.61)	44 (28.76)	109 (71.24)
13	WhatsApp	77 (36.50)	134 (63.50)	52 (33.99)	101 (66.01)
14	YouTube	69 (32.70)	142 (67.29)	44 (28.76)	109 (51.66)
15.	twitter	69 (32.70)	142 (67.30)	43 (28.10)	110 (71.90)
16.	Instagram	68 (32.23)	143 (67.77)	47 (30.72)	106 (69.28)

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019).

The result in Table 7 shows that there was some difference in terms of the frequency of awareness of the various modes of disseminating information as more males showed a higher frequency inalmost all the modes than females.

Table 8 gives details of proportion of students aware of the various sources of student recruitment information by age.

Table 8 - *Distribution of Students' level of Awareness of Student Recruitment Information Modes Used Most by UEW by age*

SN	Info. Source	15-19yrs Aware (%)	15-19yrs NA (%)	20-25yrs Aware (%)	20-25 NA (%)	Above 25 Aware (%)	above25 NA (%)
1.	Website	90 (94.74)	5 (5.26)	166(92.74)	13 (7.26)	83(92.22)	7 (7.78)
2.	Newspapers,	88(92.63)	7 (7.37)	165(92.18)	14(7.82)	75 (83.33)	15(16.67)
3.	Family & Friends	81 (85.26)	14(14.74)	159(88.83)	20(11.17)	80(88.89)	10(11.11)
4.	Radio & T.V.	80 (84.21)	15(15.79)	160 89.39)	19(10.61)	81 (90)	9 (10)
5.	Alumni	78 (82.10)	17(17.90)	136(75.98)	43(24.02)	66(73.33)	24(26.67)
6.	Campus Visit	73 (76.84)	22(23.16)	142(79.33)	37(20.67)	70(77.78)	20(22.22)
7.	Edu. Fair	72 (75.79)	23(24.21)	143(79.89)	36(20.11)	74(82.22)	16(17.78)
8.	Brochures	65 (68.42)	30(31.58)	130(72.63)	49(27.37)	69(76.67)	21(23.33)
9.	School visit	59 (62.11)	36(37.89)	122(68.16)	57(31.84)	61(67.78)	29(32.22)
10.	Flyers	54 (56.84)	41(43.16)	85 (47.48)	94 (52.51)	57(63.33)	33(36.67)
11.	Lecturers	43 (45.26)	52(54.74)	88 (49.16)	91 (50.84)	48(53.33)	42(46.67)
12.	Facebook	32 (33.68)	63(66.32)	65 (36.31)	114(63.69)	28(31.11)	62(68.89)
13.	WhatsApp	31 (32.63)	64(67.37)	67 (37.43)	112(62.57)	31(34.44)	5 (65.56)
14.	YouTube	24 (25.26)	71(74.74)	58 (32.40)	121(67.60)	31(34.44)	59(56.56)
15.	twitter	24 (25.26)	71(74.74)	58 (32.40)	121(67.60)	31(34.44)	59 65.56)
16.	Instagram	24 (25.26)	95(74.74)	60 (33.52)	119(66.48)	31(34.44)	59(65.56)

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019).

From Tables 7 and 8 the ranking order for the various modes of disseminating student recruitment information was the same irrespective of gender or age. However, result in Table 8, points to the fact that the 20-25 age group showed a higher level of awareness of the various modes of disseminating student recruitment information than the 15-19 age group and the above 25 age group. This is evident from the results in Table 8 that the 20-25 age groups recorded

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higher frequencies for all the modes of disseminating student recruitment information.

Surprisingly, the findings in Table 8 also supports what the literature says; Benedict et al. (2016), Herren, et al. (2011), Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) and Constantine and Zinc Stagno's (2010) studies that, the 20-25 age group were more aware of the top three social media platforms; Facebook, WhatApp and Youtube as being used by universities to disseminate information.

The results in Tables 6, 7, 8 revealed that students were aware of the diverse means used by UEW to disseminate students' recruitment information. The fact that respondents were aware that university students' recruitment information could be found from multiple sources confirms Rogers and Robertson's (2015) report which noted that students were using multiple media channels to research colleges including websites, social media, and college brochures. The result also confirms Cantrell's (2014) and Hayes et al.'s (2009) assertion that, there was no one channel of communication that would reach all students so universities needed to strategically use as many avenues as possible to disseminate information to students.

The results further showed that the university's website was the first point of contact when students were searching for information concerning the university irrespective of the gender or age group. This goes to support Shields and Peruta's (2019), Vrontis, et al.'s (2018), Peruta and Shield's (2016), Wyrwicka and Mrugalska's (2015), Karcher's (2011), Herren, et al.'s (2011), De Jager and Du Plooy (2010), Parrot and Tipton (2010), Lindbeck and Fodrey (2010) and Rocca

and Washburn's (2005) studies which found that college/university websites were the number one source for student recruitment information during their college search process.

The result also showed that family and friends formed part of the top three sources of information that students were aware of. This goes to support Karcher's (2011); Johnston's, (2010); Rocca and Washburn's (2005) and Washburn, Garton and Vaughn's (2002) assertion that parents, along with other family and friends, were the most influential sources of information.

These results however, differ with Kim, Sin, and Yoo-Lee's (2014) study which found that 98.6% of respondents reported using Wikipedia most as an information source, Lubbe and Petzer (2010) who found that students were mostly aware of the university's brochures as a major source of information and Maguire Associates' (2011) survey which found most students were mostly aware and visited Facebook and YouTube for information concerning a university.

The findings in this study further made it clear that there was low awareness of the UEW social media platforms as a student recruitment strategy by the students of the University of Education, Winneba. This is evident from the fact that all the social media platforms used by the university formed the bottom five of the sources of student recruitment information as shown in Tables 6, 7, 8 This meant that respondents were not very familiar with the existence of UEW student recruitment information on social media be it by gender or by age. This goes to confirm Shaw's (2013) assertion that many of the students he surveyed were clueless that their chosen university even had a Twitter or Facebook

account. Shaw's study also found that students thought that universities' social media platforms did not talk about the things they needed to know or did not post useful information that relates to them on these SM platforms. Therefore, students did not search for student recruitment information on these platforms. The findings also inveterate Constantinides and Zinc Stagno's (2011) study which showed that future students ranked social media last in a list of information channels that influence their choice of a study and university. The authors explained that this could be as a result of lack of relevant content and low engagement on official university social media sites. The result could also mean that students did not consider social media platforms as reliable sources for university student recruitment information which confirms Cantrell's (2014) assertion that students felt social media was not used for business or formal situations. Shaw, (2013) also found that although 65% of students used social media channels several times a day, students rated universities' social media presence as less influential and less trustworthy than more traditional sources such as prospectuses. This is because universities did not make enough use of social media in recruitment, which meant students currently did not expect or look for recruitment information on such platforms.

The UEW has five social media platforms advertised on its website but the level of awareness of such media serving as avenues for student recruitment information was low. This could be as a result of the fact that the institution has not made any effort to publicise its social media platforms as sources from which students could obtain student recruitment information hence, the low awareness

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by students. It is also possible that the UEW is not active on these platforms or visitors to the platforms did not see any relevant student recruitment information that would make them want to come back to them or repost information on such platforms to their contacts to make the platforms of the institution visible to others. It could also be that UEW is reluctant to actively invest or use social media for its student recruitment activities. This reluctance could stem from the concerns higher education institutions enumerated when they embraced social media such as loss of control, time commitment, information overload and illegal account creation as documented by Reuben (2008). This could explain UEW's unwillingness to actively advertise their social media platforms to make prospective students aware of them.

It is also possible that respondents did not really have a choice of the university they attend. Respondents attended universities suggested by parents as shown in studies by Spearman, et al, (2016), Rogers' (2014), Herren, et al. (2011), Karcher (2011), Johnston, (2010), Rocca and Washburn (2005) and Washburn, et al. (2002). It is also possible respondents chose institutions they thought offered programmes that suited the subjects they read at the senior high school level, or universities that the grades they obtained could send them. Thus, there was no need to research the university via any source.

With respect to the five social media platforms used as information sources by the university, Facebook was the commonest source at a frequency of 129 (35%). This was followed by Whatsapp at a frequency of 125 (34%). This confirms Hesel's (2013) findings and other studies in Ghana which showed that

Facebook was the commonest social media platform used by students (Ocansey, Ametepey and Oduro, 2016; Markwei and Appiah, 2016; Mingle, Adams and Agyei, 2016).

The fact that students were aware of the diverse means UEW uses to reach out to its prospective students conforms to Chapman's (1981) theory which states that an institution's efforts to communicate with prospective students play a major role in the college choice process and involves the use of different student recruitment information sources.

One positive outcome from the results in Tables 6, 7, 8 was that respondents had some level of awareness that university student recruitment information could be found on social media. This means that efforts to reach prospective students through SM should not be abandoned (Cantrell's, 2014). This also implies that the UEW needs to publicise their social media channels by following DiAna's (2014) advice to bring greater awareness of the institution's presence on social media to prospective students to make them more aware of the various information channels.

In addition, the UEW should also pay attention to Chapman's advice that admission officers need to continuously look at ways they could use to strengthen their recruiting strategies and also make it a point to evaluate current or future strategies. Thus, if UEW wants to increase the awareness of SM as a student recruitment strategy, then the institution should endeavour to disseminate information containing the external influences understood to affect prospective students' university choice decision through SM platforms that are popular among

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their target audience. In the case of the UEW, Facebook and Whatsapp could serve such purpose.

Research Question 2: What type of information about UEW do students look for on social media platforms?

Lubbe and Petzer (2013) are of the view that knowing which factors influenced prospective students' university choice and who and what the main influencers of these students are, would help universities differentiate on demographic needs, segment their market accordingly, and develop tailored marketing communication plans to meet these different groups' needs. Thus, this research question was formulated.

The data from Tables 6, 7 and 8 indicate that there is general awareness of the channels the UEW uses to disseminate information to its stakeholders. The Tables also show that there is some level of awareness of the social media platforms used by the UEW to disseminate information even though the level of awareness of these social media platforms was low. The fact that there was some level of awareness of the UEW social media platforms and the study is geared towards the possibility of intensifying the use of social media as a student recruitment strategy prompted me to include an item in an attempt to find out the type of information students usually search for most on UEW's social media platforms.

Section C, Items 1 to 11 contained common types of student recruitment information that prospective students usually search for. Respondents were to indicate the extent to which they agreed to searching for those particular student

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recruitment information on the UEW social media platforms using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates "strongly agree" and 5 indicates "strongly disagree". Frequencies and percentages were used to answer this research question. The responses are shown on Table 9.

Table 9 shows the top 11 types of student recruitment information prospective students searched for on the UEW's social media platforms.

Table 9- *Types of Information Prospective Students Search for on the UEW's Social Media Platforms*

SN	Statement **I normally use social media to:**	Freq. (f)	Relative Freq. (%)
1.	Search about programmes available, admission requirement and processes	305	12.30
2.	Search about quality and reputation of programmes	303	12.22
3.	Career opportunities for the programmes	291	11.73
4.	Search about Scholarships available/tuition fees	265	10.69
5.	Ranking and reputation of the university	213	8.59
6.	Search about accommodations available on campus (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities)	212	8.55
7.	Search about the profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them	194	7.82
8.	Search for profiles of alumni	191	7.70
9.	Class size and the number of students on the programme	185	7.46
10.	Quality of facilities and location of institution	184	7.42
11.	Search for the opportunity to engage with seniors/peers on the programme of interest	137	5.52
Total		**2480**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

From Chapman's (1981) external influences of a college choice, the types of information prospective students search for concerning a university was grouped into three. These are information concerning the programmes available, information concerning the institution and information concerning significant persons.

From Table 9, information concerning the programme had four items and they include: Programmes available, quality and reputation of programmes, admission requirement and processes, class size and the number of students on the programme and career opportunities for the programmes.

Information concerning the institution had four items and they include: quality of facilities in the institution and location of institution, ranking and reputation of the university, search about scholarships available/tuition fees and search about accommodations available on campus (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities).

Information concerning significant persons had three items and they include: profile of staff, information concerning mates /seniors/peers in the institution, information concerning profiles of alumni.

The results in Table 9 point to the fact that, information concerning programme offered by an institution played a major role when students were searching for information on an institution's social media platforms. This was evident from the fact that it was only information concerning programmes category that had two of its items having a frequency higher than 300. This supports LaFave, et al's (2019); Rudhumbu, et al's (2017); Fagerstrom and

Ghinea,'s (2013); Herren, et al.'s (2011); Rocca and Washburn's (2005); and Agrey and Lampadan's (2014) surveys that found academic reputation of the university, academic quality, career opportunities after graduation, and preparation for employment as having the most influence on students' choice of a university. This result however, contradicts Maguire Associates' (2011) survey which found that more than half (59%) of prospective students used social media to search about students' life on campus in order to explore their "fit" with colleges and universities they intended to enrol in. It also contradicts DiAna's (2014) study which found that respondents searched about student life, on-campus activities and events, school information as well as photos of the institution most through social media.

Result in Table 9 also shows that ranking and reputation of the university was the most important factor considered when it came to searching for information concerning the institution on social media. This is consistent with De Jager and Du ploy (2006) assertion that the reputation of an institution served as a very important variable associated with the selection of a higher education institution. This finding meant that the reputation of the institution should be built and maintained. This could be done by putting in place mechanisms that would ensure that the institution offers nationally and internationally recognised programmes. Conscious efforts should also be made by the UEW to maintain high quality standards which would result in the institution being recognised and highly recommended by its stakeholders.

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The result in Table 9 also indicates that search for the profile of staff in the institution ranked first when it came to information concerning significant persons' category. This is in contrast with the study of (De Jager and Du ploy, 2006) who found that their respondents rated the reputation of the lecturers at the institution as the least overall important issue when it comes to selecting an institution. The fact that students at the UEW rated the profiles of staff highly in this category means that the institution should ensure that they show the achievement of their staff on SM media to make the general public aware of what they were doing since this would go a long way to improve the reputation of the institution.

The overall finding of research question two shows information concerning programme characteristics was more important to students since this category recorded higher frequencies as compared to the other categories. This assertion supports Chapman's (1981) model which says that academic characteristics or information concerning programmes were major factors that affect prospective students during the college choice process. Therefore, universities that showed in their communication strategy available programmes and the benefits students would derive from these programmes were the ones students would select.

Based on the findings in research question two, a lesson could be learnt from Chapman's model of College Choice. The lesson to be learnt is meant for the action of University of Education, Winneba Management. The University in accordance with the model should make an effort to communicate with their

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prospective students through various channels and more especially through social media outlets often since it is the commonest source of information for the current generation of students and could go viral in a matter of seconds. In addition, when communicating this information on social media, the emphasis should be on programmes available and admission requirements and processes, quality and reputation of programmes and career opportunities for the programmes, since these were the highest valued items selected by students.

Research Question 3: How do students rate the effectiveness of the use of social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy?

Since the study sought to ostensibly communicate the external characteristics of the UEW to prospective students through social media, this research question was asked. The purpose of the question was to ascertain students' views on what the UEW should do for its SM platforms to serve as an effective student recruitment strategy. Means and standard deviations were used to answer this research question. This was done by looking at the aggregated means of the respondents on each of the research questions. Section D, Items 1 to 10 of the questionnaire contained items earmarked to be used by the UEW to ensure that its social media platforms would serve as effective student recruitment strategy. Respondents were to assign weights to show their levels of agreement or disagreement to whether the items outlined would make the use of SM serve as effective student recruitment strategies at UEW. Respondents were asked to rate the items as follows:

Strongly agree =1; Agree = 2; Somehow agree = 3; Disagree = 4; strongly

disagree = 5. The results are as indicated on Table 10.

Table 10- *Effectiveness of Social Media Platforms as a Student Recruitment Strategy*

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. UEW should monitor social media conversations being held about the institution and offer quick responses concerning issues raised	2.55	1.21
2. UEW should develop guidelines/strategic plan on how it will use SM as a recruitment strategy	2.48	1.11
3. Information on UEW SM should be accurate, authentic and relevant	2.40	1.19
4. UEW SM platforms should be interactive/engaging	2.38	1.13
5. UEW SM should contain videos, photos, posts, comments, testimonials, recommendations from current students, family, alumni, staff and followers	2.33	1.14
6. UEW SM should contain employability of graduates from the university	2.24	1.14
7. UEW should appoint someone to manage the institution's SM platforms	2.21	1.16
8. UEW SM should show a video giving a campus tour of the university on social media.	2.18	1.09
9. UEW should use the most common social media platform(s) used by students	2.16	1.10
10. UEW SM platforms should show the academic ranking of the institution	1.87	1.01
Mean of means	**2.28**	**1.13**

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)

Table 10 shows students' views on some strategies considered as effective

strategies to be used on SM to make them serve as effective student recruitment

strategies. From Table 10, most of the respondents perceived the items listed as ineffective strategies by an overall mean of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 1.13. Considering the mean cut-off point of 3.0, the respondents' responses were low for all the 10 items on this section of the instrument. This meant that respondents considered all the strategies as totally ineffective for ensuring that SM would be an effective strategy for disseminating student recruitment information. This result is not surprising because the earlier results in Table 6 showed that the level of awareness of the institution's social media platforms was low, meaning students were not aware of them. This implies that they did not use them to search for information often to be able to judge their effectiveness (Shaw, 2013; Nyangau and Bado, 2012). The results could also be that UEW rushed in using SM for student recruitment without planning which would support the finding of Nyangau and Bado, (2012) that those higher education institutions and organisations that rushed to use social media without clear strategic plans did not necessarily see effective results.

This result notwithstanding, of the 10 items listed majority (mean 2.55 and standard deviation of 1.21) of respondents suggested that UEW should monitor social media conversations being held about the institution and offer quick responses concerning issues raised in order to make social media an effective student recruitment strategy. This could be as a result of students' awareness that social media platforms usually feature forums for comments which have the possibility of collecting negative remarks or feedback. Thus, by monitoring these platforms, when visitors to these platforms post negative comments, the

institution would be in a better position to clarify the misconceptions and start a conversation to change the existing perception that they did or did not know of (Reuben, 2008). This was followed by sentiments that universities should develop a set of guidelines/ strategic plan pertaining to social media usage in order to make it an effective student recruitment strategy (mean 2.28 and standard deviation of 1.11). This is consistent with Benedict, et al.'s, (2016), Nyangau and Bado's (2012) and Hayes et al.'s (2009) suggestion that to make social media an effective tool for student recruitment, institutions need to set clear goals as to what they want to achieve by using these platforms. Respondents also indicated that for social media to be an effective recruitment strategy, these platforms should be interactive /engaging and include videos and photos. This assertion is in line with Lubbe, et al. (2013) who thought that students would forward interesting videos posted by the institution without hesitating thus, unknowingly doing the marketing on behalf of the institution.

Overall, the findings of the study indicated that social media was ineffective as a student recruitment strategy, this result is a departure from Parrot and Tipton's (2010) national survey of 500 first-year undergraduates which revealed that nearly 60% of their respondents relied on digital information over print materials.

Thus, UEW should take Noel-Levitz's (2010) advise that universities should have some sort of presence on social media sites and Contantinides and Zinc Stagno's (2011) and Lindbeck and Fodrey's, (2010) counsel that colleges'/universities recruitment strategies needed to evolve to the changing

desires of potential students and approach the use of social media in a proactive way by being active and continuously use social media in their promotional mix and understand the online behaviour of potential students. In addition, there is the need for strong institutional commitment by allocating resources to ensure the success of this form of communication. DiAna (2014) also advises that institutions need to bring greater awareness of their presence on social media, as a large percentage of students were unaware of their social media presence. Lubbe, et al. (2013) suggests that it would be beneficial for institutions in terms of student recruitment to maintain an online presence and make use of social networks to recruit students.

The finding suggests that if the UEW wants to use SM as a student recruitment strategy it must put in more effort to conform to Chapman's theory by reviewing the way it identifies and recruits its prospective students on these SM platforms. This can be done by researching and developing systematic marketing strategies for its social media platforms. Arguably, social media in this ICT age is the commonest marketing strategy and should not be ignored by any institution, the UEW inclusive.

Hypothesis 1:

H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW   social media platforms.

H1: There is statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.

In order to determine whether there was any significant difference between gender of students and the types of students' recruitment information students search for, the above hypothesis was formulated. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean ratings between males and females on the 11 types of student recruitment information indicated on Section C of the questionnaire. The level of significance value for the study is 0.05. The results are as shown on Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11- *Difference between Students' gender and types of student recruitment information students search for on UEW social media platforms*

SN	Types of Information	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
1.	Career opportunities for the programmes	-2.495	362	.013
2.	Class size and the number of students on the programme	-1.824	362	.069
3.	Search about programmes available and admission requirement and processes	-1.748	362	.081
4.	Search about Scholarships available	-2.672	362	.008
5.	Search about quality and reputation of courses	-2.250	362	.025
6	Search about accommodations available on campus (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities)	-1.014	362	.311
7.	Quality of facilities and location of institution	-831	362	.406
8.	Search about the profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them	-2.358	362	.019
9.	Ranking and reputation of the university	-191	362	.358
10.	Find out which universities my mates/seniors were attending	-212	362	.832
11.	Search for the opportunity to engage with peers on the programme of interest	-191	362	.848

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)   *Significant, $p < 0.05$

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Table 12- *Difference between Students' gender and types of student recruitment information students search for on UEW social media platforms*

SN	Types of Information	Significance level	Comparison	Null Hypothesis Accepted/Rejected
1.	Career opportunities	.013	1.3 < .05	Reject
2.	Class size	.069	6.9 > .05	Accept
3.	Search about programmes/ admission requirement/ processes	.081	8.1 > .05	Accept
4	Search about Scholarships/tuition fees	.008	0.8 < .05	Reject
5.	Search about quality and reputation of programmes	.025	2.5 < .05	Reject
6.	Search about accommodations (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities)	.311	31.1 > .05	Accept
7	Quality of facilities/location of institution	.406	40.1 > .05	Accept
8.	Search about the profile of staff/ the opportunity to engage with them	.019	1.9 < .05	Reject
9.	Ranking and reputation of the university	.358	35.8 > .05	Accept
10.	Profile of alumni	.832	83.2 > .05	Accept
11.	Search for the opportunity to engage with seniors/ peers on the programme of interest	.848	84.8 > .05	Accept

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)   *Significant, $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 12, the null hypothesis was rejected for four out of the eleven items. These are; search about scholarships available (p= .008), career opportunities for the programme (p= .013), search about the profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them (p= .019) and search about quality and reputation of courses (.025) respectively had an alpha value less than .05. This means that both males and females were more likely to search for the same type of information concerning these variables on UEW social media platforms.

The alternative hypothesis was accepted for seven out of the eleven items. The alternative hypothesis was accepted for class size (.069), programmes available, admission requirement and process (.081), accommodation available (.311), quality of facilities (.406), ranking and reputation of the institution (.358), search for profile of alumni (.832) finding out which university senior/peers were attending (.848). This means that both males and females were more likely to search for different type of information concerning these variables on UEW social media platforms.

Overall, the result failed to reject the null hypothesis (accepted the alternative hypothesis) for majority of the items, (that is seven out of the eleven items). This means that on the whole, both prospective male and female students were more likely to search for different type of student recruitment information concerning UEW on social media platforms. This finding is consistent with the study by Wiese, et al's (2010) who found that males and females differed in the ranking of the top ten college choice factors they used in their study. The authors

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also found that in all instances these factors were ranked higher by female students.

This study conforms with Chapman's assertion that the fixed characteristics of an institution consists of academic and non-academic factors which may or may not be considered important to a particular student. Since the result on Table 12 shows that the null hypothesis was rejected for some of the items and accepted for other items, this means that prospective students attach different levels of importance to the different types of student recruitment information. Thus, the UEW should adhere to Manfield and Warwick's (2006) advice when developing recruitment strategies to take care of these similarities and differences.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of information students search for on the UEW social media platforms.

H1: Statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of information students search for on the UEW social media platforms.

In line with Chapman's (1981) assertion that, an institution's effort to communicate with students involve "systematic marketing strategies to attract students to the university" (p. 498), I sought to find out whether age should be considered in the systematic marketing strategy to direct student recruitment information to prospective students through social media.

In an attempt to answer this hypothesis, the Chi-squared analysis was used to test if there was a significant relationship among the ages of students and the 11 types of student recruitment information as indicated on Section C of the questionnaire item. The level of significance value for the study is 0.05. Results are indicated in Table 13.

Table 13- *Relationship between ages of students and type of student recruitment information*

SN	Types of Information	Critical Value	Degree of Freedom	Probability value
1.	Career opportunities for the programmes	10.241	8	.249
2.	Class size and the number of students on the programme	10.930	8	.206
3.	Search about programmes available and admission requirement and processes	3.953	8	861
4.	Search about Scholarships available/tuition fees	18.063	8	.021
5.	Search about quality and reputation of courses	9.811	8	.279
6.	Search about Accommodations available on campus (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities)	9.821	8	.278
7.	Quality of facilities and location of institution	15.452	8	.051
8.	Search about profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them	16.352	8	.037
9.	Ranking and reputation of the university	5.967	8	.651
10.	Find out profile of alumni	4.275	8	.831
11.	Search for the opportunity to engage with seniors/peers on the programme of interest	11.526	8	.174

Source: Field Survey, Dare (2019)   Significant, $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 13 show the null hypothesis is rejected for two out of the eleven items. The null hypothesis was rejected for search about scholarship/tuition fees (.021) and Search about profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them (.037). The alternative hypothesis was accepted for nine of the items. These are; class size (.069), programmes available, admission requirement and process (.081), Search about quality and reputation of programmes (.279), Career opportunities for the programmes (.249), accommodation available (.311), quality of facilities (.406), ranking and reputation of the institution (.358), search for profile of alumni (.832) finding out which university senior/peers were attending (.848).

Overall, the study rejected the null hypothesis for two out of the eleven items. This means that majority of the respondents accepted the alternative hypothesis for many of the items listed in Table 13. Therefore, prospective students of different age groups search for different information concerning an institution on SM. This is consistent with Kimmel, et al.'s (2016) study which revealed significant differences between differing age groups over time and same-age groups between periods of time when deciding on which institution to attend. This meant that students of different age groups were motivated by different things when deciding to enrol in a school which results in them ultimately seeking for different types of information concerning their school of interest. For instance while students in the 24 or under age group were found to be motivated for seeking higher education due to the motivation from parents, students in the 25-34 age group were motivated because of a desire for a new career and students of age

35+ were motivated because of a desire for pay increase, desire for a new career and desire for more respect from peers (Kimmel, et al.'s, 2016).

The result of hypothesis 2 goes to support Chapman's assertion that universities need to continuously research their current and prospective students and identify the major influences they need to consider in developing effective institutional recruiting strategies and policy. In the case of this study, age is a major influence. Therefore, it is essential that UEW follows Kimmel, et al.'s (2016) suggestion by developing age-cohort driven recruitment strategies for each age group depending on the majority of age specific students being targeted.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study sought to determine how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba in terms of students' level of awareness of the various modes used to disseminate student recruitment information, the types of information students searched for on these platforms and their perception of its effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the University of Education, Winneba. The study used Chapman's (1981) college choice model and focused on the external influences of a college choice and specifically on the efforts made by UEW to communicate to prospective students using social media.

Descriptive statistical methods were used to answer three research questions posed in Chapter One and inferential statistics were the analytical methods used to test two hypotheses that were formulated. The study was guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the level of students' awareness of the modes of disseminating student recruitment information used by the University of Education, Winneba (UEW)?

2. What type of information about UEW do students look for on social media platforms?

3. How do students rate the effectiveness of the use of social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy?

Hypotheses

4. H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.

   H1: There is statistically significant difference between the gender of students and the type of student recruitment information they search for on the UEW social media platforms.

5. H0: No statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of information students search for on the UEW social media platforms.

   H1: Statistically significant relationship exists between age of students and the type of information students search for on the UEW social media platforms.

The population for the study was 7,124 fresh undergraduate students on the Winneba main campus. The cross-sectional descriptive survey was adopted for the research using a sample size of 364, comprising 211 males and 153 females, admitted in the 2018/2019 academic year. Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents at the three campuses of the Winneba campus. Closed-ended questionnaire was used to elicit data to answer the research

questions and hypotheses. Statistical procedures used in the data analyses were frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation, t-test as well as chi-squared test using version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Key Findings

Based on the research questions and the hypotheses for this study, the findings were as follows:

Students' level of awareness of the various modes of disseminating student recruitment information

The study revealed that the students from the University of Education, Winneba were aware of the various modes used by the institution to disseminate student recruitment information. The University's website was the main source that students used when searching for student recruitment information.

Students' awareness of social media modes

There was low awareness of UEW SM platforms being used for disseminating student recruitment information. Facebook at a frequency of 129 (35%) was found to be the most familiar social media tool. This was followed by Whatsapp at a frequency of 125 (34%).

Types of information students look for on social media

The study revealed that the fixed academic characteristics of an institution such as programme availability, admission requirement, future career prospects, quality and reputation of programmes were more important

when students were searching for information on social media concerning a university

Students' perception of the effectiveness of the use of the social media by UEW as a student recruitment strategy

The finding of the study indicated that students rated as ineffective the strategies outlined by the institution to ensure that SM becomes an effective student recruitment strategy at UEW.

Hypothesis Results

1. The independent t-test failed to reject the null hypothesis (accepted the alternative hypothesis) for 7 out of the 11 items. Meaning majority of respondents think there is a difference between gender and the type of information they search for on SM. This means that on the whole, both male and female prospective students were more likely to search for different types of student recruitment information concerning UEW on social media platforms.

2. The chi-squared analysis conducted rejected the null hypothesis for 2 out of the 11 items. Meaning majority of respondents think there is a difference between age and the type of student recruitment information prospective students search for concerning an institution on SM. This means that students of different age groups search for different information concerning an institution on SM.

Conclusions and Implications

This study was a cross-sectional descriptive survey aimed at determining how effective the utilisation of social media was in disseminating student recruitment information by the University of Education, Winneba in terms of students' level of awareness of the SM platforms, the kinds of information students search for on these platforms and their perception of its effectiveness in enhancing the student recruitment efforts of the University of Education, Winneba.

The findings in this study were largely consistent with those of other studies which showed that students were generally aware of the various channels used to disseminate student recruitment information at the UEW. However, there was low awareness of social media platforms as student recruitment strategy which was also consistent with other studies. Facebook was found to be the most common social media platform used by students as a source of student recruitment information. The results of the study point to the fact that general recruitment strategies on SM should first and foremost take into account students' desire for information concerning programme availability, admission requirement, future career prospects and opportunities (upon graduation). Furthermore, the study provided evidence that supported the alternative hypothesis for majority of the items concerning types of information students look for on SM in terms of gender and age. Since the findings of this study were based on a sample of undergraduate students admitted to a public university, the implications that could be drawn from the results are applicable primarily to undergraduate students and

administrators at similar institutions. The recommendations that follow will generally pertain to policies and practices that institutions and departments might consider instituting in order to improve the effectiveness of their efforts to recruit students to their undergraduate programmes using SM. For example, institutions should recognise the gender and age differences and the type of information they search for and consider this when developing their student recruitment strategies to be used on SM. The implication of this study for further studies is the need for more studies to be conducted on using SM as a recruitment strategy in Ghana. This is because of the general lack of research on SM as a student recruitment strategy in higher education institutions in Ghana.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were hereby made:

Social media communication is an affordable and simple outreach method that has potential for wide reach. However, the findings of the study clearly show that students of UEW had low awareness of the institution's social media sites for student recruitment information. Therefore,

- Admission officers should set clear and measurable goals with specific audiences in mind and develop strategies on how to effectively use SM as a major recruitment strategy. They should also ensure that all admissions related information is communicated through the SM platforms that are commonly used by students, e.g. Facebook and Whatsapp.

- Management of the UEW should support the use of SM by allocating resources; financial and personnel by ensuring that specific offices and individuals are tasked with the responsibility of actively monitoring conversations concerning the university, offering quick responses and making the various SM platforms more interactive. Such personnel should also ensure that recruitment information on SM platforms were relevant, accurate and up to date.

- Admission officers should ensure that since males and females differed considerably according to the information they search for concerning an institution, the UEW could consider different recruitment strategies for each gender. Therefore, if the UEW wants to target females in general, or attract more females for certain programmes e.g. Science programmes, then the advertisement should focus on factors that will attract females to the institution and to the specific programmes.

- Admission officers should research and find out the exact information their target age groups require most and develop appropriate recruitment strategies accordingly. This is because the study showed that the different age groups look for different student recruitment information because they differed in their motivation for enroling in a particular school.

- Admission Officers and the Media and Publication unit should extensively communicate the fixed academic characteristics of an institution, e.g. programmes offered, the requirement for each programme and their career paths, etc. in any recruitment strategy on social media in order to entice

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students to the platform and to the institution and to also encourage reposting on other platforms.

Suggestions for Further Studies

To further extend the literature on the utilisation of social media in disseminating students' recruitment information, the following recommendations for further studies are made:

Compare the Awareness of the Institution's Social Media Platforms at all Campuses of the University of Education, Winneba

The students' awareness of the social media platforms for disseminating student recruitment information as well as the kinds of information they normally searched for on the social media platforms have been highlighted in this research. The findings suggest that students of the main campus of UEW had low awareness of the institution's social media platforms for disseminating student recruitment information. More in-depth research should be conducted to compare the awareness level on all the four main campuses of the university.

Qualitative Study on Effective Strategies to Use on Social Media Platforms to make SM Effective Recruitment Strategies

The results on the effectiveness of social media as a student recruitment strategy revealed that students found all the response items, listed for them to rate to be ineffective as a strategy for institutions to use on SM. Therefore, a qualitative study that will encourage students to suggest the strategy that they think would be effective for an institution to use on social media to make it an effective student strategy will be in a good direction.

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A Study to Evaluate how Potential students in the Senior High Schools Source for Student Recruitment Information

The study used respondents who were already students of the institution. A study to find out from senior high school students who were yet to enrol in universities the channels they were going to use to source for student recruitment information and the type of information they would be looking for concerning their universities of choice would be in the right direction.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Assessment of the Utilization of social media platforms for student recruitment

Kindly complete this questionnaire on the *Assessment of the use of Social Media (SM) in the Recruitment of Students.* Information gathered from this questionnaire will be treated in strict confidence and will only be available to the researcher.

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Please tick (√) the appropriate box or write in the spaces provided in response to each question.

1. What is your gender? Male   [   ]   Female   [   ]
2. What is your age? 15 – 20 yrs. [   ]   21-25 yrs.   [   ]   above 25 yrs. [   ]

INSTRUCTIONS

*Read each statement and make sure you understand it. On the right side of each statement there is a row of boxes; **tick** (√) the most appropriate **box** that best describes your response to the statements.*

SECTION B**: AWARENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	SA	A	NA	D	SD
1. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's lecturers					
2. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's YouTube					

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3. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's Facebook					
4. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's Twitter.					
5. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's WhatsApp					
6. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's Instagram.					
7. Information concerning a university can be obtained from radio and television.					
8. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's flyers					
9. Information concerning a university can be obtained from school visit from university officials					
10. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's educational fair.					
11. Information concerning a university can be obtained from newspapers					
12. Information concerning a university can be obtained from					

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	SA	A	DS	D	SD
campus visits					
13. Information concerning a university can be obtained from family members, friends					
14. Information concerning a university can be obtained from alumni					
15. Information concerning a university can be obtained from brochures					
16. Information concerning a university can be obtained from the institution's website					

KEY: SA = Strongly Agree   D = Disagree

A = Agree   SD = Strongly Disagree

NA = Not Aware

SECTION C: TYPES OF INFORMATION PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS SEARCH FOR ON UEW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

	SA	A	DS	D	SD
I normally use social media to:					
1.Search about career opportunities for the programmes					
2. Search foe class size and the number of students on the programme					
3.Ssearch about quality and reputation of courses					
4.Search about Scholarships available/					

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and tuition fees					
5. Search about programmes available and admission requirement and processes					
6.Search about Accommodations available on campus (e.g. university halls and hostel facilities)					
7. Search for quality of facilities and location of institution					
8. Search about profile of staff and the opportunity to engage with them					
9. Search for the ranking and reputation of the university					
10. Find out which universities my seniors/peers were attending and the opportunity to engage with them					
11. Search for the profile of alumni					

KEY:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

DS = Don't Search

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

SECTION D: EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Statement	ME	E	SE	NE	DK
1.Information on UEW social media should be accurate, authentic and relevant.					
2. UEW SM should contain Videos, photos, posts, comments, testimonials, recommendations from current students family, alumni, staff and followers.					
3. Academic ranking of the institution on social media would be effective Accuracy/authenticity/relevance of the information on the social media platform would be effective.					
4. UEW social media should contain employability of graduates from the institution.					
5. Using the most common social media platform(s) used by students would be effective.					
6.UEW should appoint people to manage the institution's social media platforms.					
7. UEW SM should show a video giving campus tour of the university.					
8. The university should develop a set of guidelines/ strategic plan on					

	ME	E	SE	NE	DN
how it will use Social Media as a recruitment strategy.					
9. Universities should monitor social media conversations being held about the institution and offer quick responses concerning issues raised					
10. UEW SM platforms should show the academic ranking of the Institution.					

KEY:

ME = Most Effective

E = Effective

SE = Somewhat Effective

NE = Not Effective

DN = Don't Know

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