



## Chapter 2

# Digital Marketing Through Social Media Best Practices: A Case Study of HEIs in the GCC Region

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### ABSTRACT

*The exponential growth of social media usage during the past few years has unfolded unprecedented opportunities. The effective utilization of relevant social media tools, which was once considered the domain of business organizations only, is gradually shifting to various kinds of organizations functioning in society, and educational institutions are no exception. The current study aims at finding out the best practices followed by the top higher education institutions in GCC region, focusing on how they are tapping the vast potential of their online presence, specifically in social media. The researchers take into consideration the different kinds of social media used and the nature of content shared by the selected higher education institutions to gain interesting insights through comparative analysis in order to discover the critical success factors for the desired objectives. This chapter has an implication on all the HEIs in the GCC, education consultancies, digital marketers, businesses, and other stakeholders who are interested in the field of digital marketing.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The shift from traditional marketing to digital marketing has unleashed unprecedented opportunities to the marketers all over the world (Langan et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2022). It has resulted in exploring new avenues and interesting possibilities which were unheard in the past, leading to greater customization and customer satisfaction (Khan et al., 2020; Khan et al.,2021). The use of social media in particular, has grown exponentially and organizations are effectively influencing their intended audiences on a regular basis by creating relevant and useful online content (Langan et al., 2019; Hollebeek & Macky,2019). Digital marketing, which was once considered the domain of business organizations only, is gradually shifting to various kinds of organizations functioning in the society and educational institutions are no exception. It is now very common for not-for-profit organizations to have a strong online presence and effective social media presence.

Online courses offered by education Institutions along with the availability of digital textbooks provide concrete examples that educational institutions all over the world are incorporating the digital media tools effectively (Langan et al., 2019; Khan & Magd,2021; Magd & Khan,2022b) . Covid-19 in particular, created an environment where the use of digital technology in educational institutions grew at a phenomenal rate (Bocar et al., 2022; Magd & Khan,2022a). The current study aims at finding out the best practices followed by the top higher education institutions in GCC region, focusing on how they are tapping the vast potential of their online presence, through social media best practices (Magd et al.,2022; Saleem et al., 2022).

### **1.1. Social Media**

Social media is a term used to describe the various platforms and technologies that allow individuals and organizations to share content, opinions, and information in a digital format (Kushwaha et al.,2020; Hanaysha & Momani,2021). These platforms include popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, as well as newer platforms like TikTok and Clubhouse (Baumann, 2022). Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives, and its impact on society and the way we communicate is undeniable (Kushwaha et al.,2020).

The origins of social media can be traced back to the early days of the internet, when online forums and discussion boards were used to connect people with similar interests (Himelein-Wachowiak et al., 2021). The first true social media platform, Six Degrees, was launched in 1997, and it allowed users to create profiles and connect with friends (Dhingra & Mudgal,2019). Since then, social media has evolved to become a powerful tool for communication and engagement, and it has changed the way we interact with each other and consume information.

One of the most significant impacts of social media is the democratization of information (Abdullah et al., 2019). It has given individuals the ability to share their thoughts and opinions with a global audience, regardless of their background or education. This has led to a more diverse and inclusive conversation, and it has given a voice to marginalized groups that were previously unheard (Abdullah et al., 2019).

Social media has also changed the way businesses and organizations interact with their customers. The platforms provide a direct line of communication between companies and their customers, which allows them to build stronger relationships and provide better customer service. Additionally, social media has become an essential tool for marketing and advertising, as businesses can reach a large and targeted audience through paid advertising and organic content (Baumann, 2022).

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