

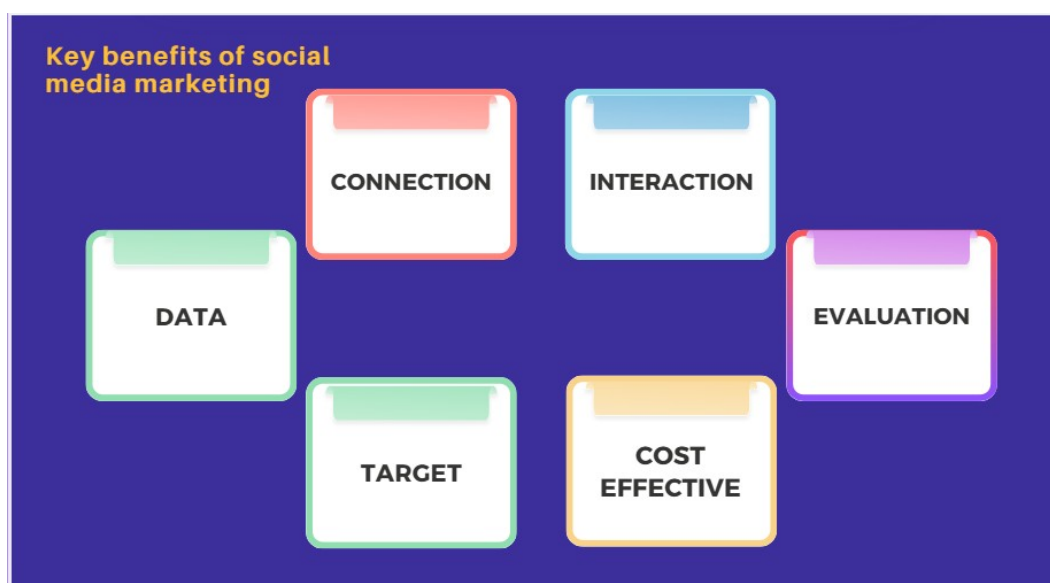
# **THE ROLE OF THE SMM IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF UZBEKISTAN.**

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**ABSTRACT:** In today's globalized world, educational institutions operate in a highly competitive environment where effective marketing strategies—particularly through social media marketing—are crucial for attracting students, faculty, and funding. This article explores the role of SMM in strengthening the reputation and outreach of universities, analyzing best practices, tools, and challenges involved in implementing successful social media strategies within the academic sector.

**KEYWORDS:** Social media marketing, higher educational institution, marketing strategies

**INTRODUCTION.** Social media marketing has become an essential tool for businesses of all sizes. Its power lies in the ability to connect with customers, build brand awareness, and drive sales in a dynamic and engaging environment. Unlike traditional marketing methods, social media offers a unique blend of direct interaction (24/7), data-driven insights, cost-effectiveness making it a vital component of any modern marketing strategy. This exploration delves into the key benefits of social media marketing (Figure 1) highlighting its impact on connection, interaction, data collection, target audience engagement, cost-efficiency and evaluation.



*Figure 1. Key benefits of social media marketing*

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Let's briefly outline the key advantages of SMM mentioned above. Social media allows businesses to interact with their customers in real time. Through comments, direct messages or other features on various platforms, companies can respond quickly to customer inquiries and concerns. Social media platforms provide real-time interaction, transforming marketing from a passive broadcast to an active dialogue. Businesses can leverage polls, quizzes, live videos, and interactive contests to encourage active participation and gather valuable feedback.

One of the most significant advantages of social media marketing is the access to a wealth of data on customer demographics, interests and behaviors. Also competitor data (brand sentiment, marketing strategies, etc) and market data: industry trends, innovations, foreign companies experience available social media platforms.

The key benefit of social media are the maximum opportunities for precise targeting according to geography, interests, habits, and demographics.

Compared to traditional advertising methods such as TV commercials or billboards, social media ads tend to be less expensive while still being highly effective at reaching targeted audiences.

Another significant advantage of social media marketing is its ability to track and evaluate results through analytics. This data provides insights into how well campaigns perform ensuring that businesses make informed decisions when developing future strategies.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research explores the role, potential, and effectiveness of SMM (Social Media Marketing) tools in the education system of Uzbekistan using a comprehensive, mixed-methods approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. The primary methodologies included surveys, interviews, content analysis and secondary analysis of statistical data.

In the first stage, the official social media pages (Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) of various higher education institutions across Uzbekistan were analyzed. The content analysis method was based on the theoretical frameworks of A. Krippendorff (2004) and N. Weber (1990). The analysis focused on the level of interactivity, audience engagement, and user participation on these platforms.

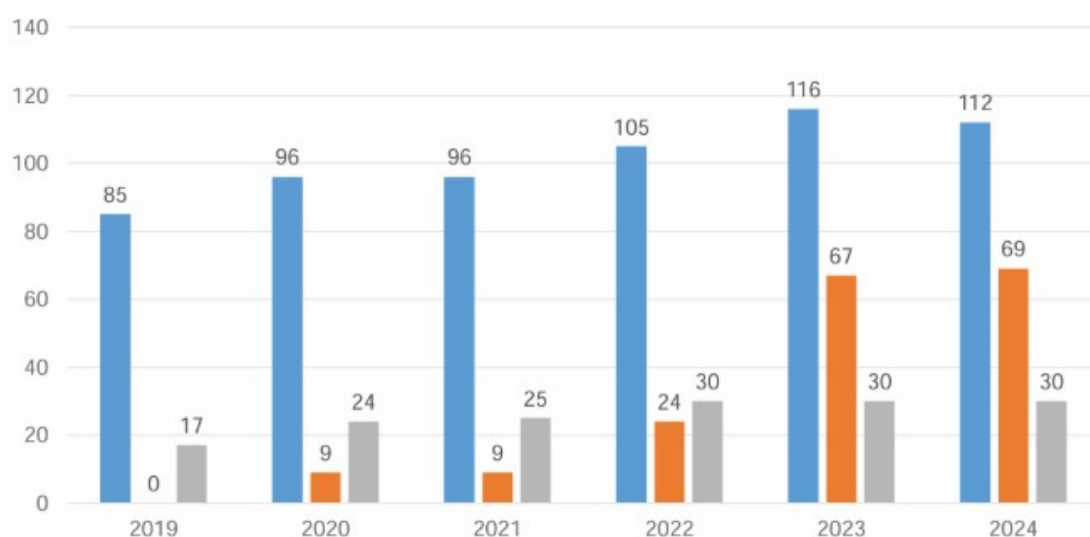
In the second stage, a survey was conducted among more than 250 respondents, including teachers and students. The survey questions were designed to assess the impact of SMM on educational efficiency, information exchange, motivation enhancement, and the interactivity of the learning process.

The interview method was applied in a semi-structured format with university administrators as well as SMM specialists. These interviews explored content strategies, challenges and solutions, and the role of SMM in branding and digital image formation in the education sector.

The following scholars' works served as key theoretical foundations for the research: Philip Kotler was a pioneer in marketing theory; his book Marketing 4.0 emphasizes the role of digital communication in modern education. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who had theories on social media and user engagement were central to the study. Gulbahor Yusupova (TUIT) – her articles on digital transformation and the integration of SMM in Uzbekistan's educational context

were closely analyzed. Qodirov N. and Karimov S.'s, E.S.Melinchuk's works on internet marketing and media communication, particularly in the higher education sphere, were also utilized in this research.

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS and Excel software, employing chi-square tests, correlation coefficients, and regression analysis to derive statistically grounded results. This methodological approach provided a structured and in-depth understanding of the role and effectiveness of SMM in the educational system of Uzbekistan.



\* <https://gov.uz/oz/edu/news/view/19441>

*Figure 2. Number of higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan (2019-2024 y)*

- Governmental higher educational institutions
- Non-governmental higher educational institutions
- Foreign higher educational institutions

Over the past five years, the number of higher education institutions has shown a remarkable growth, doubling in size, as depicted in the diagram. That's why in the highly competitive educational landscape of Uzbekistan, developing a strong SMM (Social Media Marketing) presence is no longer optional — it is essential. Each educational institution must invest in effective digital communication to attract, engage, and retain its audience. A well-executed SMM strategy not only enhances visibility but also builds trust and strengthens the institution's brand in the eyes of students, parents, and partners.

SMM requires clearly defined goals and objectives, a solid understanding of the target audience, and evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented activities. Universities seeking to make effective use of SMM must first understand why social media users should be interested in their brand, their marketing efforts, and their educational services.

In this article, we will discuss how to properly organize an SMM strategy for an educational institution, what methods to use to improve marketing effectiveness on social media, and how to build communication and trust with the audience through online platforms.

### 1. Defining the Target Audience

The first step in creating an effective SMM strategy is defining the target audience. For educational institutions, the main audience groups are:

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| ✓ Prospective students | ✓ Alumni              |
| ✓ Current students     | ✓ Academic staff      |
| ✓ Parents              | ✓ Potential employers |

Each of these groups has its own interests and needs. For example, prospective students are interested in information about academic programs, admission requirements, and student life. Parents, on the other hand, seek information about the institution's reputation and learning environment. Therefore, before launching an active social media presence, it's important to analyze the needs of each audience segment.

### 2. Choosing the Right Platforms

Not all social media platforms are equally suitable for promoting educational institutions. The most popular platforms include: Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn. When selecting platforms, it's essential to consider where your target audience is most active and what types of content they prefer.

### 3. Creating a Content Strategy

Content is the foundation of any SMM strategy. Creating high-quality and diverse content will help attract and retain the audience's interest. Here are some content types to include in your strategy:

*Educational posts* – Share helpful tips, study materials, and news from the world of education.

*Visual content* – Photos of the learning process, events, and student life help build a positive image of your institution.

*Video content* – Recording lectures, masterclasses, and interviews with teachers and students offers deeper insight into your institution.

*Success stories* – Highlight stories of graduates who have achieved career success.

*Event posts* – Announce and cover events such as open days, fairs, and conferences.

It's important that content is varied, platform-appropriate, and updated regularly. Social media marketing specialist at higher educational institution need to create a content plan that includes topics, publication dates, and content formats.

### 4. Engaging with the Audience

One of the key aspects of SMM is engaging with your audience. Don't forget to reply to comments, messages, and questions. Conduct online polls, contests, and quizzes to boost engagement. The goal is to build a community where users can share their opinions and receive timely responses.

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, all the given ideas, social media marketing in education play a crucial role in attracting students, enhancing institutional reputation, and ensuring long-term growth. However, to maximize the benefits of SMM, institutions must

develop clear strategies tailored to their target audiences, create engaging and relevant content, and actively interact with their followers. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, embracing social media marketing will remain a critical component for higher education institutions striving to remain competitive and relevant in the modern educational environment.

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