Impact of Digital Marketing in Promoting Student Enrolment Ratio in Private Universities: Changing Patterns of Higher Education Marketing

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Abstract

The Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) in higher education is a positive indicator for the development of any nation. The study investigated various perceived factors affecting the enrolment system adopted by the private universities. The perceived factors has been analysed through the extraction of weight vectors orthogonallyand then compared with demographic categorizations. The perceived factors extracted are third party portal and online counselling,Social media marketing,Website content and search engine optimisation, Advertisements in video portals,Advertisements in print media and admission campaigns.The implied findings will enhance the GER of the private universities and strengthen the higher education systemwith resilient and sustainable foundation.

Keywords: Higher Education,GER,Private universities, Digital marketing, Student enrolment ratio,perceived factors, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER),ANOVA

Introduction

Higher education scenario in India:

Education is an indispensable parameter for the overall development of the society.Hence access to education is the important facet enshrined in the human development policies.This is substantiated by the fact that the education is a tool through which a human mind can make all possible achievementsby reaping their latent ideas. In lieu of such contemporary thought of Reconstructionist and behaviourism, the investment towards higher education to ensure learning for all hassoared up contextually.Throughout the previous decade,the leading bodies and government of respective nations have invested highly in higher education.This can be more substantiated by the fact that the number of out-of-school children have been reduced from 106 million in 1999 to 68 million in 2008.The parameters for education have increased among the both genders thus up scaling the human development parameters across Inequality –adjusted Human development Index.In between the period of 1991 and 2007,the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education have improved from 84percent to 96 percent in developing nations of MiddleEast, North Africa, and South Asia. The improving enrolment in the early

education has paved way for the enrolment in the higher education system.Contrastingly,the situation is not in line with the progression of higher education in India as compared to developed nations. The percentage of students enrolled in the higher education in world varies from the 28% to 90%.On the other hand, the higher education enrolment percentage in India is estimated as 25.8% which is lower than the minimum enrolment percentage of higher education of world which is estimated as 28%.According to the reports published through All India Survey on Higher Education(AISHE),the enrolment in have dropped about the 5lakh in the undergraduate courses like Bachelor of Technology(B.Tech) and drop of about 6.6lakhs in case of Arts courses.This fact can be justified by the fact that the number of students enrolled in the B.Tech courses have drastically reduced to 37,70,949 in 2018-2019 from 42,54,919 in 2014-2015.The Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) is calculated for the age of 18-23 years in India.The enrolment in technical course indicates the infrastructural development and Progression in Information Technology. But the reports(TOI -2016-2017) of approval of 507 colleges have been approved for progressive closure by AICTE(All India Council For Technical Education) is a matter to be considered in order to revamp higher education system of India.

There is need reengineer or restructure the system in order to bring the country as per with the purviews of higher education with proper development indices .The reasons for decreasing enrolment can be attributed to complex socio economic texture ,gap in implementing the education policy at grassroots level,inaccessibility to information. On the other hand, economic slowdown in India is affecting the enrolment ratio in India indirectly. The mission of gaining competitive advantage with proper quality leaning methodology supported by Research development is inconceivable until and unless we can bring talented human resource in the purview of higher education system in India.

Emergence of digital technology:

According to the Ghotibifar.2017, the technological infusion in the existing way of doing business has changed the perception of the consumers. Similarly the business organisation have adopted various strategies through digital platform in order to sustain their holistic growth in the way forward journey (Lamberton and Stephen et al.2016).The digital marketing technology have relinquished with technological infusion.With the advancement of social media from being mere a message conveying tool to the experience based immersive tool for the digital technology users. The importance of digital marketing technology hassubterfuge to immersive based

experience of consumers(Kannan,2017).

A priori evaluation of marketing strategy and tools in higher education marketing:

The higher education's institutions use different strategy to promote their vision for higher education.In Indian scenario,the higher education institutions in India's adopt a mix of offline and online marketing promotion tools to increase their enrolment ratio.The education is rooted through various entrance examination system held in India.There were specific examinations which are held at the national level,state level and at the individual university level.The exams like Joint entrance exams for engineering,NEET,CLAT,CAT,MAT are held to screen the students according to their rank.Post exams,the students are left with the choice of choosing the university or college according to the course opted by them.According to the recent reports,the reputation of the college in terms of quality of teaching,geographical location,research and development,employment of alumni influences the enrolment process.Hence it's imperative for the universities to communicate their activity to the students so that the students get enrolled in the respective universities with proper information.

The Private universities in India adopt various tools like STP, segmenting targeting, and positioning for upscaling their enrolment and communicating their activity.The promotional camps according to the courses are held.The offline promotion camps are held specifically for any course or department as well as for the overall development.Even few universities organise their camps in the remote parts of society in order to inform students of that very region about their activity(Courses, placement).This helps to promote the enrolment by including eligible students residing in area where there is fewer scopes for higher education in India.

Infusion of digital marketing technology in student enrolment system:

The organisation whether they are profitmaking or not for profit are adapting the digital technology in order to endure them in the age of dynamically changing technology. Thedisruption of the traditional mode of operating an organisation through the emergence of the Information technology, automation, haspressed them to adopt the technology (Yadav and Pavlou.2014). In lieu of this, the digital marketing technologies have infiltrated in the horizons of the higher education scenario in India. The applications of the digital technology have prompted the higher educational institutions all over the world about the service they provide in their respective domain. Hence they are in favourable locus to exhibit the opportunities they

provide for the students(PATRUTIU BALTES, 2015).Previously the higher educational institutions used to communicate to the students through offline tools majorly. The reputable educational institutions used to promote them through the Television advertisements and Radio channels, FMchannels. The institutions with moderate financial budget allocated utilises print media tools ,Offline fairs and Promotions through magazine(Mazzarol.1998).The target consumers for the educational institutions are the young people and they have higher affinity for internet based applications through mobile devices. Hence digital marketing is imperative for higher educational institutions to use digital tools in order to communicate about their service(Truong and Simmons,2011).The use of digital marketing strengthen the brand value and helps in building the brand cognizance among the virtual community(Voorveld at al.2019, Thompkins et al.2019,Duff et al.2019,Poels et al.2019,Voorveld ,et al.2019).The higher educational institutions uses different digital marketing strategies in order to communicate their activities. The technologies like Search Engine Optimization, Social media applications,and content based advertisements in the Video portals like YouTube, student community pages in Facebook,Blogging,Webinars,E-learning tools.The higher educational institutions uses the Search Engine Optimisation helps in enhancing the organic click through rate(Satish and Sunil,2012). The higher educational institutions use the social media tools to convey their service to the student community which further helps this enterprises in building brand network(Boyd and Ellison,2018).According to the (Ghosal I, 2019)digital marketing have enhanced the convince in enhancing the enrolment of the students in Indian context.The author has further opined that digital marketing tools provide cost effective method for advertisement and marketing.The higher educational institutions can use this digital marketing technology in creating a virtual community among the students searching for specific type of course. (Kumar p et Al., 2019)Zervina O & Y Stukalina (2018) investigated one paper and examine some marketing strategies to be applied in a higher education institution in the agenda of customer-driven education.The authors have further opined that digital marketing strategies can help in overcoming the challenges to build effective marketing strategy. This will provide a strong network and better relationship management in the contemporary era of customer driven education.According to Gutterman,2009,Information and communication technology assists in achieving sustainable development. Castillo G & HaddudA (2018)have opined that the use of social media tools can help online students become more

engaged and interact more effectively with peers and instructors. Dubey P &Pandey D.K (February, 2019) explained that online admissionsystem can impact the satisfaction in higher educational institutions of Bilaspur. They have proposed model covering eight different dimensions namely student satisfaction, transparency and efficiency, information access, ease of use, safety and security, resource utilization and value for money was tested in the study.

Statement of the Problem:According to the survey on Higher education 2017-2018(released by Ministry of Human Resource Development Department of Higher Education,Government Of India),there are 903 universities,39050 colleges and 1011 standalone institutions .Among the 903 universities,343 universities are privately managed.The gross enrolment ratios in developed nations are comparatively higher.According to the secondary reports(uis.unesco.org),the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education of Germany is about 70% in 2017..The Gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education in tertiary education is 85.8% as in 2015.The gross enrolment ratio of China is 48.1% in 2018 which has been escalated by 2.4% from the year of 2018.the Gross enrolment Ratio for tertiary education of Russian Federation is 80.4% in 2015.In lieu of such conditions for India which is leaping ahead for Global leadership,the gross enrolment ratio of India is 25.8% which is relatively low as compared to developed nations.Even the enrolment ratio is not properly distributed among the levels of education.The number of students enrolled in under graduate programme is 79.2%of the total enrolled.Among them only 0.5% of the total enrolled for the undergraduate programmes,only 0.5% of them (1,61,412 students) are enrolled for research.This factor necessitates the gap in the enrolment system which is one of the reasons for the lower enrolment ratio of students.Though these issue encompassed by the complex socio economic scenario of the India,but the gap in the enrolment system cannot be overlooked.Hence,an attempt has been made to investigate the factors affecting the enrolment system of private universities of the West Bengal in the current scenario.The latest technological infusion in the enrolment system adopted by the universities has been investigated in the current time perspective.

Rationale of the research:

The West Bengal state is witnessing an escalating impact on the evolution of higher education system due to emergence of the Private universities.The private universities have increased the enrolment ratio of students.The study will examine the use of the digital marketing and promotion tools used by the private

universities of the West Bengal.This paper will explore the major modes of the admission system adopted by these private universities with relevance to both offline and digital marketing tools.The relevance of the digital marketing tools in this marketing mix technique(traditional and digital modes) in the current scenario.The affinity of the students towards this enrolment system will also be assessed.

Conceptual framework
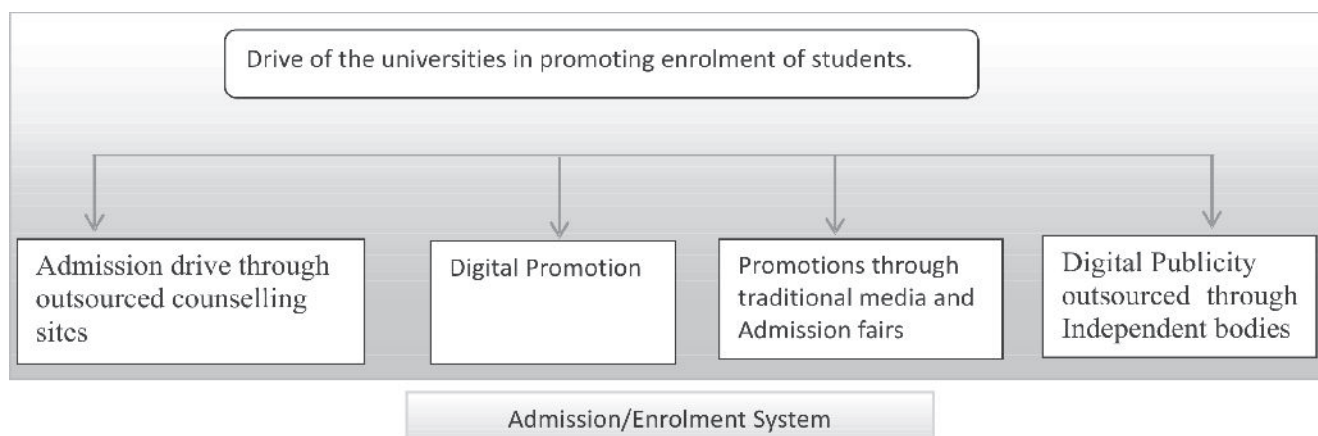
Significance of Study

I)   Implications for Higher Education sector to increase students'enrollment ratio.

II)   Justify those factors which promoted the respondents inadmission system with modern technology Digital Marketing in various private universitiesaround Kolkata District.

III) Validate the association among factors with demographic variables which can justify enhancementof number of students enrolling in higher education contemporarily as well as in time ahead.

Research objectives:

The higher education sector in India is facing challenges to increase the enrolment rate of the students. The research is an investigation about the enrolment system and its promotion tools infused with technological adjustment. Thestudy has also explored the relationship of the factors relating to the enrolment system and the demographic categorization of the respondents.

The specific research Objectives are as follows:

1) To identify those factors enhancing the Studentsenrollment rate of the private universities.

2) To identify the association between the factors enhancing the Student enrollment rate with reference to their demographic categorization.

Research Methodology

Study Settings and Designs:

The study is descriptive in nature. The data was collected from the students of various levels of education. The levels of education taken in this case are undergraduate programmes, postgraduateprogrammes. The students enrolled in the private universities are taken as the respondents. The size of the sample was determined according to the size of proportionality. The respondents are chosen from the random number generated from the excel sheet. Themethod of simple convenience sampling has been followed.

Questionnaire development and pilot testing:

The study has explored secondary sources of data in order to explore the enrollment system followed by the universities. Besidesthese, a qualitative investigation has been conducted with the audio recordings, Video recordings, and as well as face to face interviews.The questionnaire was formulated on the summated rating scale. The Five point likert scales have been used here with 1 referred to as strongly agree and 5 referred to as strongly disagree.The outputs of the interview are coded; transcribed and common word roots have been derived. The whole output have been an effective instrument to design questionnaire. Again the questionnaire was assessed to the experts and pilot tested to confirm it's construct validity.The Questionnaire framed was translated to Bengali and again translated back to English in order to achieve semantic consistency.The compliance of the paper

with construct validity,convergent validity,content validity,Representation validity,face validity ,criterion validity, concurrent validity and predictive validity have been checked. The method of Self-administered questionnaire have been used which defines that the respondent's take the responsibility of reading and answering the question.This method has been considered deemed as better mode as it reduces the bias and improves the quality of response.Questionnaire contains two parts: a) the demographic details of the respondents b) Reflective statements to find out the perceived impact of Digital Marketing in higher education for admission system in different private universities.

Empirical design:

The response from the questionnaire was coded in the table in the IBM SPSS 23 software.The exploratory factor analysis has been used in order to obtain the purpose of data redundancy.The Principal Component Method was used to extract the dimensions. Through the Principal Component Analysis,the data have been projected into the principal subspace.The principal have been spanned by the eigenvectors of the covariance matrix.The orthogonal rotation method by the Gram-Schmidt orthogonalization has been followed along with pertinent iterative thresh holding.The adequacy of the sample was verified through Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin test(KMO) and Bartlett's test.The factors affecting for enrolment system through Digital Marketing have been extracted through – variables through data redundancy techniques and Factor analysis with Rotated Component Matrix. Analysis of variance

(ANOVA) has been used to check the association among factors(Independent variables) with demographic variables.

Types of data used:

Primary data have been collected from the survey which is either coded qualitatively and quantitatively. Secondary sources of data have been collected through books,journals,reports,research studies,internet sources;the data from secondary sources was collected through books, journals, reports, research studies, internet sources, magazines, newspapers, and survey reports from the Department of Higher Education,MHRD as well as the Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal.

Hypothesis Formulation

H01: There is no significant association between 'Gender' and 'Student Enrolment system" with respect to factors.

H02: There is nosignificant association between 'Age' and 'Student Enrolment system' with respect tofactors.

H03: There is no significant association between 'Courses" and 'Student enrolment system' with respect to factors.

H05: There is nosignificant association between 'Area of residence' and 'Student Enrolmentsystem' with respect tofactors.

Data Analysis and Findings:

Table 1:

Items	Frequency	Percentage	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender			**Course**		
Male	65	54.16%	**Undergraduate**	68	56.66%
Female	55	45.83%	**Postgraduate**	52	43.33%
Age of the Respondents			**Types of Residence**		
18-21	45	37.5%	**Urban**	61	50.83%
22-24	25	20.83%	**Semi-Urban**	38	31.66%

Table 2:

Cronbrach's alpha	No. of items
0.771	120

Table 3:

Kaiser –Meyer –Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.902	
Bartletts test of sphericity	sig	.000

Factors obtained based on the Variance values:

Table 4

Statement of variables	Variance values	Factor
The third party portals like shiksha.com influences you towards admission in this university	.567 .	Third party portal and online counselling
During your decision making time, third party portals have helped by providing right information about the university.	705	
The websites of the third party portals provides pr oper counselling to the you	.771	
The third party portals provide right options about the choice and eligibility oftaking admission in particular degree.	.541	

Table 5

Statement of variables	Variance values	Factors
The Facebook page of the institutes have higher organic traffic	.506	Social media marketing
The micro blogging can promotes the students towards the institutes	.605	
The webinars have a propelling role in attracting students towards them	.546	
The Google Ads and search engine optimization have a influential effect in generating leads	.787	

Table 6

Statement of variables	Variance values	Factors
The website content guides you for taking admission	.710	Website content and Search Engine Optimization
The Information in the website have influence on the admission	0.837	
The placement information in the website helps in justifying your decision.	.771	
The information related to affiliation and collaboration is one of the guiding factor.	.522	

Table 7

Statement of variables	Variance values	Factors
The advertisement through video contents helps in justifying your choice for admission.	738	Advertisement in video portals
The content about the activities in the college through video portal creates cognizance about the college.	.700	
The video about campus live creates brand value and influences you.	.896	
The video about types of courses helps you choosing the right course available in the university for you.	.726	

Table 8

Statement of variables	Variance values	Factors
The education fairs helps you in knowing about the university.	.864	Advertisements in print media and Admission campaigns
The advertisements in newspapers provide a useful insight to you regarding information about admission notification.	.506	
The advertisements in the magazines gives a solution to the dilemma regarding the choice of university	.605	
The education fairs organised at the venues near your residence helps you in decision making without travelling long distance.	.546	

Table 9 (ANOVA table used to identify the significant association among Demographic variables and extracted factors though EFA method)

Variable	Significance value among the factors	Significance value(Positive association)
Gender	Third party portal and online counselling, social media marketing, Website content and search engine optimisation, Advertisement in video portals, Advertisements in print media and Admission campaigns	**Gender** is significantly associated with the **Social media marketing, Website content and Search Engine optimisation**
Age of respondents	Third party portal and online counselling, social media marketing, Website content and search engine optimisation, Advertisement in video portals, Advertisements in print media and Ad mission campaigns	**Age of respondents** is significantly associated with **Social media Marketing and Advertisement in video portals.**
Types of courses	Third party portal and online counselling, social media marketing, Website content and search engine optimisation, Advertisement in video portals, Advertisements in print media and Ad mission campaigns	**Types of courses** is significantly associated with **Website content and SearchEngine optimisation**
Area of residence	Third party portal and online counselling, social media marketing, Website content and search engine optimisation, Advertisement in video portals, Advertisements in print media and Admission campaigns.	Area of residence is related with**Advertisement in video portals** and **Advertisement in print media and Admission campaign.**

Findings through Factor Analysis:

1)Third Party Portal and Online Career Counselling:

In current scenario,the private universities outsource their marketing through external portals which provide counselling and information regarding their courses.The third party portals like shiksha,College Dunia,College Dekho provides service similar to these in addition to lead generation for student admission.The third party portals also provide counselling service and guide the students when they are in dilemma regarding their choice of career.They also serve the queries.This system aids the

students in informed decision making and provides right candidate to the university for the purpose of admission. Choosing right career decisions Henceforth this portals which is a part of information based digital marketing helps in opting for right career decisions and increases the enrolment rate of the students in higher education.

Social media marketing: Social media have been extensively used by the universities to connect with the students and other target groups. In this research, the factor of social media marketing is encapsulated with the behaviour like the usage of facebook app,microblogging app.Besides these the live webinars organised by the universities which are broadcasted online or live streamed have a propelling role in the promotion of the admission system.Besides these,the Google Ads and search engine optimisation have an influential effect in providing right information to the students.The social media have been used by the universities for the purpose of advertising, communication and marketing. Even few social media apps acts as a part of public relation management for the organisation.

Website Content and search engine optimisation:

Website content has been another source of relevant information about the university. In many case, it acts as the first point of encounter for the private university. The perceived impact of the website content of the university has a deeper impact. The factor of website content is embedded by its utility of guiding students about the type of course. The information of placement data, salary packages, collaborations with the foreign universities

provide a reliable feed for substantiating the decisions of the students. The information related to the eligibility of the students helps the interested students to know and prepare about the national entrance examinations. The previous year's cut off list helps the students to prepare for the admission in the college in advance.

Advertisements through video portals: The universities have their separate channels in the video portals where they upload various videos related to the education scenario of various departments. Information related to various innovations and research is also uploaded here.Even they are advertised through content based ads in these video portals. The affinity of the students towards these video portals lies in its utility in justifying the choice of admission,increasing cognizance about the respective university and concerned departments.

Advertisement in print media and admission campaigns: The advertisements through print media and campaigns have a detrimental effect in enhancing enrolment rate in the areas with limited internet accessibility and technological penetration. Though the effect of these campaigns is diminishing day by day due to technology based cost effective disruption in advertisements.But to specific segments of their population,it is still relevant. Through advertisements in print media,much useful information can be provided to the students regarding starting of admission session, notification about entrance examination,aptitude test.These advertisements and campaigns can be beneficial to the students residing in the remote areas with limited

Proposed Framework: Refined Model after Data Analysis
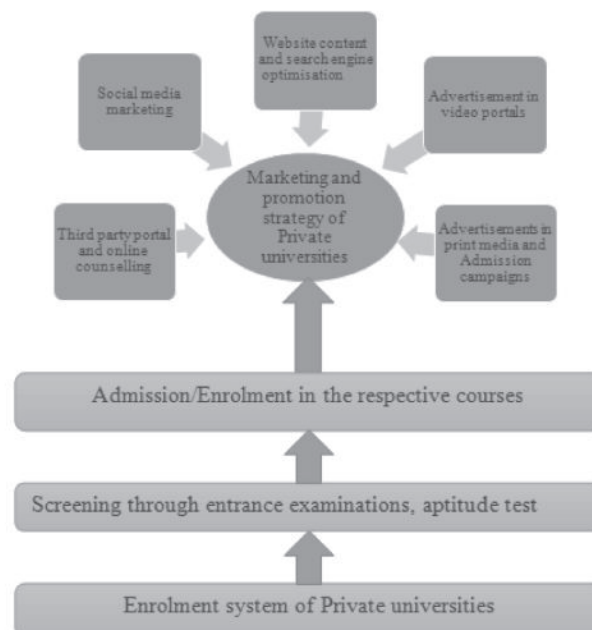
Findings through ANOVA:

The ANOVA is an effective tool that will help to test a specific hypothesis is generated about the population parameter. The statistics of the sample is then tested to conclude about the hypothesis. While testing the parameters through ANOVA,it have been found that Gender categorization have been found to shown the significant association with "Social media marketing" and "Website Content and Search Engine Optimisation".The Age of Respondents showing significant association with the "social media marketing" and "Advertisement in video portals". The variable of Types of Courses has been showing positive association with the Website content and the search engine optimisation. The Area of residence has been showing positive association with the Advertisement in video portal as well as Advertisements in print media and Admission campaigns.

Conclusion

The factors that have been obtained through the data reduction are "Third party portal and online counselling", "social media marketing", "website content and search engine optimisation". The other factors that have been obtained are advertisements in video portals, advertisement in Print media and Admission campaigns. The social media marketing tool have been used extensively as their internet consumption pattern is majorly chunked by social media. Search engine optimisation helps in enhancing the visibility of the website through the improvement of unpaid results. The association of the factors have been validated through F-statistics and comparison of means of the group. The method of comparison of mean and the F-statistic have extracted positive association of the demographic categorization with factors abstracted. The factor of Gender and Types of Courses are significantly associated with the Website content and the search engine optimisation. The statistical analysis has inferred that social media marketing has been significantly associated with the Gender and Type of course categorization of the sample. Thus the study will help in structural analysis of the factors affecting the admission in higher education institutions or universities. The knowledge of this scenario will help the private universities in content framing and analysis of the promotion which in turn increase the GER of the students.

Managerial and academic implications:

The higher education scenario is witnessing a latent changes by the impact of policy changes, MFD (Maximising Fund for Dependency), as well as by the drift by the dynamic job market. In such case,keeping pace with the Global and National challenges and optimise the resource utilisation, is a major factor for the higher education institutes.Similarly, the recent upsurge of private universities has also led to the concept of Self driven sustainability. In lieu of such cases, it is important to know about the likelihood of the Indian students and the ways to drive them towards higher education. In such cases, it only by knowing the Indian students and connecting them with the Global curriculum with in national paradigm within reach of their nearest Venue. The implied findings of the paper will help the private universities to analyse the proper content through which they can drive students towards their educational venture. Though according to the recent findings of AISHE,the number of students enrolling even for higher education research is low as compared to the developed nations of the world. The data from the AISHE 2018-2019, have also indicated that only 2.5% percent colleges in India conduct PhD programmes. In the year of 2018-2019, a total of 1, 69, 170 students have been enrolled for the PhD programmes which are even less than 0.5% of the students enrolled. This necessitates that the private universities in India which are numbered as 341(Self-Aided), it is very important to analyse the affinity of the students, so that they can be motivated for higher education. Similarly for the courses like B.Tech and B.E courses, the enrolment was 42,54,919(AISHE-2014-15) which fell to 37,70,949(AISHE 2018-2019).The enrolment of the students in arts course fell from 98,60,520 to 91,98,205 in the same period. This declining trend can be improved in positive direction through many ways.But the value of this paper lies that the findings in this research will be a boosting factor for the private universities to customise their promotion strategy according to the students and linking them with the global scenario which will improve India's GER. This in turn enhances the sustainability of the universities with resilient foundation.

Limitation and Future Scope

The study is limited with geographical limitation which includes research coverage to the private universities of the Kolkata only.

Comparative analysis of the Private universities and state universities can also help in better assessment in future course.

The impact of the accreditation(NAAC) and Rankings of NIRF have not been considered in this case.

The link of the enrolment rate with detailed clustering of the complex socio-economic condition has not been considered.

The role of the factors on the specific type of course can also help in more detailed assessment.

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