# THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE INTENTION TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the significant influence of social media on students' perceptions and their intention to pursue higher education. As digital technologies rapidly evolve, social media's "five freedoms"—freedom in time, geography, scale, format, and control—have become integral in transcending traditional media limitations, fostering global communication, and enhancing educational experiences. The research highlights how social media enhances interaction between students and educators, thereby improving student engagement and educational quality. Trust, a foundational element in digital environments, is crucial for user engagement and is defined by benevolence, integrity, competence, and predictability. The study finds that effectively integrating social media technologies in education can increase students' trust, leading to more positive learning behaviors and better academic outcomes. Additionally, perceived value plays a pivotal role in students' decisions to engage with online learning platforms, influenced by factors such as functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional value. The image of educational institutions, shaped by effective use of social media, significantly impacts market performance and public perception. The findings underscore the need for higher education institutions to strategically manage their online presence to build trust and enhance perceived value among prospective students, thus improving their competitiveness in the digital age.
**Keywords:** Social Media, Trust, Perceived, Value Image, Intention to Pursue Education.

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, with the acceleration of globalization and the rapid development of digital technologies, social media has become an indispensable part of everyday life. The advancement of digital technology has enabled people to communicate and access information more conveniently and efficiently. According to recent data, global internet users have increased from 4.9 billion in 2021 to 5.4 billion in 2023, representing 67% of the world's population. This digital transformation has significantly impacted not only personal lives but also various sectors such as education, business, society, and culture. Social media has emerged as a crucial factor in driving and stimulating public interest. Educational institutions in the digital age must continuously adapt to technological changes. Moreover, social media plays a key role in enhancing the quality of education and promoting student engagement. The application of virtual reality technology has greatly increased interactivity and immersion in educational environments, particularly in distance learning and blended learning models, which have significantly improved student participation and learning outcomes. The use of social media and new media technologies in education has become a vital tool for increasing competitiveness and has a persuasive influence that encourages individuals to become part of the institution. In the context of digital transformation, effectively leveraging these technologies not only improves educational quality and increases students' willingness to learn but also presents a significant challenge for universities aiming to make their institutions appealing to the public, thereby positioning themselves as top choices for further education. Successfully launching and creating interest among target audiences, as well as influencing their decisions to pursue higher education, has become increasingly important.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Social Media

In contemporary society, social media has become a powerful force influencing how people communicate, interact socially, and disseminate information. With the advancement of digital technologies, social media has integrated into nearly every aspect of daily life, significantly impacting sectors such as education, business, and culture. Social media is characterized by its "five freedoms" - freedom of time, geographic boundaries, scale, format, and control, as highlighted by Wertime and Fenwick (2008). These characteristics enable social media to transcend the limitations of traditional media, facilitating global communication and interaction. Burnett and Marshall (2003) emphasize that the core of new media lies in its interactivity, allowing users to take a more active role in the communication process and participate in the creation and sharing of information through various channels (text, audio, video, etc.). This interactivity is particularly evident in the fields of education and business, where social media platforms are widely used to enhance user experience and customer loyalty. Furthermore, Aldahdouh (2020) demonstrates that the integration of social media into education significantly enhances student engagement and interaction, especially in remote and blended learning environments. Social media effectively facilitates communication and collaboration between students and educators. Yu (2022) further explores the innovative application of social media in visual communication design, finding that social media not only enhances students' creativity but also increases the influence and reputation of educational institutions.

**Table 1**: Key characteristics of social media

| Researcher | Freedom of Time | Freedom of Geography | Freedom of Scale | Freedom of Format | Freedom of Control | Interactivity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wertime & Fenwick (2008) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | - |
| Burnett & Marshall (2003) | √ | √ | √ | √ | - | √ |
| Aldahdouh (2020) | - | - | - | - | - | √ |
| Yu (2022) | - | - | - | - | - | √ |

**Trust**

In digital and online environments, trust is considered the foundation for user engagement and relationship maintenance. McKnight and Chervany (2001) identified four main components of trust: benevolence, integrity, competence, and predictability. These elements collectively enhance users' trust in digital platforms, influencing their decisions and behaviors.Trust is particularly crucial in e-commerce and social media. Kim and Park (2013) highlighted that trust behaviors include cooperation, information sharing, accepting influence, and transacting, which are central to user interaction in digital environments. As social media becomes more widely adopted, building and maintaining user trust becomes increasingly important, directly impacting user engagement and loyalty.

In the field of education, Aldahdouh (2020) found that effective integration of social media technologies by educators can increase students' trust, leading to more positive learning behaviors and better academic outcomes.

**Table 2**: Components of trust

| Researcher | Benevolence | Integrity | Competence | Predictability | Structural Assurance | Situational Normality | Cooperation | Information Sharing | Accepting Influence | Transaction |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| McKnight & Chervany (2001) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | - | - | - | - |
| Kim & Park (2013) | - | - | √ | √ | - | - | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Aldahdouh (2020) | - | - | - | - | - | - | √ | √ | - | - |

**Perceived Value**

Perceived value refers to the overall assessment that consumers make about a product or service, typically based on dimensions such as quality, price, functionality, social value, and emotional value. Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived value as the consumer's overall perception of the utility of a product or service, formed by weighing the benefits against the costs involved in the decision-making process. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) expanded on this concept by identifying five key dimensions of perceived value: (1) Functional Value – the utility derived from the product or service's ability to fulfill basic needs; (2) Social Value – the utility derived from the product or service's ability to enhance social standing or identity; (3) Emotional Value - the feelings or affective states that the product or service generates; (4) Epistemic Value-the utility derived from the product or service's ability to provide new experiences; and (5) Conditional Value – the utility derived from a product or service's ability to meet specific needs in particular circumstances. In the field of education, perceived value plays a significant role in influencing students' decisions to engage with online learning platforms. Research by Hirankasi and Klungjaturavet (2021) supports this view, showing that perceived value significantly impacts students' choices regarding educational platforms.

**Table 3**: Components of perceived value

| Researcher | Functional Value | Social Value | Emotional Value | Epistemic Value | Conditional Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zeithaml (1988) | √ | √ | √ | - | - |
| Sweeney & Soutar (2001) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Hirankasi & Klungjaturavet (2021) | √ | √ | √ | √ | - |
| Kim & Park (2013) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |

**Image**

Image refers to the overall perception and evaluation of an organization by the public, typically encompassing product image, brand image, and institutional image. Kotler (2000) defines image as the perception that the public holds about an organization, which is influenced by factors such as advertising, promotional activities, social responsibility, and public welfare initiatives. Hirankasi and Klungjaturavet (2021) emphasize that a strong organizational image is crucial for market performance and public perception, especially in the education sector. A

positive institutional image can significantly enhance student loyalty and boost the school's brand influence. Kim and Park (2013) further note that effective use of social media by educational institutions can greatly improve their institutional image, thereby increasing trust and a sense of belonging among students and the public.

As competition in higher education intensifies, private institutions face the challenge of creating distinctive academic images and differentiated value propositions to attract students. Research indicates that a unique academic image and strong brand value are essential for attracting and retaining high-quality students.

**Table 4:** Components of image

| Researcher | Product/Service Image | Brand Image | Institutional Image | Advertising | Promotion | Social Responsibility | Public Welfare Activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kotler (2000) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Hirankasi & Klungjaturavet (2021) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Kim & Park (2013) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

This case study indicates that there were four variables such as social media, trust, perceived value, and image that influenced on the intention to pursue education.
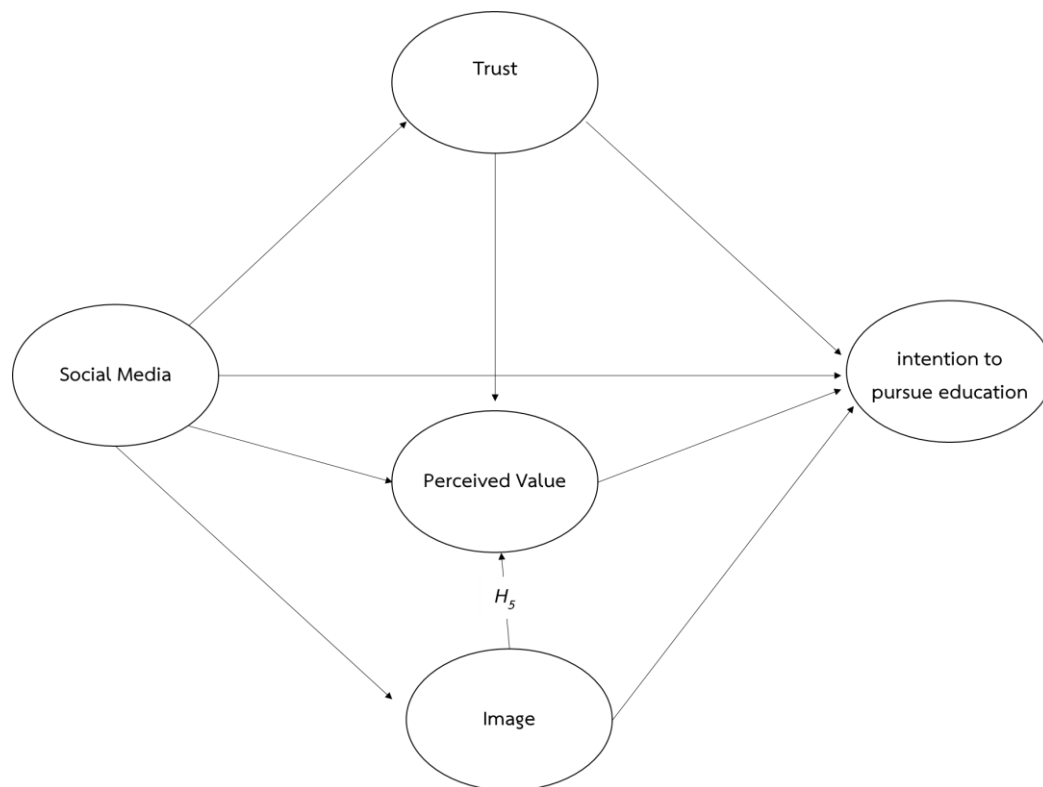


**Figure 1:** Research framework

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The impact of social media on the educational sector, particularly in shaping students' perceptions and intentions to study, has become increasingly significant in the digital age. Higher education institutions face both challenges and opportunities in leveraging digital transformation. Social media's "five freedoms"—freedom in time, geography, scale, format, and control—have transcended the limitations of traditional media, fostering global

communication and interaction. The interactivity of social media is crucial in education, enhancing communication and collaboration between students and educators, and improving student engagement and educational quality. Trust is the cornerstone of user engagement and relationship maintenance in digital environments. McKnight and Chervany (2001) define trust as comprising four main components: benevolence, integrity, competence, and predictability. These elements collectively enhance users' trust in digital platforms, influencing their decisions and behaviors. Aldahdouh's (2020) research found that effectively integrating social media technologies by educators can increase student trust, leading to more positive learning behaviors and better academic outcomes. Perceived value, which refers to the overall assessment consumers make about a product or service, plays a significant role in influencing students' decisions to engage with online learning platforms. Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived value as the consumer's overall perception of the utility of a product or service, formed by weighing the benefits against the costs involved in the decision-making process. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) expanded on this concept by identifying five key dimensions of perceived value: Functional Value, Social Value, Emotional Value, Epistemic Value, and Conditional Value. Image, which encompasses product, brand, and institutional perceptions, is vital for market performance and public perception, especially in higher education. Kotler (2000) defines image as the perception the public holds of an organization, influenced by factors such as advertising, promotional activities, social responsibility, and public welfare initiatives. Hirankasi and Klungjaturavet (2021) emphasize that a strong organizational image is crucial for market performance and public perception, particularly in the education sector. Effective use of social media by educational institutions can greatly improve their image, thereby increasing trust and a sense of belonging among students and the public. This study underscores the necessity for higher education institutions to strategically manage their online presence to foster trust and enhance perceived value among prospective students.

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