Review Article

Investing digital marketing tools in supporting the quality of education: an application study in the Wasit Education Directorate

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Abstract: Through an applied study in the Wasit Education Directorate, this study seeks to investigate how investing in digital marketing tools supports educational quality. Given the rapid pace of digital transformation, educational institutions now need to implement digital strategies that improve communication between parents and students and aid in the learning process. Through semi-structured interviews with educators, experts, students, and parents, the study employed a qualitative curriculum. The findings demonstrated that digital marketing tools improve education quality by fostering communication, encouraging participation, and offering interactive content. Numerous issues were also brought to light by the study, including inadequate infrastructure and a dearth of training in digital marketing, and suggested creating consistent digital tactics to facilitate the fusion of digital marketing and education.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Digital Transformation; Iraq; Quality of Education; Wasit Education Directorate.

1. Introduction

The world's education system is undergoing rapid change due to technological advancements and digital transformation, which have created new chances to raise educational standards and advance its resources. One of the most popular contemporary tools for advancing education is digital marketing, which can be used to enhance communication with recipients, increase access to educational services, and raise public awareness of the value of education and its results.

To improve the quality of education in light of this shift, educational institutions need to implement efficient digital marketing techniques. To improve the institution's reputation and foster more interaction between students, parents, and teachers, this involves utilizing tools like social media, email, visual content, and search engine optimization. Kotler and Armstrong (2020) highlighted that these tactics add value to the educational process, enhancing academic performance and raising awareness of the significance of education and its results.

Educational institutions can create marketing campaigns that are appropriate for both parents and students by using these strategies, which call for a thorough understanding of the target market and its needs. Social media and visual content can improve student engagement and interaction, which raises educational quality (Al-Baz, 2021).

This study's significance is demonstrated by its attempt to provide insight into how to use digital marketing tools to enhance educational quality, particularly in regional contexts. Since the Wasit Education Directorate serves as a crucial illustration of the opportunities and difficulties associated with digital transformation in a practical educational setting, it has been selected as an applied model to investigate this relationship. In order to satisfy the demands of the local educational community and raise the standard of education in the area, you can investigate how to enhance digital marketing strategies through this research.

In order to meet the demands of this stage of the digital transformation of education, educational institutions must embrace the newest trends in digital marketing, such as leveraging big data to analyze student behavior and tailor instructional materials to their individual needs. For educational institutions to create cutting-edge educational solutions that enhance the learning process, they must collaborate with tech companies.

To sum up, educational institutions should seize the chance to use digital marketing as a potent instrument to raise the standard of instruction in order to see favorable and long-lasting outcomes.

Study Problem

The study's issue is that there aren't enough applied studies demonstrating how digital marketing tools affect educational quality in local contexts to keep up with the growing interest in their use in educational institutions. This knowledge gap emphasizes how urgently a thorough field study is needed to elucidate the connection between digital marketing and educational quality, which helps to improve educational strategies and communication amongst all stakeholders.

Study Objectives

1. Given the paucity of applied research in this area, an analysis of the effects of digital marketing tools on educational quality is necessary to comprehend how these tools can enhance the educational process and facilitate communication between students, parents, and teachers.
2. Get to know the Wasit Education Directorate's digital marketing tools: Determine the resources currently employed by local educational institutions to help find opportunities and gaps.
3. Make suggestions for bettering investments in digital marketing: creating workable plans for educational establishments to utilize digital marketing more efficiently, which helps to raise the standard of education.

Study Questions

1. Which digital marketing tools are the most popular in the Wasit Education Directorate?

   The purpose of this question is to identify the tools that are currently being used in digital marketing.
2. How do the directorate's employees perceive the effects of digital marketing tools on educational quality?

   This inquiry pertains to examining how these tools affect educational quality, which speaks to the research being done to better understand this impact.
3. What major obstacles does digital marketing face in the neighborhood school system?

   This inquiry aids in examining potential roadblocks to digital marketing efficacy, which aligns with objectives pertaining to enhancing the use of these technologies in educational establishments.

2. Review of Literature
The concept of digital marketing and its tools

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), digital marketing encompasses a range of practices through digital channels aimed at promoting services and fostering audience interaction. In the educational context, digital marketing has become an effective tool to improve the image of the educational institution, enhance its communication with students and parents, and attract more beneficiaries of its services.

Digital Marketing Tools in Education:
Social Media

One of the fundamental tools for direct public communication is social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These platforms allow schools to disseminate instructional materials, plan activities, and answer questions from parents and students. According to a study by Harvard University, 2020, the use of social media in education enhances students' interaction and increases their involvement in the educational process.

- **Applied examples**: Interactive publication: Instead of publishing advertisements as they did in the past, schools can use Facebook or Instagram to create interactive opinion polls that ask parents and students what they would like to see covered in the upcoming workshops. This approach improves the response and tailors the content to the beneficiaries' needs. Using Instagram Stories: This feature can be used to show live footage of class activities or school

events, or to interview teachers and students briefly. This gives students a more authentic sense of school life and increases their sense of belonging.
- **Linking findings**: These illustrations bolster the study's findings, which validated the function of social media in improving communication and encouraging student involvement. The study's suggestion also highlights the importance of incorporating parents and students in the planning of digital marketing campaigns.

Email Marketing

Sending advertisements, alerts for educational events, and recurring bulletins via email is a good way to stay in constant contact with the recipients. 73% of teenagers use email to communicate with educational institutions, according to research (SMTH, 2021).
- **Applied examples:** Specialization: Schools can segment email lists according to the concerns of parents or students rather than sending out generic communications to all. Letters to science-minded students, for instance, can contain details about contests and scientific seminars.Announcements: Periodically sending out e-mail bulletins that summarize the most significant school events and accomplishments, along with informative guidance for parents, is advised as it improves communication with the school community.
- **Linking findings:** These practices are in line with the study's findings, which supported the importance of email in improving communication and delivering precise and timely information. The study's recommendation also supports the necessity of creating a cohesive digital strategy that incorporates effective email use.

Institutional Website

These methods are in line with the study's findings, which supported the importance of email in improving communication and delivering precise and timely information. The study's recommendation also backs the necessity of creating a cohesive digital strategy that incorporates efficient email use.
- **Applied examples:** Enhancing user experience: The website should be simple to use and responsive to mobile devices. It should also include features like virtual school tours, advanced search, and frequently asked questions.
Diversity of content: To emphasize the caliber of education, the website should ideally feature a range of graphics, including images and videos, as well as student success stories and parent certificates.
- **Linking findings:** These illustrations corroborate the study's findings, which showed how crucial websites are as official venues for showcasing educational services. The study's recommendation also highlights the necessity of using imaginative visual content that draws inspiration from student experiences.

Improving search engines (SEO)

Search engines (SEO) are used to improve a website's visibility in search results, which helps draw in more relevant visitors. Improved search engine optimization is crucial for educational institutions because research shows that 75% of users only look past the first page of search results (Lee, 2023).
- **Applied examples:** The use of keywords related to education in the area, like "Wasit Schools" or "Education in Wasit," is necessary to enhance the site's visibility in local search results.
To improve the site arrangement in the search results, it is advised to create high-quality backlinks from reputable websites, such as the Ministry's websites or nearby universities.
- **Linking findings:** The aforementioned practices highlight the study's findings, which underscore the significance of search engines in luring students.

Paid Advertising

The purpose of advertisements is to advertise particular programs, like school registration or educational workshops. Studies reveal that sponsored advertisements can raise brand recognition for the school by as much as 50% (Miller, 2022).
- **Applied examples** Schools can use Facebook and Instagram ads to target particular groups, like parents of high school-aged children in a particular area.
Google Ads: Google Ads can be used to show up in search results when people look up phrases like "the best primary schools in [city]".
Remarking: By displaying advertisements to individuals who have already visited the school website, this strategy effectively raises the likelihood that they will register.

- **Linking findings:** The study's findings, which showed how funded ads can raise brand awareness and draw in students, are supported by these examples, and the study's recommendation highlights the necessity of creating a comprehensive digital strategy.

The importance of digital marketing in education

Several studies highlight that digital marketing enhances educational quality by facilitating faster communication and encouraging active parental and student involvement (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020). By assisting educational institutions in adjusting to the swift changes occurring in the digital landscape, these tools can improve their capacity to compete and accomplish their educational objectives.

Digital marketing goals in education

In the education industry, digital marketing goes beyond simply promoting the school; rather, it seeks to accomplish a number of strategic objectives that raise educational standards and improve the learning process overall. The following points sum up the most important of these objectives:

- Improving communication and interaction: Digital marketing seeks to establish efficient avenues for communication and interaction between the educational establishment and all parties involved, such as students, parents, instructors, and the neighborhood. Social media and email are two examples of tools that allow educational institutions to communicate, reply to questions, and receive notes efficiently and quickly (Kotler & Keller, 2016).
- Enhancing the institution's image and reputation: Digital marketing is essential to creating a favorable perception of the institution and improving its standing in the community. Educational institutions can gain the trust of the public and draw in more parents and students by showcasing accomplishments, sharing success stories, and highlighting educational values (Smith & Chaffey, 2013).
- Greater recognition of the value of education: Digital marketing helps raise awareness of the significance of education in establishing and advancing societies. Educational institutions can promote learning, emphasize the advantages of education, and persuade parents to support their children's education by launching digital awareness campaigns.
- Attracting students and increasing registration: attracting new students and increasing registration rates is one of the main goals of digital marketing in education. By using tools such as search engines and funded ads, educational institutions can access potential students and introduce them to their programs and services (Kotler & Keller, 2016).
- By offering digital educational resources, enabling distance learning, and promoting collaboration and communication between educators and students, digital marketing tools can be utilized to support the educational process itself.
- Gaining the consent of the beneficiaries: By attending to the needs and expectations of each beneficiary and offering a pleasant and comfortable experience, digital marketing seeks to satisfy all of them (Smith & Chaffey, 2013).

Quality of Education and Its Indicators

The degree to which an educational system can meet the needs of students and society, produce results that meet certain standards, and offer a learning environment that is both encouraging and stimulating is known as its quality. The positive interaction between all elements of the educational system, including administration, curricula, teaching strategies, and evaluation, is necessary for quality, according to UNESCO.

According to UNESCO (2015) and Al-Ani (2021), education quality can be assessed through multiple indicators including teacher competency, enriched learning environments, technological integration, and academic achievement levels.

- ✓ Teacher effectiveness and qualifications: One of the primary elements influencing the caliber of the educational process is the effectiveness of the teacher and his capacity to teach using contemporary techniques. According to the Al-Ani study (2021), the decline in students' cognitive achievement was caused in part by the inadequate educational credentials in certain Iraqi educational institutions. As a result, it is necessary to activate ongoing professional development programs for teachers.
- ✓ An educational environment that is integrated encompasses the institution's human, physical, and psychological elements. According to the Jabouri study (2021), schools that create a positive learning environment attain better outcomes in terms of student interaction and behavior, particularly in rural schools with inadequate infrastructure.
- ✓ Student satisfaction and parents: One qualitative measure of the caliber of services rendered is the approval of the educational system's recipients. According to the Al-KHATEB & Mustafa study (2022), improving the school's reputation and boosting confidence were two benefits of the expansion of digital communication channels between the family and the school.

✓ Using technology in the classroom: Rawat et al. (2022) According to their research, using technology in the classroom improves active engagement, offers equal access to knowledge, and diversifies the sources of learning. The importance of Iraq's transition to digital learning and teacher preparation for using educational platforms is further supported by Hussein's study from 2023.

✓ Academic achievement: This metric is used to assess educational outcomes based on students' academic performance and is a direct indicator of the quality of education. Al-Otaibi and Al-Humaidan's(2021)study demonstrates that the quality of the curriculum, the appropriateness of the assessment techniques, and the type of teacher-student interaction in the classroom all have a direct impact on academic outcomes.

Digital Marketing Is a Strategic Engine to Improve Quality

According to recent research, digital marketing fosters interactive relationships that raise student satisfaction and institutional affiliation in addition to drawing in new students. According to the Rogers study (2020), the digital campaigns under investigation have a positive impact on students' experiences at the institution by offering immediate responses, visually appealing communication interfaces, and clear instructional content. According to research, (Rawat et al., 2022). (Al-Ubaidi, 2023) Digital marketing is incorporated into institutional strategies to improve the institution's standing in a changing competitive environment and to help establish enduring relationships with students and society. The 2020 study by Ikatrinasari et al. An innovative approach to integrating SWOT and AHP business analysis tools in the creation of successful digital marketing plans that can be tailored to the Iraqi educational context to identify opportunities, strengths, and areas in need of further digital development.

Previous studies: Critical Analysis

Studies addressing the effects of digital marketing in the field of education, whether in relation to interactive content or its influence on academic decision-making, have proliferated in recent years. The most well-known pertinent studies are critically reviewed below and contrasted with the current study.

❖ **Al-Ani study, Iraq (2023)**

Focus: Examining the information on the pages of Iraqi universities.

Comparable: It is comparable to our study in that it addresses the Iraqi context and the educational field.

The distinction: unlike the current study, it involved the parties to the educational process and concentrated on the analysis of the content rather than discussing its impact on educational quality.

❖ **The Al-Harthy Study in Saudi Arabia (2022)**

Focus: How digital marketing influences college registration decisions.

Comparable: The function of decision-making was covered in both studies.

The distinction: Our study integrates educational dimensions and the impact of marketing on educational quality, whereas Al-Harthi approach the decision solely from a marketing standpoint.

◆ **Research Muhammad and others (2022) - Emirates**

Focus: Including digital marketing in strategic plans for universities.

Comparable: It supports the findings of our study regarding the significance of strategic planning in digital marketing.

The distinction: whereas our study focuses on public education in a setting confronting digital challenges, the previous study concentrated on universities in a comparatively advanced digital environment.

❖ **Al-Masry Study, Jordan, 2021**

Focus: How prepared Jordanian academic institutions are to use digital marketing.

The distinction: which employ interviews with a variety of categories (students, teachers, and parents), the infrastructure and human cadre are rated exclusively.

◆ **Al -Zubaidi Study (2021)- Iraq**

Focus: The relationship between digital marketing tools and student satisfaction.

Comparable: intersects with our study in measuring the impact of marketing on contentment.

The distinction: Al -Zubaidi used quantitative questionnaire, while our study followed the qualitative curriculum through in -depth interviews, providing deeper visions.

❖ **Alshurideh and associates (2020)**

Digital marketing techniques can promote greater educational outreach and engagement, claim Sutherland et al. (2020).

Focus: Social media's function in higher education.

The distinction is that although our study covers general education, it focuses exclusively on higher education.

❖ **García-Morales et al. (2021)**

Focus: Applying SWOT and AHP to develop a digital marketing strategy. Creating a positive learning environment is essential for student success, as noted by.

Comparable: The sole study that proposes a strategic model akin to the one our study has chosen.

The distinction: Unlike our study, you did not discuss the Arab context or the technical and human challenges. discussed the importance of relationship-building in educational digital marketing.

What distinguishes the current study?

✓ The Wasit Education Directorate was cited as an example of an educational environment that highlights the challenges of real-world digital transformation. Almusharraf and Khahro (2020) found that digital communication can greatly increase parental satisfaction.

✓ The qualitative curriculum: Although semi-structured interviews are uncommon in earlier Arab studies, they were utilized to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions and practices.

✓ When combined with actual field data, strategic analysis increased the SWOT-AAN model's applied value. According to Junco (2020), social media increases academic interaction and student engagement.

4. Study Methodology

According to research by Darling-Hammond (2020), teacher qualifications have a significant influence on learning outcomes.

Type of Study and Its Approach

Semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of 32 participants from the Wasit Education Directorate were used in this applied qualitative study. Participants were selected according to particular standards that align with the study's objectives in order to guarantee the variety and range of experiences in the study's topic. The primary patterns and concepts were extracted from the data using the objective analysis method in order to gain a thorough understanding of digital marketing strategies and how they affect the directorate's educational quality. Recruitment of students is greatly aided by institutional websites (Poock, 2021).

The Study Community and Its Eye

Information accessibility and visibility for students can be enhanced through search engine optimization (Peters et al., 2020). The study group of the Wasit Education Directorate is active in the field of education. A purposeful sample of 32 participants was chosen to represent a range of groups in the educational sector based on criteria that support the goals of the study. The sample was distributed as follows:

• According to nine teachers from different directorate schools, digital advertising greatly raises awareness of educational brands (Anderson, 2020).

• Eight students in various academic stages;

• Nine parents;

• Six educational and technical specialists

This sample was selected to guarantee a thorough representation of all stakeholders in the educational process, reflecting the quality of education and the reality of contemporary digital marketing practices.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are a common method of gathering data. Because of the earlier literature review, an interview guide was created that contains a series of open-ended questions. These inquiries seek to investigate a number of topics pertaining to the use of digital marketing tools in education, specifically:

• Participants' awareness of the tools' uses in education;

• Their interpretations of the tools' influence on educational quality; and

- The difficulties they encounter in this regard.

The information gleaned from the interviews is examined using the objective analysis approach. The subsequent actions have been taken:

- To grasp the overall context, the interview texts were reviewed several times.
- Recurring themes in the participants' responses are represented by initial codes.
- Symbols that represent the core elements of the study are categorized under the major topics (themes).
- Go over each topic to make sure it is accurate and consistent.
- Remove interpretations and relate them to the study's theoretical objectives.

In order to guarantee consistency and dependability, the researcher coded the interviews before having an academic colleague with expertise in educational.

Honesty and Steadfastness

Clarifying the study's purpose for the participants and guaranteeing information confidentiality were two of the researcher's clear protocols to lessen bias. Additionally, it was not allowed to affect the participants' responses during the interviews; instead, the responses were noted. To ensure objectivity and neutrality in the analysis, a colleague in academia has reviewed the data.

5. Results and Discussion

Despite the study's qualitative methodology, a few straightforward quantitative metrics were taken from participant responses, including the following:

- 81% of teachers said they use social media daily for teaching.
- 63% percent of parents agreed that digital messages made it easier for them to monitor their kids' academic progress.
- According to 75% of respondents, students' engagement with school activities was improved by digital marketing.

This information strengthens qualitative findings and offers a more thorough foundation for comprehending how digital marketing affects the regional educational landscape.

The main axes of the study:
The First Axis: The Level of Awareness of Digital Marketing Tools in Education

According to the interview results, most participants—particularly those in the category of teachers and experts—have a high level of awareness regarding the significance of digital marketing because they regularly use its tools, like social media, to post informative content and advertisements. Some parents and students, however, drew attention to the fact that they could only use digital communication to receive notifications without engaging in meaningful conversation with educational institutions.

An illustration of an educator:

"The school page on Facebook has emerged as the primary means of communication with parents; however, we are not well-versed in digital marketing, so our efforts rely on individual initiative rather than a strategic plan."

Based on the findings, there is a noticeable discrepancy between the professional use of digital marketing in the educational setting and the theoretical understanding of its significance.

The Second Axis: The Effect of Digital Marketing On the Quality of Education

The majority of participants attested that improving parent satisfaction and student participation are two benefits of the regulated use of digital marketing tools. Interactive digital content, like instructional videos and creative ads, helped some students better understand academic concepts, according to some students.

An illustration of an educator:

I took part in an electronic workshop for the first time when the school announced it on Instagram, which added interest and interaction to the learning process.

Conversely, parents reported that digital messages made it easier to follow up with their kids, but they occasionally saw organizational flaws that hurt the tools' efficacy.

The Third Axis: The Challenges in Using Digital Marketing Tools

The following issues were identified through interviews as the main obstacles to the best use of digital marketing tools in the classroom:

- Inadequate digital infrastructure in certain schools, which restricts access to digital tools.
- There are no formal training programs in place to teach educational staff how to use digital marketing techniques.
- The absence of central coordination for digital planning between schools and the Directorate of Education.

Fourth Axis: Use The SWOT -AHP Framework to Develop Digital Marketing in Education

According to Ikatrinasari et al. (2020), a SWOT analysis and an AHP tool can be used to propose a strategic model for the development of digital marketing. According to the data at hand, this model is predicated on evaluating the educational institution's internal and external environments and establishing strategic priorities.

- **SWOT Cross**: This type of analysis is used to determine the educational system's strengths and weaknesses as well as potential threats to the digital marketing process.

Table 1. SWOT Digital Marketing Analysis in Wasit Directorate

Description	Component
An increasing awareness of the educational staff of the importance of digital marketing tools	Strengths
Weak infrastructure and lack of training in digital marketing	Weaknesses
The possibility of cooperation C technological sector to develop educational digital solutions	Opportunities
Digital security and the absence of policies supporting digital transformation	Threats

- AHP tool: By establishing the priorities that need to be addressed first, it is used to prioritize and develop strategies based on SWOT analysis, ensuring increased efficacy in digital marketing in educational institutions.

- The most important proposed strategies:

✓ Students' participation in the creation of digital educational content serves as an illustration of this, as it enhances their engagement with the materials and boosts their motivation for active participation.

✓ For instance, to prevent cyberattacks and safeguard user data, educational platforms must address their inadequate digital security.

Effective tactics can be used with this model to guide digital marketing efforts toward enhancing educational quality and the way different elements of the educational system interact.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of interviews with various participant categories, the study concludes that while educational institutions under the Wasit Education Directorate are increasingly aware of the importance of digital marketing tools, their usage remains limited and lacks integration into a well-defined strategic framework. Digital marketing—particularly through email and social media—has shown potential in strengthening communication between schools and the local community, thereby enhancing the quality of education. However, there exists a clear gap between the availability of these tools and their effective implementation within a cohesive institutional system, hindering the achievement of desired outcomes. The study also highlights key infrastructural challenges, including poor internet connectivity and a shortage of adequate educational tools and resources. Furthermore, a lack of training and difficulties in adapting to rapid technological advancements impede the ability of educational staff to develop digital marketing skills. Lastly, the absence of creative and visually compelling digital content from educational institutions limits their ability to effectively showcase their achievements.

Recommendations

Based on the previous results, the study recommends the following:

1. Preparing a unified and comprehensive strategy for digital marketing at the level of the Wasit Education Directorate, integrated into educational and educational plans.

2. Partnership of parents and students in the design and implementation of digital promotional campaigns, in order to enhance the interaction and belonging to the educational institution.
3. Adopting strategic analysis methodologies such as (SWOT + AHP) to plan and activate digital marketing tools in an organized and systematic manner.
4. Encourage schools to adopt digital infrastructure by supplying modern gadgets, high-speed internet, and suitable interactive platforms.
5. Setting up workshops for teachers and educational cadres to receive specialized training on how to use digital marketing tools in the classroom.
6. Creating imaginative visual content that is based on student accomplishments and experiences in order to make it a visually appealing and useful tool for school digital marketing campaigns.

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