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**A Contribution of Uses and Gratification Theory towards the Brand Equity of  
Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs)**

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**Abstract**

A university's brand equity is a key driver in communicating its values to prospective students. Meanwhile social media usage facilitated those prospective to gather information relevant to higher education institutions. A dynamic model focusing on customer-based brand equity often lack empirical support in higher education sectors, particularly in Malaysia. This study explores the role of social media usage as a factor to brand equity. It is believed that contribution of this social media uses, and gratification theory will help Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) to better understand how the satisfaction of social media usage would increase its brand equity. Hence, this study aims to examine the relationship between social media usage and brand equity. This paper reviews literature related to social media usage towards brand equity in PHEIs with theoretically integrate the theory of uses and gratification. Drawing from the theory of uses and gratification the purpose of this study is to examine how social media usage influences brand equity. The quantitative findings from 180 undergraduates indicated social media usage influences the brand equity of higher education institutions. The results from structural equation modeling provided insight into how relationship developing, information sharing, self-presenting, entertaining of social media usage influences brand equity

*Keywords:* Social media usage; brand equity; Uses and Gratification Theory; PHEIs

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**1. Introduction**

Since 1957, Malaysia has begun to develop human capital to replace expatriates and to help build the country. Therefore, higher education was seen as a crucial national agenda. However, before 1970, access to local higher education was limited only to one, namely University Malaya, and most of these students were from elite families

that have the resources and opportunity to send their children to further their studies. However, profitability was never an issue hence marketing activities were almost non-existent to attract students. (Sivalingam, 2006).

Four decades later, the Malaysian higher education landscape changed tremendously, especially after the Malaysian Government in 1996 liberalized the higher education sector by welcoming private participation (M. N. N. Lee, 2008). Malaysia is fast leading to become a center of educational excellence in the region as well as internationally. The door towards higher education was widely opened and the education sector has become a “commodity”. While higher education providers become “private business entity”, profitability and survival were concerned (Naidoo, 2003). With the liberalization of Malaysian education policies, more Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) have sprung-up to provide more space and opportunities to potential students that create new and greater challenges among industry players. There are too many institutions offering the same courses and they are competing for the same limited number of students. Thus, in order to attract and retain students and running profitability, the PHEIs should build the corporate image or brand as well as improve the quality of the services. PHEIs must put more effort to boost their brand equity in order to secure students’ enrolment and retention. Therefore, students as customers have become the main focus for PHEIs when strategizing their promotional activities (Ismail & Faridah, 2015). Recognizing and accepting education as an industry, higher education institution providers realize that under this current competitive global market, they must compete for students in order to survive. They must know and study what are the factors that can attract and retain students at their respective institutions.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), like any other business, are no exception. With increasing costs of education, students, parents, and prospective employees have intensified their scrutinized for the value delivered by HEIs (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998). PHEIs have come to terms with the fact that they must ensure that their primary customers (i.e. students) are attracted to register which will ultimately lead to the survival of the PHEIs. With the rapid increment of PHEIs in Malaysia competing for students who want quality education and value for the services, coupled with the reduced financial support from the government and other agencies, it is important for institutions to strategize in order to compete and survive in the competitive world. To ensure students are attracted, the PHEIs should develop effective strategies in enhancing their brand equity. Furthermore, it is vital that antecedents of students’ perception on brand equity are realized as they are becoming important (Pinar et al., 2011). Empirical studies have shown that PHEIs with high students’ brand awareness, quality perception and brand loyalty will have better student enrolments. Thus, marketing strategies in enhancing brand equity are vital in maintaining the reputation and sustainability of PHEIs.

The potential to provide customers with information about experience and credence qualities in advance of purchase has resulted in widespread recognition of the significance of brands in relation to consumer choice in the education service sector. Arguably, what is of particular significance in this process is brand equity. It is often suggested that marketing in the education service sector is relatively challenging due to the unique characteristics of the service and the dominance of experience and credence qualities. A particular consequence is that perceived risk is generally higher in a service selection decision because consumers find services more difficult to evaluate in advance of purchase (Haggis, 2003). In this situation, the brand can play an important role as a risk reliever, giving consumers greater confidence in their decision making and increasing trust (D. J. Kim et al., 2008). In essence, the brand provides a signal or a promise to consumers about the service that will be delivered, thus mitigating some of the problems associated with experience and credence qualities (Christodoulides et al., 2010). As well as a risk reliever, because the brand is a source of information, it can also serve as a tool for differentiation and ease the consumer choice process by creating distinctiveness (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998). Thus, the brand has been increasingly recognized as an important determinant of consumer choice in the education service sector.

Nowadays, social media technologies enable businesses to solve numerous consumer problems. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of application and uses of social media, how it affects and adds value to the customer’s decision which later enhance the brand equity. Significantly, brand equity is the consumer’s response to the brand, and this is reflected in the overall attitude towards the brand (Keller et al., 1993). Marketers have created their own social networks as a mechanism in their social media strategy to communicate with customers about their brand. Thus, the consumer’s added values will lead to preferences for a particular brand. In a nutshell, it is extremely crucial to ensure success in building strong brand equity in PHEIs. The evidence is shown by Gretry et al., (2017), by asserting that social networks is the most effective mechanism to communicate with customers about their brand in this digital age market. However, Goswami et al., (2013) in their study discover that social media participation was not sufficiently taken to enhance brand visibility. It only can be bettered with such practices of being agile and assertive to deploy the synergies of social media usage.

Although there are ubiquities of social media research that has been carried out, yet there is a paucity of academic research and empirical evidence in the area (Dolan et al., 2019). In the meantime, Rutter et al., (2016) investigate social media technologies used by students to post questions to the university. However, if no response is forthcoming, the students may experience dissatisfaction. This lack of response in turn can affect their decision

to apply to that university. The results demonstrate a strong and positive effect on recruitment performance only when PHEIs use an interactive social media.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Brand Equity*

Brand equity has been defined by Aaker, (1991) as “a set of assets such as name awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, and associations that are linked to the brand and add value to the product or service being offered.” Aaker, (1992) has proposed the first comprehensive model of brand equity. He identified five dimensions of brand equity, namely brand name awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary assets. Bisardi & Ekwulugo, (2003) highlighted that in higher education the brand image potentially plays a major role in reducing the risk associated with such service, largely because the assessment of quality takes place after consumption. Hence, having a strong brand is important as a risk reliever that simplifies the decision-making process (Erdem & Swait, 1998). That is to say, the brand represents a differentiation tool that gives cues to the consumers during the decision-making (Chen, 2008; Temple, 2006). On the other hand, brand equity has been defined as “outcomes that accrue to a product with its brand name compared with those that would accrue if the same product did not have the brand name” (Ailawadi et al., 2003). The benefits of a product or service through the power of brand name and the purposes for measuring brand equity include: (1) to guide marketing strategy and tactical decisions, (2) to assess the extendibility of a brand, (3) to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing decisions, (4) to track the brand’s health compared with that of competitors and over time, and (5) to assign a financial value to the brand in balance sheets and financial transactions. According to Keller & Colgate, (2005) the power of a brand lies in what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand. In the mindset of the customer, he develops a theory that identifies two key elements of mind-set equity, which are awareness and familiarity, as well as favorable brand associations.

Brand in short is the practice of using a business name and logo in marketing communications which allows the consumer to better recognize what the product is offering. Brands often provide the primary points to differentiate between competitive offerings, and as such they can be critical to the success of companies. Hence, it is pertinent that the management of brands is approached strategically (Wood, 2000). The building of a brand or a set of values, associated with the actual product provides it with an ‘increase in value’ or ‘additional value’. A strong brand has therefore great value for its owner, as it represents a means whereby turnover, and income can be generated and at the same time it can be protected against attack or infringement of ownership by competitors (Lindstrom & Andersen, 2000). Successful branding campaigns can expect more sustained customer relationships and sales over a longer period than companies not implementing branding strategies.

Brand equity consists of elements such as the brand association, market fundamentals and marketing assets that distinguish one brand from another and that influence a customer’s perceptions of or knowledge about a brand. When brand elements are favorable in a customer’s mind, brand equity is considered to be positive. When they are not favorable, the brand equity is negative. Brand equity is regarded as a very important concept in business practices as well as in academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantage through successful brands (Lassar et al., 1995). In order to successfully manage a brand’s equity, one must understand how it is built, and where it is likely to lead. The marketers in the area of higher education service should realize that developing a positive brand image is more important than creating awareness. Brand has a significant influence on the selection of a university (Mourad et al., 2011).

### *2.2 Users and Gratification Theory*

The Uses & Gratifications Theory (U&G) theory is vigorous to this study. It is the accurate in explaining the social media usage and to understanding how brand is evaluated by consumers. Also, the definition of engagement behaviors is a result of motivational influences consistent with the theoretical underpinning of the Uses and Gratification Theory (Dolan et al., 2019). Uses and Gratification sought to find out what the audience does with media, not what the media does to the audience. This theory looks at needs and how they are influenced by personal characteristics as well as the environment within which a person interacts socially (Stephen, 2016). Consistent with the rationale of the Uses and Gratification Theory, social media usage is proposed to have a positive influence on brand equity.

Consequently, having an on-line and real-time engagement can serve as a powerful management instrument. This system will provide management with a continuously updated database of its customers and continuous information about the degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among customers (Christian Grönroos, 1994). Interaction among users can also contribute to the formation of virtual communities, where people gather due to shared interests, sociability, identity, and sense of communion. Given that virtual communities are often built around user-generated contents, responding to content is argued to be an integral part of community development

since it can be used in their evaluations of brand equity reinforce dynamic content creation (Hollebeek et al., 2017).

### *2.3 Gratification Factors for Social Media Usage*

According to Gu & Wang, (2012) there are 5 categories of social media that is, SNS (Social Network Sites), blog, microblog, LBS (Location Based Service), and theme community. Blog is perhaps the best known form of social media; blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first. Meanwhile, content community is a virtual community based on theme content sharing. In addition, Gu & Wang (2012) reveal that if users are attracted by the theme, and then become the member of the community. Social Network Sites (SNS) on the other hand is the site where, the users can create their own pages and share information with friends. Moreover, Location Based Service (LBS) is a new form of social media where user can use mobile devices to check in by specific application and interact with brands. Lastly, the microblog which is largely used nowadays, is a new kind of blog based on Web2.0 technology, social networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content ('updates') are distributed online and through the mobile phone network. Microblog has become one of the most popular social media.

Social media is defined as any digital tool or venue that allows individuals to socialize on the web. According to Kaplan & Haenlein, (2010) social media is defined as "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Recent evidence suggests that social media are forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, idea, personal messages and other content (Kaur, 2016; Scholz & Smith, 2016; Soma et al., 2016)

Whereas social media marketing is the utilization of social media and social networks to market a product, company, or brand. According to Kaur, (2016) "Social media is a form of internet marketing that implement various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and branding social goals." According to Felix et al., (2017) social media marketing provides firms with an opportunity to use social media to build relationships with customers, employees, communities, and other stakeholders. Subsequently, Muchardie et al., (2016) mentioned that social media can be utilized as a marketing tool to make and build strong relationships with customers, so that later they would be more loyal. Similarly, A. J. Kim & Ko, (2012) proposed that social media marketing (SMM) is a two-way communication seeking empathy with young users, and even enforcing the familiar emotions associated with existing luxury brands to a higher age group.

A review of the literature reveals several dimensions of social media usage that, collectively, constitute a comprehensive understanding of the social media usage gratification namely, relationship developing, information sharing, self-presenting and entertaining (Hu & Zhang, 2016). The conceptualization of social media usage combined with the four behavioral dimensions suggests a promising theoretical basis for modelling social media usage construct illustrated in the figure below.

### *2.4 Social Media Usage Impact on Brand Equity*

With the rise of social media, it appears that communication has been democratized (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The power has been taken from those in marketing and public relations by the individuals and communities that create, share, and consume blogs, tweets, Facebook entries, movies, pictures, and so forth. Communication about brands happens, with or without permission of the firms in question. It is now up to firms to decide if they want to get serious about social media and participate in this communication or continue to ignore it. Both have a tremendous impact. Brands should no longer regard social media marketing as a way to reach consumers, but also as an important and cost-effective image-building tool (Godey et al., 2016).

Dehghani & Tumer, (2015) in their study found that Facebook advertising significantly affected brand image and brand equity, both of which factors contributed to a significant change in purchasing intention. A strong brand can grant protection from equity dilution and resist the impact of negative publicity in the case of product failures and, thus, reduce potential volatility in future cash flow (Hsu & Lawrence, 2016). Similarly, Nguyen et al., (2015) in their study demonstrated that social media strategic capabilities may enhance a firm's ability to identify opportunities in the brand innovation process and help firms adjust accordingly. This adjustment is only possible in combination with continuous knowledge acquisition from social media and market orientation.

Understanding the principles of social media consumption can both assist marketing managers in developing strategies and provide insights into the potential role of culture in brand relationship development (Pentina et al., 2013). Similarly, by deploying various social media marketing solutions, it will possibly increase the brand awareness by providing exclusive information to the audience (Barreda et al., 2015). On the other hand, Michaelidou et al., (2011) found some barriers in implementing social media in business-to-business (B2B) organization. This is due to lack of technical skill among employees, and knowledge to correctly measure social media usage. Yet, the increasing influence of social systems nowadays forces organizations to create more customer-centered activities.

Whereas the importance of social media for brand management and customer relationship management is widely recognized, it is unclear whether social media can also help companies market and sell products (Yadav et al., 2013). Likewise, positive relation has been detected on social media engagement level and personal branding efforts but the relation between existence on social media and personal branding has not been confirmed (Karaduman, 2013). Significantly Godey et al., (2016) emphasize that social media should not only be thought of as a means of raising brand awareness and reaching new customers, but also as an increasingly important and serious brand image building tool. In the same vein, Hudson et al., (2016) reveal that social media use was positively related with brand relationship quality and the effect was more pronounced with high anthropomorphism perceptions. Connecting the brand to a larger ecological context, providing more related knowledge or inspirational usage, and associating the brand with trending topics may add to the users' values of following brand pages on social media (Gao & Feng, 2016). Thus, the hypothesis to investigate is:

*Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between social media usage and the brand equity of PHEIs.*

### **3. Methodology**

In higher education research, questionnaire surveys are a popular method for gathering data because of their capability to gather large sample sizes for statistical analysis (Chad & Kevin A., 2015). Traditionally, questionnaires are disseminated via post or by hand by the researcher. In the wake of technology advancement, the internet has become a popular medium for questionnaire distribution. In this study, the researcher collects the data using a structured questionnaire administered through face-to-face survey with the use of closed-ended questions (questions with multiple-choice answers and the Likert scale). The questionnaire was mainly constructed using a selection of scales from previous researchers.

The researcher enters the identified PHEIs, chooses a classroom and asks the students to complete the questionnaire. The students in the classroom were chosen because it is assumed that they have made the decision to enroll in that university and therefore are appropriate targets to answer the questionnaire (Wallace et al., 2014).

The questionnaire consists of a total of 19 questions: four items for entertainment, gratification, information sharing, relationship development and self-presentation adopted from T. Hu and Zhang, (2016) , and 18 items for brand equity (Erdoğan & Ergun, 2016; G. Lee & Leh, 2011; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001)

The researcher uses SPSS and PLS SEM to interpret the data and to test the constructs in the study. The validity instrument ensures that the items in the questionnaire measure the dependent variable and independent variable. The reliability analysis also indicates the stability and consistency. The researcher utilizes an inter-item consistency reliability test which is the Cronbach's coefficient alpha. A range of statistical procedures were employed to test the research hypothesis. These include the correlation test (test of association) and PLS-SEM (Structural Equation Modelling). The researcher utilizes an inter-item consistency reliability test which is the Cronbach's coefficient alpha, and confirmatory factoring analysis (CFA).

### **4. Result**

To determine how well the data fits the theory, the first step is to evaluate the path model that has been developed. The evaluation follows a two-step process: 1) evaluation of the measurement model, and 2) evaluation of the structural model.

#### *4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

The first step to evaluate the path model is to evaluate the reliability and validity of the construct measures. Only after they have been established with quality evidence can the structural model be evaluated (H. et al. 2017 Hair, 2017). This section displays the results of the PLS-SEM measurement model for this study. The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted by following the steps recommended by Hair et al., (2014) and Thuramy, (2015). In evaluating the measurement model, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the scales used in this study. CFA is applied because it is more applicable with the well-established scale that was adapted from previous literatures as opposed to the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) that should be employed when the researchers have little or no knowledge regarding the constructs' composition (Ali Memon et al., 2018). The assessment was done by obtaining the value of the outer loadings, indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

There are two criteria to determine the internal consistency reliability criteria: i) Cronbach's Alpha (representing the upper bound or higher reliability value) and 2) Composite reliability (representing the upper bound or higher reliability value). Both measures vary between 0 and 1, in which the higher value indicates a higher level of reliability. Composite reliability values of 0.6 to 0.7 are acceptable, and values between 0.7 and 0.9 can be regarded as satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Thus, the measurement is considered acceptable

and reliable. Composite reliability below 0.6 indicates a lack of internal consistency reliability. Convergent and discriminant validity was examined to assess construct validity. All factor loadings exceeded .82 and all were significant at the alpha level of .01, ensuring convergent validity of the measures. Furthermore, average variance extracted (AVE), exceeding the cut-off level of .50, was also calculated to verify convergent validity (J. F. Hair et al., 2014).

#### 4.1. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was conducted to check the hypothesized model after validating the measurement model. The hypothesis, which hypothesized the positive impact of social media usage on brand equity, was supported with estimates of 0.151 at the level of  $p < .05$ , meaning information on social media usage affect the brand equity positively. The finding suggests social media usage is another form of a company managed platform and the social media channel should include valuable information related to the PHEIs services.

Table 1. The Impact of Social Media Usage on Brand Equity.

Relationship	B	t-value	p-value	Decision	R <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
Social Media Usage > Brand Equity	0.151	2.454	0.007	Supported	0.63	0.047 (Small)	0.443

### 5. Discussion and Solution

Hypothesis: There is a positive significant relationship between social media usage and the brand equity of PHEIs.

Table 2. Summary of Hypothesis.

Measurement Model				Structural Model			
CR	IR	AVE	HTMT	Path Coefficient (1)	Path Coefficient	VIF	f <sup>2</sup>
>0.7	<0.708	>0.501	Yes	Significant	Significant	>5	Small

Table 2 above shows a summary of the results from the measurement and structural models for hypothesis H1. First, in the measurement model for hypothesis H1, the composite reliability (CR) shows that all the items have a satisfactory level of reliability which meets the threshold of  $CR > 0.7$  (Ansary & Nik Hashim, 2017).

Secondly, the indicator reliability (IR) value demonstrates that all fifteen items are between the range of 0.772 and 0.877, suggesting that the threshold of 0.708 or higher as suggested by Hair et al., (2014) is fulfilled. Therefore, a satisfactory consistency of the latent construct in measuring social media usage in this study is confirmed. Thirdly, the AVE value displays a satisfactory level between 0.666 and 0.713, which also meets the threshold of more than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; J. F. J. Hair et al., 2014). Accordingly, hypothesis H1 confirms the ability of social media to explain more than half of the variance of its indicators. Next, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) value in H1 proves to be satisfactory with a value of less than 0.85, suggesting that each construct is different from one another for discriminant validity (Henseler & Chin, 2010). Using the bootstrapping procedure, the path coefficients of the first-order constructs, namely entertaining, information sharing, relationship developing and self-presenting are significantly established to measure social media usage in the reflective first-order construct which generated beta values of BEnt (0.254), BI (0.373), BR (0.378), BS (0.363), t-values of BEnt (9.46), BI (11.6), BR (11.927) and BS (7.687) and p-values of 0.000. These results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the first-order and second-order constructs. It is also evident that social media usage is at a satisfactory level which fulfils all thresholds of the reliability and validity testing (Hair et al., 2014).

With regards to the structural model analysis, the variance inflation factor (VIF) value of 1.321 which is less than 5 Hair et al., (2014) suggests that no collinearity issues had occurred between the constructs. Secondly, a two-stage approach was conducted to find the significant effect of social media usage on the brand equity of the PHEIs, since hypothesis H1 is established as a higher-order construct in measuring social media usage as a second-order formative. The outcome reveals a positive significant relationship between social media usage and brand equity with a t-value of 2.454, a p-value of 0.007, and  $\beta = 0.151$  with confidence interval less than 1. The result also confirms that the threshold is reached, thus supporting hypothesis H1. Thirdly, the f<sup>2</sup> effect size of 0.047 indicates that social media has a small effect size on brand equity as the endogenous (Cohen, 1988; F. Hair et al., 2014).

Based on the findings above, as the independent variables in this research, social media usage demonstrates a positive significant direct effect on the brand equity of the PHEIs. The result shows a satisfactory level that reaches the stipulated threshold. Since the expectation of hypothesis H1 is supported, it can be concluded that there is an effective social media usage among the PHEIs in enhancing their brand equity and sustaining their growth.

This research outcome correlates with that of previous studies conducted by Yeik Koay et al., (2019), Algharabat et al., (2020) and Pringle & Fritz, (2018). These empirical works have found a significant effect of social media on brand equity in which this variable is cited as a critical resource for the success of a comprehensive

firm strategy in forming a sustainable branding strategy. Additionally, a positive relationship between social media and marketing's return on investment; and brand equity has been discovered by a content analysis presented by Shay & Horst, (2019), specifically relating to the customer engagement.

Nonetheless, this result contradicts the findings derived by Sadek et al., (2018) who have cited the insignificant influence of social media usage on brand equity of an industry, particularly with regard to user generated social media. This study suggests that user generated social media is not a significant predictor brand associations which is one of the brand equity dimensions. It can also be deduced that this is due to the characteristic of the users themselves. Raji et al., (2019) have also underlined the ineffectiveness of social media as a construct, resulting an insignificant effect on the branding strategy of an organization.

Based on the thorough discussion, it can be inferred that this study supports the findings in earlier literature which have discovered a positive significant influence of social media on brand equity, although the previous authors have concentrated on the influence of social media on performance (Homburg et al., 2015; Oberoi et al., 2017; Tafesse & Wien, 2018), attitude (Costa et al., 2016; Knoll, 2016; Lin & Kim, 2016; Shareef et al., 2017) and customer response (A. J. Kim & Johnson, 2016; Lin & Kim, 2016; Seo & Park, 2018; Yoshida et al., 2018) organizations. Thus, the result of this study is beneficial such that it has established the direct significant effect of social media usage on the brand equity of PHEIs, which is a comparatively unexplored research field.

With regard to the analysis of hypothesis H1, social media usage is defined as internet-based applications that allow user-generated content to be produced and shared. The social media usage variable that is established from the dimensions of relationship development, information sharing, self-presenting and entertaining a proposed by Hu & Zhang, (2016) is positively significant to brand equity of PHEIs. Thus, the result revealed that social media usage as a term is nearly generally relevant to many disciplines including and not limited to health, finance, and tourism. As such, the significance of social media usage may be confined on the specific scope and context of the research. In a specific marketing research context in the field of PHEIs, this study states social media usage as the tools to develop relationship with customers, to share information, entertain and self-presenting in the interest of realizing mutual objectives which can impact the brand equity of PHEIs, and consequently result in financial stability and growth.

Accordingly, PHEIs must ensure the availability of social media usage as a resource in any future marketing strategies as to achieve sustainable growth. Even though past studies have primarily focused on the western or conventional context of the study, the current research has discovered that the PHEIs also confirms the significant influence of social media usage in their marketing and promotional activities. Thus, this encounter indicates that the significant effect of social media usage can also be generalized to other global contexts of the study. On the basis of existing literature, findings consistently indicate a significant relationship between social media usage and brand equity in an organizational context. This aligns with a research by Bernritter et al., (2016) and Hodis et al., (2015) which reveal that social media usage has a strong impact among companies in their marketing efforts. Despite this, such findings have not been empirically tested in the educational industry, namely PHEIs.

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