



Effects of Social Media Marketing on Student Enrollment Decisions: A Study at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College

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Abstract- This study explores how the college's social media marketing influences students' decisions to enroll at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College. It had two main objectives: (1) to examine how students perceive key social media marketing factors content quality, advertising value, social influence, and interactivity and their enrollment decisions, and (2) to identify which factors most strongly predict enrollment decisions. A quantitative approach was used, with data collected from new students and analyzed through descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression. The findings show that students hold positive perceptions of the college's social media presence. All four factors were rated highly, indicating that students consider the content useful and trustworthy, advertisements informative, and social media pages engaging. Enrollment decision outcomes were also rated positively, suggesting that social media increased students' interest, confidence, and intention to take action. All four factors were positively correlated with enrollment decisions. However, regression results revealed that interactivity was the strongest predictor, followed by content quality. Advertising value had a smaller but significant effect, while social influence was not a significant predictor when other variables were controlled. Overall, the study highlights the importance of prioritizing interactive engagement and high-quality content to enhance student enrollment outcomes.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Student Enrollment Decision, Higher Education Marketing, Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College.

I. Introduction

Social media has become one of the most powerful forces shaping how people make decisions in today's digital world. For universities and colleges, it is no longer just a platform for promotion but a key channel for building relationships with prospective students. Globally, social media use continues to grow, with billions of people actively engaging online each day (DataReportal, 2025). In China, the digital landscape is especially significant. With over one billion active users more than 70% of the population social media is deeply embedded in daily life (Hootsuite, 2024). For Generation Z students in particular, platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili are central to how they gather information, seek peer opinions, and shape their educational aspirations. These platforms are not simply for entertainment; they are spaces where young people explore university options, evaluate reputations, and imagine their future identities.

China's higher education system provides a strong context for understanding the impact of social media marketing. With more than 44 million students enrolled in tertiary education, China has the largest higher education system in the world (Ministry of Education of China, 2023). However, this scale also creates intense competition among institutions. At the same time, demographic changes and declining birth rates are gradually reducing the number of potential applicants. As a result, universities must compete more strategically to attract students. Social media offers an effective solution because it allows institutions to present campus life, academic programs, student achievements, and career pathways in a direct and engaging way. Unlike traditional advertising, digital platforms allow real-time interaction, visual storytelling, and peer-generated content. Research suggests that many Chinese students consider a university's online reputation and social media presence when deciding where to apply. They often search for authentic reviews, videos of campus activities, and information about scholarships before making a final decision (Rushing, 2024).

Previous studies confirm that social media marketing can significantly influence enrollment outcomes. Research has shown that well-planned digital campaigns are linked to increased student applications (Wijaya et al., 2023). Personalized video content, for example, has been found to increase application completion rates by over 30%. In the Chinese context, authentic content shared on platforms like Douyin has been shown to build trust and generate stronger interest in institutions (Sisi & Zainudin, 2025). These findings highlight that students respond positively to relatable, transparent, and engaging digital communication.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) helps explain how social media influences enrollment decisions. According to this theory, students' decisions are shaped by their attitudes toward the institution, the influence of

important others such as parents and peers, and their confidence in their ability to enroll successfully (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Gao et al., 2024). In China, family expectations and social networks play an important role in educational choices, making this framework particularly relevant.

Despite growing interest in this area, there is still limited research that fully examines how social media marketing factors such as content quality, advertising value, social influence, and interactivity work together to shape actual enrollment decisions in Chinese higher education. Addressing this gap is important both academically and practically. Theoretically, it strengthens understanding of digital marketing within an educational setting. Practically, it helps universities design more effective strategies. By focusing on authentic storytelling, meaningful engagement, and personalized communication, institutions can turn online interest into real enrollment decisions in an increasingly competitive environment.

1.1 Research Objective

1. To explore the levels of social media marketing factors and students' enrollment decisions at Guangxi Finance Vocational & Technical College.
2. To analyze the effects of social media marketing factors on students' enrollment decisions.

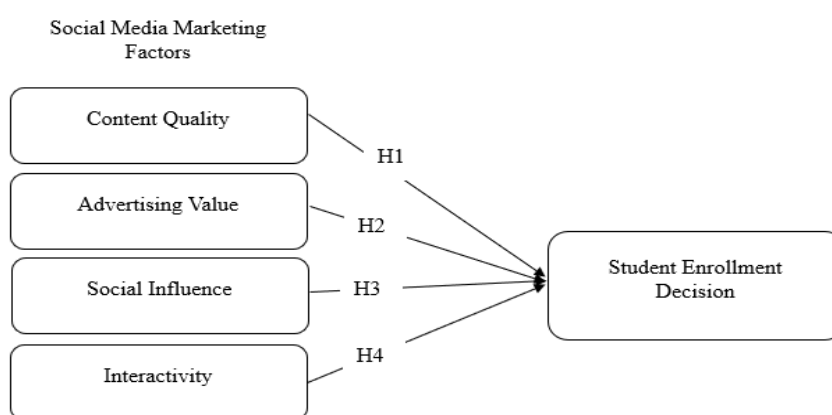


Figure 1. Research Framework

II. Literature Review

This session discusses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College and Related Research In Social Media Marketing Content Quality, Advertising Value, Social Influence, Interactivity.

2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), has remained one of the most commonly utilized models in interpreting and forecasting the behavior of individuals in a variety of social, consumer, and educational settings. The theory states that the behaviour is controlled by behavioral intention, which in turn is influenced by three fundamental constructs, namely attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The attitudes describe good or bad impressions of acting as an activity, which may include how a university student prefers to study at the university. Subjective norms are the weights of significant others that may promote and discourage the behavior. Perceived behavioral control indicates how the individual assesses possibilities and resources to execute the behavior. Together, this provides the complete picture of the intentions behind the actual decisions, making TPB particularly useful for higher education choices.

The most important core belief of TPB is that intention is the closest predictor of behavior. That is, in case of a strongly defined intention to enroll, a greater probability would be given to a student to enroll. Attitudes, norms, and perceived control are what will psychologically support the formation of intention. A good attitude towards a university's reputation or social media posts enhances the intention. Strong subjective norms reinforce the likelihood of a person enrolling in that university, and high perceived control further supports this. This principle emphasizes that universities should not only leave positive impressions but also overcome social and practical barriers to achieve actual enrollment.

2.2 Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College

Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College (GFVTC) is a provincial, publicly owned higher-vocational school based in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang, China. It is the cradle of Guangxi's financial talent, the only full-time vocational institution in Guangxi that trains financial and economic professionals.



It has two campuses, namely University East Road, Xiangsi Lake, and offers its academic programs through three departments: Finance accounting, Information Technology, Culture and Tourism. Through these, it has 26 highly specialized programs, including international finance and auditing, tax, big data analysis, e-commerce, hospitality management, and mobile internet technologies. To ensure the application of learning, GFVTC has established 10 training bases and more than 100 laboratories and work-experience stations across fields including banking, securities, insurance, accounting, advertising, media design, tourism, and financial services. The availability of such facilities forms clear pathways by the students to bridge the theory-practice gap and support the twin emphasis that the school has on academic education and applied technical training. GFVTC now has over 10,000 students and over 600 teaching faculty comprising senior professors and industrial practitioners. The institution focuses on professional certification in tandem with diploma courses to make its curriculum responsive to the evolving demands of the financial sector in Guangxi. Most graduates enter finance, banking, taxation, or government administration, and the employment rate of graduates never falls below 90%.

2.3 Related Research in Social Media Marketing Content Quality, Advertising Value, Social Influence, Interactivity

In the last ten years, social media has emerged as one of the most significant instruments that universities can use to connect with and engage prospective students. Increasingly, research suggests that marketing on these platforms extends beyond mere promotion to include the establishment of trust and other aspects of perception creation and enrollment influence. Four aspects emerge consistently when we scan the literature: the quality of content, interactivity, social influence, and advertising value, and each is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Content Quality is always emphasized as the pillar of successful social media marketing. With the provision of appropriate, clear information by institutions, students have a high chance of developing positive attitudes towards the university. The study by Drouiche and Baha (2024) revealed that institutional reputation was perceived as better when information was well-constructed and credible, which consequently positively impacted students' willingness to join. Choudhry (2022) demonstrated that informative posts also contributed to uncertainty reduction, but at the same time warned that content based on entertainment, such as flashy visuals or funny campaigns, was appealing but failed to persuade students to enrol. It appears that a majority of the research agrees on this: students desire content that is both credible and practical, and research that relies on metrics borrowed from consumer marketing may not be able to capture all the things that students care about in an education setting, including career outcomes, accreditation, and academic quality.

The advertising value, i.e., the degree to which students perceive online promotions as informative, credible, and engaging, also comes into play. Saraiva & Lues (2024) found that credibility and informativeness were more likely to prompt positive responses than entertainment. This suggests that while creativity can draw attention, students ultimately require credible information to make such a serious choice. Wahab et al. (2024) introduced a bit of complexity by revealing that the intention to enroll often mediates the connection between marketing actions and student loyalty and that electronic word of mouth can reinforce the connection.

The power of social factors is also fairly established. Student choices are seldom made in a vacuum; family, friends and peers are also actively involved in decision-making about where a student is to study. Ellis and Helaire (2023) demonstrated that parental directions and peer expectations exerted high pressure on students, which can be defined as subjective norms within the context of TPB. Electronic word of mouth has just increased its impact in the era of digital communication. Cassar & Caruana (2023) found that positive online reviews and testimonials enhance institutional credibility, especially among international students considering alternatives abroad.

Social media has altered the scene in another sphere: interactivity. The current generation of students wants to have their questions answered immediately and efficiently via digital media. Broadbent & Lodge (2021) found that online platform features such as fast responses and live chat gave students a greater sense of control, reducing feelings of intimidation during the enrollment process. Likewise, Akpen et al., (2024) contended that the two-way communication process makes students feel part of the process, rather than passive receivers of information. In spite of these observations, most studies continue to treat interactivity as a general phenomenon without acknowledging that responsiveness, user-friendliness, and participatory voice can affect students differently.

III. Methodology

This study examined how social media marketing influences students' enrollment decisions at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College. A quantitative approach was used, as enrollment decisions are shaped by students' perceptions and online experiences. The research involved selecting a representative sample, developing and validating a questionnaire, collecting data, and analyzing the results using appropriate statistical methods.



3.1 The Population / Sample Group

This study focused on new students enrolled at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College during the 2024–2025 academic year. These students were selected because they had recently made their enrollment decisions and were likely influenced by the college’s social media marketing activities. The total population consisted of approximately 6,300 freshmen.

Using Yamane’s formula with a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was calculated as 377 students. To ensure fair representation from different academic backgrounds, stratified random sampling was used. The final sample included students from Financial Accounting (132), Information Technology (151), and Cultural and Tourism (94). This approach helped ensure balanced participation and strengthened the credibility of the results.

3.2 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was carefully developed based on prior research on social media marketing and student enrollment decisions. It included three sections: demographic information, social media marketing factors, and enrollment decision. Students responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This allowed them to clearly express how they perceived the college’s social media content and how it influenced their decision to enroll.

3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed directly to selected students in classrooms and common areas within the college. Students were given sufficient time to complete the survey, and follow-ups were conducted when necessary to ensure a good response rate. After collection, all questionnaires were checked to ensure they were complete and accurate. The responses were then coded and entered into statistical software for further analysis.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure, three experts reviewed the items using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). All items met the required standard, confirming good content validity. A pilot test with 30 students was conducted to check reliability. The Cronbach’s Alpha value was 0.881, indicating strong internal consistency and confirming that the questionnaire was reliable for the main study.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize students’ perceptions of social media marketing and enrollment decisions. To examine relationships and determine the influence of social media marketing factors on enrollment decisions, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted. These methods provided clear evidence of how social media marketing influences students’ decision-making.

IV. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. General Information of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	177	46.9
	Female	200	53.1
	Total	377	100.0
Age	17-19 years	230	61.0
	20-22 years	113	30.0
	23 years old and above	34	9.0
	Total	377	100.0
Department	Financial Accounting Major	132	35.0
	Information Technology Major	151	40.1
	Cultural and Tourism Major	94	24.9
	Total	377	100.0
Use of social media	<1 Hour	30	8.0
	1-2 hours	143	37.9
	3-4 hours	83	22.0
	5+ hours	121	32.1
	Total	377	100.0

Table 1 shows the general information of the respondents. The research sample consisted of new students at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College, totalling 377 respondents. Most of them were female



students (200 students, 53.1%), and the number of male students was 177 students (46.9%). In terms of age greatest number of students were 17-19 years of age and the number of students was 230 (61.0%). These were combined with those in the age bracket of 20-22 years and were 113 students (30.0%). Students whose age is 23 years and above were the least with only 34 students (9.0%). In terms of department, the majority of the students enrolled in the Information Technology Major with a total enrollment of 151 students (40.1%). The Financial Accounting Major came second, and it had 132 students (35.0%). The smallest population belonged to the Cultural and Tourism Major since it had 94 students (24.9%). In terms of use of social media show that the biggest population used social media on 1-2 hours a day, and shaped 143 students (37.9%). This was then followed by students taking social media 5 hours or more with 121 students (32.1%). In the meantime, 83 (22.0%) of the students said that they spent 3-4 hours on social media, the next few said they spent less than 1 hour on social media, which overall numbered 30 students (8.0%).

Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of Total

	Mean	S.D.	MIN	MAX	Interpretation
Content Quality	3.51	0.731	1.50	5.00	High
Advertising Value	3.61	0.769	1.25	5.00	High
Social Influence	3.59	0.715	1.25	5.00	High
Interactivity	3.58	0.731	1.50	5.00	High
Student Enrollment Decision	3.59	0.743	1.50	5.00	High

Table 2 reveals that the general results of all constructs were high, which shows relatively good responses on the 1-5 scale on all the variables of the study. The highest mean was obtained with the variable of Advertising Value (Mean = 3.61), then comes Student Enrollment Decision (Mean = 3.59), and Social Influence (Mean = 3.59). Then interactivity stated a mean of 3.58, content quality only had the lowest mean (Mean = 3.51), but it was also included in the high interpretation category. These standard deviations were between 0.715 and 0.769 indicating that the distribution of responses was moderately spread which indicates consistency between the ratings of the participants on the constructs.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficient

	Y	X1	X2	X3	X4
Y	1				
X1	.459**	1			
X2	.344**	.354**	1		
X3	.206**	.189**	.249**	1	
X4	.517**	.289**	.255**	.265**	1

*** Statistically significant level 0.01

Table 3 shows the results of a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis between Content Quality(X1), Advertising Value (X2), Social Influence (X3), Interactivity (X4) and Student Enrollment Decision (Y) where all the independent variables were found to be positively and statistically significant with the dependent variable at the 0.01 level of significance. In particular, the strongest positive correlation was observed between Interactivity (X4) and Student Enrollment Decision ($r = .517$ $p < .01$), then Content Quality(X1) ($r = .459$ $p < .01$) and Advertising Value(X2) ($r = .344$ $p < .01$), whereas Social Influence (X3) demonstrated the least, but significant one ($r = .206$ $p < .01$).

Also, the correlation between the independent variables was between .189 and .354 which is far less than 0.80 (Stevens, 2002). It means that no issues of multicollinearity and too strong interrelation of the predictors exist. As such, every independent variable can be included in the model of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis where an addition of a variable can take place in a sequence to define its incremental value in explaining Student Enrollment Decision.

Table 4.Regression Coefficient

Model X1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	0.578	0.221		2.614	0.009
Content Quality	0.299	0.045	0.294	6.608	0.000*
Advertising Value	0.132	0.043	0.137	3.059	0.002*
Social Influence	0.012	0.045	0.012	0.271	0.787
Interactivity	0.400	0.045	0.394	8.973	0.000*



$R^2 = 0.388$, $*P < .05$

The regression coefficient analysis results which have been reported in Table 4.9 show that the interaction of the independent variables are Content Quality, Advertising Value, Social Influence, and Interactivity on Y (Student Enrollment Decision). These predictors are not as important in explaining the enrollment choices of students, as the analysis reveals. As it can be seen, the Sig. of Content Quality (Sig. = 0.000), Advertising Value (Sig. = 0.002), and Interactivity (Sig. = 0.000) also have Sig. values that are not greater than 0.05, which means that they have statistically significant positive effects on Student Enrollment Decision at a level of 0.05. Conversely, Social Influence (Sig. = 0.787) has a Significance value of more than 0.05 which implies that it does not significantly influence enrollment decision under this regression model. In summary, it was found that:

1. Content Quality significantly affected Y, indicating a positive influence ($B = 0.299$, $p < .05$).
2. Advertising Value significantly affected Y, also contributing positively ($B = 0.132$, $p < .05$).
3. Social Influence did not significantly affect Y ($B = 0.012$, Sig. = 0.787).
4. Interactivity significantly affected Y, showing the strongest contribution to Student Enrollment Decision ($B = 0.400$, $p < .05$).
5. The model in general had an $R^2 = 0.388$, implying that the four predictors together explained 38.8 per cent of the Student Enrollment Decision variation. This implies that students' enrolment decisions are predominantly determined by Interactivity, Content Quality, and Advertising Value, whereas Social Influence appears to have little influence in this sample and model.

V. Discussion

Objective 1: The results indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of the college's social media marketing activities.

All four factors Content Quality, Advertising Value, Social Influence, and Interactivity were rated at a high level. This suggests that students find the college's online presence informative, useful, and engaging. In particular, the relatively high mean scores reflect that students are satisfied with the information shared on social media and perceive it as relevant to their academic decision-making process.

Similarly, the overall level of Student Enrollment Decision was high, indicating that students felt confident about choosing the college. This implies that social media platforms are not merely communication tools, but meaningful channels that contribute to shaping institutional image and strengthening students' enrollment intentions.

Objective 2: The inferential analysis provided deeper insight into how each factor influences enrollment decisions.

Among the variables, Interactivity emerged as the strongest predictor. The findings suggest that when students experience responsive communication, opportunities to ask questions, and meaningful engagement through social media, they feel more assured in their decision to enroll. This supports the idea that two-way communication builds trust and reduces uncertainty, especially in high-involvement decisions such as choosing a college (Shneikat, 2024; Tran et al., 2026).

Content Quality was also found to significantly influence enrollment decisions. Students appear to rely heavily on clear, detailed, and credible information shared online. High-quality content likely signals professionalism and institutional competence, helping students feel more secure in their choice (Gupta, 2025; Tran et al., 2026). This finding aligns with signaling perspectives, which suggest that well-presented information reduces perceived risk and strengthens confidence in decision-making.

Although Advertising Value showed a positive and significant effect, its influence was comparatively weaker. This suggests that students respond positively to promotional messages when they perceive them as meaningful and beneficial, rather than purely persuasive. Advertising appears to support decision-making when it communicates value clearly and authentically (Ju & Song, 2026; Sudarshan et al., 2024).

Interestingly, Social Influence was positively correlated with enrollment decisions, but it did not remain significant in the combined regression model. This indicates that while peers, online networks, and social environments may initially shape students' perceptions, their direct influence becomes less prominent when more concrete factors such as content quality and interactivity are considered. This finding is consistent with prior studies suggesting that peer communication often plays a supportive, rather than dominant, role in institutional choice (Shahid, 2025; Anderson et al., 2024; Rehman et al., 2022).

Overall, the regression model explained 38.8% of the variation in student enrollment decisions. Interactivity, Content Quality, and Advertising Value were significant predictors, while Social Influence was not significant in the final model. These results suggest that students are more strongly influenced by meaningful engagement and high-quality information than by social pressure alone. For higher education institutions, this highlights the importance of prioritizing interactive and informative digital communication strategies to strengthen student recruitment outcomes (Assefa et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2026).



VI. Conclusion

This study set out to understand how social media marketing influences students' enrollment decisions at Guangxi Finance Vocational and Technical College. The findings provide clear evidence that social media plays a meaningful role in shaping students' perceptions and confidence when choosing a college.

The profile of respondents shows that the study captured a balanced group of new students from different majors, age groups, and levels of social media usage. Most students reported using social media daily, which confirms that online platforms are an important part of their lives. This makes social media an effective and relevant channel for institutional communication and student recruitment.

In terms of perception levels, all social media marketing factors Content Quality, Advertising Value, Social Influence, and Interactivity were rated highly by students. This indicates that students generally hold positive views about the college's social media presence. Among the factors, Advertising Value received the highest overall rating, while Content Quality, though slightly lower, was still evaluated positively. Students also showed a high level of confidence in their enrollment decisions, suggesting that the information and impressions gained through social media supported their choice of institution.

When examining the influence of each factor, Interactivity emerged as the strongest predictor of enrollment decision. This suggests that students value platforms where they can communicate, ask questions, and receive responses. Interactive features appear to build trust and strengthen confidence in decision-making. Content Quality also had a significant positive impact, showing that clear, relevant, and meaningful information plays an important role in reducing uncertainty. Advertising Value contributed positively as well, although its impact was more limited compared to interactivity and content quality.

On the other hand, Social Influence did not significantly predict enrollment decisions in the full regression model. Although peers and online communities may shape initial perceptions, their influence becomes less important when stronger informational and engagement factors are considered. This suggests that students rely more on direct institutional communication and interactive experiences rather than solely on external opinions. Overall, the regression model explained 38.8% of the variation in students' enrollment decisions. This demonstrates that social media marketing factors, particularly Interactivity and Content Quality, play a substantial role in influencing enrollment outcomes.

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