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Service Marketing Mix Strategies in Digital Higher Education: Implications of GST for the Expanding E-Learning Ecosystem."

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Abstract

Digital transformation has significantly reshaped higher education by enabling the growth of online learning platforms and technology-driven educational services. The expansion of digital learning environments has created new opportunities for institutions to reach wider student populations while also increasing competition in the education sector. In this context, the service marketing mix framework plays an important role in designing effective strategies for delivering educational services in digital environments. At the same time, taxation reforms such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have introduced regulatory considerations for digital education providers, particularly in relation to pricing and service delivery structures. This study examines how service marketing mix strategies influence digital higher education and analyzes the implications of GST for the expanding e-learning ecosystem in India. The study highlights the need for strategic adaptation by higher education institutions in order to remain competitive in the evolving digital education landscape.

Keywords: *Service Marketing Mix, Digital Higher Education, GST, E-Learning Ecosystem, EdTech.*

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Introduction

The higher education sector has experienced substantial changes due to the rapid advancement of digital technologies. Universities and educational institutions are increasingly integrating online learning systems, digital platforms, and interactive technologies into their academic programs. These developments have expanded access to education and enabled flexible learning opportunities for students across geographical boundaries.

In India, digital higher education has grown rapidly with the support of government initiatives and private EdTech companies. Platforms such as SWAYAM have made high-quality learning resources accessible to students, while EdTech companies like have developed innovative digital learning solutions. As the digital education market continues to expand, higher education institutions must adopt effective marketing strategies to attract and retain students.

The service marketing mix (7Ps) provides a strategic framework that helps institutions design and deliver educational services more effectively. However, the growth of digital education is also influenced by regulatory factors such as taxation policies. The implementation of GST in India has created new considerations for digital education providers, particularly with respect to pricing and compliance. Therefore, understanding the interaction between marketing strategies and taxation policies is essential for the sustainable development of the digital higher education ecosystem.

Review of literature

1. **Shikha Gambhir & Aditya Sharma (2025) – *Survey-Driven Multivariate Analysis of Digital Marketing's Role in Higher Education*** - the role of digital marketing strategies in higher education institutions. The study finds that social media platforms, institutional websites, and online promotions significantly enhance student engagement and institutional visibility. Digital marketing enables universities to reach a wider audience and improve communication with prospective students. However, the research focuses mainly on digital marketing tools and does not examine service marketing mix strategies or regulatory influences on digital education services.
2. **Digital Transformation in Education Marketing (2024) – *Digital Transformation in Education Marketing: Leveraging the Marketing Mix* -** This study examines how technological advancements reshape marketing practices in higher education institutions. The findings indicate that digital platforms improve communication, service delivery, and institutional reach. The research highlights the growing importance of digital technologies in educational marketing strategies. However, the study does not analyse regulatory frameworks such as taxation policies affecting digital education services.
3. **Bibliometric Analysis (2024) – *Research Trends on Digital Marketing Strategies and Student Satisfaction in Higher Education* -** This bibliometric study reviews research trends related to

digital marketing strategies and student satisfaction in higher education. The findings reveal a growing emphasis on digital communication tools to promote educational programs and enhance student engagement. The research highlights the increasing role of digital marketing in higher education institutions. However, the study does not explore service marketing mix frameworks or policy factors influencing digital education markets.

4. **Shilpi Banerjee (2019) – *Taxation of Digital Economy: An Analysis of Equalisation Levy and GST in India* –** this study analyses taxation challenges in the digital economy with special reference to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India. The study highlights that GST has improved transparency and tax compliance for digital services and online platforms. It also discusses regulatory challenges related to digital transactions. However, the research focuses mainly on the broader digital economy and does not examine the impact of GST on digital higher education services.
5. **Neha Bhasin & Karamjeet Kaur (2018) – *Impact of GST on E-Commerce in India* –** it analyses the impact of GST on the development of e-commerce platforms in India. The study indicates that GST simplified the indirect taxation system and supported the growth of digital commerce. It also improved transparency and efficiency in online business operations. However, the research mainly focuses on e-commerce platforms and does not examine the implications of GST for digital education services.

Research Gap

Existing literature has widely examined the role of the service marketing mix (7Ps) in improving service quality, student satisfaction, and institutional competitiveness in the higher education sector. Several studies have also explored the rapid growth of digital learning platforms and the increasing adoption of technology in higher education. In addition, research has analyzed the economic and regulatory implications of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on various service industries in India. However, most previous studies have focused on these areas independently. Limited research has integrated service marketing strategies, digital higher education, and GST policy implications within a single analytical framework. In particular, there is a lack of studies examining how GST regulations influence the pricing, delivery, and marketing strategies of digital higher education services. Furthermore, the expanding e-learning ecosystem driven by EdTech companies and online learning platforms has created new challenges and opportunities for higher education institutions, which have not been adequately addressed in existing research. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge this gap by analyzing the role of service marketing mix strategies in digital higher education and examining the implications of GST for the expanding e-learning ecosystem in India.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of service marketing mix (7Ps) strategies in the delivery and promotion of digital higher education services.
2. To analyse the impact of digital transformation and online learning platforms on marketing practices in higher education institutions.
3. To study the implications of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) for the expanding digital e-learning ecosystem.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual and descriptive research design based on secondary data sources. Information is collected from academic journals, research papers, policy reports, and institutional publications related to digital education, marketing strategies, and taxation policies. The study analyses existing literature to understand the role of service marketing mix strategies in digital higher education and to evaluate the implications of GST for online education services.

Service Marketing Mix (7Ps) in Digital Higher Education

The service marketing mix, developed by Bernard H. Booms and Mary Jo Bitner, extends the traditional marketing mix to include seven elements: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. In the context of digital higher education, these elements play a critical role in shaping the strategies adopted by universities and online learning platforms.

1. Product - In digital higher education, the “product” refers to academic programs, online courses, certifications, and digital learning experiences offered by institutions. With the expansion of the e-learning ecosystem, universities increasingly provide online degrees, MOOCs, hybrid learning programs, and skill-based certification courses. Digital technologies enable institutions to design personalized learning pathways and interactive content to enhance learning outcomes.

2. Price - Pricing strategies in digital education include tuition fees, subscription models, and pay-per-course systems. Compared to traditional education, online learning often offers more flexible pricing structures. However, taxation policies such as Goods and Services Tax (GST) influence pricing decisions, especially for ed-tech

companies and private online education providers.

3. Place - The "place" element refers to the mode of service delivery. In digital higher education, learning is delivered through online platforms, learning management systems (LMS), mobile applications, and virtual classrooms. These platforms allow institutions to reach global audiences and provide flexible learning environments.

4. Promotion - Promotion strategies in digital education rely heavily on digital marketing tools, including social media campaigns, search engine marketing, webinars, and online branding. Institutions increasingly use targeted advertising and content marketing to attract prospective students.

5. People - It represent faculty members, technical staff, administrators, and student support teams involved in delivering educational services. In digital environments, instructors must adapt to new teaching methods such as virtual instruction and interactive online learning.

6. Process - The process element includes the procedures and systems through which educational services are delivered. This includes online admissions, digital course delivery, virtual assessments, and automated student support systems.

7. Physical Evidence - Although digital education lacks a traditional physical environment, physical evidence exists in the form of institutional websites, online platforms, digital certificates, and virtual learning interfaces. These elements influence students' perceptions of service quality and institutional credibility.

Impact of Digital Transformation in Higher Education

Digital transformation has significantly reshaped the structure and functioning of higher education institutions across the world. The integration of digital technologies has enabled universities to redesign their teaching methods, administrative systems, and marketing strategies. Online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and cloud-based learning management systems have become essential components of modern higher education. These technologies allow institutions to deliver educational services to a wider audience and overcome geographical barriers.

One of the major impacts of digital transformation is the expansion of online learning opportunities. Universities are increasingly offering online degree programs, certification courses, and hybrid learning models that combine traditional classroom instruction with digital learning tools. This flexibility enables students to access educational content anytime and from any location, which is particularly beneficial for working professionals and international students.

Digital transformation has also influenced marketing strategies in higher education institutions. Universities now rely heavily on digital marketing channels such as social media platforms, search engine optimization, email marketing, and online advertisements to promote their programs. These tools allow institutions to interact directly with prospective students and provide detailed information about courses, admission procedures, and career opportunities.

Another important aspect of digital transformation is the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence in educational marketing and service delivery. Learning analytics help institutions analyse student behaviour, preferences, and engagement levels, enabling them to design personalized learning experiences. Artificial intelligence-powered chatbots and virtual assistants are increasingly used to provide instant responses to student queries, improving communication between institutions and learners.

Mobile learning applications and interactive digital tools further enhance the learning experience by providing multimedia content, real-time discussions, and collaborative learning opportunities. As a result, digital transformation not only improves educational accessibility but also strengthens institutional competitiveness in the global education market.

GST Implications for EdTech and Online Education

The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India has introduced a unified taxation system that affects several service sectors, including digital services and online platforms. GST was introduced to replace multiple indirect taxes and create a transparent and standardized taxation framework across the country. While many educational services provided by recognized institutions remain exempt from GST, several digital education services offered by private platforms may fall under taxable categories.

The taxation of digital learning services has important implications for the pricing structure of online courses. Private educational platforms that provide skill development programs, professional certifications, or specialized training courses may need to include GST in their pricing models. This could increase the overall cost of certain digital education services and influence students' affordability and access to these programs.

At the same time, GST has contributed to greater transparency and regulatory compliance in digital transactions. The taxation framework encourages digital education providers to operate within formal economic systems and maintain standardized financial records. This improves accountability and helps regulate the rapidly expanding digital education market.

However, GST implementation may also create certain operational challenges for emerging educational technology companies and smaller online learning platforms. Compliance with taxation procedures, reporting requirements, and administrative processes may increase operational costs for new market entrants. These challenges highlight the importance of developing balanced taxation policies that support innovation and entrepreneurship in the digital education sector.

Overall, the introduction of GST represents an important regulatory development that influences the growth, pricing strategies, and sustainability of the digital e-learning ecosystem. Policymakers and educational institutions must work together to ensure that taxation frameworks encourage innovation while maintaining accessibility and affordability of digital education services.

Conclusion

Digital transformation has significantly influenced the development of higher education by expanding the reach and accessibility of learning through online platforms. The application of the service marketing mix (7Ps) plays an important role in improving the delivery, promotion, and effectiveness of digital education services. Institutions that adopt innovative marketing strategies and digital technologies can enhance student engagement and institutional competitiveness. At the same time, regulatory frameworks such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST) influence the operational and pricing structures of digital education providers. While GST promotes transparency and standardization in digital services, it also requires institutions and online platforms to adapt their strategies accordingly. Therefore, the integration of effective marketing strategies with supportive regulatory policies is essential for the sustainable growth of the digital e-learning ecosystem. Overall, the study emphasizes that the successful expansion of the digital e-learning ecosystem depends on the effective integration of marketing strategies, technological innovation, and supportive policy frameworks. Educational institutions that strategically adopt digital marketing practices and service marketing mix strategies while adapting to evolving regulatory environments will be better positioned to enhance accessibility, improve service quality, and remain competitive in the rapidly changing higher education landscape.

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