PROBLEMS IN ON-LINE ADMISSIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF NORTH KARNATAKA - A STUDENTS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
The goal of online or web based activities in particular online admissions is to provide convenience, save time, bring more objectivity, transparency and speedy transactions over the manual operations. On the other hand Mere launching of an attractive website uploading all the information and videos of the institute and place a nicely designed application form for download, and relaxing to wait for online admission does not fully facilitate online admissions.

This study reveals interesting and real life problems in using this online facility. Especially, the students who are the beneficiary of this online admission process face vivid problems in making an online transaction. Among these problems the most common and frequently occurring problems for both rural and urban students are website not working, connectivity, on-line payment, system requirement, cost of transaction and lack of customer care etc. The severity of these problems is more observed in case of rural students as it is clear that, the rural areas are deprived of internet, and technology based services.

The aim of this paper is to throw light on the most common problems faced by both rural and urban students. Hence here is an attempt to explore the problems faced by students in making online admissions by conducting a short survey and capturing the responses of the students from both rural and urban background. The subsequent paragraphs of this paper throws light on the responses and findings of this study

Key words: Online, Website, transactions, connectivity, customer care, electronic payment.

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1. INTRODUCTION
Recently, educational institutions have started using information technology tools to improve the efficiency of administrative services and effectiveness of the academic programmes. Especially colleges imparting engineering, medical, management education and even institutions imparting degree level education across the country have been using the Internet and other digital technologies to recruit students and manage their courses. As such most of the institutions in and around North Karnataka have some type
or the other information system in place. One among such tools is Website, which is largely used to make a web presence and ultimately achieve good number of admissions to various programmes. Thereby institutes expect students to surf their website and make a selection of a course and as well as do their admission through an online portal.

In fact, this online portal on admissions, definitely provides utmost convenience to the management as well as for students on a 24X7 basis, and is a much sought after way of getting admitted to an institution. On the other hand online procedure also poses lot of barriers on the institutions as well as the students. The students face vivid problems in making such an online admission despite the assumption that the online facilities are more advantageous than the manual ones. Few of them being website not working, connectivity, on-line payment, system requirement, cost of transaction and lack of customer care etc. Rural students undergo many more problems of very high to very low severity on scale.

The aim of this paper is to throw light on the most common problems faced by both rural and urban students. Hence here is an attempt to explore the problems faced by students in making online admissions by conducting a short survey and capturing the responses of the students from both rural and urban background. The subsequent paragraphs of this paper throws light on the responses and findings of this study.

2. OBJECTIVES
The study encompasses two major objectives mentioned here below.

- To explore the problems faced by the students in making online admissions.
- To study the online admission problems of both urban and rural students

3. METHODOLOGY
The methodology adopted to assess the problems involves following steps.

Data collection Firstly a questionnaire is prepared having 30 questions exploring the perceived problems such as Website, online fees portal, connectivity, customer care, online help, printing and generating receipts etc.

Sample size Secondly the questionnaire was instrumented on a sample of 300 students studying in Degree and PG courses in the District equally distributed in rural and urban areas of North Karnataka

Sample points. The sample is equally divided into two parts and 150 students from urban colleges and 150 students from rural colleges will be subjected to collect data through the questionnaire by adopting convenient sampling method.

The responses are further captured into printed questionnaires and the required primary data will be extracted from it using coding and tabulation techniques.

Further data analysis tools like averages, percentages, graphs such as bar, pie-charts are worked out to assess the existence of the problems in online admissions.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
An elementary descriptive analysis is made here to assess and explore identify the existence of the latest problems in the admission procedure. In the bargain table 1 is prepared to describe the respondents.
Table 1 Distribution of Respondents based on the Course studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSC</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Responses of the students on various problems and their severity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Percentage of Students Reporting problems</th>
<th>Aggregate % age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (%)</td>
<td>Female (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website not responding</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online Payment</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System requirements</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of transaction</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer care</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the table -2 above, we can easily make out that, majority of the respondents have faced one or the other problems in making online admission. Each of these problems have been analysed herewith based on the responses of the students under study.

Out of 300 respondents surveyed, around 74% of the students express that they encounter problem with website through which they are making their admissions. The problems will be of the nature of web pages being static and not dynamic, secondly all the pages are not properly linked and hence giving problem in navigation. Around 77% of the students opine that, the problems are of very high in nature in connectivity. It may be due to the rural connectivity problems. From the survey it is evident that, almost all the problems identified have been common problems of a major portion of the students, almost nearing to 90% in a very high level of severity. Each of these problems are analysed separately in the following paragraphs.

4.1. Website not Working
Since website is the major source for online admissions the real challenge institutions is therefore to maintain working website. The study says that about 74% of the students face problems relating to website being not working at the time of login due to different technical reasons. This creates other associated problems for the students and creates a sort of tension in their minds regarding deadlines of online application, and related payments. The success of the online admission depends upon how well and technically fit the website has been developed and launched. The objective of online admissions is to provide a 24X7 facility to take admission to various educational programmes of the institute. This requires the institutes to develop a robust website, with all the information including a virtual tour of the institute showing all its infrastructure and facilities. Therefore enough care should be taken by the college to see that, a proper professional and technically sound web designer has to be approached and the website should be launched in a server which is on internet.

4.2. System Requirements
The online admission system has certain system requirements in particular the hardware requirements such as Personal Computer, Modem, Printer, Scanner, UPS etc for making online transactions. If any one or more of these are not available at the time of the online transaction or admission it becomes difficult for the students to make admission. Also that not all these equipment’s are available at home in every household so that, they can make such a transaction all the time. Therefore, about 68% of the students
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opine that, they encounter shortage of infrastructure for online admission making. Every household cannot afford to hold all the equipment’s at home all the time as they may not be useful all the time and also may not be economically affordable for the people to maintain these equipment’s at home. Therefore, hardware requirements pose a problem to the students for which they have to approach the Net Centres or Internet browsing café for the purpose and it may incur cost and time for them to avail such facility. Hence system requirements is one of the major problems faced by student’s especially rural student, as they may not get these browsing centres at their villages.

4.3. Electronic Payment System

The study reveals that around 75% of the students opine that, problem arises with electronic payment system while making online admissions. Making online payment requires either a debit card, credit card, smart card or internet banking account, which would require username and password for making transactions. Not all students from (both urban and rural areas) possess such an instrument or account for making online payment. They may have to depend upon the parents, relatives or friend’s accounts or cards at the time of making payments which may be more difficult for rural students for making such an alternative arrangements. Students face many more such problems in online payment due to technological errors. Taking a bank challan based payment will solve such a problem for the students but needs to generate a challan and to approach bank for payment which consumes time, commission and transportation expenses for the student while making transaction.

4.4. Connectivity Problem

Having low connectivity or no connectivity is a common problem across the country at all point of time. For one or the other reason, connectivity suffers in place. The study reveals that, around 77% of the students opine that, they face connectivity problem every time they make online transactions. This leads to unnecessary tension at the time of admission. It creates lot of suspicion in the minds of the students such as, whether the transaction has happened properly, whether the payment has been made properly and the admission process is complete or not, so on and so forth. Students have experienced that the connectivity problem if begins it will last for more than a day or two until it gets resolved. This creates a big tension for the student if the deadline for admission appears. Hence this is one major problem that the students face during admission as explored from this study.

4.5. Customer Care

This study says that, 76% of the students who encounter a problem while online admissions, becomes worried and starts searching for help to resolve the problem. The incomplete transactions, system hangings, power failure etc situations demand the timely help and guidance for the students undergoing process of admission. At this time point the student looks for immediate help. Which is only possible by providing customer care service to the students online. If the institute fails to make tie up with a BPO or if fails to arrange for proper customer care, the students get suffered in the process and this creates a sort or distrust in the minds of the student and parents about the dependability of the online process.

4.6. Cost of Admissions

One last and big problem is cost. On an average 75% of the students opine that, the online admission is more costly than the old manual one. The rural students say they pay more cost than the urban students due to various reasons. The cost of admission for them would include, bank commission, internet browsing café charges, printing receipts and challan charges, transportation charges to go to bank and browsing centres, and other allied charges. Which was not the case with manual procedure earlier.
5. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Having understood the problems associated with online admissions process, from the student’s perspective, this paper opens up further scope for research, or study of factors affecting online admissions and their modeling, from both the angles or service provider, and the service users.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of online or web based activities in particular online admissions is to provide convenience, save time, bring more objectivity, transparency and speedy transactions over the manual operations. Whereas, the current study reveals interesting and real life problems in using this online facility. Especially, the students who are the beneficiary of this online admission process, face vivid problems in making an online transaction. Among these problems the most common and frequently occurring problems for both rural and urban students are website not working, connectivity, on-line payment, system requirement, cost of transaction and lack of customer care etc. The severity of these problems is more observed in case of rural students as it is clear that, the rural areas are deprived of internet, and technology based services. On the other hand mere launching of an attractive website uploading all the information and videos of the institute and place a nicely designed application form for download, and relaxing to wait for online admission does not create any online admissions. The management of these online processes must focus to provide continuous follow-up, updation, and customer care to the students and public. Then one can really expect good growth in online admissions.

REFERENCE


