



ASSESSMENT IN FOCUS

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Assessment in Focus is dedicated to the dissemination of information and developments at the Testing Center, as well as to shed light on aspects of educational measurement and evaluation issues that would assist in the development and maintenance of up-to-standard and quality education at SMU, and similar higher learning institutions in Ethiopia.

Editor's Note

Assessment in Focus is a biannual newsletter devoted to announcing major highlights of the activities carried out under the duties and responsibilities of the Testing Center (TC), SMU. These activities mainly focus on education and the activities' core concern comprises of educational assessment, offering trainings on how to prepare test items, giving trainings on educational assessment and evaluation, and carry out testing programs at any level. The Center also gives service to organizations in the recruitment of their employees by developing question items and testing their candidates.

In addition, the Center presents differing articles which add important inputs to the knowledge and perception of customers and the University's community at large.

St. Mary's University provides short-term trainings based on the need assessment and the request thereof of stakeholders to fill their skill gaps so that their employees improve the way they are expected to run their responsibilities at their workplace.

Besides, as mentioned here above, the Center administers different local as well as international tests based on the request of customers. These include: GRE, TOEFL, and employment tests which are currently offered to many public and private organizations.

Outreach services are also one of the significant activities of the Center. The provision of trainings to educational institutions on the subjects of how to deal with test preparation and assessment methodologies is vividly underway. In light of this, we were able to offer this same training to not less than 100 teaching staff of Abune Gorgorios Educational and Training Center in Addis Ababa.

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"The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have hummer, but without folly."

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Activities at the Testing Center

The following activities have been carried out over the last few months.

Preparation and posting of Higher Education model Exit exams

Model exams were prepared for the Regular and Distance Education Program fields of study. Exams were also posted on SMU's online system

Preparation and uploading of Flyers

Different flyers were prepared and distributed to advertise international and local employment testing services carried out by the Testing Center. Some of the flyers focus on pedagogical issues such as: Causes of Test Anxiety and Strategies that Help Avoid it, and Study Habits. The flyers have been prepared to be posted on SMU's online system for students of the Regular and Distance Education Programs.

Experience Sharing Visit

A team from SMU staff representing the Computerized Marking and Grading Unit of the Testing Center and ICT Development and Support Unit, paid a visit to Educational Assessment and Examination Service (EAES) of the Ministry of Education on October 22, 2024 (Tikimt 12, 2017 E.C).

The team visited different centers of the EAES where exam marking, grading and related security tasks are carried out. They conducted a discussion on the function of optical mark reader, scanning machines and other technological devices applied for marking and grading activities and the procedure to be followed in each process. The purpose of the visit was aimed at gaining experience which will enable SMU to improve its computerized marking and grading process using the latest technological advancements and practices.

Provision of Employment Tests

TC offered 14 employment test offering services to governmental and non- governmental organizations in the last few months. The Center had been and still is providing employment/placement tests in 25 fields of study. The exam development and administration

is carried out by highly qualified experts in the respective fields of study. The marking procedure is supported by computerized reading system to insure accuracy and timely supply of results to customers.

Administration of International Tests

A total of 53 test sessions were successfully conducted for:

- 623 Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT),
- 378 Chartered Institute for Securities and Investment (CISI),
- 108 Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), and
- 23 Praxis (Teachers professional test) registered candidates in the last few months. International test administration service delivery has regularly been monitored and the customers' satisfaction survey which was conducted recently has aimed at improving our efficiency and test administration services.

Trainings

Trainings were given to Kidist Mariam and Abaqira Academy on the preparation of test blueprint and exam development. Similarly, trainings were given to newly placed Testing Center assessor –tutors. An orientation was also given to CODL exam coordinators and invigilators on how to handle and run exams offered at the end of every term.



By the same token, a half day pedagogical training was given to 100 administrative and teaching staff of Abune Gorgorios Primary and Junior Secondary schools on contemporary assessment issues such as instructional methods, preparation of test blueprint



and test item construction. The training was carried out on January 30, 2025 at one of the compounds of Abune Gorgorios Education and Training Center.

Item Analysis

Item Analysis was conducted upon exams of College of Open and Distance Education and the Regular Program as well as Kidist Mariam schools and feedback reports were given to the concerned bodies aimed at improving quality of tests and test development skills of instructors/ test item developers.

Managing Test Anxiety

Woubshet Shiferaw, PhD, SMU

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal human feeling that is part of life. It is an unpleasant emotion that most people feel anytime in life when they are faced with challenges. This is an unpleasant state of turmoil, often accompanied by nervous behavior. Anxiety is not the same as fear, which is a response to a real or perceived immediate threat. To the contrary, it refers to the expectations of future threat to the victim. Anxiety is a feeling of fear, worry, and uneasiness, usually generalized and unfocused overreaction to a situation that is only subjectively seen as a threat. Mild anxiety before an event can help people to perform better. But when it becomes more intense, it causes distress to last longer, interferes with daily living, and hence we can say that it creates a problem in one's daily life.

Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is the uneasiness, apprehension or nervousness felt by students who have a fear of failing an exam. Test anxiety is a type of anxiety that can affect the test taker before, during or after the test. Anxiety can often serve as a good form of adrenaline such as distributed feeling in your stomach before making a speech, taking a test, or performing on stage. Test anxiety can also be experienced at varying levels. Slight exam stress can help by providing alertness, readiness and helping you to concentrate. However, excessive exam anxiety may result in a stress which can negatively affect performance.

Recognizing the symptoms of test anxiety

Symptoms of test anxiety vary from person to person. Some students are mildly affected and exhibit few symptoms, while others experience severe reactions. It may occur before, during or after the test. Anxiety is your mind's or your body's natural response to what it views as a threat. When threatened, your body triggers a number of physical and mental reactions. These reactions can be organized into three categories, and when combined, create a state within which test anxiety flourishes. Each category is connected to the other, so anything that can be done to lessen one reaction will lessen the impact of the other two categories.

There are three categories of reactions; namely, Physical (somatic), Emotional and Mental (cognitive).

1. Physical (somatic)

This is the easiest place to start. These symptoms are the most observable, both to the person suffering with test anxiety and to those around them. The body's reactions to anxiety are hard to miss!

Common physical responses to test anxiety:

- Changes in body temperature
- Breathing problems (tightness in chest, breathing too quickly)
- Muscular responses (stiffness in muscles)
- Abdominal problems (an upset stomach, feeling queasy, nausea)
- Headache /sensory responses (dizziness, light headaches, blurred vision)
- Cardiovascular reactions (palpitations or tightness in chest, an increase in blood pressure)

There are many other related physical symptoms associated with test anxiety which include skin rashes, changes in eating patterns (eating too much or too little), an increase or decrease in activity level, sleep disorders (insomnia, nightmares, or in severe cases of phobia – night terrors).

When a few or all of these responses occur during



a test, it's easy to understand how test performance suffers.

2. Emotional

Emotional responses can include:-

- Mood changes
- Emotionally unstable responses
- Feelings of losing control

These emotional factors can literally override other bodily functions and can easily lead to a student avoiding a task completely due to a panic attack or a full-fledged phobia. It is with these reactions in mind that you may ask yourself: "What good is it if I can memorize and learn a huge amount of information, but I can't remember it during the test because of my emotions? "

The ability to control and normalize emotion is the key to overcoming exam stress.

3. Mental (cognitive)

Mental responses to test anxiety include:-

- Irrational thinking
- Feeling of failure or rejection
- Forgetfulness and memory loss
- Loss of concentration and focus

This series of symptoms is due to negative thinking rather than positive thinking taking control in the brain. The result can best be described as students making themselves 'sick' with excessive worry due to irrational thought, which then strips them of confidence and leads to an inability to concentrate.

Are Certain People More Prone to Test Anxiety?

While anyone can get anxious before taking an important test, people who worry a lot or who claim to be perfectionists are more likely to have trouble with test anxiety.

This is because people with these qualities sometimes find it hard to accept mistakes they might make, or to get anything less than a perfect score. In this way, even without meaning to, they put much more pressure

on themselves. Test anxiety is bound to thrive in a situation like this.

Students who aren't prepared for tests but who care about doing well are also likely to experience exam stress. People can feel unprepared for tests for several reasons: they may not have studied enough, they may find the material difficult, or perhaps they feel tired because they didn't get enough sleep the night before.

Students who experience test anxiety are often masters at avoidance and may also have problem with procrastination. They often avoid studying, and a day or two before the test they start to worry that they have not studied enough. Procrastination also leads to last -minute cramming, which can result in the information becoming disorganized in the student's brain.

This pattern of avoidance creates a vicious cycle: procrastination leads to last -minute cramming, which leads to anxiety, self -doubt, and excessive anxiety during a testing situation, which, again, may lead to the inability to remember or think logically.

What Causes Test Anxiety?

There are many obstacles that stand in the way of overcoming test anxiety, but the condition can be properly managed with the right care. It may be past experiences of blanking out on tests or the inability to readily retrieve answers to questions that can bring on an episode of test anxiety. It could also be a lack of preparation for an exam which is a real reason to be worried about test performance. Errors in time management, poor study habits, failure to properly organize material and cramming the night before the exam are also likely to increase test anxiety.

Suppose the test taker has been adequately prepared for the test and yet if any precipitating anxiety occurs, then, that condition may result from negative thinking and futile worrying, nothing else!

Focusing on past test performances, i.e., how friends and other classmates are doing or the negative consequences of doing poorly are also major factors contributing to anxiety. Students who experience test anxiety tend to be the type of people who put a lot of pressure on themselves not to perform well



as a consequence. They often have unusually high expectations for themselves and, many times, have been very good students in the past. When these students begin to experience low grades for the first time, usually at college level, their image of themselves as a smart person begins to erode. They then put pressure on themselves to perform better, but often put off studying longer than they should. This initiates a cycle of self – doubt and irrational belief that can result in high anxiety levels during testing situations.

Common Causes of Test Anxiety

- Learned behavior
- The direct association of grades and personal worth
- A feeling of a lack of control
- A teacher embarrassing a student
- Being placed into an academic position above one's ability
- A fear of alienation from parents, family and friends due to poor grades
- Timed tests and the fear of not finishing the test, even if one can do all the problems.

Ineffective study methods and procrastination can lead to anxiety and a lowered self- image. Poor performance in a course can lead to increased pressure on oneself, especially if the outcome of a test or of a course is very important. A single experience of extreme test anxiety can leave a student uncertain if it will occur again. Focusing on the bad things that could happen also fuels test anxiety. The more a person focuses on the bad things that could happen, the stronger the feeling of anxiety becomes. This makes the test – taker feel worse, and because his or her head is full of distracting thoughts and fears, it can increase the possibility that they will show under –performance on the test.

Diagnosing Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is a fairly common condition among students of all ages, and while it can often be diagnosed

by experts, the sufferer is usually already acutely aware of the condition. A useful way of overcoming nervousness and anxiety in tests and exams is to take note of triggers that create tension.

Diagnosing exam stress involves charting the physical, mental, and emotional reactions experienced when anticipating a test, during taking the test, and after the test is completed.

Generally, if a person feels more stressed, strained, or anxious when taking a test than at any other normal time in their life, then they are probably suffering from test anxiety.

Test anxiety can be a real problem, especially when the stresses reach a height where the nervousness takes over and the test taker cannot even focus on the test questions and fail to do their best in the exam or test. However, there are steps you can follow to keep away test anxiety at a manageable level and overcome nervousness.

Traditional strategies such as developing improved studying and test- taking skills can make a significant difference. For example, students can learn classroom note –taking and graphic organization techniques to assist them in better preparing for tests, thereby calming their nerves.

Along with study skills, students can be taught effective study habits for test, which can be a positive first step in overcoming test anxiety. Study habits have to do with planning (how, when, and where you study), time management, and organizational skills.

Everything takes time and practice, and learning how to overcome nervousness and anxiety is no different.

Although it will not disappear overnight, facing and dealing with test anxiety will help you learn stress management and overcome nervousness, which can prove to be a valuable skill in many situations besides taking tests.

Of course, taking care of your health – such as getting enough sleep, exercise, and healthy food before a test – can help keep your mind working at its best. Students who get a full eight hours sleep the night before a test are more likely to figure out the problems



than those who stay awake the entire night before studying.

The good news for students who experience test anxiety is that it may be easily conquered if they are willing to follow some guidelines and practice some well-established techniques. Research indicates that when students have tools and strategies that build both emotional skills and healthy physical habits, overcoming test anxiety and its associated symptoms is attainable. As a result, they improve their ability to prepare for and perform an exam. The most frequently mentioned strategies address the following areas:

- Relaxation
- Knowledge of testing conditions/ study skills
- Adequate preparation
- Effective healthy habits, exercise
- Monitoring of thinking patterns /positive self-talk/

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Understanding Emotional Intelligence Lewi Senbeto, SMU

In a world that values intelligence and technical skills, there is an equally vital yet often underestimated trait that shapes the quality of our lives: Emotional Intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand, manage, and harness emotions, both your own and others'. As a psychologist, I've witnessed firsthand how this powerful ability transforms relationships, careers, and personal growth. It includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. EI is critical for thriving in relationships and professional success, helping to resolve conflicts, build trust, and inspire collaboration. You can develop EI through mindfulness, active listening, and managing stress. Cultivating EI enhances personal growth, deepens

connections, and leads to a more fulfilling life.

Now a day, according to in Ethiopia context emotional intelligence needs to be increased all over the country. Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in Ethiopia's political, economic, and psychosocial landscape. Political polarization and trust deficits highlight the need for empathy and dialogue. Studies show that EI enhances educators' commitment and students' well-being, while low EI contributes to psychosocial challenges in youth. Leaders with high EI foster trust and communication, essential for diverse organizations. Strengthening EI across sectors can improve social cohesion, communication, and emotional well-being, making it a key tool for addressing Ethiopia's ongoing challenges. Let's dive into what emotional intelligence truly is and why it's indispensable in today's world.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage our emotions while being attuned to the emotions of others. Coined by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer and popularized by Daniel Goleman, EI is a dynamic skill encompassing five core components:

1. Self-Awareness: The ability to recognize and understand your emotions and how they impact your thoughts and behavior.
2. Self-Regulation: Managing your emotions in healthy ways, staying in control even under stress.
3. Motivation: An inner drive that goes beyond external rewards, fueling perseverance and optimism.
4. Empathy: Understanding and sharing the feelings of others, fostering deep connections.
5. Social Skills: Building meaningful relationships through effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork.

Why Emotional Intelligence Matters

Imagine a workplace where collaboration thrives, conflicts are resolved smoothly, and leaders inspire their teams with compassion. Such environments are often driven by emotional intelligence. People with high EI navigate complex interpersonal dynamics



with ease, fostering trust and cooperation.

In personal life, EI plays an equally vital role. It helps in understanding loved ones' emotions, addressing misunderstandings, and building deeper connections. Whether in friendships, family, or romantic relationships, EI ensures stronger bonds and better conflict resolution.

Building Emotional Intelligence

While some people may naturally exhibit high emotional intelligence, it is a skill that anyone can develop. Here are some practical ways to build EI:

1. **Practice Self-Awareness:** Reflect on your emotions regularly. Journaling can help identify patterns and triggers, offering insight into your emotional landscape.
2. **Cultivate Empathy:** Put yourself in others' shoes. Try to understand their perspectives without judgment, and respond with kindness.
3. **Enhance Communication Skills:** Practice active listening. Pay attention not just to words but also to tone and body language.
4. **Manage Stress Effectively:** Stress can derail emotional control. Engage in relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or regular exercise.
5. **Seek Feedback:** Ask trusted friends or colleagues how your actions and words affect them. This can provide valuable insights for growth.

Emotional Intelligence in Action

To see the power of EI in action, consider this scenario: A team leader notices an employee struggling with a task. Instead of reprimanding them, the leader approaches with empathy: "I see this project has been challenging. Is there something I can do to help?"

This response not only boosts the employee's morale but also strengthens their trust in the leader.

Such small but impactful acts of emotional intelligence create ripple effects, enhancing workplace harmony and productivity.

The Ripple Effect of Emotional Intelligence

Developing emotional intelligence isn't just about

individual growth; it influences everyone around you. A parent with high EI creates a nurturing environment for their children. A teacher with emotional intelligence inspires students to learn and express themselves openly. A leader with strong EI drives their team to success while maintaining a positive culture.

In essence, emotional intelligence is the foundation of thriving relationships, effective leadership, and personal fulfillment.

A Lifelong Journey

Building EI is not a one-time effort; it's a lifelong journey. As you become more aware of your emotions and those of others, you'll notice profound changes in how you relate to the world. The more you practice mindfulness, empathy, and emotional regulation, the more rewarding your experiences will become.

Final Thoughts

Emotional intelligence isn't just a soft skill; it's a life skill. In a world where human connection is more valuable than ever, cultivating EI is a transformative step toward a more meaningful and fulfilling life. Whether in your career, relationships, or personal growth, emotional intelligence is the key to unlocking your full potential.

Start today, and witness the profound impact of understanding and managing emotions both yours and others'.

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The Impact of Technology on Education

Yidnekachew Ejigu, SMU.

Technology and education are fundamental components of a modern, successful society. Education equips individuals with knowledge and tools to tackle contemporary challenges, while technology provides the resources to implement those solutions. Together, they form essential building blocks for a brighter future. Historically, technology in education was limited to basic tools such as projectors and overhead projectors. However, today, technology has revolutionized education, offering online learning platforms, interactive simulations, and virtual reality experiences. These advancements have made education more engaging, accessible, and personalized.

The rapid evolution of technology has allowed students to learn interactively, gaining deeper insights into complex topics. It has also enabled students to access educational content from anywhere in the world, making education more accessible, particularly to those with internet access. This transformation has fostered greater independence and collaboration, with students now able to work with peers from different countries through virtual communication. Additionally, these technological advancements have reduced educational costs, making it possible for more people to pursue their studies.

This shift has led to a more globalized educational system, where students from various countries now have access to the same resources and opportunities. Online courses and virtual classrooms are increasingly popular, allowing education to extend beyond traditional classrooms. This development has made it easier for students to obtain quality

education, regardless of their geographic location, and has enabled teachers to reach out to students in diverse ways. The resulting interconnectedness has positively impacted global economic development, as more people can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for active participation in the economy. Furthermore, this has contributed to a more equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to quality education.

Some of the key impacts of digital technology on education include:

- Big data and artificial intelligence (AI) help improve educational effectiveness and outcomes.
- Gamification and immersive learning create engaging, fun, and interactive educational experiences.
- Digital technologies and online resources are now indispensable in today's dynamic learning environment.
- Digital tools enhance learner performance and improve teaching effectiveness.

Impacts of Digital Technologies on Teachers' Professional and Teaching Practices

The integration of digital technologies in education has greatly impacted teachers' professional practices. Here are some key findings from the literature:

1. Digital Technologies and Education Transformation:

- Digital technologies have transformed education globally. Schools have adopted strategies and policies to incorporate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into teaching and learning.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of digital tools in education, revealing both advantages and challenges. While some schools faced difficulties due to low digital capacity, others thrived, showcasing the potential for digital transformation.

2. Impact on Teachers' Professional Practices:

- Teachers are central to integrating technology into their teaching. Their attitudes, skills,



and knowledge significantly impact effective technology integration.

- Digital tools enable teachers to diversify their teaching methods, making content delivery more interactive and personalized. Technology also supports formative assessments and data-driven decision-making, enhancing feedback for students.
- The use of digital tools fosters collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. It also allows teachers to manage classrooms more effectively, addressing diverse learning needs and promoting inclusivity.

3. Challenges and Opportunities:

- Several factors affect the success of digital technology integration, including infrastructure (internet access, devices, software), teacher training, and curriculum alignment with technological tools.
- Support from school leadership and the presence of effective professional development programs are critical for maximizing the potential of digital tools. Additionally, addressing technostress (stress from adapting to new technologies) is necessary to ensure a smooth integration process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, digital technologies have transformed education in profound ways. Teachers' professional practices play a crucial role in this transformation. By addressing challenges such as infrastructure, teacher training, and digital capacity, schools can effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. A holistic approach that considers infrastructure, pedagogical practices, and support systems will ensure the sustainable success of digital transformation in education.

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Determinants of financial arrangement in individuals

Absira Yohannes, SMU

Financial arrangement refers to how individuals manage their finances, including budgeting, saving, investing and spending. Various factors influence these financial decisions, making the study of financial arrangements a complex but crucial aspect of personal finance. Understanding these determinants can help individuals make more informed financial choices and can also aid financial advisors in providing better guidance.

Key Determinants of Financial Arrangements

- **Income Levels:** - one of the most significant factors influencing financial arrangement is an individual's income. Higher income levels generally provide more flexibility in spending, saving and investing. Conversely, lower income levels may lead to more stringent budgeting and prioritizing essential expenses.
- **Education and Financial Literacy:** - knowledge about financial products investment opportunities and budgeting techniques plays a critical role in financial decision-making. Individual with higher financial literacy are more likely to make informed and beneficial financial choices.
- **Age and Life Stage:** - financial needs and priorities change over the course of person's life. Young adults might focus on education loans



and saving for a home, while older individuals may prioritize retirement savings and health care expenses.

- **Culture and Social Factors:** - cultural background and social environment can influence financial behaviors. For instance, some cultures emphasize saving and investing, while others may prioritize spending on family and social obligations.
- **Psychological Factors:** - individual attitudes towards money, risk tolerance and financial goals significantly affect financial decisions. Some people are natural savers, while others may be more inclined to spend.
- **Economic Environment:** - the broader economic climate, including interest rates, inflation and employment rates, can impact personal financial arrangements. For example, high inflation may erode saving, prompting individuals to seek investment options that offer higher returns.
- **Health and Family Obligations:** - health status and family responsibilities can greatly influence financial decisions. Medical expenses, childcare and eldercare needs often require significant financial planning and resources.
- **Government Policies and Taxation:** - tax incentives, social security benefits and other government policies can shape how individuals manage their finances. Tax deductions for retirement savings, for example, can encourage individuals to invest in pension plans.

Importance of Understanding Financial Determinants

- **Personal financial planning:** - recognizing the determinants of financial arrangements can help individuals create more effective financial plans that align with their goals and circumstances.
- **Financial advisory services:** - financial advisors can offer better guidance by understanding the various factors influencing their clients' financial decisions.
- **Policy making:** - policymakers can design better financial literacy programs and policies that support individuals' in managing their finances

effectively.

- **Economic stability:** - understanding these determinants can contribute to broader economic stability by promoting sound financial practices among individuals.

Theories and Modes

- **Life-cycle hypothesis:** - this theory suggests that individuals plan their consumption and saving behavior over their life time. They aim to maintain a stable standard of living, smoothing consumption in anticipation of varying income levels at different life stages.
- **Behavioral finance:** - this field studies the psychological factors that influence financial decision-making, such as biases and heuristics. It hopes explain why individuals might make seemingly irrational financial choices.
- **Human capital theory:** - this theory posits that investments in education and skills can enhance an individual's earning potential, there by affecting their financial arrangements.

Conclusion

The determinants of financial arrangements in individuals are multifaceted, involving a combination of income, education, age, culture, psychology, economic condition, and health and government policies. By understanding these factors, individuals can make more informed financial decisions that align with their long-term goals and circumstances in navigating their financial journeys.

- Exploring the determinants of financial arrangements offers valuable insights into personal finance management and reveals fascinating dynamic that shape our economic behaviors.

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The Metaverse Metamorphosis: Transforming Marketing Strategies in a Virtual World

Eyoel Genene, SMU.

The phrase "metaverse," which was first used in science fiction writing, is no longer only a fantasy idea. It is transforming how we connect with technology, the media, and one another as it becomes a more palpable reality. The metaverse is developing into a multidimensional digital realm spanning virtual and augmented reality as a result of technological advancements, posing both new opportunities and difficulties for companies wishing to interact with their consumers. This study intends to investigate how the metaverse notion is evolving and how it affects marketing, with an emphasis on consumer engagement tactics.

The idea of the metaverse to itself has gained popularity in a short period of time, as there has been high innovation in VR, AR, and digital spaces. Continuous improvement of the VR environments and the creation of connections between them leads to the situation when this area starts to be seen as a new marketing and communication tool. The article tackles the changing field of the metaverse along with its marketing implication for managers, discussing the paths that the brands can take while in the digital environment to create close bonds with the consumers.

Understanding the Metaverse:

Metaverse refers to a common virtual realm built on the foundation of interlinked digital worlds through which the users are able to interact with each other and virtual entities as well as the real time. Unlike the virtual platforms we use today that are only focused on

online actions and information exchanges, metaverse breaks down the barriers between the physical and the virtual, which is known as a key feature of metaverse (Rosedale, 2008). This was precisely the value of this interconnectedness – the transition which was permitted to take place from one virtual space to another thus making up one very dynamic and large-scale digital community.

Opportunities for Brand Immersion:

With the advent of the global metaverse, brands face a paradigm shift in how they reach consumers, which in turn provides immense innovations in creating immersive and interactive customer outreaches that go beyond traditional marketing channels. In this virtual realm, which features everything from quality VR experiences to AR overlays and virtual events, brands have the opportunity to dominate the consumer’s attention by offering immersive storytelling experiences, innovative product showcases, and touch-sensitive brand activities.

Johnson (2023), claims that the phenomenon of metaverse provides a dynamic environment that gives brands access to a wide range of technologies through which they can conceptualize memorable stories that help them to engage with consumers. By using virtual reality, brands can place consumers in virtual worlds where they can check out the products, talk with a brand representative, and do some fun things, such as watching 3D shows. As a result, realities are getting blurred out.

The metaverse is one of the marketing’s cornerstones due to its capacity to build emotional bonds between firms and customers. By building and designing interactive settings in which people can live the necessary experience, brands can pluck at people’s emotions and senses so as to lead to memorable moments for the consumers. As proposed by Smith and colleagues (2022), emotional engagement is the core of brand loyalty as well as purchase intention and the metaverse Metaverse is unable to create a perfect environment for building these emotional relationships.

The metaverse provides the chance to brands to create perpetual presence within the environment where the consumers can associate with branded



content and experience. Contrary to offline channels like those constrained by time and space, the virtual metaverse always promotes relationships by offering continuous engagement opportunities, which therefore enable brands to maintain ongoing links with their consumers beyond stand-alone campaigns or events. Such constant connection builds brand loyalty and advocacy, as consumers experience a sense of belonging to and an affinity with brands that are actively present in the virtual world that they have created (Taylor, 2023). This also helps brands to build meaningful relationships with their consumers.

Moreover, the metaverse assists the brands in consumer engagement and loyalty, more so, it opens up the brand to stand out from the crowd which is an increasingly competitive environment. Through generation of innovative technologies and compelling narratives, brands can very well be distinguished from competitors and readily attract the witty consumers of the hour. Additionally, the metaverse has a level playing ground for brands of all types to be on, it is a platform where the big brands compete with the small starts and niche players on an equal footing.

The Metaverse will create unique chances for brands to develop beyond conventional means by offering an immersive and interactive reality that breaks through the boundaries of marketing media. With VR and AR, brands can now establish real time and genuine consumer connections. They can engender an ongoing relationship and differentiate themselves from the competition brands driving loyalty. As the metaverse keeps evolving, the brands that will be successful in the digital world are those that will adopt the new technologies, continually design, and execute campaigns that help them stay relevant in the consumer's mind.

Personalization and Customization:

Users in the metaverse will find personalization more rewarding than ever before because brands now can adjust and customize in-depth new channels concerning individual choices and manner of use. With data-empowered insights and AI algorithms, brands will be able to develop personalized 'avatars,' interact in virtual environments, and get tailored-made recommendations that will be so closely relatable for consumers. Through the use

of individualized narratives, brands will be able to stimulate engagement, deepen relationships, and fast-track customer decisions in the virtual realm. Besides, the metaverse allows for the technology to be dynamically personalized, meaning that the experiences can configure themselves in the real time according to the users data and feedback, which only can go to further improve the matching and effectiveness of brand communication.

Collaboration and Co-Creation:

With the metaverse, brands can share creation among users, resulting in consumption engagement and participatory experience. Engaging users in outlines allows them to create and share user-generated content, socialize in virtual worlds, and develop brand experience together that brands make them volitional participants in the brand storytelling. In this manner, interactive experiences not only reinforce engagement but also motivate individuals to advocate for the brand and promote it within social virtual communities. The Company status besides the content co-creation in the Metaverse is hidden in new product development and innovation where brands can ask for user opinions and pull-in, in order to shape branded items and increase the customer satisfaction level.

Integration with Traditional Marketing Strategies

Marketing professionals need to recognize that the virtual world of the metaverse is a contemporary version of the old trade route for brands to drive stronger engagement – rather than diversify in an isolated fashion, they should integrate AR/VR experiences within traditional marketing efforts. By matching virtual activations with the brand message and strategic goals, marketers are able to ensure that they are offering one holistic, consistent feeling in all different areas of the ecosystem. In addition, blend on-site interaction with the virtual world to produce more reach and more powerful action, resulting in a coordinated brand experience that is easy for consumers to adapt. Adopting this hybrid way helps your brand benefit from the advantages of digital and traditional marketing. Amongst them is increased reach and the ability to engage a larger audience.

The metaverse forms a novel marketing realm,



where the brand encounters an ultimate chance to draw users in a full scope of engagement through conditioning a realistic virtual environment. With the skilled discernment of metaverse complexities and the appropriate creative advertising tactics of brand engagement, marketers will be ready to assume the lead role in placement of their brands in the novel digital realm.

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Key lessons that students should embrace during their time at university

Lewi Senbeto, SMU

A university stay typically refers to the period during which a student is enrolled in a college or university to pursue higher education. This experience often

lasts three to four years for undergraduate degrees and can be longer for graduate studies. During this time, students immerse themselves in academic learning, engage with diverse ideas and perspectives, and develop critical skills that shape their personal and professional futures.

University life offers a unique environment that encourages independence, self-exploration, and social interaction. Students have opportunities to form lifelong friendships, participate in extracurricular activities, and network with peers and faculty. The experience can be both challenging and rewarding, as students navigate coursework, manage time, and discover their passions.

Overall, a university stay is not just about gaining knowledge in a specific field; it's a transformative phase that fosters growth, resilience, and a sense of community, preparing students for future careers and lifelong learning.

University is a pivotal time for personal and academic growth, and there are several key lessons that students should embrace during their time at university:

1) Time Management: Balancing academic responsibilities, social activities, and personal commitments is crucial. Learning to prioritize tasks and manage time effectively can lead to better academic performance and a more fulfilling university experience.

2) Critical Thinking: University is not just about absorbing information; it's about questioning, analyzing, and forming opinions. Developing critical thinking skills will serve students well in their studies and future careers.

3) Networking: Building relationships with peers, professors, and industry professionals is invaluable. Networking can lead to internships, job opportunities, and collaborations that can enhance personal and professional growth.

4) Financial Literacy: Understanding how to manage finances, including budgeting, saving, and investing, is essential. Many students face financial challenges, and being financially literate can help them make informed decisions.



5) Self-Care and Mental Health: University can be stressful, so building strategies for self-care, mindfulness, and managing mental health is vital. Seeking help when needed is a sign of strength, not weakness.

6) Adaptability: The ability to adapt to change and face challenges is a key skill in both academic and career pursuits. Being open to new experiences and resilient in the face of setbacks fosters personal growth.

7) Communication Skills: Whether it's writing papers, giving presentations, or networking, strong communication skills are essential. Being able to articulate thoughts clearly and effectively is an invaluable asset in any field.

8) Lifelong Learning: Cultivating a mindset of continuous learning helps students adapt to new challenges and opportunities beyond university. Staying curious and open to new knowledge is key to personal and professional development.

9) Cultural Competence: Engaging with diverse perspectives and cultures enriches the university experience and prepares students for a globalized workforce. Learning to appreciate and respect diversity is crucial.

10) Goal Setting and Planning: Setting clear, achievable goals and developing a plan to reach them can help students stay focused and motivated throughout their academic journey.

By recognizing and embracing these lessons, university students can maximize their educational experience and prepare themselves for future success. Benefits of these lessons

- Time management enhances productivity and reduces stress.
- Critical thinking fosters analytical thinking and informed decision-making.
- Networking opens up career opportunities and collaborations.
- Financial literacy empowers students to make informed financial decisions.
- Self-care and mental health promotes overall well-being and resilience.

- Adaptability prepares students for change and uncertainty.
- Communication skills enhance personal and professional interactions.
- Lifelong learning encourages continuous personal and professional development.
- Cultural competence increases empathy and global awareness.
- Goal setting provides direction and motivation.

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Riddles

Fanta Ayalew, SMU.

Ten riddles are presented below. Choose the best answer from the alternatives given. The answers are available on page 15.

1. What has to be broken before you can use it?
a. an orange b. an egg c. an apple d. a gourd
2. I'm tall when I'm young, and I'm short when I'm old. What am I?
a. human b. lion c. tree d. A candle
3. What month of the year has 28 days?
a. February b. March c. All of them d. May
4. What is full of holes but still holds water?
a. injera b. pancake c. A sponge d. ladle
5. What question can you never answer 'yes' to?
a. Are you okay? b. Are you asleep yet? c. Are you eating? d. Are you coming?
6. What is always in front of you but can't be seen?
a. The future b. The past c. Your dream d. All
7. There's a one-story house in which everything is



yellow. Yellow walls, yellow doors, yellow furniture.
What color are the stairs?

- a. Yellow b. The choice of the owner c. Perhaps green. d. There aren't any—it's a one-story house.
8. What can you break, even if you never pick it up or touch it?
a. an iron dome b. log of wood c. promise d. timber
9. What goes up but never comes down?
a. our fame b. our income c. our beauty d. our age
10. A man who was outside in the rain without an umbrella or hat didn't get a single hair on his head wet. Why?
a. He was bold b. He was bald. c. He was short. d. He was shoed nicely.

Answers for the riddles

10. b 9. a 8. c 7. d 6. a 5. b 4. c 3. c 2. d 1. b

QUOTES' CORNER

Best Birthday Quotes

1. "Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears." — John Lennon
2. "As you get older, three things happen: The first is your memory goes, and I can't remember the other two." — Norman Wisdom
3. "My life is better with every year of living it."
— Rachel Maddow
4. "Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young."
Fred Astaire
5. "Your birthday is the beginning of your own personal new year. Your first birthday was a beginning, and each new birthday is a chance to begin again, to start over, and to take a new grip on life." — Wilfred Peterson
6. "The older you get the better you get, unless you are a banana." — Betty White
7. "Birthdays are nature's way of telling us to eat more

cake." — Edward Morykwas

8. "Today is the oldest you have been and the youngest you will ever be. Make the most of it!"
— Nicky Gumbel
9. "We turn not older with years but newer every day."
— Emily Dickinson
10. "You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake." — Bob Hope
11. "To me, old age is always 15 years older than I am."—Bernard Baruch
12. "You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that make you want to live to be a hundred."— Woody Allen
13. "There are two great days in a person's life—the day we are born, and the day we discover why."
—William Barclay

14. "Wisdom doesn't necessarily come with age. Sometimes, age just shows up all by itself." — Tom Wilson

15. "Because time itself is like a spiral, something special happens on your birthday each year: The same energy that God invested in you at birth is present once again." — Menachem Mendel Schneerson

Quotes on Quality of Education

"A quality education grants us the ability to fight the war on ignorance." Charles B. Rangel

"If we provide quality education to one generation, poverty will automatically be eradicated from society." Arvind Kejriwal

"The right to a quality education is the perfect path to bridge the gap between different cultures and to reconcile various civilizations. Without such a right, the values of liberty, justice and equality will have no meaning. Ignorance is by far the biggest danger and threat to human kind." Moza Bint Nasser

"Getting quality education is the right of all citizens."
Unanimous



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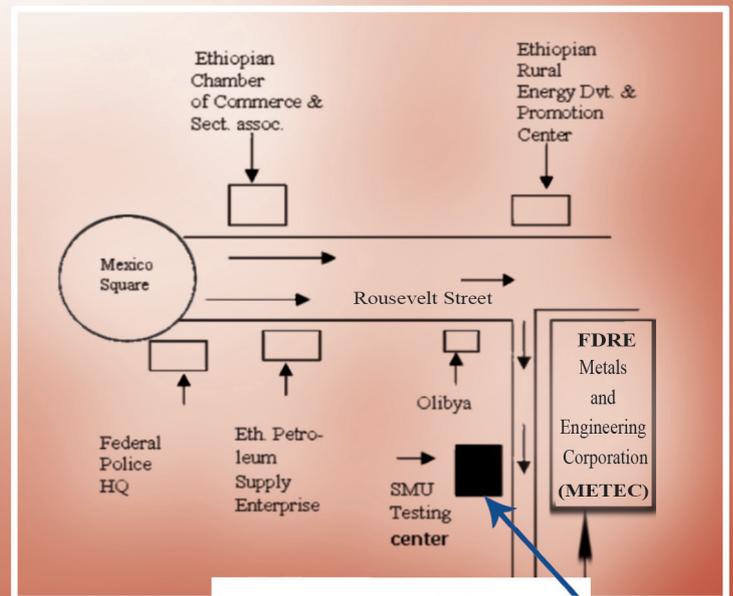
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