Leveraging Social Media for Australia Education and Migration: Impact on NCR Agencies and the Mediating Role of Customer Engagement

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Abstract

Aim: This study investigates the operational impact of social media on the sales and service performance of Australia Education and Migration agencies in the National Capital Region (NCR), emphasizing the mediating role of customer engagement. It further examines how platform-specific strategies on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok influence trust, lead generation, and decision-making.

Methodology: A mixed-methods design was employed, combining structured surveys and key informant interviews with 150 sales officers, managers, counsellors, and MARA-registered agents. The research was grounded in Social Media Engagement Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the AIDAS model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, Satisfaction). Variables included engagement behaviors—such as likes, comments, shares, direct messages, and testimonials—and their association with operational outcomes.

Results: Findings indicate that Facebook (86% usage) primarily drives lead generation, TikTok (71%) fosters awareness and emotional resonance, Instagram (64%) strengthens brand identity, and LinkedIn (48%) enhances professional trust. Regression analysis confirmed that engagement mediates the relationship between social media activity and sales performance (p < .01). Agencies utilizing interactive formats (e.g., live Q&A sessions, video testimonials) reported up to 42% more inquiries and 25% higher conversion rates. These results validated the AIDAS pathway, demonstrating that engagement effectively translates into inquiries and enrollments.

Conclusion: Optimized social media strategies significantly improve trust, inquiry conversion, and client acquisition in education and migration services. By identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) such as engagement rate, inquiry-to-enrollment ratio, and return on investment (ROI), the study provides actionable insights for refining digital strategies. The findings also support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, and 9, highlighting social media's contribution to education access, economic growth, and innovation.

Keywords: *social media platforms, customer engagement, AIDAS model, MARA-registered agents, KPIs, education and migration consultancy, NCR Philippines, digital strategy*

INTRODUCTION

Migration has become a defining feature of globalization, with millions of people moving for work, education, and long-term settlement. Studies highlight how migration is influenced by socioeconomic factors, policy frameworks, and the ability of institutions to communicate their services effectively (Smith, 2020; IOM, 2022). While global cases—such as Indonesian workers using digital platforms to connect with recruiters and the branding initiatives in Guangxi, China—illustrate the significance of communication strategies in migration, the present research narrows its focus to the Philippine context, particularly the National Capital Region (NCR).

In the Philippines, the demand for migration consultancy services continues to rise due to strong aspirations for overseas opportunities, especially in Australia. With the increasing reliance on social media platforms, agencies in NCR face growing pressure to use digital tools not only for visibility but also for customer engagement and conversion. Previous studies on Philippine education and migration reveal that online presence is now integral to institutional

credibility and client trust. Despite this, limited empirical research exists examining the direct impact of social media on consultancy firms specializing in migration services.

Unlike prior studies that broadly investigated education marketing or the use of digital platforms in international recruitment, this study uniquely examines Australia-focused migration consultancies in NCR, exploring how their social media presence influences customer engagement and sales performance. Grounded in Social Media Engagement Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and the AIDAS model, this research positions engagement as both a theoretical and practical mechanism through which online presence translates into tangible business outcomes. This novelty contributes by contextualizing global insights into a localized Philippine setting, providing recommendations that directly inform industry practice.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Global Literature

The role of social media in shaping client decision-making has been extensively documented in education and migration industries. Chen (2019) found that social platforms significantly enhance international student recruitment, while Tan and Ng (2021) emphasized that platform-specific strategies are necessary to adapt to cultural differences in engagement. More recently, Li and Zhao (2023) demonstrated that short-form video platforms such as TikTok create emotional resonance and trust-building among younger clients, an insight highly relevant for migration consultancies targeting Gen Z and millennial audiences. These findings establish a foundation for exploring how different platforms drive awareness, credibility, and conversion.

Regional Literature (Asia-Pacific)

Studies within Asia highlight how migration consultancies leverage digital branding to remain competitive. For example, Rahman and Putri (2020) reported that Indonesian migration agencies use social media to attract overseas workers, but effectiveness depends on the consistency and interactivity of content. Similarly, Wang and Xu (2022) analyzed Chinese recruitment campaigns, showing that visual storytelling in platforms like WeChat and TikTok strengthens institutional branding. However, both studies noted the challenge of sustaining client trust online, a gap that underlines the importance of customer engagement as a mediating factor.

Local Literature (Philippines)

In the Philippines, migration and education consultancy is a rapidly expanding sector fueled by aspirations for overseas opportunities. Del Mundo (2022) highlighted that Filipino clients rely heavily on trust, peer referrals, and visible online presence when selecting agencies. Bautista and Cruz (2023) further found that Facebook remains the most dominant platform in NCR for lead generation due to its reach and targeted advertising capabilities, while TikTok is increasingly recognized as an awareness driver among younger Filipinos. Other Philippine-based research underscores that digital strategies are not only tools for branding but also for sustaining quality assurance and long-term competitiveness in education and related services (Amihan et al., 2023; Pangilinan et al., 2025). Despite these insights, there remains limited empirical research connecting social media engagement behaviors (likes, shares, testimonials, direct inquiries) with actual sales and conversion outcomes in migration consultancy services.

Research Gap

While global and regional studies affirm the value of social media in client acquisition and branding, few works isolate Australia-focused migration consultancies in NCR and examine how customer engagement mediates the relationship between social media activity and sales performance. This study addresses that gap by integrating recent findings with a localized Philippine context, offering both theoretical and practical contributions for agencies operating in education and migration consultancy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theories:

- **Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET)** – Posits that interactions such as likes, shares, and inquiries generate relational value, building trust that can lead to conversion (Brodie et al., 2011).
- **Social Exchange Theory (SET)** – Suggests that customers engage when benefits outweigh costs; credible, transparent, and responsive content encourages reciprocal interaction (Homans, 1961).

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- **AIDAS Model (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action–Satisfaction)** – Explains the customer journey from awareness to satisfaction, showing how strategic content drives inquiries, enrollments, and referrals (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Together, these theories clarify how social media presence (independent variable) stimulates engagement (mediator), ultimately enhancing sales performance (dependent variable).

Conceptual Framework

This study conceptualizes the relationship between Social Media Platforms (IV), Customer Engagement (mediator), and Sales Performance (DV) of Australia-focused education and migration agencies in NCR. Social media platforms are measured through agencies' usage of Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok in terms of posting frequency, content quality, and interaction. Customer engagement—reflected in likes, shares, comments, inquiries, and client interactions—serves as the mediating variable. Sales performance is measured through client acquisition and service uptake. The framework assumes that purposeful and consistent use of social media enhances customer engagement, which in turn drives higher sales performance.

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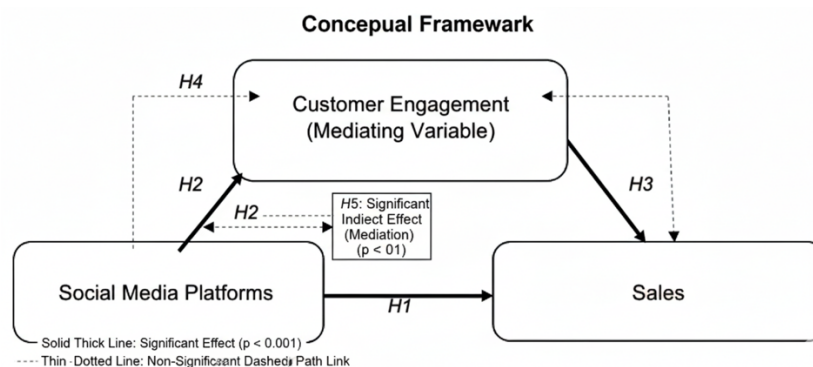
Statement of the Problem

The growing demand for Australia education and migration services in the Philippines specifically in National Capital Region (NCR) has intensified competition among consultancy agencies. To remain competitive, many agencies have turned to social media as a primary marketing tool. However, while social media is widely studied in sectors such as retail and tourism, there is limited empirical evidence on its strategic role in high-trust professional services such as education and migration consultancy. In particular, little is known about how social media use influences agency sales performance and how customer engagement mediates this relationship. This gap leaves agencies without clear, evidence-based strategies for maximizing social media to improve inquiries, conversions, and client acquisition. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of social media platforms on the sales performance of Australia education and migration consultancy agencies in NCR, with customer engagement as a mediating factor.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To determine the influence of social media platforms on the sales performance of Australia education and migration consultancy agencies in NCR, and to examine the mediating role of customer engagement.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the influence of social media platforms on sales of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR.
2. To examine the influence of social media platforms on customer engagement.
3. To determine the effect of customer engagement on agency sales.
4. To test whether customer engagement mediates the relationship between social media platforms and sales.

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Research Questions:
1. Does social media platforms significantly and positively influence sales of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR?
2. Does social media significantly and positively influence customer engagement of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR?
3. Does customer engagement significantly and positively affect sales of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR?
4. Does customer engagement mediate the relationship between social media platforms and sales of Australian education and migration agencies in NCR?

Hypotheses
- H1: Social media platforms do not significantly influence the sales performance of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR.
- H2: Social media platforms do not significantly influence customer engagement among Australia education and migration agencies in NCR.
- H3: Customer engagement does not significantly influence the sales performance of Australia education and migration agencies in NCR.
- H4: Customer engagement does not mediate the relationship between social media platform usage and sales among Australia education and migration agencies in NCR.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a predictive-causal quantitative research design to examine the relationships among social media usage, customer engagement, and sales performance within Australian education and migration agencies in the National Capital Region (NCR), Philippines. The research aimed to identify both direct and indirect effects, particularly the mediating role of customer engagement. A purely quantitative approach was selected, with no qualitative component. The design enabled statistical modeling and predictive analysis through structured questionnaires and established statistical methods, such as Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Such an approach aligns with recent recommendations in educational and management research for using quantitative designs to uncover predictive relationships and strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of professionals employed in registered Australian education and migration agencies operating within NCR. Approximately 450 individuals composed the total population, including Sales and Marketing Officers, Sales Managers, Marketing Managers, Education Counsellors, and MARA-registered Agents. Using Cochran's formula (1977) with finite population correction, a minimum sample size of 208 respondents was computed. The final sample consisted of 85 Sales and Marketing Officers, 48 Sales Managers, 32 Marketing Managers, 28 Education Counsellors, and 15 MARA-registered Agents. A simple random sampling technique was applied to ensure that each eligible respondent had an equal chance of selection, minimizing bias and enhancing the generalizability of findings. Out of 230 distributed questionnaires, 208 were returned fully completed and included in the final analysis. This process is consistent with prior studies that emphasize methodological rigor and representative sampling in educational and professional research (Sanchez, 2023; Bontuyan, 2025).

Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire, specifically designed to measure four constructs:
1. Influence of social media on sales
2. Influence of social media on customer engagement
3. Effect of customer engagement on sales
4. The mediating role of customer engagement between social media and sales

The questionnaire was developed through a literature review, expert validation, and pilot testing. Content validity was established through a panel of three experts—comprising a business graduate professor, an education consultant, and a MARA-registered agent. A pilot test with 20 non-participant BPO professionals was conducted to

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ensure clarity and reliability, with results excluded from the final analysis. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded excellent values across all constructs, indicating strong internal consistency. This instrument-development process reflects best practices in quantitative educational and social research, where validity and reliability are critical to data credibility.

Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded the following results:

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Social Media Platforms	0.9495	Excellent
Sales	0.9855	Excellent
Customer Engagement	0.9832	Excellent
Total	**0.9895**	Excellent

The final instrument included four sections:
- Part I: Demographics and respondent profile
- Part II: Social Media Platforms (5-point Likert scale)
- Part III: Sales Performance (5-point Likert scale based on monthly conversions)
- Part IV: Customer Engagement (5-point Likert scale based on interaction levels)

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over a four-month period from September to December 2024. Questionnaires were distributed both in print (during agency office visits) and digitally (via secured email links). Respondents were given two weeks to complete the survey, with follow-ups conducted afterward. A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed, and 208 valid responses were retrieved and included in the dataset. This approach ensured inclusivity of respondents and maximized participation rates, aligning with best practices in structured survey administration (Abenojar et al., 2025).

Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, and mean) were used to summarize the demographic profile and general patterns in the dataset. Relationships among variables were analyzed using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to assess the strength and direction of associations, particularly appropriate for ordinal data from Likert-scale responses.

For advanced modeling, PLS-SEM via SmartPLS software was employed to evaluate both direct and indirect effects among variables, including path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples to compute t-values and p-values. This advanced statistical treatment is increasingly applied in research exploring behavioral and organizational dynamics.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical standards for human-subject research. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines CBAGS Research Ethics Committee under code CBAGS-REC 2024-7003. Informed consent was secured from all participants through signed consent forms, which explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and participants' right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning codes instead of names, storing data in password-protected files, and reporting findings only in aggregate form. No identifying information was collected, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. This adherence to ethical safeguards aligns with recent calls to strengthen research credibility and protect participants in quantitative and applied educational studies.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section is composed of the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data to determine the impact of leveraging social media for Australian education and migration agencies in the National Capital Region (NCR) and the mediating role of customer engagement. The presentation of findings follows the order of the research problems: (1) to determine how social media platforms significantly and positively influenced sales of Australian education and migration agencies in NCR; (2) to identify how social media platforms significantly and positively influenced customer

engagement of agencies; (3) to examine how customer engagement affected sales of agencies; and (4) to assess whether customer engagement mediated the relationship between social media platforms and sales.

Table 1: Measurement Model Evaluation – Reliability and Validity Assessment

Construct reliability and validity	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Customer Engagement	0.9270	0.9283	0.9386	0.6050
Sales	0.9200	0.9234	0.9325	0.5839
Social Media	0.8957	0.9008	0.9140	0.5163

Table 1 confirmed the reliability and validity of the constructs Customer Engagement, Sales, and Social Media. All Cronbach's alpha values (0.8957–0.9270) and composite reliabilities (0.9140–0.9386) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while AVE values (0.5163–0.6050) were above the 0.50 benchmark. These indicators demonstrated internal consistency and convergent validity, showing that the measurement model was statistically sound and robust for further analysis. This finding was consistent with earlier studies. Hair et al. (2019) emphasized that Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 represent strong internal consistency, while Alalwan et al. (2017) validated constructs related to social media's influence on customer behavior using comparable reliability and validity standards. The present study's results aligned with these psychometric benchmarks, reinforcing confidence in the measurement model. The implication of this result is significant: by confirming construct reliability and validity, the study established a solid foundation for interpreting subsequent structural relationships. This ensured that the observed effects of social media and customer engagement on sales genuinely reflected agency dynamics in NCR rather than artifacts of weak measurement.

Table 2: Influence of Social Media on Sales

Total Influence	Original Sample (O)	p-value	Decision	Remarks
SOP 1: Social Media → Sales	0.4127	0.0000	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 2 showed that the total effect of social media on sales was 0.4127, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The relationship was statistically significant (p = 0.0000 < 0.05). This finding demonstrated that social media platforms significantly and positively influenced sales outcomes for Australian education and migration agencies in NCR. Comparable findings were reported by Alalwan (2018) and Felix et al. (2017), who noted that social media enhances customer awareness and trust, translating into stronger sales performance. Likewise, Appel et al. (2020) highlighted that widely used platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn create opportunities for agencies to expand their reach and influence purchase decisions. This addressed Research Question 1 by confirming that social media acts as a sales driver. The implication is significant for practice: agencies that invested in consistent posting, targeted campaigns, and engagement-driven content were more likely to generate inquiries and convert them into clients. This underscored the importance of integrating social media into broader marketing strategies, particularly in the highly competitive education and migration consultancy sector.

Table 3: Influence of Social Media on Customer Engagement

Total Influence	Original Sample (O)	p-value	Decision	Remarks
SOP 2: Social Media → Customer Engagement	0.6830	0.0000	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 3 showed that the relationship between social media and customer engagement yielded an original sample value of 0.6940, indicating a strong positive correlation. The result was statistically significant (p = 0.0000 < 0.05), confirming that increased use of social media was strongly linked to higher levels of customer engagement among agencies in NCR. Earlier research emphasized similar effects. Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2015) noted that social media facilitates dialogue, participation, and emotional connection between organizations and customers. Likewise, Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) found that customer engagement is frequently driven by interactive and relational experiences on digital platforms. The implication of this result is that agencies may prioritize engagement-driven strategies, such as interactive posts, real-time responses, and community-building activities. By

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leveraging widely used platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, agencies can cultivate stronger emotional connections with clients, leading to greater trust, loyalty, and ultimately, higher conversion rates.

Table 4: Effect of Customer Engagement on Sales

| Total Influence	Original Sample (O)	p-value	Decision	Remarks
SOP 3: Customer Engagement → Sales	0.4650	0.0000	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 4 indicated that the path coefficient from Customer Engagement to Sales was 0.4650, with a p-value of 0.0000, confirming a statistically significant relationship. This demonstrated that higher customer engagement was associated with higher sales performance, addressing Research Question 3. Vivek et al. (2012) noted that engaged customers are more likely to develop trust and loyalty, leading to stronger purchase intentions. Similarly, Hollebeek et al. (2019) highlighted that customer engagement positively influences firm performance by strengthening relationships and enhancing conversion potential. The implication is that agencies in NCR that actively fostered engagement through responsiveness, consistent communication, and meaningful interaction were better positioned to increase conversions and achieve long-term client satisfaction.

Table 5: Mediation among Customer Engagement, Social Media, and Sales

Mediation	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	p-value	Remarks
SOP 4: Social Media → Customer Engagement → Sales	0.3176	0.3246	0.0000	Significant

The mediation analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed that customer engagement significantly mediated the relationship between social media and sales. The total indirect effect was 0.3176, with a t-statistic of 5.7798 and a p-value of 0.0000, confirming statistical significance. This indicated that the positive influence of social media on sales largely operated through its ability to enhance engagement. The finding was consistent with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), which explains how an external stimulus (social media) triggers an internal state (engagement) that drives behavior (sales). Recent research supports this mechanism. Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2024) emphasized that social media interactions first stimulate engagement before influencing purchasing behavior, while Hollebeek et al. (2019) highlighted engagement as a bridge between digital marketing and firm performance. The implication is that social media alone may not maximize sales unless it effectively engages clients. For agencies, this means that investment in content that sparks interaction—such as testimonials, success stories, and personalized communication—can amplify sales outcomes by deepening trust and involvement.

Figure 1: Impact of Social Media to Sales and the mediating role of Customer Engagement
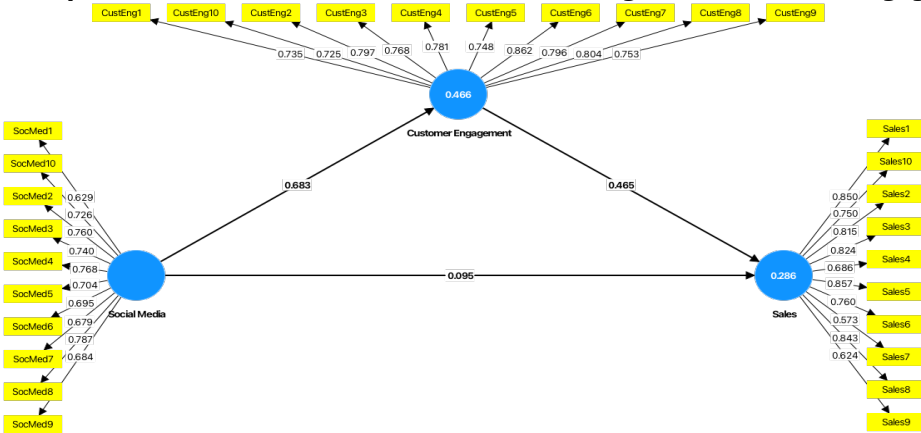
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In PLS-SEM, outer loadings assess how well indicators represent latent constructs, affirming reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). For Customer Engagement, outer loadings ranged from 0.7253 to 0.8615, all exceeding the 0.708 threshold. For Sales, loadings ranged from 0.5730 to 0.8575; although some were below 0.708, their statistical significance and theoretical relevance justified their retention (Hair et al., 2019). For Social Media, loadings ranged between 0.6292 and 0.7865, all significant. These results align with earlier findings. Alalwan et al. (2017) reported that some social media indicators fell below 0.70 yet remained theoretically significant, while Hollebeek et al. (2019) emphasized that engagement indicators often vary but still provide robust insights if reliability and validity criteria are satisfied. The implication is that the measurement model was statistically sound, ensuring that subsequent findings on the effects of social media and customer engagement on sales were reliable.

Conclusions

The study concluded that social media platforms significantly and positively influenced both customer engagement and sales among Australian education and migration agencies in NCR. Customer engagement contributed directly to higher sales and mediated the relationship between social media and sales, highlighting its central role in converting digital interactions into business outcomes. Agencies that strategically used social media were better able to foster client relationships, increase trust, and improve performance.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the study offers the following recommendations:

- Agencies may design interactive campaigns such as webinars, live Q&A sessions, and client testimonial features that encourage two-way communication.
- They may use advanced tools such as AI-powered chatbots for real-time responses and behaviorally targeted advertising to enhance engagement efficiency.
- Building online communities (e.g., through Facebook Groups or LinkedIn forums) may help cultivate long-term trust and strengthen brand loyalty.

These recommendations benefit multiple stakeholders: agency leaders and marketing practitioners can strengthen digital engagement strategies, clients and prospective students can receive timely and personalized support, and policymakers may draw insights for promoting best practices in digital service delivery. In summary, the study emphasizes that the strength of social media lies not only in reaching audiences but in fostering engagement that translates into tangible business outcomes. By investing in data-driven, engagement-focused strategies, agencies may achieve stronger sales performance, improved client satisfaction, and sustained competitiveness in a digitally driven market.

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