

Promoting Global Opportunities to Gen Y: Is the Online Platform the Easy Way Out?

Irene K Hui¹, Georgia B Mitchell²

1 Office of Undergraduate Education, Ground Floor, Room 108, Learning and Innovation Building (Building #17), Staff House Road, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia

2 Office of Undergraduate Education, Ground Floor, Room 108, Learning and Innovation Building (Building #17), Staff House Road, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia

Student services sometimes struggle to communicate and engage with the broader student population efficiently and effectively.

The majority of Gen Y university students receive instant information through social media, computers and smartphones. While hi-tech tools such as Blackboard and lecture recordings are widely used on campus to enhance eLearning, the international education sector is gradually adapting to the world of technology and changing needs of students. UQ Abroad, the outbound student exchange program at The University of Queensland (UQ), is striving to employ a range of creative means to enhance communication with Gen Y and promote global opportunities.

This presentation will first identify the challenges faced by UQ Abroad as shown by a significant decrease in the number of students responding to the traditional methods of communication (e.g. weekly information sessions, daily drop-in advising sessions and printed promotional materials available in the Resource Room). Two initiatives recently adopted by UQ Abroad will be showcased: (1) Facebook and (2) the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) Ambassador Program. We will illustrate how UQ Abroad uses the UQ Abroad Facebook Group to interact with group members and connect students at different stages of their UQ Abroad experience. We will then discuss how the OUE Ambassador Program complements online activities, with OUE Ambassadors acting as peer mentors to provide timely support, sharing their experiences with the wider community and enhancing word-of-mouth marketing – both on campus and online.

Finally, we will address the limitations and practical issues associated with the use of the online platform. In answering the question “Is the online platform the easy way out?”, we aim to find out what types of information are best to communicate online and what suit better in the conventional communication mode, and explore ways on making Gen Y students more informed of their global opportunities and options.

Key Words

Communication, Facebook, Gen Y, marketing, promotion, social media, social networking, student exchange, student representatives, word of mouth.