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## How are Higher Education Institutions defining their Meta-description tags?

### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of the paper is to investigate the use of meta-tags by the leading Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). It explores the various kinds of messages conveyed by HEIs in the meta-description tags of their website homepage. It further examines that whether the messages conveyed by HEIs are following the prospective students' perspective.

**Design/Methodology/Approach**– A list of leading 200 universities was procured from the website of "The Times Higher Education." Meta-keywords and meta-description tags of the HEIs websites' homepage were drawn using online software. Descriptive analysis of the meta-tags was conducted to analyze their use by HEIs. Quantitative content analysis tool was applied to understand the messages conveyed by HEIs.

**Findings** – Meta-description tags are defined by more than half (58.79%), whereas meta-key words are written by approximately a quarter (27.47%) of HEIs on their homepage. While defining their meta-description tags, HEIs frequently used words related to the themes such as institution, focus area, academic programs, image building, geography, student group & environment.

**Practical implications**– It will help the HEIs to understand the importance of meta-tags. Moreover, HEIs will be able to define their meta-description tags better.

**Originality/value** – This is the first research paper to explore and analyze the meta-tags of the HEIs websites'.

**Keywords** – Higher educational institutions (HEIs), Meta-tags, Meta-keywords, Meta-description tags, Search engine optimization (SEO), Educational Marketing

### Introduction

The importance of digital communication channels has increased significantly for higher educational institutions (HEIs) as the present generation of students is accessible online (Jones & Healing, 2010). Technologically based interactive communication plays an ever-increasing role during undergraduate and postgraduate students' decision-making process (Gomes & Murphy, 2003).

The majority of the HEIs have designed their websites for providing the information to their target audience. Over a period, most of the HEIs have social media presence on the leading social networking sites. Students, whether national or international, are investing more and more time investigating appropriate facilities on the Internet (Gomes & Murphy, 2003; Thompson, 2007). The search to gather relevant information online is very challenging as targeted content based on the seemingly endless supply of the information can be difficult (Royo-vela and Hünermund, 2016). It is a huge challenge for web publishers to ensure that their websites appear at the top of a search engine result page (Zhang & Dimitroff, 2005).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps in improving the ranking and the visibility of organization's website when online users enter specific keywords in any search engine (Brown, 2007; Davis, 2006; Ramos & Cota, 2008). SEO represents a significant opportunity for

marketers since a top listed website in Google's organic search can receive 33% more traffic on their page (Lee, 2013). SEO is the process of refining the site using on-page and off-page optimization techniques so that it will be indexed and ranked successfully by the search engines. On-page optimization techniques such as keywords, relevant content and well-defined meta-tags ensure that the search engines can easily read, understand, crawl and navigate the pages of a website to index it correctly (Dodson, 2016). An experimental study (Zhang & Dimitroff, 2005) concluded that web pages with metadata elements achieved better visibility than those without metadata elements.

Usually, metadata is displayed as retrieved results on a search engine interface and used as an information "snippet" to provide navigational guidance for the information users (Yu & Meng, 2003). As a standard practice of search engines, a significant part of metadata, especially the summary about the website, is often extracted from the "description" META tag from the original site (Nowick, 2002). From a marketing perspective, the metadata describing a University website should provide relevant and exciting information about the institution that can act as powerful cues to direct a prospective student to visit that particular internet site. There seems to be knowledge gap about the role of meta tags as only a single research study (Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2005) has been conducted to analyze the marketing perspective of META tags on destination marketing websites.

The main aim of the present study is to understand the usage of the META tags (especially description & keywords) by the leading global universities. It explores the important messages conveyed by HEIs through the meta-description tags. It further investigates whether or not the messages conveyed through the meta-description tags are according to the perspective of the potential student. This study will provide the platform for core understanding of the META tags and will help HEIs to define their meta-description tags better.

### **Student's decision making process**

Selecting a college is a complex and multi-stage process, during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, and this, is later followed by a decision to attend a particular college, university or institution of advanced vocational training (Hossler, et al., 1989). Moreover, the decision to study abroad is one of the most expensive and complicated decision by the students (Mazzarol, 1998; Assael, 1981, cited in Nicholls et al., 1995). Prospective students make trade-off among the various important attributes to determine their preference (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

Different authors (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Hossler et al., 1999) have proposed three-stage model of students' college or university choice. It consists of predisposition, search and evaluation stages. Search stage is crucial for this research as this is the stage where student mostly uses internet & search engine for finding the college or university for higher education.

### **Factors considered by students during decision-making process**

Chapman (1981) observed that student characteristics & external factors mainly influenced the choice of college. A study by Kotler & Fox (1985) revealed that image of the college has a strong impact on the college selection process. According to a study conducted on Chinese students, their decision of choosing an American University depends mainly on their perception

of an institutional brand. Further, the study reported that the perception of an institutional brand is built in the eyes of the prospective student mainly due to academic ranking, campus security, location, alumni network, social environment, university name and word of mouth (Gai et al., 2016). Factors such as information related to student life, reviews, courses offered, duration of the study, events & activities, university news, job opportunities, tuition fees and the freedom of customizing education influenced the choice of international students (Galan et al., 2015). A review study reported that the purchase intention of international students is mainly dependent on five factors i.e. personal reasons, the image of the country, the image of the city, image of the institution and the evaluation of the program of study (Cubillo et al., 2006).

### **Role of Internet during college selection process**

Introduction and growth of the internet in higher education marketing and admission was quite evident in 1990's. According to a study (Strauss, 1998) conducted on students of Ohio state university, students had access to the internet and used it to obtain the information about the colleges.

External information search primarily word of mouth and online social networking plays a major role in tracing the information about the Universities (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Blogs and forums play a vital role in the comparison and evaluation of HEIs. Postgraduate students usually consider the information on the website before taking the admission to an educational institution (Galan et al., 2015). Advertisements, especially on Facebook, can trigger the needs (Zhao et al., 2008). Internet and print media were perceived to be the most important sources of information by students of Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong-Kong while searching for the foreign universities (Gray, B.J. et al., 2003). Students usually search online and gather information about the specific topics (Messner, 2011) or colleges (Gomes & Murphy, 2003) with the help of smartphones, tablets or desktop. Impartial sources such as white papers or articles, e-word of mouth (Bei, Chen, & Widdows, 2004), reviews (Moran & Hunt, 2008), customized content on university websites (Gomes & Murphy, 2003) are considered important sources of information by the students. Internet users employ search engines as a primary tool to tap the internet resources (Haltley, 2002). Post-graduate students consider search engine (mainly Google) as the most influencing factor for the assessment and evaluation of the HEIs. Students type specific keywords such as course, city, language, degree, sessions, and professors for finding the relevant information. They mainly check on an average the first two or three results and clicks the hyperlink in the search engine (Google) only when the brief information shown on the search engine result page is simple, clear and engaging (Royo-vela and Hünernmund, 2016).

### **Communication approaches by HEIs**

Schultz et al., (2012) observed that marketing communication is changing from traditional marketing to a combination of conventional and interactive activities due to increasing use of the internet by the consumers'. HEIs are using a mix of outbound and inbound marketing for communicating the messages to the target audience. Outbound marketing is a conventional form of marketing and focuses on sending the promotional message to the target audience through the traditional media (Royo-vela and Hünernmund, 2016). Inbound marketing focuses on showing the appropriate message to the target audience when they are actively searching for similar information through online channels. Inbound marketing includes social media marketing (blogging, virtual communities, apps), content marketing (user-generated content using Web 2.0), search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO) (Pellissier, 2012).

Therefore, this approach uses online channels and platforms to mobilize appropriate resources as per the requirement (Hagel & Brown, 2011). Inbound marketing is important for HEIs due to the limited resources. HEIs can reach the national and international target audience with the limited budget (Royo-vela and Hünermund, 2016). Inbound marketing is 62% cheaper, regarding marketing expenses, than outbound marketing (Loomer, 2012). Thus, inbound marketing can increase organization's return on investment (Halligan and Shah, 2009). Inbound marketing tools such as search engine rankings & advertising followed by word of mouth, content & information of HEIs and the social networking sites (SNS) affect the student's decision-making process and thus improve the brand perception, preference, and the image (Royo-vela and Hünermund, 2016).

### **Role of Meta description in information search**

Metadata is data that describes other data. Meta is outlined in the information technology as "underlying definition or description." Metadata summarizes the basic information about the data so that it is easy to find. Metadata for web pages contain information about the content and is usually expressed in the form of HTML Meta tags by web page authors. Each Meta tag has a name field and a content field. The name field describes the type of information contained in the content field. There are various kinds of META tags but only "description," "keywords" and "robots" are recognized by the search engine (Nowick, 2002; Zhang and Dimitroff, 2005). The use of Meta tags on websites especially the "description" tags was reported by a few authors (Craven, 2001; Nowick, 2002; Zhang and Dimitroff, 2005).

According to Moz (refer (<https://moz.com/learn/seo/meta-description>)), an SEO expert website, Meta-descriptors (meta-description tags) are HTML attributes that commonly appear below the blue clickable link in SERP and should ideally be shorter than 160 characters. Meta-description is like an advertising copy that should include keywords matching the search phrase used by the searcher on the website. Meta-description is an opportunity for the webmaster to advertise the relevant content to the searcher. Crafting compelling and pertinent meta-description can help in improving the click through rate and thus an important part of search marketing. In case the meta-description is not written by the webmaster, search engines pull together the same from the website using the relevant keywords whereas social sharing sites may exhibit the first text on the web page

### **Research Questions**

The lack of empirical research regarding strategic utilization of META tags to enhance the visibility of the website makes a strong case for such study. Therefore, the following research questions arise based on the reviewed literature and its respective gaps.

RQ1: What is the current status of use of META tags by leading global universities?

RQ2: What are the most important messages conveyed by leading global universities through meta-description tags?

RQ3: Are the messages conveyed by the universities through the meta-description tags following the students' perspective?

### **Methodology**

The first phase of this study seeks to provide a general understanding of the current status of the use of the META tags by the leading global educational institutions. The second phase of this study examines the content of meta-description tags regarding the keywords used, the major concepts they have in common, and the types of persuasive messages they are trying to convey.

A list of the leading global educational universities (2016-17) was procured from the website of "The Times Higher Education" ([https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort\\_by/rank/sort\\_order/asc/cols/stats](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats)).

First, "description" and "keywords" META tags on the websites of top 200 universities were downloaded using online software (<http://tools.buzzstream.com/meta-tag-extractor>) and saved individually in a spreadsheet. 18 sites having META tags in the languages other than English were dropped. Thus analysis of META tags of 182 universities was conducted. Secondly, text processing and statistical tools were used to produce the descriptive statistics such as average length of "description" META tags, an average number of "keywords" META tags and the frequencies of META tags within certain length range. The third step involved the data aggregation and preprocessing to prepare the data for analysis. Stop word (words used in everyday language) list developed by Kevin Bouge (<https://sites.google.com/site/kevinbouge/stopwords-lists>) has been utilized for filtration. Replacements were also provided to words that were different only in numbers and tenses. Quantitative content analysis tool was applied with the help of software (Hamlet 3.0 II for Windows). The software has assisted in counting the frequency of words used in the meta-description tags.

The researcher identified the central concepts (categories of keywords) in the text by categorizing the most frequently used keywords and calculating the frequencies of their occurrences, as individual words and as categories as well, in each piece of META tags as an indicator of their importance.

## **Findings**

The results of this study are presented in two sections. The first section summarizes the results of the general descriptive analysis and provides a summary of frequencies and distribution of length of META tags. The second section presents results of the content analysis of meta-description tags regarding the major concepts and variability in the content.

### ***General Descriptive Analysis***

Out of the 182 websites of the universities, more than half (58.79%) are using meta-description tags (Refer Table 1). Surprisingly, meta-keywords are used by approximately a quarter of the educational institutions (27.47%) only. This number is little higher in the case of "description" tags (52.4%) whereas it is much lower in the case of "keywords" META tags (58.8%) as compared to a study conducted on the websites of destination marketing organizations in the Northeastern US (Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2005).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the length of meta-description tags measured by the number of words. The mean length was approximately 27 words (183.57 characters, i.e., about 23 characters more than prescribed by the SEO experts) thus indicating the ignorance of website designer's awareness of the rule of thumb for appropriate length of a META tag (160 characters). However, the relatively large standard deviation (22 words) suggests that there is a lot of

variation between the numbers of words used in “description” tags of the websites of global universities.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

### ***Content Analysis of Meta-description Tags***

Content analysis of the global universities website’s meta-description tags was conducted. It was used to identify the major themes by classifying different words into some definitive categories.

#### ***Identifying the Major Themes***

The aggregated text file without stop words was deconstructed into individual unique words together with their corresponding frequencies. After removing all the stop words and numerals (except 100), the frequency of similar words having different spellings, various forms of verbs, plurals, etc. with similar meanings were merged. When the words were counted in the meta-description tags, there were 565 unique words. Each unique word, on an average, was repeated approximately three (2.95) times in meta-description. Thus there were total 1670 words in the meta-description tags of HEIs.

The researcher has tried to understand the themes in the meta-description tags by counting the frequently used words (68 unique words). Each unique word was repeated approximately 14 times (13.67) in the description tag resulting in 930 total words. Six categories representing the major themes in the description tags were identified by the researcher (Table 2). Categories convey the themes related to educational institutions i.e. institution, focus area, image building, academic programs, geography, student body & social environment.

***Institution:*** While describing them, educational institutes on an average once in four times (25.4%) convey about their name or the type of organization in the meta-description tags. Most of the institutes have illustrated themselves as "University" whereas a few have explained themselves as "School," "College," "Centre," "Institutions" and "Campus." A few organizations have talked about the type of institution such as "Public," "Private" or "State." University marketer seems to understand the importance of the brand name and thus frequently highlighting the name in the meta-description tag.

***Focus area:*** On an average once in five times (20.6%), educational institutes convey about their focus area in the description tags. The majority of the leading educational institutes have stressed on the core functional area such as research, teaching, education, learning and rarely focused on the social sphere (social, service) as conveyed by their meta-description tags.

***Academic Programs:*** Meta-description tags of the leading universities have mentioned academically oriented words on an average once in six times (16.6%) in the meta-description tags. Academically oriented words can further be categorized into streams (Sciences, Art, Medical, Technology, Engineering, Business) or level of Program (Undergraduate, Graduate) or generic academic terms (Courses, Offers, Degree, Discipline, Scholarship, Major).

***Image Building:*** On an average, words relating to the image of the educational institutes were found to be once in seven times (14.6%). Image related words stress upon either the academic position (Leading, Top, Ranked, and Excellence) or quality of the institution (Oldest, Founded, Large, Professional).

*Geography:* Words related to geography have been highlighted 13.3 percent times by the leading universities in their meta-description tags. Words having the international orientation (i.e. the world, global, and international) have frequently been used compared to national perspective (i.e. nation, the name of country or place). It seems that most of the leading global universities are willing to attract international students.

*Student Group & Environment:* Meta-description tags of the leading educational institutions include the words related to the student group and living environment on an average once in twelve times (8.4%). "Students" being the major target audience is the most common word used in this category. University environment has been related to "Home," "Living" environment in the message to attract the students. A few institutions have emphasized "Experience in the university" in the meta-description tags.

## **Discussion & Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the themes used by the leading global universities by looking into the current practice of using meta- description tags of their websites. The results indicate that there are several issues related to the use of META tags. Significant numbers of global university websites are not using META tags, suggesting that there is inferior understanding of the same among the web designers and IT team of the universities. Web pages without meta- tags are certainly going to impact their visibility negatively in SERP (Zhang and Dimitroff, 2005). The consequences for ignoring the use of meta-description tags can be far-reaching. If a website homepage does not contain a “description” META tag, some search engines will show the first few sentences which may result in non-relevant content to the searcher. The searcher may not click the link due to unwanted content leading to low click through rate (CTR). Low CTR may result in a low number of target audiences reaching to the website.

Meta descriptors can be of any length, but most of the search engines truncate the snippets longer than 160 characters. The majority of the sites have written more extended meta-descriptors. Thus it implies that "description" META tags should be concise and most important messages should be conveyed in the first one or two sentences.

Meta-descriptors mainly comprise a few major themes reflecting the focus areas of leading global universities. The findings of this study have been compared with four recent studies (Cubillo et al., 2006; Galan et al., 2015; Gai et al., 2016; Royo-vela and Hünermund, 2016). The comparison has helped to understand the factors considered significant by the prospective students while taking admission in the University and the kind of information prospective students search on social media during higher education decision making (refer Table 3). The comparison has helped to understand whether the words used by the leading global universities in the meta-description tags matches the student’s perspective. Royo-Vela and Hunermund (2016) conducted an exploratory study to identify how the HEIs can develop their image and awareness using new interactive marketing communication tools mediated by student’s decision-making process. Gai et al. (2016) have conducted a netnographic analysis of Chinese students wishing to enter the US Universities Master's Programs. Galan et al. (2015) have interviewed the international students at an Australian university to explore the use of social media in educational decision making. Cubillo (2006) has proposed a theoretical model that integrates the different groups of factors which influence the decision-making process of international students.



University name is considered critical for building the favorable perception of an institutional brand. Online education marketers understand the significance of the institutional brand name and have frequently been using the name of university or school or college in the meta-description tag. Moreover, some of the universities have also been highlighting the type of the institution, i.e., public or state or private in the description tag.

Prospective postgraduate students seem to be concerned about the learning practices and thus discuss the same on an online forum. Universities have been highlighting various kinds of purposes ranging from the functional area (teaching, research, learning, education, knowledge, study, and discovery) to social (service, social) in their meta-description tags. Each university offers different courses and caters to various target segments, so it may be a reason for highlighting different types of purpose in the meta-description tag. Thus the words related to focus area in the meta-description tag may not be matching with the perspective of prospective post-graduate students.

Institution image is formed not only by the image of the organization but also by the faculty expertise and the facilities offered (Cubillo et al., 2006). Academic positions and ranking are considered crucial by the students while deciding about the HEI. Students believe the ranking by the reputed agencies like US News and World Report Ranking, etc. The good rank may be utilized by the prospective student in short-listing the HEI in the consideration set or building the perception of an institutional brand. Educational marketers seem to be aware of the same, and thus most of the leading global universities highlighted the words like top, ranked, excellence in their meta-description tags. Global universities have been using various other adjectives (Oldest, Large, and Professional) according to their strength to build their image.

Students use social media for finding the various kinds of courses offered by the educational institute. Freedom of choosing the courses seems to be low on preference while looking for information on social media (Galan, et al., 2015). Prospective students evaluate the program from the international recognition, recognition by the potential employers, program suitability, program specialization and the total cost of the program (Cubillo et al., 2006). Global universities have been quite often highlighting the words related to the level of courses or programs (undergraduate, postgraduate) or the stream of courses (Sciences, Engineering, Art, Medical, Business, and Technology) in the description tags. Usage of course or program related words may help in attracting the right target audience on their website. Accredited HEIs can highlight the themes related to recognition & accreditation in their meta-description tags.

International students prefer to study in the country having a good social reputation, academic reputation, the opportunity of working during the course and simple immigration procedure. Moreover, international students favor cities with excellent facilities and low cost of living (Cubillo et al., 2006). Geographical location is considered one of most important factor considered by Chinese students in the choice of international school and also in building the perception of the institutional brand (Gai et al., 2016). Educational marketers seem to understand this perspective, and thus Universities prominently used the words like global, world, international, particular country or city name in the meta-description tags.

Reviews from former students are considered to be the second most important information prospective students look for while searching the social media for educational decision making. Chinese students seem to be concerned about the acceptance and exposure in the Western Schools (Gai, et al., 2016). Students studying in Australian University consider the information

related to the life of existing students as the most important (Galan, et al., 2015). Prospective students watch the pictures and videos on the social media. Leading global universities highlight the student group related words (student, community, group, society) and the environment related terms (Living, Home, Experience, Environment) in their meta-description tags. Adding more words related to student's life in the meta-description tags may help the universities in motivating the prospective customer to open the link. Exhibiting the lifestyle of existing students by adding pictures, videos and reviews related to student's activities and events on the institutional website or the landing page may help the university to engage the prospective student.

Prospective students are concerned about the internship and placement opportunities offered at the University campus. International students exhibit interest in the educational institutions with active alumni networks. None of the university is highlighting the words related to placement, internship, and alumni in the meta-description tags. One of the reasons may be that most of the leading global universities are focusing mainly on teaching, learning, research, and service. An educational marketer may suggest the words related to placement by the institution excelling in the same or have active alumni networks.

Due to the increase in the crime rate, prospective international students are concerned about their safety on the campus. None of the university is highlighting about the security aspect in the meta-description tag. The HEIs located in the sensitive areas may stress upon the safety of students in the campus, especially in the meta-description tag. Such institutions may share the reviews of students, exhibit pictures and videos demonstrating the safety aspect.

Prospective students look forward to the competence of professors and delivery of their sessions before taking the final decision. Universities with well-qualified professors can highlight the same on the website and meta-description tag. Selected videos of the lecture sessions of few faculty members on the website and social media page can help in increasing the engagement.

### **Suggestions & Managerial Implications**

The results and findings of this study provide guidelines and information for universities' marketing staff to help them understand the role of meta-tags in the web page visibility in online search. Students consider search engine as the most important factor for gathering information and it is an influencing factor in the final decision, so, defining the relevant and exciting meta-description is necessary for motivating the searcher to click the link shown on search engine result page (SERP).

Based on underlying research, universities should define the meta-keywords and meta-description tags. Universities already writing the meta-description tags should describe them in less than 160 characters, so that they are evident on SERP. As far as possible, universities, while defining their meta-description tags, should use the words similar to the search phrases used by the target audience. Universities should try to find out the frequently used search terms used by their target audience with the help of either surveys or technological tools like Google Adwords, Google Trends. Meta-description tags should be defined in the same language used by the target audience during the online search process. This will help the educational institute to attract the relevant target audience to their website through the search engine.

## Suggestions for Future Research

Many directions for future study exist since research in the field of use of search engine optimization tools by HEIs is limited. For instance, there is scope for a comparison of meta-description tags between the HEIs of different continents or countries. Secondly, meta-keywords of the HEIs can be analyzed and compared with the student's perspective. Meta-keywords can be compared to various courses and the nationalities. Third, a primary study can be conducted to understand the influence of meta-tags on the prospective students' behavior. Fourth, a longitudinal study on meta-tags can be carried out to understand the frequency, timing, and reasons of updating the meta-tags. Lastly, an experimental study can be conducted to analyze the impact of metadata implementation on HEIs web page visibility on SERP.

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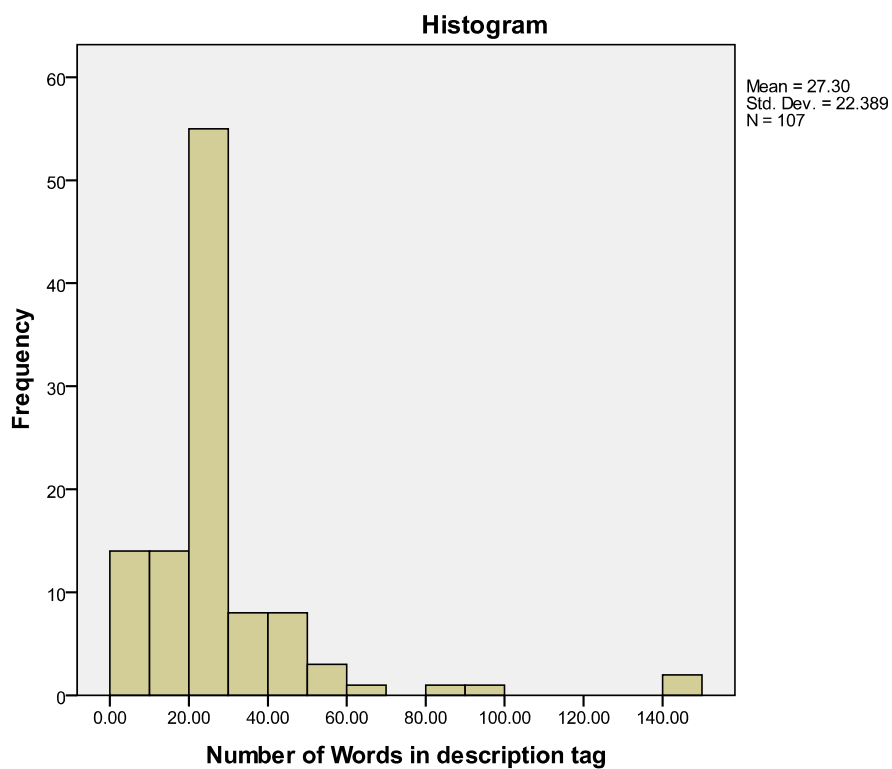


Figure 1 – Distribution of number of words in a META description tag

Table 1 - Websites using META tags on Home Pages

Type of META tags	Frequency	Percentage (Out of 182)
Description	107	58.79
Keywords	50	27.47

Table 2- Themes exhibited by Universities in meta-description tag

Categories/Words	Frequencies	Percentage
<b>Institution</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>25.4%</b>
University	161	
Institutions	16	
Public	14	
School	10	
Campus	6	
Center	6	
College	6	
Private	9	
State	9	
<b>Focus area</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>20.6%</b>
Research	78	
Education	28	
Teaching	25	
Learning	17	
Knowledge	9	
Study	8	
Service	8	
Create	7	
Discovery	7	
Mission	7	
Social	6	
<b>Academic Programs</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>16.6%</b>
Sciences	20	
Offers	15	

Programs	13
Technology	11
Undergraduate	11
Graduate	10
Academic	10
Engineering	9
Art	8
Medical	8
Business	7
Disciplines	6
Major	7
Range	7
Degree	7
Scholars/ Scholarship	6
<b>Image building</b>	<b>135 14.5%</b>
Higher	14
Founded	8
Oldest	8
Innovation	6
Large	6
Professional	6
Wide	6
Focus	6
Leading	33
Top	18
Ranked	14
Excellence	10
<b>Geography</b>	<b>124 13.3%</b>
Nation	12
Located	10
Europe	8
California	7



Arizona	6
London	6
UK	6
World	46
Global	13
International	10
<b>Student Group &amp; Environment</b>	<b>79 8.4%</b>
Students	21
Community	10
Group	6
Society	6
Member	8
Living	8
Experience	7
Home	7
Environment	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>930</b>

Table 3 – Comparative analysis of words used in meta-descriptions vis-a vis information needs of a prospective student

Category of words used in Meta-description tags of HEIs reported by the current study	Keywords typed in Google regarding higher education information search (Royo-vela & Hünerrmund, 2016)	Variables considered by Chinese students while choosing American Universities (Gai et al., 2016) (Bracketed figure shows the rank of the variable)	Factors considered by Chinese applicants for building perception of institutional brand (Gai et al., 2016)	Postgraduate students at Australian University look for the following information on social media during decision-making process (Bracketed figure shows the rank of the variable (Galan et al., 2015)	Purchase intention of prospective students (María Cubillo, J., Sánchez, J., & Cerviño, 2006)
<b>Institution</b>			University name	University Information & News (4)	
<b>Purpose</b>			e-WOM learning regarding		
<b>Image building</b>	University ranking	Reputation in the country (4) Ranking for consideration set	Academic Positions and ranking especially from employer's perspective in US News and World Report ranking		Institution image (Corporate Image, Faculty & Facilities)
<b>Academic programs</b>	Specific Course, Degree			Course offers (3) Freedom of tailoring the education (6)	Program Evaluation
<b>Geography</b>	Specific City	Geographical locations (1)	Geographical Locations		Country Image City Image
<b>Student Group &amp; Environment</b>			Composition of Student body and Social Environment Campus security Alumni networks	Student life (1) Reviews from former students (2) Events and Activities (4) Study Duration (4) Job opportunities (4) University Facilities (5) Tuition Fees (6)	Personal reasons (Personal Improvement & Advice from family, professor & friends)
	Types of Sessions, Professors, Language	Intern Opportunities (2) Alumni Placement rates (3)			