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Journal of General Business, Innovator and Entrepreneurship	Pages 66-127	Bandar Lampung, September 1, 2024
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1st Edition, 2024

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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND BRAND IMAGE ON STUDENTS' DECISIONS TO CHOOSE A BUDDHIST EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM AT STIAB JINARAKKHITA LAMPUNG

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ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization that continues to develop today, the use of the internet has become common and is no longer foreign to the world community. Almost everyone now knows and uses the internet, which is able to connect millions to billions of users in various parts of the world. This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing and brand image, both simultaneously and partially, on the decision to choose. The method used is a quantitative descriptive approach with multiple linear regression analysis techniques. The results of the study show that individually, the variables of social media marketing (X1) and brand image (X2) each have a positive and significant impact on the decision variable to choose (Y). Simultaneously, both variables also contribute significantly to influencing students' decisions.

Keywords: social media marketing, brand image and decision to Choose.

INTRODUCTION

The development of globalization and advances in information technology have made the internet and social media an inseparable part of modern society, including in the context of higher education. Social media is now not only a means of communication, but has also become a strategic platform in the world of marketing, including in promoting educational institutions to prospective students (Alalwan et al., 2017). This change requires higher education institutions to adapt their communication and marketing strategies to remain relevant, competitive, and able to reach potential student segments effectively.

Table 1. Student Data

No	Years	Student
1	2020	38
2	2021	48
3	2022	24
4	2023	15

Source: BAAK STIAB Jinarakkhita data, 2023

1st Edition, September, 24

Journal Homepage: <http://journal.ubl.ac.id/index.php/mabuss>

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The Jinarakkhita Lampung College of Buddhist Studies (STIAB) is the only Buddhist religious college in Lampung Province that has a strategic role in developing Buddhist education in the region. However, based on data obtained from BAAK STIAB Jinarakkhita, there has been a significant decline in the number of students in the Buddhist Education Study Program from 2020 to 2023, namely from 38 students in 2020 to only 15 students in 2023. This downward trend indicates a problem in attracting prospective students to choose the study program, so an evaluation of the factors that influence students' decisions in choosing a study program in this digital era is needed (Godey et al., 2016).

Amidst the increasingly tight competition between higher education institutions, marketing strategies through social media are one of the effective approaches to building interactive and persuasive communication with prospective students (Ismail, 2017). Social media marketing allows educational institutions to create interesting content, share information widely, build social connections, and create a supportive digital community. Optimal use of social media is believed to increase awareness and interest of prospective students in the study programs offered (Ahmad et al., 2020).

In addition, brand image is also an important factor in the student decision-making process. A strong and positive brand image can create a good perception of an educational institution, which in turn influences the beliefs and confidence of prospective students in making choices (Ahmad et al., 2020). In the context of the Buddhist Religious Education Study Program, brand image not only reflects academic quality, but also spiritual values and a distinctive institutional identity. Therefore, it is important for STIAB Jinarakkhita to build a brand image that is in accordance with the needs and expectations of students in the digital era.

Although many studies have examined the influence of social media marketing and brand image on consumer or student decisions, specific studies in the context of Buddhist religious education are still very limited (Ainin et al., 2015). This study is here to fill the gap by examining how social media marketing and brand image influence students' decisions in choosing the Buddhist Religious Education Study Program at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung. The findings of this study are expected to provide academic contributions as well as become a strategic foundation for institutions in designing a more effective marketing approach that is in accordance with the characteristics of students in the digital era (Kuppelwieser & Finsterwalder, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a form of marketing that uses social media platforms to build brand awareness, deliver promotional messages, and create direct relationships and interactions with

consumers (Dessart et al., 2015). According to Chatterjee & Kumar, (2017) social media marketing includes all forms of marketing, both direct and indirect, that utilize social media as the main tool in building awareness, recognition, and involvement in a product or service.

Widiyanto et al., (2024) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideology of Web 2.0 and enable the exchange of user-generated content. In the context of educational marketing, social media provides a space for interactive dialogue between educational institutions and prospective students, allowing institutions to convey the values and advantages of study programs directly and personally.

b. Brand Image

Brand image is a consumer's perception of a brand, which is formed from experiences, associations, and interactions with the brand (Sari et al., 2023). According to Auliarahman, (2020) brand image is a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a brand. A strong brand image can influence consumer decisions in choosing products or services, including in the context of choosing a study program.

Auliarahman, (2020) states that brand image reflects consumer perceptions of a brand based on various associations stored in their memory. A positive brand image can create added value for educational institutions because it provides trust and a sense of pride in the institution's brand.

c. Student Decision to Choose

The decision to choose is a cognitive, affective, and behavioral process that individuals go through in determining a choice, including in the context of choosing a study program (Barusman, 2024). According to Barusman, (2014) this process consists of five stages, namely problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchasing decision, and post-purchase behavior. In the context of education, these stages include awareness of the need for education, searching for information about institutions and study programs, comparing available alternatives, to the final decision to enroll (Tupari et al., 2023). The AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model is also relevant to measure the student decision process, where attention to information, interest in the study program, growing interest, and real action in choosing are the main indicators. Therefore, students' decisions to choose the Buddhist Religious Education Study Program at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung are greatly influenced by perceptions, personal interests, and effective marketing strategies from the institution.

Conceptual Framework

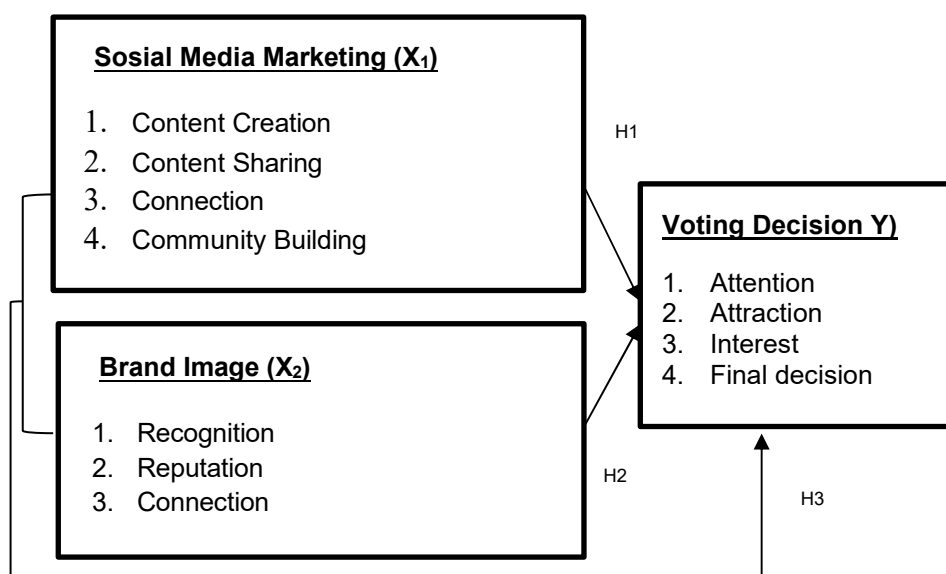


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

a. Research Design

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach (Dhall, 2019). This approach was chosen because it aims to determine the influence of independent variables, namely Social Media Marketing (X₁) and Brand Image (X₂) on the dependent variable, namely Students' Decision to Choose a Buddhist Education Study Program (Y). This study was conducted through a survey using a questionnaire, and the data obtained were analyzed statistically using multiple linear regression analysis.

b. Research Methods

The method used is a survey method with quantitative techniques. This technique is carried out by distributing questionnaires to students as respondents to obtain primary data that describes .

c. Population and Sample

The population in this study were all active students at the Jinarakkhita Lampung School of Buddhist Studies (STIAB), totaling 122 people. To determine the number of representative samples from the population, the Slovin formula was used with an error rate (precision) of 5%. Based on calculations using this formula, the number of samples was 93 students. Sampling was carried out using proportional random sampling by considering the distribution of students by semester. This

technique was chosen to ensure that the samples taken truly reflect the overall characteristics of the student population at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung.

Table 2. Calculation of Sample Size

No	Semester	Total	Sample
1	II	15	$15/122 \times 93 = 11$
3	IV	24	$24/122 \times 93 = 18$
4	VI	45	$45/122 \times 93 = 34$
5	VII	38	$38/122 \times 93 = 30$
Total		122	93

Source: Processed Data, 2024

d. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through several methods. First, a questionnaire compiled using a 5-point Likert scale was used to obtain primary data from respondents related to the variables studied. Second, documentation was used to collect secondary data from related institutions or agencies, which functioned as a complement and support for the primary data obtained. Third, observations were carried out directly in the field to strengthen understanding of the real situation and conditions related to the research object.

e. Data Analysis Techniques

Validity testing in this study was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment method, where a statement item is declared valid if the calculated r value is greater than the r table, which is 0.316 at a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). While the reliability test uses the Cronbach's Alpha method, with the provision that an alpha value greater than 0.7 indicates that the instrument is reliable. Furthermore, data analysis techniques were carried out with the help of SPSS software, which includes descriptive analysis to describe data distribution, normality tests using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, and homogeneity tests to test the similarity of variance between data groups. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of independent variables (Social Media Marketing and Brand Image) on the dependent variable (Choosing Decision) both simultaneously and partially. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis was also used to determine the extent of the contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, as well as the t-test and F-test to test the hypothesis partially and simultaneously.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1st Edition, September, 24

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a. validity test

The researcher conducted a validity test of the instrument using SPSS version 26 software, and tested the significance by comparing the calculated *r* value and the table *r* value. In this study, the degree of freedom (*df*) value was 39 with a significance level of 0.05 so that the table *r* value was 0.316. A statement item is declared valid if the calculated *r* is greater than the table *r* and has a positive value. Based on the results of the validity test, it was found that in the social media marketing variable, out of a total of 12 statement items, there were two invalid items because the calculated *r* value was smaller than the table *r*, namely items X1.1 and X1.3, so that both items were declared invalid. Meanwhile, in the brand image variable, out of 15 statement items tested, two items were found, namely X2.11 and X2.14, which did not meet the validity criteria, so they were also declared invalid. As for the decision to choose variable, there were three items whose calculated *r* value was lower than the table *r*, but two of them, namely Y3.9 and Y3.10, were declared invalid and were not used in further analysis.

b. Reliability Test

Table 3. Reliability of Social Media Marketing Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.802	10

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 4. Statistical Reliability of Brand Image

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.934	13

Source: data processed, 2024

Table 5. Statistical Reliability of Voting Decisions

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.937	10

Source: data processed, 2024

Based on the results of the instrument reliability test in this study, the reliability coefficient of 33 statement items was obtained using the Reliability Scale analysis through the IBM SPSS version 20 program. The alpha value produced for the social media marketing variable was 0.802, for the brand image variable it was 0.934, and for the decision variable it was 0.937. Because all alpha values are

greater than 0.70 and are at a significance level of $p > 0.05$, all instruments are declared reliable. Thus, it can be concluded that the instruments used in this study have met the criteria for good validity and reliability.

c. Normality Test

Table 6. Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				
		X1	X2	Y
N		93	93	93
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	31.48	46.35	33.63
	Std. Deviation	5.012	4.894	5.103
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.109	.099	.068
	Positive	.109	.099	.061
	Negative	-.083	-.074	-.068
Test Statistic		.109	.099	.068
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.008 ^c	.026 ^c	.200 ^{c,d}

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Source: data processed, 2024

The results of the normality test show that the significance value of 0.200 is greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the residual has a normal distribution and the regression model used has met good criteria.

d. Coefficient of Determination

Table 7. The Value of the Determination Coefficient of Social Media Marketing, Brand Image on the Decision to Choose

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.835 ^a	.698	.691	2.837

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Media Marketing, *Brand Image*

b. Dependent Variabel: Keputusan Memilih

Source: data processed, 2024

Hasil analisis regresi menunjukkan bahwa Sosial Media Marketing dan Brand Image memiliki hubungan yang kuat dengan keputusan memilih, dengan nilai R Square sebesar 0,698 yang berarti model dapat menjelaskan 69,8% variasi keputusan tersebut. Standar error yang rendah (2,837) juga menandakan akurasi prediksi yang baik. Dengan demikian, kedua variabel tersebut berperan penting, meskipun masih ada 30,2% variasi yang dipengaruhi faktor lain di luar model.

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e. t-hypothesis Test (Partial)

Table 8. Social Media Marketing Personal T-Test (X1) on Voting Decision (Y)

Coefficients ^a						
Model				Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	7,637	1,990		3,838	0,000
	X1	0,826	0,062	0,811	13,227	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Source: data processed, 2024

The results of the analysis show that t count is 13.227 > t table 1.661 with a significance of 0.00 < 0.05, so H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted. This means that social media marketing has a significant effect on students' decisions to choose the Buddhist Religious Education study program, so the research hypothesis can be accepted.

Table 9. Brand Image Coefficient and Voting Decision

Coefficients ^a						
Model				Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	7,587	4,292		1,768	0,080
	X2	0,562	0,092	0,539	6,103	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Source: data processed, 2024

The calculation results show t count of 6.103 with a significance of 0.00, greater than t table of 1.661 at $\alpha = 0.05$. Because t count > t table and significance < 0.05, then H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted, which means that brand image has a significant effect on the decision to choose a Buddhist Religious Education study program. Thus, the hypothesis stating that there is a positive and significant effect can be accepted.

f. f-hypothesis Test (Simultaneous)

Table 10. Result f-hypothesis Test (Simultaneous)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1671.205	2	835.603	103.821	.000 ^b
	Residual	724.365	90	8.048		
	Total	2395.570	92			

a. Dependent Variabel: Keputusan Memilih

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sosial Media Marketing, *Brand Image*

Source: data processed, 2024

The significance value (0.000) is much smaller than the commonly used significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Because Sig. < 0.05, it can be concluded that the regression model is simultaneously significant. This means that the Social Media Marketing and Brand Image variables together have a significant effect on the Decision to Choose.

Discussion

1. The Influence of Social Media Marketing on the Decision to Choose

The results of the study show that social media marketing has a positive and significant influence on students' decisions in choosing the Buddhist Religious Education Study Program at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung. With a regression coefficient value of 0.811 and a significance of 0.000, marketing activities through digital platforms such as Instagram and Facebook have proven effective in attracting students' interest. The delivery of study program information interactively through visual content, testimonials, and campus activities also helps shape students' positive perceptions of the institution, thereby increasing their likelihood of choosing the program.

2. The Influence of Brand Image on the Decision to Choose

This study also shows that brand image has a significant influence on students' decisions, as indicated by a t-value of 6.103 with a significance of 0.000. A positive institutional image, such as a good academic reputation, upheld religious values, and consistent campus services, encourages students to trust and choose STIAB Jinarakkhita as a place to study. This proves that trust in institutions is an important factor.

3. Simultaneous Influence of Social Media Marketing and Brand Image on Voting Decisions

1st Edition, September, 24

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Simultaneously, social media marketing and brand image are proven to have a significant influence on student decisions, with a calculated F value of 103.821 and a significance of 0.000. The coefficient of determination of 0.698 indicates that 69.8% of the variation in voting decisions can be explained by these two variables. This indicates that an effective digital marketing strategy and strong institutional branding can simultaneously increase the attractiveness of study programs and increase the institution's chances of attracting new students.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

a. Conclusion

The results of the study show that social media marketing and brand image each have a positive and significant effect on students' decisions in choosing the Buddhist Religious Education Study Program at STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung. Simultaneously, both variables also have a significant effect, which confirms that an effective social media marketing strategy and a positive institutional brand image can encourage students to choose the study program.

b. Suggestion

STIAB Jinarakkhita Lampung is advised to continue developing its social media marketing strategies by creating engaging and relevant content, as well as strengthening the institution's image through improved service quality and academic reputation. Prospective students are encouraged to use information from social media wisely and to consider the institution's brand image in their decision-making process. Future researchers are recommended to include additional variables and expand the scope of the study to obtain more comprehensive results that can serve as a reference for more effective educational marketing policies.

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