

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND E-WOM ON THE DECISION TO CHOOSE A UNIVERSITY

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Abstract. Time and cost limitations are the main obstacles when looking for information related to universities no longer need to be done offline or directly, in the digital age that is now taking place social media is one of the main methods of finding news and information. This study aims to determine the effect of digital marketing and E-WOM on the decision to choose a university (UMKT). The Subject are the students of undergraduated program of Management UMKT. This research uses quantitative analysis. The sample used in this study was 130 respondents who were taken by non- probability sampling method using purposive sampling. The data collection technique was carried out using a questionnaire in the form of a google form link. The results of this study indicate that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a university, and E- WOM has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a university.

Keywords: Decision to Choose a University, Digital Marketing, Electroning Word of Mouth (E-WoM).

1. INTRODUCTION

Universities need to re-evaluate their system design and planning to adapt to the evolving dynamics of the global economy and digital competition. Institutions that do not have adequate infrastructure, efficient and effective systems, and reasonable management control will find it difficult to compete and succeed in this arena. The purchase decision is a series of consumer considerations before purchasing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010; Poluakan & Pangemanan, 2014). Customers develop an inclination among the available brands and may also generate a desire to buy the brand they like best as evaluations are made (Kotler & Keller, 2018).

Time and cost limitations are the main challenges when looking for information related to universities that no longer need to be done offline or in person. In today's digital age, social media has become one of the main methods of searching for news and information. Not only that, direct electronic opinion (E-WOM) is also an important factor in determining purchasing choices because references from friends are more trusted, along with the lack of relationship with the company or product being discussed (Hasan, 2010). Online promotion strategies can increase campus engagement with prospective students outside the campus area. As a result, the campus outreach can reach more prospective students from a greater distance. Online media is very popular, with both parents and teenagers actively engaging with it. Information-seeking trends now focus on visual and audio information rather than long texts that are considered uninteresting anymore with the advent of the "visual speak lauder" phenomenon.



Figure 1. Achievements of Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2024), through the Directorate General of Higher Education, announced that Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur (UMKT) or Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan is the best private university in East Kalimantan. One of the reasons for this achievement is because of the cooperation between domestic and foreign universities, such as the double degree program of the Faculty of Health of Chulalongkorn University Thailand, UMKT-Kingston University, UMKT-Derby University, UMKT Charles Darwin University Australia, UMKT-Kyungdong University South Korea, UMKT NTUST Taiwan, and UMKT- TUT Taiwan. Not only that, this campus is also conducting cooperation in strengthening human resources (HR) with Muhammadiyah Surakarta University. The Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan, one of the private universities in East Kalimantan, uses a digitalization system, digital marketing strategies, online media such as websites and social media, and influencers or brand ambassadors.

Digital marketing is a marketing strategy that uses the internet platform to reach the target market. This method is also known as internet marketing, online marketing, e-marketing, or e-commerce (Hermawan, 2012). Entrepreneurs utilize digital marketing to benefit from using Internet media in marketing activities. Electronic Word of Mouth is a derivative of Word of Mouth, where consumers get incentivized to spread information, promote, and recommend products or services directly or indirectly to fellow consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2018). According to Hasan (2010:32), word of mouth (WOM) is a way for consumers to convey information about brands or products to others.

Based on the explanation above, the research is titled "The Influence Of Digital Marketing And E-WOM On The Decision To Choose A University

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Decision to Choose a University

After evaluating various alternatives, choosing a university as the next step in the student decision-making process becomes important. Currently, students tend to have preferences for the brands, products, or services under consideration and are inclined to select the university of their choice (Anderhofstadt & Spinler, 2019).

A purchase decision is an action that may or may not be taken by the consumer during the purchasing process (Ayuni & Prasetyawati, 2020). According to Griffin (2005), loyal customers are the most valuable asset for any company.

As mentioned by Kotler & Keller (2009), the university choice decision (as a purchase decision) occurs when consumers select a university. The decision-making process for choosing a university is an individual activity related to selecting and using the services offered. This activity is further supported by Kotler et al. (2016) who stated that the decision

to choose a university (as a purchase decision) is part of the study of consumer behavior, which describes how individuals, groups, or organizations select, purchase, and fulfill their needs and desires.

2.2 Digital Marketing

Mahalaxmi and Ranjith (2016) view this approach as one of the best ways to overcome and minimize communication mistakes with consumers directly. Meanwhile, Chaffey and Chadwick (2019) define Digital Marketing as the application of digital technologies that form online channels to market, including websites, emails, databases, digital TV, and recent innovations such as blogs, news feeds, podcasts, and social networks.

In line with that, Chakti (2019), stated that Digital Marketing includes all marketing efforts carried out through internet-connected devices. This strategy involves various strategic approaches that utilize digital media to communicate with potential customers through online communication channels, thus creating more effective and measurable interactions.

Various digital marketing channels that support marketing activities include websites, blogs, social media (such as Facebook and Instagram), and interactive audio-video content (such as YouTube and videos). In addition, there are also interactive audio channels (such as Podcast, SoundCloud, and Spotify), display ads, and marketplace platforms (such as Shopee, Bukalapak, Tokopedia, Traveloka, and Pegi-peg).i).

Digital Marketing offers great opportunities to improve with various media and content, as every year, month, and even day presents new challenges. Innovation in this field involves utilizing the latest technology to achieve the goal of effective communication with consumers. These digital marketing activities utilize various platforms, such as social media and other online media, which play an important role in triggering and influencing the achievement of future sales targets (Soetanto et al., 2020).

In order to support these activities, digital media is used as a tool to facilitate all marketing activities through various technology platforms, including the Internet, websites, mobile phones, television, and other interactive media.

Building personal relationships with consumers by listening to their complaints or suggestions to support decision-making can be a significant plus for business development, especially in strengthening the company's brand image and reputation. Although it may seem simple, this step requires real commitment and effort, especially for those who are still trying to understand the essential aspects of digital marketing.

The digital age has brought about profound changes that provide positive impacts and tremendous potential to support various aspects of life if utilized wisely. However, on the other hand, this era also poses new challenges that need to be faced, including negative impacts that affect both individuals and society. These challenges extend to various fields, such as socio-culture, defense, security, politics, economics, and information technology. Dealing with these dynamics requires an adaptive, strategic, and integrated approach to maximize positive impacts while negative impacts are effectively minimized.

Based on the results of research conducted by Hairudinor and Rusidah (2022), it is known that digital marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Study by Patandean (2023), also showed that digital marketing has a positive and significant effect on student's decisions in choosing UKIP as their place of study. In addition, the research findings of Azzam & AL-Mizeed (2023), stated that digital marketing has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Based on the results of these studies, the hypothesis formulation used is:

H1: Digital Marketing has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose a University

2.3 E-WoM (Electronic Word of Mouth)

As mentioned by Kietzmann and Canhoto (2013), Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is a review or statement based on positive, neutral, or negative experiences made by potential

or former consumers about a product, service, brand, or company that is then spread through internet media.

In social psychology, great attention has been paid to interpersonal communication. Research in this area consistently reveals how personal influences affect individual decisions. Traditional Word of Mouth (WOM) is 'the process of sharing opinions and information about a particular product among customers' (Jalilvand et al., 2011).

In the context of the Internet and online channels, E-WOM communication refers to positive or negative statements made by potential, current, or past customers about an organization or product via an Internet platform (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). From this definition, it can be concluded that electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is a shopping experience shared by consumers through positive or negative statements made by potential or former consumers about a product that are spread through the internet media.

According to Lestari & Gunawan (2021), E-WOM refers to positive or negative statements made by long-time consumers to the general public about a product through the Internet. E-WOM is also understood as a form of open communication conducted by consumers through internet-based technology, where consumers can give and receive information about a product or service's characteristics and about a particular seller or service provider (Arif, 2021).

In addition, Santosa (2019); Fadhilah & Saputra (2021) stated that E-WOM has been proven to have a positive and significant impact on purchase decisions. Similar findings were revealed in the study by Rahmawati et al. (2022), which showed that E-WOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions on the Shopee e-commerce platform. Additionally, the research by Priyatna and Agisty (2023) further supports these findings by demonstrating that E-WOM positively and significantly impacts repeat purchase intention. Based on these research findings, the hypothesis formulated is:

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has a positive and significant effect on the Decision to Choose a university.

3. FRAMEWORK

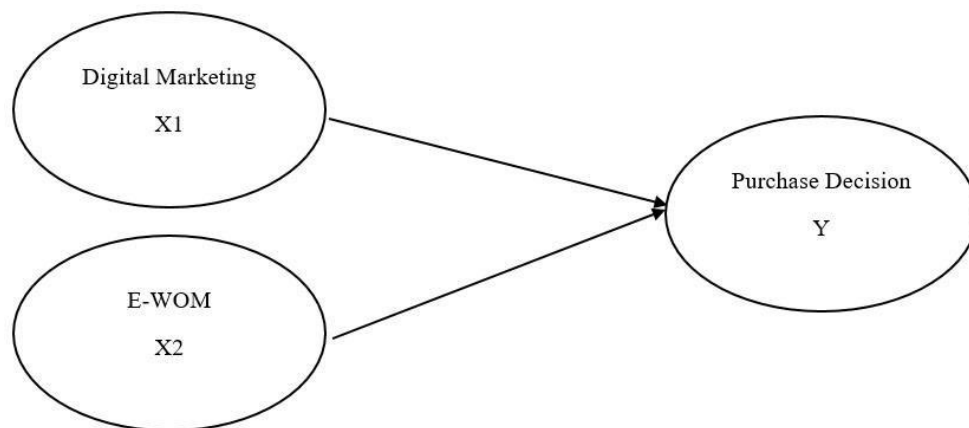


Figure 1.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan is used as a research place to analyze the influence of digital marketing and E-WOM on the decision to choose a

university for undergraduate management study program students at UMKT.

Sugiyono (2019:126), explains that population is a generalization area that includes objects or subjects with specific quantities and characteristics chosen by researchers to study and then draw conclusions. The population includes all the characteristics and properties of the object or subject being studied. This study involved students of the S1 Management Study Program from UMKT. The population of students in the S1 Management study program at UMKT is 2028 people, according to the PDDikti page on the reporting data for the odd 2023 academic year.



No.	Kode	Nama Program Studi	Status	Jenjang	Akreditasi	Jumlah Dosen Penghitung Rasio	Jumlah Dosen Homepage			Jumlah mahasiswa	Rasio Dosen / Mahasiswa
							NIDN	NIDK	Total		
4	61201	Manajemen	Aktif	S1	Baik Sekali	50	16	3	19	2028	1 : 40.56

Figure 2.

Samples are a subset of population members taken using sampling techniques (Hardani et al. 2020:362). Researchers use probability sampling techniques to determine the population and research samples. In this sampling method, respondents have a similar opportunity to be selected as a sample (Sugiyono, 2018).

UMKT Undergraduate Management Study Program students received the questionnaire through a link sent via Google Forms. The 95 individuals who responded included both males and females. The sample size was determined from the population of UMKT undergraduate students using Yamane's formula and integrated with Isaac and Michael's formula.

$$\text{Formula: } n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$\text{Formula: } n = \frac{2028}{\text{respondents } 1 + 2028 (0.1)^2} = 95.3 \text{ rounded up to } 95$$

Data analysis in this study was carried out by processing and comparing information from questionnaires, aiming to produce accurate and easy-to-understand data. This process used SPSS version 26 software that applied various key analysis techniques. One of the techniques used is multiple linear regression analysis, which aims to evaluate the relationship between the dependent variables, namely the University Choice Decision, and independent variables, such as Digital Marketing and E-WOM. This study applied the multiple linear regression analysis method to determine how much influence each independent variable has on the dependent variable. The individual effect of each independent variable is evaluated through the t-test as part of partial hypothesis testing. The significance level of each independent variable can be known through the partial t-test results. Meanwhile, the coefficient of determination (R-Square) is applied to measure the extent to which the independent variables in the regression model can explain the variability of the decision to choose a university. Researchers can conclude the research hypothesis by systematically studying the relationship between the variables studied with this analysis.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that "Digital Marketing and E-WOM variables partially have a significant effect on the Decision to Choose a University" was tested using the t-test, with a significance level of 0.05.

Table1. T-test results

Coefficients^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.153	0.495		2.332	0.021
<i>Digital Marketing</i>	0.282	0.100	0.241	2.809	0.006
<i>E-WOM</i>	0.479	0.103	0.400	4.662	0.000

(Source: SPSS Processed Data, 2024)

The results of hypothesis testing indicated that digital marketing and electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) have a significant partial influence on university selection decisions. This phenomenon is evidenced by the t-count value of both variables (2.809 for digital marketing and 4.662 for e-WOM), which exceeds the t-table value (1.978). This condition results in the rejection of H₀ and acceptance of H_a. This finding showed that both digital marketing and e-WOM have been proven to have a significant impact on prospective student's decisions to choose a university.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R²) measures the ability of the regression model to explain variations in the dependent variable, with a value between 0 and 1. A low R² value indicates the limited influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. In multiple linear regression analysis, Adjusted R Square is recommended because it provides a more accurate assessment by considering the number of independent variables in the model.

Table 2. Test Results of the Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.566 ^a	0.320	0.309	0.595

(Source: SPSS Processed Data, 2024)

Table 2 showed that digital marketing and e-WOM variables contribute to 30.9% of university selection decisions, while factors outside the scope of this study influence the other 69.1%.

The results of hypothesis testing indicated that digital marketing significantly affects the decision to choose a university, as evidenced by the t-count value (2.809), which is greater than the t-table (1.978). This finding is in line with the research of Wilis and Faik (2022), who also found a positive and significant effect of digital marketing on university selection decisions (Wilis & Faik, 2022).

The e-WOM variable analysis results showed a t-count value of 4.662, which is greater than the t-table (4.662 > 1.978). This indicates that e-wom partially significantly influences the decision to choose a university. This finding is consistent with several previous studies, which state that e- wom has a positive and significant influence on choosing a university

(Rahmawati et al., 2022).

The analysis indicates that e-WOM has the most dominant influence on the University Choice Decision among UMKT Management undergraduate students, as evidenced by the highest t-count value of 4.662.

In addition, 30.9% of the decision to choose a university is influenced by digital marketing and e-wom, while 69.1% is determined by factors not covered in this study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, digital marketing and e-wom variables have a significant effect partially on the decision to choose a university for undergraduate Management study program students. Digital marketing and e-WOM variables collectively explain 30.9% of the variation in the decision to choose a university. In comparison, the remaining 60.9% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. Based on these findings, it is recommended that UMKT conduct video interviews with lecturers and alumni who share their experiences, which can be uploaded to YouTube and shared on social media. In addition, for future research, it is recommended to consider factors such as brand image and service quality that can influence the decision to choose a university more comprehensively.

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