

WEBSITE QUALITY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND SATISFACTION ON CHOOSING DECISIONS PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of satisfaction in mediating the influence of website quality and social media on the decision to choose private universities in the city of Medan. The population in this study is all students enrolled in the Universitas Potensi Utama in 2022 while the sample of this study is 104 samples taken from 10% of the population. Data collection techniques using questionnaires and literature studies. Data processing with PLS smart program assistance tools. The results of this study show that the quality of websites and social media has a positive and significant effect on student satisfaction and students' decisions to choose the Universitas Potensi Utama. Other results indirectly show that the quality of websites and social media has a positive and significant effect on student decisions in choosing private universities through student satisfaction.

Keywords: *website quality; social media; student satisfaction; choosing decision*

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology is very rapidly developing bringing tremendous changes to human life. Individuals or companies will increase sales through digital marketing. Digital marketing is a marketing or promotion activity of a brand or product using digital media or the internet to attract consumers or potential customers quickly. Marketing strategies that use digital media and the internet are often found when opening social media, applications, or internet sites (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019; Huang & Benyoucef, 2017; Lee, 2018; Zhang & Gupta, 2018). Digital marketing uses the development of the digital world to do advertising that is not heralded directly but has a very extraordinary effect (Heidrick and Struggles, 2009; Kango et al., 2021; Noaman et al., 2017; Rutter et al., 2017).

The intense competition in the world of education lately makes educational institutions such as universities have to shift the marketing system which is usually done directly, in the end slowly following the development of digital technology through digital marketing strategies, including in North Sumatra Province, especially Medan City. One of the private universities that runs the implementation of higher education in Medan City is the Universitas Potensi Utama which also faces very tight competition.

One of the marketing strategy steps carried out by the management of Universitas Potensi Utama is by implementing an online marketing model through digital marketing. The management of Universitas Potensi Utama understands that current conditions have changed greatly and are certainly no longer the same conditions as they were 10 years ago. The management of Universitas Potensi Utama made changes in its marketing strategy by utilizing the current development of internet technology, considering that the growth of internet users continues to grow significantly (C. S. Putri, 2016). One of the keys to the success of an organization lies in its ability to change quickly with the times, and one of them is by utilizing digital formats (Tataryntseva et al, 2022).

Universitas Potensi Utama in Medan City in general also has a website as a form of digital marketing platform. However, to produce quality digital marketing, you must present a quality website as well (Saidani et al, 2019). Good website quality will create confidence in people towards the agency that owns the website

(Hariadi et al, 2021). A quality website is a website that is easy to use. A quality website will provide complete information related to all products and services offered to the public, including how people will make payments to get these products and services (Olewy & Hadi, 2021; Purohit & Kumar, 2021). It is known that the features on the website presented by Universitas Potensi Utama are still limited to depositing tuition fees online, so utilization is still not optimal. This condition causes low people to access the website at the Universitas Potensi Utama in Medan City.

Social media has a direct impact on consumer purchasing decisions. According to Swastha & Handoko (2012) In the consumer buying process there is a consumer information search phase. This information can be provided by marketers or sought after by consumers through social media. There are already many companies that use social media in business activities, and the goal is to market products and establish relationships with customers.

According to Moriansyah (2015) stated that in this digital era, the process of customer decision making can be influenced by social media, including influencing the decision to buy a product. According to Nasrullah (2015) is a media platform that focuses on the existence of users that facilitate their activities and collaboration. Therefore, social media can be seen as an online media that strengthens relationships between users as well as a social bond. Social networking sites generally play the role of a medium that is a place to carry messages from the communication process.

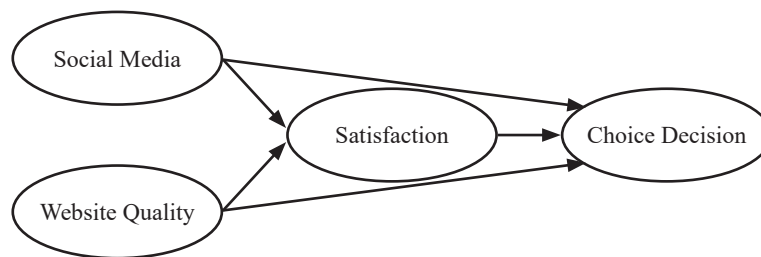


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

The type of research used is quantitative research. This research was conducted at the Universitas Potensi Utama which is located at Jalan Kol. Yos Sudarso KM. 6.5 No. 3A Tanjung Mulia Medan, Telp. 061–6640525, website: www.potensi-utama.ac.id. The population in this study is students recorded at Universitas Potensi Utama until 2020 as many as 1,038 students. While the sample taken was 10% of the total population, so the number of samples in this study was 104 students. This is as suggested by (Hair J.F., 2010) that the appropriate sample size for the SEM analysis tool is between 100–200 respondents, with the intention that it can be used in estimating the interpretation of the results and the requirements for the sample are active students. The two-month study period starts from June to July 2023. Data analysis techniques using path analysis with a partial least square (PLS) approach with Smart PLS application program tools.

RESULTS

Based on the results for outer loading, it showed that all indicators have an outer loading value above 0.7 so that all indicators in each variable are said to be valid. The AVE of each variable has a value of > 0.5 which means that all variables meet the criteria of discriminant validity. The value for the level of reliability is above 0.7. So it can be stated that all variables tested are qualified and worthy of further processing. The hypothesis in this study was done by looking at t-Statistics and P-Values. Path Coefficients direct influence between variables as in the Table 1.

Table 1. Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Media_Social → Choice_Decision	0,322	0,334	0,078	4,126	0,000
Media_Social → Satisfaction	0,303	0,304	0,096	3,167	0,002
Satisfaction → Choice_Decision	0,316	0,315	0,088	3,605	0,000
Website_Quality → Choice_Decision	0,213	0,217	0,087	2,449	0,015
Website_Quality → Satisfaction	0,227	0,239	0,087	2,595	0,010

Source : Smart PLS Output, 2023

For the sixth and seventh hypotheses can be seen by indirect influences between variables, shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Media_Social → Satisfaction → Choice_Decision	0,096	0,096	0,042	2,286	0,023
Website_Quality → Satisfaction → Choice_Decision	0,072	0,076	0,036	1,982	0,048

Source : Smart PLS Output, 2023

DISCUSSIONS

This research reveals a positive and significant correlation between the use of social media and students' university choices. The substantial coefficient of social media influence further emphasizes the significant impact of social media in shaping students' decisions. However, a critical analysis raises important questions regarding the university management's utilization of social media, especially on the platform used by Universitas Potensi Utama. Has the university management fully optimized the potential of social media? Have the strategies for managing and the content on social media been optimized for effective interaction with students?

The emerging issues related to social media, which encompass a significant portion of the variability in students' decisions, highlight the importance of delving into the sources of these problems. Are these issues related to the type of content, engagement strategies, or overall communication effectiveness? Critical analysis becomes crucial in exploring ways to address these constraints. It is important to understand that these research findings not only indicate the positive impact of social media but also call for improvement. The space for enhancing the university's social media presence underscores the need for a strategic approach to better understand and meet the information needs of students. With the evolution of technology and communication platforms, university management can update their social media strategies to more effectively align with the decision-making processes of students in the ever-changing landscape of higher education.

The results of this study strongly support previous research, which stated that Social media has a positive and significant influence on consumer choice decisions (Arif., 2021; Batee, 2019; Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019; Dwiyantri & Jati, 2021; R. Indriyani & Suri, 2020; Le et al., 2019; Leong et al., 2022; Lukito & Fahmi, 2020; Narottama & Moniaga, 2022; Ramdhan, 2019; Riskyady & Sulistyowati, 2021; Shadrina & Sulistyanto, 2022). Likewise, in this study, social media has a tremendous influence on the determination of students in choosing a place to study, one of which is information obtained on social media.

This study outlines the positive and significant impact of social media on student satisfaction. In the current digital era, students often use social media as their primary channel for obtaining information, communicating, and engaging in campus life. Therefore, it is expected that the presence and optimal utilization of social media by Universitas Potensi Utama can have a positive influence on student satisfaction. Specifically, this hypothesis reflected in the ability of social media to convey relevant and up-to-date information to students. For instance, this platform might be used to announce campus events, curriculum developments, or other crucial information that can impact the student experience. Thus, when students feel connected to relevant information, it can be anticipated that their satisfaction levels will increase. Therefore, this positive hypothesis might reflect the belief that social media, if used effectively, can significantly contribute to student satisfaction in the university environment.

In this context, it should also be considered that dynamic interactions and information-sharing on social media can create a more inclusive campus atmosphere. Students who feel engaged and connected with their peers through this platform might experience higher levels of satisfaction. Thus, this positive hypothesis may reflect the belief that social media can act as a tool for building a tighter campus community, which, in turn, positively affects student satisfaction. The positive hypothesis can be reinforced by considering the role of social media in giving a voice to students. Students can use this platform to express opinions, provide feedback, or participate in discussions about campus policies. In this context, being involved in the decision-making process on campus through social media can enhance a sense of ownership and student satisfaction. Thus, this positive hypothesis reflects the belief that social media can be a significant participatory tool in shaping student satisfaction in the university environment. The hypothesis of the positive influence of social media on student satisfaction may be based on the view that social media is not only an information tool but also a means of interaction, inclusivity, and participation. With the optimal utilization of social media by Universitas Potensi Utama in these aspects, it is expected to create a supportive and satisfying environment for students.

The findings of this study provide a crucial insight into the relationship between student satisfaction and their decisions in choosing a university. Firstly, it is important to note that this conclusion is based on statistical analysis,

indicating a significance value lower than the standard error set for this research. Furthermore, the coefficient of influence of student satisfaction on decisions to choose a university is also found to be substantial. It is essential to understand that the current level of student satisfaction with the management of Universitas Potensi Utama is perceived to fall below the expected standard. Students express dissatisfaction with the services and administrative policies of the university. This issue of student satisfaction significantly impacts their decisions in selecting a university. Therefore, improvements are needed to enhance the level of student satisfaction at Universitas Potensi Utama, which is expected to influence the relatively low inclination of students to choose the university.

This research sheds light on the need for improvements in university management, particularly in increasing student satisfaction. By improving the quality of services and adjusting administrative policies, Universitas Potensi Utama can create a more supportive and satisfying environment for its students. These changes are expected to improve students' perceptions of the university, motivating them to choose it as their higher education institution. It is crucial to note that the results of this research provide a foundation for the university to reflect on and design improvement strategies. Through concrete steps to enhance student satisfaction, Universitas Potensi Utama can build a more positive reputation and increase its appeal as a higher education option for prospective students. Thus, the results of this research can serve as a basis for further improvement measures for the sustainability and progress of the university.

The results of this study support previous research, namely research from (Kartin & Amirulmukminin, 2019; Luque Martínez & Doña Toledo, 2019; Milsom & Coughlin, 2015; Nabella et al., 2023; Noval et al., 2020; Nuraini, 2019; Nurlida et al., 2010; Sojkin et al., 2012) which found that satisfaction positively and significantly influenced consumers' decision to choose. Likewise, with universities, student satisfaction will improve student decisions in choosing where they study.

The hypothesis in this study associates the quality of the university website with students' decisions in choosing a university. The use of the website as the primary information channel makes its quality a crucial factor in shaping the university's image in the eyes of students and prospective students. Specifically, this hypothesis can be analyzed by examining the role of the university website as an information repository. If the website presents information clearly, relevantly, and up-to-date, students have good access to forming a positive understanding of the university. Conversely, if the quality of the website is not optimal, students may face difficulties in obtaining the information they need, which can affect their perception of the university's quality.

This hypothesis reflects the importance of the website as a branding tool for the university. In the digital era, the website often serves as the starting point for students and prospective students to get to know and understand the educational institution. Therefore, the quality of the website can have a significant impact on shaping the image and reputation of Universitas Potensi Utama in the eyes of prospective students. It is also important to consider the aspect of the website's influence on students' decisions. If the website provides adequate information about study programs, facilities, and other advantages, it is likely that students will feel more confident in choosing Universitas Potensi Utama. Conversely, if the website does not provide adequate insight, this can be a hindrance in the students' decision-making process.

This hypothesis reflects the crucial role of website quality in shaping students' perceptions and decisions. Therefore, this research can provide valuable insights for Universitas Potensi Utama to enhance the quality of their website to be more effective in attracting and retaining students. The results of this study are in line with research conducted by (Chen et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017; R. A. Putri & Artanti, 2021; Resmi, 2018; Wells et al., 2011) that a good quality website will improve consumer decisions to make purchases. Likewise, the decision of students in choosing a place to study is getting better the appearance of the website so that it is easier for prospective students to obtain the information they need.

The hypothesis in this study associates website quality with student satisfaction, and an in-depth analysis of this hypothesis provides a deeper understanding of its relevance. The analysis of the hypothesis indicates that website quality is identified as an element that can influence students' perceptions of the university. If the website presents information well, is interactive, and meets the needs of students, it can create a positive experience. Conversely, if the website is not optimal, students may face obstacles in accessing the necessary information, which can affect their satisfaction levels.

This hypothesis reflects the importance of website quality as a means of communication between the university and students. If the website is well-designed, it can provide an effective platform for conveying information, updates, and interaction between students and the university. Therefore, the analysis of this hypothesis highlights the communicative aspect of the website as a factor influencing the level of student satisfaction. In this context, it is also important to note that website quality can shape the university's image in the eyes of students. An engaging, informative, and easily accessible website can enhance students' positive perceptions of Universitas Potensi Utama. Conversely, a less optimal website can create a negative impression, which can impact overall student satisfaction.

The analysis of this hypothesis depicts the complexity of the relationship between website quality and student satisfaction. Therefore, this research provides a foundation for further understanding and potential improvements in the website management strategies of Universitas Potensi Utama to enhance student satisfaction. The results of this study are in line with the results of the study (F. Indriyani & Helling, 2018; R. A. Putri & Artanti, 2021; Resmi, 2018; Saidani et al., 2019; Wulandari et al., 2021), which states that the quality of the website has a positive and significant effect on customer/consumer satisfaction. So as to be able to satisfy consumers, one of them is by providing a good quality website that is easily accessible and easy to understand by every user.

A thorough analysis of the findings from this research provides a more detailed picture of the influence of social media on students' decisions in choosing a university, with student satisfaction as an intervening variable. This study opens up new insights by highlighting that while social media has a significant positive impact, its indirect influence on students' decisions in choosing a university is not statistically significant. A key factor in this is the crucial role of student satisfaction as a mediator. Student satisfaction appears to play a more dominant role in responding to social media and shaping the decision-making process of students.

This observation suggests that social media has a strong direct impact on influencing students' decisions, but its indirect influence, mediated by student satisfaction, is relatively lower. The explanation for this can be linked to the availability of the social media platform owned by Universitas Potensi Utama, which is capable of meeting the information needs of students throughout their higher education journey. Delving deeper, this research provides a foundation for universities to better understand the dynamics of interaction between Social Media, student satisfaction, and university selection decisions. Further developments may include optimizing social media strategies more focused on aspects that trigger student satisfaction, with the goal of enhancing its effectiveness in influencing students' university selection decisions. The results of this study support previous research, namely research (Ngoc Duy Phuong & Thi Dai g, 2018).

This research provides an in-depth analysis of the influence of social media, student satisfaction, and website quality on students' decisions to choose a university. Social media has a positive and significant impact on students' decisions, and this is further strengthened by the level of student satisfaction. In other words, social media not only directly affects students' decisions but also through enhancing their satisfaction. Website quality also proves to influence students' decisions, although the statistical results do not reach a significant level. Nevertheless, student satisfaction emerges as a crucial mediator in connecting website quality with students' decisions. This finding indicates that website quality is more likely to have a direct impact on students' decisions, but student satisfaction provides an indirect impact that contributes as well.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that student satisfaction plays a crucial role within the framework of students' decisions. Factors such as social media and website quality can enhance the university's appeal, but the success of attracting students largely depends on the level of satisfaction they experience. Therefore, university management strategies should focus not only on marketing and information technology aspects but also on efforts to improve service quality and the student experience. Practically, the implications of these findings highlight the importance of social media and website quality in attracting students. Even though website quality did not reach statistical significance, improvement efforts in both aspects remain relevant to enhance the competitiveness of the university. Moreover, increasing student satisfaction can be a key strategy in improving the university's reputation and retaining students when they choose a higher education institution. These findings provide a profound insight into the interconnection between social media, student satisfaction, website quality, and students' decisions in the context of university selection. This holistic analysis can serve as a foundation for universities' strategic decision-making to enhance student attraction and retention.

CONCLUSIONS

Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping students' university choices by exerting a positive influence. This underscores the necessity for refining social media strategies to bolster a university's presence in higher education. Moreover, its impact extends to enhancing student satisfaction, as it fosters an inclusive atmosphere and provides a platform for student voices to be heard. Recognizing the significance of student satisfaction in the decision-making process, there is a pressing need for improvements in university management to elevate overall satisfaction levels. Additionally, the quality of a university's website emerges as a crucial factor in influencing students' decisions. This highlights the importance of ensuring websites offer clear and relevant information to prospective students. Furthermore, website quality not only impacts the decision-making process but also contributes to student satisfaction through effective communication, underscoring the pivotal role of positive impressions and communication effectiveness in improving overall student satisfaction.

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