Student Decision to Enter College in Bengkulu

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ABSTRACT

Universities in Indonesia face increasingly fierce competition in attracting prospective students to remain and compete with other universities, Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu needs to apply factors that can influence student decisions. This research aims to examine the influence of social media marketing, university reputation, tuition fees, location, and product variations on students' decisions to study at UM Bengkulu. The data used is primary data. This research is included in quantitative research with a purposive sampling technique. The population of this research was all UM Bengkulu students, totaling 800 respondents. This research uses SEM-PLS version 4.0. The results of this research state that tuition fees, location, and product variety have a significant influence on student decisions, while social media marketing and university reputation have no influence on students' decisions to study at UM Bengkulu.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is an educational institution that aims to brighten the life of the nation and produce graduates or undergraduates who are really needed to develop a country. Based on data from the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of students in Indonesia in 2021 was 8.96 million and 9.32 million in 2022. Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2023 the number of Indonesian students reached 7.8 million, consisting of around 3.3 million students at state universities and 4.4 million students at private universities (BPS, 2023). With the increase in the number of students, universities in Indonesia face increasingly fierce competition in attracting prospective students. To survive and compete with other universities, appropriate strategies are needed for universities to attract prospective students.

In Indonesia, Muhammadiyah Bengkulu University (UM Bengkulu) is one of the higher education institutions that has a significant role in providing access to quality education. UM Bengkulu is one of the private Muhammadiyah universities under the coordinator of L2DIKTI Region II Palembang. To survive and compete with other universities, UM Bengkulu applies the

4P marketing mix theory which consists of product, price, place and promotion in the context of the world of higher education. UM Bengkulu implements a marketing mix strategy starting from social media marketing, university reputation, tuition fees, location, and product variations to attract prospective students and influence students' decisions to study at UM Bengkulu. These strategies will be interconnected to shape prospective students' perceptions of the university they want.

Social media marketing has a positive influence on student decisions (Adolf & Lapian, 2020). UM Bengkulu uses social media marketing in an effort to promote higher education so as to make UM Bengkulu more widely known to the public and prospective students, both within the province and neighboring provinces. The challenges for private universities in the future as an organization or educational institution are increasingly complex. This complexity is characterized by several things, such as the development of digital technology which requires university leaders, lecturers and education staff to master digital technology such as social media marketing to attract students' interest in entering UM Bengkulu.

Higher education reputation is an important factor in influencing student decision making (Mukammil et al., 2023). In this case, a university's reputation, such as accreditation, is an absolute requirement for a university to continue to exist, because if it is not accredited, students will not be interested and will close by itself. A good reputation can influence prospective students' perceptions of a university and can help strengthen its image to attract prospective students. Tuition fees are also a factor that can influence student decision making (Djaelani & Didit Darmawan, 2021). Students need to consider tuition fees such as tuition fees, construction fees, practicum fees, internship/field practice fees, KKN fees, graduation fees, and other fees, so that they can be accommodated in the family and student budget. Therefore, UM Bengkulu has a competitive tuition fee policy and provides various financial assistance options such as tuition fee discounts and scholarships from the government, internal scholarships, and scholarships from UM Bengkulu partners.

Location factors are another factor that can influence student decisions (Mohamed et al., 2021). UM Bengkulu has several campuses spread across various locations in the city of Bengkulu. This location is an attraction for students to choose UM Bengkulu. UM Bengkulu's location is quite strategic and is supported by various fairly complete public facilities such as dormitories, boarding houses, ATMs, banks, minimarkets which can influence prospective students' decisions. Product variations, in this case the faculties and study programs offered, can also influence student decisions (K. D. Rachmawati & Patrikha, 2021). UM Bengkulu has 8 faculties and 24 undergraduate study programs and 4 postgraduate master's study programs. The availability of study programs that suit the interests of prospective students is an important element in attracting prospective students to enter UM Bengkulu. Even though social media, university reputation, tuition fees, location and product variety have been widely researched in the context of students' decisions in choosing a university, these constructs still need to be studied further, especially at UM Bengkulu.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Maketing

Companies use marketing communications to circulate information, convince and remind customers (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Marketing via social media has developed along with the development of digital technology. According to Kotler & Keller (2018), social media is a tool or technique that companies use to communicate with customers through text, images, audio and video. Companies and organizations can utilize social media to increase awareness, recognition, recall, and even response to brands, products, companies, individuals, or organizations. Social media can play a role when a company's marketing activities form individual relationships or interactions with customers and provide opportunities for companies to access customers

(Dwivedi et al., 2018). Social media marketing indicators are context, communication, collaboration, and connection (Solis, 2010).

College Reputation

According to Warta (2017), reputation is the result of a process of assessing the merits and demerits of subjects, individuals, organizations, products and services they produce. Reputation is an assessment given to an individual, institution, or country and this reputation cannot be obtained in a short time because it requires years of effort. A university's reputation is a general description or assessment given to a university by the public, students, educators and other related parties. This reputation includes perceptions regarding the quality of education, academic achievement, recognition at the national or international level, facilities, research, contributions to society, and various other factors that can influence the way people view and decide to study at that university. Indicators of higher education reputation are higher education competence, higher education excellence, public trust in higher education, and higher education experience (Harahap et al., 2018).

Tuition fee

Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2018 concerning Technical Instructions for School Operational Assistance states that tuition fees or education costs are financial resources provided and/or required for education unit costs, costs for organizing and managing education, as well as students' personal costs. in accordance with statutory regulations (Government Regulations, 2018). Education costs are the total financial sacrifices incurred by consumers (student parents) for necessities during education from the beginning to the end of education, such as registration fees, tuition fees, building construction donation fees, practicum fees, internship fees, thesis exam fees, KKN fees. , graduation fees, and other educational costs used to support lectures. Students often compare prices at one university with other universities, so it is necessary to pay attention to these prices compared to competitors' prices. Indicators of tuition costs are educational registration fees, tuition fees, and other fees (Murti, 2019).

Location

Kotler and Armstrong (2018) state that location is a geographic place for carrying out various company activities to manage its business, in this case related to how to deliver products or services to consumers and where the strategic location is. A college location is a geographical place or physical area where a college is located. Location is one of the important factors considered by customers (Monica, 2018). A strategic and convenient location will attract consumers to buy. Determining the location of a college is very important because a college that is in a strategic location will make it easier for students to carry out the study process. Location indicators are access, visibility, traffic conditions, large and safe parking areas, and the environment (Jamaludin, 2017).

Product Variations

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2017), product variety is a collection of products, both goods and services, that sellers offer to buyers. Product diversity refers to the variety of products in the sense of the completeness of noble products in terms of brands, sizes and quality as well as the availability of these products at any time so that it will make it easier for consumers to choose and buy various kinds of products according to their wishes. In this case, the product variations referred to in higher education are faculties and study programs. With the increasing diversity of the number and types of faculties and study programs in a university, it will be easier for consumers to choose a study program according to the student's wishes. Indicators of

product variation are product completeness, product brand, variation in product quantity, and product quality (Setianingsih & Nurhadi, 2016).

Hypothesis Development

Effect of Social Media Marketing on Student Decision
    Students can use social media to find information about universities and study programs that students want. Apart from that, students can also look for reviews or testimonials from other students who have studied at the university. These reviews can provide insight into campus activities, the quality of teaching, and the strengths and weaknesses of the university. Advertising and promotions on social media can influence students' perceptions about a university and will influence students' decisions to study. Therefore, social media marketing influences student decisions (Adolf & Lapian, 2020; Irsanyya et al., 2023; Maulid et al., 2022; Sudirjo et al., 2023; Wikantari, 2022).
  - H1: Social media marketing affects student decisions

The effect of Higher Education Reputation on Student Decision
    The quality of the experience has a major impact on the level of consumer satisfaction. Wu, Li, et al. (2018) argue that satisfaction results from the value of experience (emotional value and functional value). Previous research conducted by Martalia (2022), Rajput & Gahfoor (2020), and Kusumawati & Rahayu (2020) shows a positive influence between experience quality and tourist satisfaction.
  - H2: Experience quality affects tourist satisfaction

The effect Tuition Fees on Student Decision
    According to Kotler and Keller (2018), price is part of the marketing mix that brings in revenue. Tuition fees include registration fees, tuition fees, building construction contribution fees, and other tuition fees that can influence a student's decision to choose a university. Students must consider their ability to pay tuition fees from the start of the semester until graduation so that students are more focused on completing their education and are not burdened by the inability to pay tuition fees. Tuition fees vary between universities so they can influence students' choices in choosing a college. Students will choose universities with affordable tuition fees. Therefore, tuition fees will influence students' decisions (Darmansah & Yosepha, 2020; Djaelani & Didit Darmawan, 2021; Fauzi & Ali, 2021; Hidayat, 2020; Ilmiyah & Krishernawan, 2020; D. Rachmawati et al., 2019) .
  - H3: Tuition fees effect student decisions

The effect of Location on Student Decision
    The choice of college location can have an impact on a student's life, and can influence various aspects, including cost of living, accessibility, campus environment, and social life. College locations that are close to where students live can be more easily accessed and can reduce transportation or accommodation costs. Therefore, choosing a college location is an important consideration in higher education decision making because it will influence a student's decision to enter college. (Hidayat, 2020; Kartika et al., 2019; Mohamed et al., 2021; D. Rachmawati et al., 2019; Ramadani, 2020).
 - H4: Location effect student decisions

The effect of Product Variety on Student Decision
    Product variety such as faculties and study programs have a big impact on a student's decision to study because considering the different needs and tastes of customers, diverse and varied choices will increase the possibility of providing what students want. When students can't

find the product they want, they may go to another college, delay, or even reverse their decision to attend college. Therefore, product variations will influence students' decisions to study at university (Finthariasari et al., 2020; K. D. Rachmawati & Patrikha, 2021; Rozi & Khuzaini, 2021; Simamora & Fatira, 2019; Wahyuningsih, 2019).

- H5: Product variety effect student decisions

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
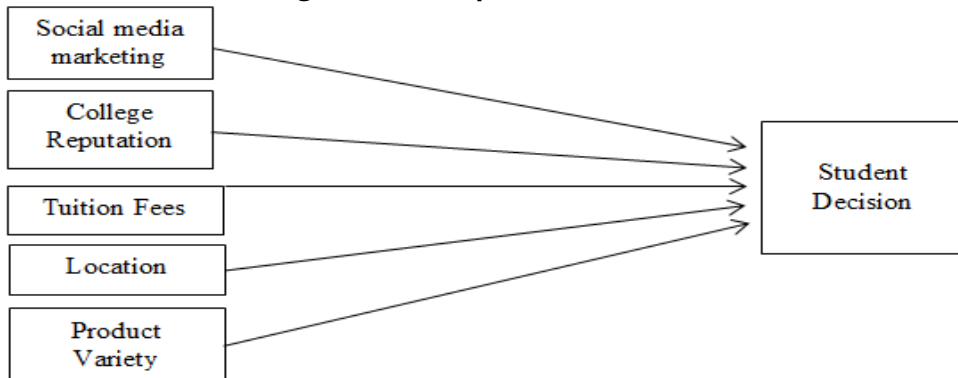
METHODS

This research is descriptive research analyzed using a quantitative approach. This research was conducted on students at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu and carried out in June-September 2023. The sample determination method in this research used a purposive sampling technique. This research used a sample of 800 samples. The data collection method is through an online questionnaire with Google Form using a 'Likert Scale'. The data analysis method uses Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) version 4.0.

RESULTS

Figure 2. Structural Model
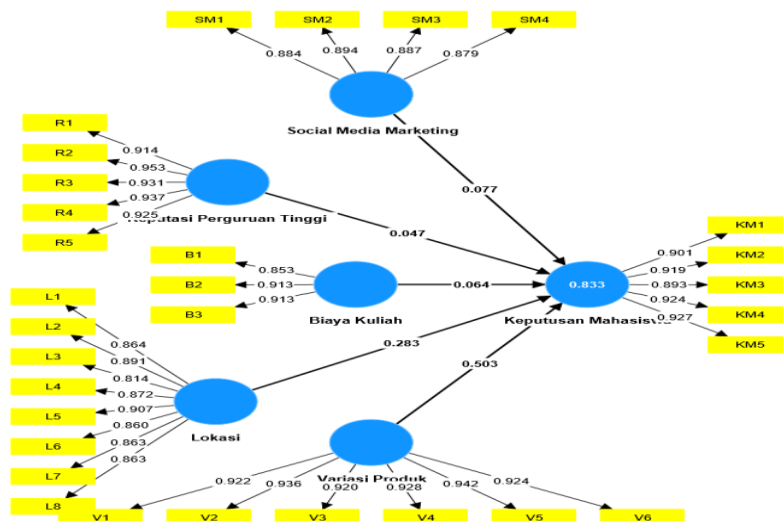
Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2023

Validity Test
Table 1. Validity Test Results

Indicator Item	Convergent Validity		Discriminant Validity	Status
	Loading Factor	AVE	Cross Loading	
SM1	0.884		0.884	Valid
SM2	0.894	0.785	0.894	Valid
SM3	0.887		0.887	Valid
SM4	0.879		0.879	Valid
R1	0.914		0.914	Valid
R2	0.953		0.953	Valid
R3	0.931	0.869	0.931	Valid
R4	0.937		0.937	Valid
R5	0.925		0.925	Valid
B1	0.853		0.853	Valid
B2	0.913	0.798	0.913	Valid
B3	0.913		0.913	Valid
L1	0.864		0.864	Valid
L2	0.891		0.891	Valid
L3	0.814		0.814	Valid
L4	0.872		0.872	Valid
L5	0.907	0.752	0.907	Valid
L6	0.860		0.860	Valid
L7	0.863		0.863	Valid
L8	0.863		0.863	Valid
V1	0.922		0.922	Valid
V2	0.936		0.936	Valid
V3	0.920		0.920	Valid
V4	0.928	0.863	0.928	Valid
V5	0.942		0.942	Valid
V6	0.924		0.924	Valid
KM1	0.901		0.901	Valid
KM2	0.919		0.919	Valid
KM3	0.893	0.833	0.893	Valid
KM4	0.924		0.924	Valid
KM5	0.927		0.927	Valid

Source: Primary Data, Processed 2023

Reliability Test
Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Status
Social Media Marketing	0.909	0.909	*Reliable*
College Reputation	0.962	0.963	*Reliable*
Tuition Fees	0.873	0.881	*Reliable*
Location	0.953	0.954	*Reliable*
Product Variety	0.968	0.969	*Reliable*
Student Decision	0.950	0.951	*Reliable*

Source: Primary Data, Processed 2023

Goodness Of Fit
Table 3. R Square Test Results

Variabel	R Square
Student Decision	0.833

Source: Primary Data, Processed 2023

Based on table 3 above, it can be seen that the R-Square value for the student decision variable is 0.833. This means that student decisions have a strong influence, student decisions can be explained by social media marketing, university reputation, tuition fees, location, and product variations by 83.3%, while 16.7% are influenced by other variables.

Direct Effect
Table 4. Direct Effect Hypothesis Test Results

Variabel	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	t statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	Keterangan
Social Media Marketing -> Student Decision	0.077	0.076	0.040	1.931	0.054	Not Significant
College Reputation -> Student Decision	0.047	0.048	0.060	0.794	0.427	Not Significant
Tuition Fees -> Student Decision	0.064	0.065	0.031	2.084	0.037	Significant
Location -> Student Decision	0.283	0.282	0.064	4.445	0.000	Significant
Product Variety -> Student Decision	0.503	0.504	0.062	8.104	0.000	Significant

Source: Primary Data, Processed 2023

Before interpreting hypothesis testing, it is known that the t-table value with a significance level of 5% or 0.05 in this study is 1.985. Hypothesis testing of each variable relationship is explained as follows:

The Effect of Social Media Marketing, College Reputation, Tuition Fees, Location, and Product Variety on Student Decision

Based on the output table, the results of the direct effect t statistics hypothesis test for social media marketing on student decisions are 1,931 < 1,985 and the p value is 0.054 > 0.050. Based on the test results, H1 in the research was rejected. Then the output table of the results of the direct effect t statistics hypothesis test for university reputation on student decisions is 0.794 < 1.985 and the p value is 0.427 > 0.050. Based on the test results, H2 in the research was rejected.

Next, the output table of the results of the direct effect t statistics hypothesis test for university reputation on student decisions is 2,084 > 1,985 and the p value is 0.037 < 0.050. Based on the test results, H3 in the research was accepted. Then in the output table the results of the direct effect t statistics hypothesis test for location on student decisions are 4,445 > 1,985 and the p value is 0.000 < 0.050. Based on the test results, H4 in the research is accepted. Finally, the output table of the results of the direct effect t statistics hypothesis test for product variations on student decisions is 8,104 > 1,985 and the p value is 0.000 < 0.050. Based on the test results, H5 in the research is accepted.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Student Decisions

Social media marketing has no influence on students' decisions to enter UM Bengkulu. This is because the scope of social media marketing variables is very broad, including Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube, and websites so that their influence on students is biased. Apart from that, the use of social media marketing is less than optimal so it does not influence students' decisions to enter UM Bengkulu. This is in line with research by Nash (2019) and Ramadani (2020) which states that social media marketing has no effect on student decisions.

The Effect of Higher Education Reputation on Student Decisions

The university's reputation, namely, PT's competence, PT's excellence, public trust in higher education, and PT's experience do not influence students' decisions to enter UM Bengkulu. This is because a university's reputation is not always the main or only factor influencing a student's decision. Every student has different individual preferences and goals in choosing a college. Some students may care more about a particular course or major than the reputation of the college itself. This is in line with research by Mahmudah & Faidah (2020) and Rahmayanti & Saifuddin (2021) which states that a university's reputation has no influence on student decisions.

The Effect of Tuition Fees on Student Decisions

Tuition fees influence students' decisions to enter UM Bengkulu. This is because the economic abilities of each individual are different, which greatly influences a student's decision to enter college. UM Bengkulu offers affordable and competitive tuition financing according to the economic capabilities of the people in Bengkulu Province and its surroundings. High tuition fees can be a major obstacle for students to obtain a college education because students must also consider living costs and boarding costs. Apart from that, the tuition fees for each study program vary but do not differ much from one study program to another, so students have more freedom to choose a study program at an affordable cost. Many students and their families have limited financial resources. This is in line with research by Darmansah & Yosepha (2020), Djaelani & Didit Darmawan (2021), Fauzi & Ali (2021), Hidayat (2020), Ilmiyah & Krishernawan (2020), and D. Rachmawati et al., (2019) , which states that tuition fees influence students' decisions to enter PT.

The Effect of Location on Student Decisions

Location influences a student's decision to enter UM Bengkulu. This is because with UM Bengkulu's strategic location, students can easily carry out daily activities. Students choose universities that are located in areas that are easy to reach from their homes or areas of residence because they can reduce travel costs and provide convenience. In the UM Bengkulu area there are complete facilities ranging from dormitories, boarding houses, minimarkets, ATMs, banks, photocopying, and others. Then, UM Bengkulu, which is located in the city center with an active social life, can give students the opportunity to develop their potential. This is in line with research by Hidayat (2020), Kartika et al., (2019), Mohamed et al., (2021), D. Rachmawati et al., (2019), and Ramadani (2020).

The Effect of Product Variations on Student Decisions

Product variations influence students' decisions to enter UM Bengkulu. The product variations in question are the number of faculties and study programs at UM Bengkulu, which consists of 8 faculties and 24 undergraduate study programs and 4 postgraduate study programs. Students will look for universities that offer a variety of study programs because they suit the student's career choices and academic interests. Students have diverse interests, so the

many study programs allow students to choose study programs. This is in line with research by Finthariasari et al., (2020), K. D. Rachmawati & Patrikha (2021), Rozi & Khuzaini (2021), Simamora & Fatira (2019), and Wahyuningsih, (2019).

CONCLUSION

The research conclusions are:
1. Social media marketing and university reputation have no significant influence on students' decisions to study at UM Bengkulu
2. Tuition fees, location and product variety have a significant influence on students' decisions to study at UM Bengkulu.

LIMITATION

Further research is needed to identify other factors that influence students' decisions in choosing UM Bengkulu. Even though this research shows that social media marketing has an insignificant effect, it is still possible to improve university marketing strategies on social media. Universities can still strive to improve and build their reputation through efforts such as improving the quality of education, research, human resources and student services. In addition, conducting comparative research with other universities that have similar characteristics or are in the same scope, can help understand the differences and similarities in the factors that influence students' decisions to enter higher education.

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