The Effectiveness Of Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA) In Higher Education (A Consumer Decision Model/CDM Approach)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the effectiveness of social media marketing (SMMA) on Instagram in building prospective students' interest in enrolling at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, using the Consumer Decision Model (CDM) approach. This study identifies the important role of social media in influencing brand recognition, trust, positive attitudes, and prospective students' intentions. Instagram has proven to be a strategic platform for delivering relevant information to the younger generation. The findings show that trust is the most influential mediating variable in shaping enrollment intentions. Consistent and quality content can increase prospective students' trust, while interactive elements and personalization strengthen positive impressions of the institution. This study emphasizes the importance of strong brand management on social media, where good brand recognition increases prospective students' trust and positive attitudes. In addition, content that displays achievements, alumni testimonials, and responsive interactions have proven effective in building a positive image. As an academic contribution, this study introduces the application of the CDM model in marketing, providing a new perspective on how social media influences positive attitudes and prospective students' intentions to enroll, especially in universities in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Competition in higher education in Indonesia is increasingly intense, both among state and private universities, so educational institutions must optimize their marketing strategies to stay relevant. In this digital era, social media has become an important tool for institutions to attract prospective students, especially through visual platforms such as Instagram which are a favorite of the younger generation in seeking information about their educational choices (Kim and Ko 2012; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) . Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA) enables universities to convey their messages effectively and efficiently, helping to build a brand that is well-known to prospective students (Kim and Ko 2012) . Several studies have shown that direct interaction and

engaging visual content can increase positive perceptions and prospective students' interest in an institution (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Mangold and Faulds 2009 ; Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch 2017) . With the increasing role of social media, it is important for universities to leverage interactive features to build rapport and create a more personalized experience for prospective students.

Previous research has revealed that information presented through social media has a significant influence on the interests and decisions of prospective students in choosing a college (Sutrisno 2020; Wardhana 2015) . In the context of educational marketing, interactive and personalized content, as well as testimonials from students and alumni, play a major role in building trust and creating engagement with prospective students (Kim and Ko 2012) (Koay et al. 2021) . Visual content and interactive features provided by platforms such as Instagram allow universities to convey their messages in an engaging and accessible way, creating a more personal bond and higher trust (Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch 2017 ; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) . Another study by Innayah et al. (2023) showed that a visual content-based approach can shape a positive image of a university, Strategic and consistent social media presence in influencing prospective students' enrollment intentions. (Choedon and Chan Lee 2020; Koay et al. 2021) However, despite the high potential of social media, many universities have not optimized audience engagement with relevant and interactive content. (Wei, Huat, and Thurasamy 2023)

Although many educational institutions have begun to use social media as part of their marketing strategy, brand awareness and trust of prospective students towards certain universities still vary (Hajli 2014; Koay et al. 2021) . At UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, for example, although there is an official Instagram account, the position of brand awareness among prospective students is still below other local universities such as UNS and UMS, indicating that this university has not achieved a "top-of-mind" position in Surakarta. This is exacerbated by the low interaction between social media account managers and student audiences, as well as the lack of content that is relevant to the needs and interests of prospective students. Low audience engagement indicates a gap between prospective students' expectations and the information provided by universities, which is also recognized by Fischer and Reuber (2011) as a common challenge in social media management by educational institutions. As a result, the potential of social media as a primary tool in building a positive image and increasing new student enrollment intentions has not been fully optimized in this institution (Kim and Ko 2012 ; Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch 2017).

To analyze the influence of SMMA on prospective students' intentions, this study applies the Consumer Decision Model (CDM). CDM identifies six important variables in consumer decision making, namely information, brand recognition, trust, attitude, intention, and actual action (Fischer and Reuber 2011) . In the context of higher education, this theory can help universities map the influence of these variables, for example, how trust in information from social media can increase brand recognition and positive attitudes of prospective students towards the institution (Durianto 2003 ; Hajli 2014). The application of CDM in the context of higher education marketing offers important insights, as noted by Kim and Ko (2012) , that elements of interactivity and brand familiarity on social media significantly influence consumer perceptions and intentions to choose a product or service, including higher education (Komalasari and Alfando WS 2023) . In addition, Hughes et al. (2020) confirmed that a consistent online presence and the use of interactive strategies on social media help build a relationship of trust between educational institutions and prospective students. With this approach, CDM becomes a relevant framework to understand and optimize the influence of SMMA information on prospective students' enrollment intentions in higher education.

CDM provides a powerful analytical structure for understanding consumer decision-making processes, especially in the context of higher education, where understanding the factors that influence prospective students' decisions is critical. The strength of this theory lies in

its ability to evaluate the influence of information from social media in shaping brand recognition, trust, and positive attitudes that ultimately drive enrollment intentions (Howard, Shay, and Green 1988; Mangold and Faulds 2009) . In addition, CDM allows this study to better understand how prospective students process information, especially when the content on social media is designed to be relevant and interactive, which can create a more memorable personal experience (Felix et al. 2017; Rauschnabel et al. 2016 , Hughes et al. 2020) . For example, Hajli (2014) highlighted that information obtained from digital platforms increases perceptions of brand quality and trust, which are important for consumer decisions in the service sector, including education. The application of CDM in this study also provides theoretical contributions by offering a deeper understanding of prospective student behavior in a digital context, which is in line with Kim and Ko's (2012) study on the significant influence of social media on consumer perceptions and intentions. By using this theory, the study can explain in more depth the role of social media in attracting interest and building loyalty of prospective students towards higher education institutions.Currently, research examining the effects of SMMA on the higher education sector, especially in Indonesia, is still limited. Many previous studies have focused more on the marketing of commercial products, while the application of theories such as the Consumer Decision Model (CDM) in the educational context is still rarely explored (Alalwan et al. 2017 ; Wei et al. 2023 ; Hajli 2014) .

In addition, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the understanding of how factors such as brand recognition, trust, and attitudes built through social media can drive prospective students' intentions to enroll in a particular university (Mangold and Faulds 2009 ; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010) . As a solution, this study offers a CDM-based approach that considers the role of social media interactions in forming positive attitudes towards higher education, by measuring the influence of various elements such as information and trust on prospective students' enrollment intentions (Kim and Ko 2012; Felix et al. 2017) . By analyzing these elements, this study contributes to providing a more effective digital marketing strategy that can be implemented by educational institutions to increase engagement and attract prospective students more optimally (Alalwan et al. 2017 ; Fischer and Reuber 2011) .

From the perspective of university management and in the context of digital marketing developments, this study raises the issue of the effectiveness of marketing information through Instagram social media on prospective students' intentions to choose a university. This problem formulation is based on the lack of brand awareness and interaction of prospective students with the official social media accounts of universities, which have the potential to influence their perceptions and decisions.

In this case, this study formulates three main questions: first, how much influence does SMMA information have on the intention to become a student at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta; second, how effective are the elements of the Consumer Decision Model (CDM)—such as brand recognition, trust, attitude, and interaction—in influencing prospective students' decisions; and third, how do the factors in the CDM interact with each other in shaping prospective students' intentions to register.

This study aims to explore the impact of social media marketing activities (SMMA), especially in building brand recognition, trust, and attitudes that influence prospective students' intentions to enroll at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The novelty of this study lies in the application of CDM) in the context of higher education marketing in Indonesia, which is still rarely focused on in academic literature (Howard, Shay, and Green 1988; Hajli 2014) . By adopting CDM, this study offers an in-depth perspective on how social media elements can shape positive attitudes and increase prospective students' intentions (Hafez 2022; Khan 2022; Wei et al. 2023) . In addition, this study also adds new insights into the importance of interactivity elements and content personalization as factors driving engagement in media (Komalasari and Alfando WS 2023 ; Hafez 2022; Khan 2022; Wei et al. 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA)

According to Kim and Ko (2012) , Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA) consists of five core elements: entertainment, interaction, customization, trends, and word of mouth (WoM). These five elements work synergistically to strengthen brand equity and loyalty. Entertainment creates emotional attachment through engaging content (Kimmel and Kitchen 2014; Hudson and Hudson 2006; Setiawan and Briliana 2021; Tufte 2001, 2005) Interaction enables two-way communication that increases loyalty (Adiningtyas and Hasanah 2023; Changani, Kumar, and Tripathi 2023; Fischer and Reuber 2011; Rutter, Roper, and Lettice 2016) . Customization offers experiences tailored to customer preferences (Buzeta, De Pelsmacker, and Dens 2020; Godey et al. 2016; Kalam, Lee, and Ying 2023; Sohaib and Han 2023) . Trends reflect a brand's ability to stay relevant and responsive to current developments (Camacho, Luzón, and Cambria 2021; Melewar, Foroudi, and Jin 2020) . WoM strengthens brand reach through trustworthy customer reviews. (Farida et al. 2019; Castronovo and Huang 2012, 2012) These five elements can increase customers' perceived value and commitment to the brand through an interactive and personal approach that distinguishes social media from traditional marketing.

Consumer Decision Model (CDM)

CDM is an analytical framework that identifies six variables in consumer decision making: finding information (F), brand recognition (B), confidence (C), attitude (A), intention (I), and purchase (P). (Howard et al. 1988 ; Jayawinangun and Syamsun 2014) . CDM emphasizes that consistent information through social media can strengthen perceptions and trust in higher education (Howard et al. 1988 ; Mohajer 2020) . In the context of education, CDM helps institutions understand the cognitive stages of prospective students, which are influenced by social trust and the campus environment (Brown and Mazzarol 2009 ; Dalangin 2021) . This study limits itself to intention (I), because the respondents are prospective students (Khoiruman and Warniati 2017; Pujasari, Syamsun, and Indrawan 2016; Salipin and Wahyoedi 2008) .

Potential Of Social Media Marketing In Higher Education

Social media in higher education has great potential to strengthen the relationship between universities and stakeholders, such as prospective students, students, alumni, and the general public. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stated that social media enables two-way communication that strengthens audience engagement with the institution's brand. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter not only disseminate academic information but also build emotional connections through sharing experiences. Mangold and Faulds (2009) added that social media allows prospective students to participate in content creation, enriching the relationship with the university.

Marketing through social media creates reciprocal value that improves service (MD. Moulude Hossain and Shahih Ahmed Chowdhury 2011) . Findings (Kotler and Armstrong 2011) and Camilleri (2020) show that information shared by friends or alumni can strengthen prospective students' decisions to choose a university.

Figure 1 Research Hypothesis Framework
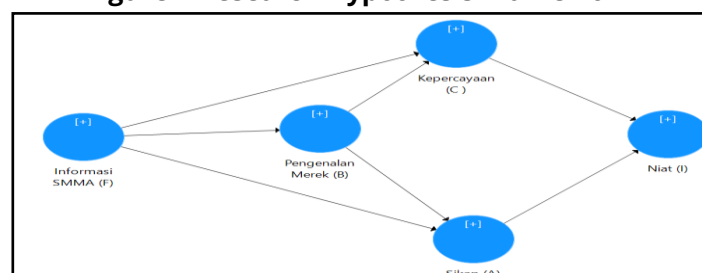
METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive method to analyze the influence of the Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Activity (SMMA) in Higher Education. This study uses the CDM approach Howard et al. (1988); and SMMA Kim and Ko (2012) as a theoretical framework, the CDM approach and SMMA theory are considered relevant today in describing the decision process of prospective students.

This model with SMMA information, brand recognition, Attitude and trust, allows research to assess how these factors influence the intentions of prospective students as the main target of educational marketing. The selection of Instagram social media as a data collection platform to expand the reach of research by considering the interaction habits of the target audience as respondents in digital media.

The study population included 4,000 followers of the UIN RM Said Surakarta Instagram account, a total sample of 400 respondents was taken based on the Slovin Formula with a 5% error rate. (Sugiyono 2020). The sampling technique in this study used non-probability sampling with a voluntary approach (Earl Babbie 2013; Malhotra, Naresh K. Nunan, Daniel, Birks 2020; Sekaran, Uma, Bougie 2016 ; Creswell, JW, & Creswell 2018).Questionnaire data were collected online using Google Forms to UIN RM Said Surakarta Instagram followers between August 12 and October 20, 2024. The questionnaire used included SMMA Information, brand recognition, trust, attitudes and intentions of prospective students towards the university. Each was measured using a Likert scale with answer choices from strongly agree (SS) with a score of 5 to strongly disagree (STS) with a score of 1. (Sugiyono 2020).

Data analysis using SEMPLS because it is a comprehensive multivariate approach to statistical analysis that can simultaneously test every relationship between variables in a conceptual model, including measurement and structural components (Hair et al. 2019). Software with SmartPLS v 3.. by following the PLS-SEM analysis literature, a two-step approach was carried out, namely evaluating the measurement model and the structural model (Hair et al. 2019).

The SEM-PLS technique allows researchers to evaluate the relationship between variables in depth and test the proposed hypothesis regarding the positive effect of marketing activities on prospective student interest. The statistical process is then presented in the form of tables and graphs. The data analysis technique used is path analysis. (Hair et al. 2019; Harahap 2018; Thakkar 2020).

RESULTS

Measurement Model

In evaluating the measurement model, the reliability of the measurement scale of each construct is analyzed by examining the indicator loading, which should be greater than 0.708 (Hair et al. 2019) . Most items show loadings greater than 0.708, except for one item from the "Attitude" construct (A2) with a loading value of 0.738. The composite reliability (CR) and Dijkstra–Henseler's rho (ρA) values are greater than 0.7 for all constructs, indicating good internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2019).

The AVE for each construct is more than 0.5, indicating good convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). These results indicate a high level of internal consistency, with constructs such as "SMMA" and "Intention" having excellent CR and rho, as well as adequate AVE, while constructs "Trust" and "Brand Recognition" showed lower convergent validity. Table 1 shows a high level of internal consistency for each construct.

Table 1 Results From The Measurement Model

	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Dijkstra–Henseler's rho (ρA)	CR	AVE	Variance explained (R²)	R2 adjusted	Predictive relevance (Q²)
SMMA Information (F)		0.949	0.956	0.956	0.685			
Hib1	0.817							
Hib2	0.807							
Int1	0.800							
Int2	0.783							
Int3	0.875							
Kust1	0.786							
Kust2	0.823							
Trend1	0.871							
Wom1	0.806							
Wom2	0.897							
Trust (C)		0.77	0.799	0.866	0.685	0.246	0.242	0.161
C1	0.831							
C2	0.749							
C3	0.896							
Intention (I)		0.77	0.934	0.944	0.706	0.680	0.679	0.470
I1	0.896							
I2	0.831							
I3	0.895							
I4	0.801							
I5	0.729							
I6	0.847							
I7	0.869							
Brand Recognition(B)		0.793	0.793	0.879	0.707	0.020	0.017	0.013
B1	0.843							
B2	0.855							
B3	0.825							
Attitude (A)		0.878	0.883	0.942	0.891	0.199	0.195	0.171
A2	0.949							
A3	0.938							

Note: 1. Yellow cells are the factor loadings of the scale items for each construct. 2 The first column Entertainment1, Entertainment2, Interaction1, Interaction2, Customization1, Customization2, Trendines1, Wom1, Wom2 (SMMA Components}; The second column Confidence1, Confidence2, Confidence3; The third column Intention1, Intention2, Intention3, Intention4, Intention5, Intention6, Intention7; The fourth column Brand Recognition1, Brand Recognition2, Brand Recognition3; The fifth column Attitude2; Attitude3
Source: Research Data

Quality Model

The criteria used are the coefficient of determination (R2) , effect size (f2) , cross-validated redundancy (Q2) and path coefficient (Hair et al. 2019) . R2 measures 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 for all endogenous structures, which are considered substantial, moderate and weak. The results In Table 6, the R2 value of confidence is 0.246; R2 for Brand Recognition 0.020; R2 for Attitude 0.1999 , while R2 for Intention is recorded at 0.680 or shows that around 68% of the variation in prospective student intentions can be explained by the independent variables used in the model, namely brand recognition, trust, and attitude . This shows that the model has a fairly strong fit in explaining prospective student intentions. f-Square (f²) is often used to assess the magnitude of the effect of a relationship in a model. This is useful for knowing the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable. If the f² value: ≥ 0.35: Large influence;

$0.15 \leq f^2 < 0.35$: Medium influence; $f^2 < 0.15$: Small influence. C oss-validated redundancy (Q^2) is used to assess the ability of the model to predict the dependent variable based on the independent variables. If Q^2 is more than 0, it indicates that the model has good predictive relevance. Conversely, if Q^2 is less than 0, the model is considered to have poor predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2019) .

Table 2 shows the results of discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which indicates that each construct in this model has good discriminant validity. The diagonal value, which is the root of AVE for each construct, is greater than the correlation between other constructs. For example, the root value of AVE for "SMMA Information" is 0.827, higher than the correlation with other constructs such as "Trust" (0.465) and "Intention" (0.405). The same applies to other constructs, where the root value of AVE is always greater than the correlation with other constructs, including "Attitude" which has the highest root AVE of 0.944. This shows that the constructs in the model can be clearly distinguished.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Variables	Information	Trust	Intention (I)	Brand Recognition (B)	Attitude (A)
SMMA Information (F)	0.827				
Trust (C)	0.465	0.828			
Intention (I)	0.405	0.812	0.840		
Brand Recognition (B)	0.141	0.236	0.176	0.841	
Attitude (A)	0.408	0.764	0.713	0.235	0.944

Source: Researcher Data

To analyze the structural relationship, collinearity must be checked to ensure that there is no bias in the regression results. The variance inflation factor (VIF) value must be lower than 3 (Hair et al. 2019) . Kock (2015) ; Lee and Chen (2022) stated that the VIF Multicollinearity test for each independent variable is below the threshold value of 5. Table 3 shows that there is no significant multicollinearity in this model.

Path Coefficient Value

The path coefficient value or path coefficient of the Bootstrapping results of 500 subsamples (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt 2011; Henseler, Hubona, and Ray 2016; Hoon, Bahari, and Singh 2010) between the independent variables and the dependent variables also shows a good relationship strength in the model. For example, in table 7, the effect of brand recognition on trust reaches a coefficient value of 0.173, with a high level of significance (p <0.01). Likewise, the relationship between trust and intention has a coefficient of 0.643 with a very strong level of significance (p <0.01), indicating a significant influence of the trust variable on prospective students' intentions to enroll.

Table 3 Evaluation Of The Structural Model

Tested Aspects	β	T Values	P Values	VIF	f^2
SMMA Information (F) -> Brand Recognition (B)	0.141	2,652	0.004	1,000	0.252
SMMA Information (F) -> Trust (C)	0.441	10,654	0,000	1,020	0.252
SMMA Information (F) -> Attitude (A)	0.383	9,532	0,000	1,020	0.179
Brand Recognition (B) -> Trust (C)	0.173	2,772	0.003	1,020	0.538
Brand Recognition (B) -> Attitude (A)	0.181	2,627	0.004	1,020	0.039
Trust (C) -> Intention (I)	0.643	12,726	0,000	1,020	0.040
Attitude (A) -> Intention (I)	0.222	4,043	0,000	2.398	0.064
Note(s): n : bootstrapping 500 subsamples					

The results of the structural model evaluation by displaying the values of path coefficients (β), t values (T Values), p values (P Values), VIF (Variance Inflation Factor), and effect sizes (f²). All relationships between variables in the model show a significant relationship, with a p value of less than 0.05, indicating a strong influence between constructs. For example, the relationship between "SMMA Information" (F) and "Trust" (C) has a β coefficient of 0.441 with a t value of 10.654 and a p value of 0.000, indicating a significant influence. The effect size (f²) shows that "SMMA Information" (F) has a large influence on "Trust" (C) and "Brand Recognition" (B), with f² values of 0.252 each, indicating a large effect on the construct. Meanwhile, the relationship between "Brand Recognition" (B) and "Attitude" (A) has a smaller effect (f² = 0.039). VIF for all relationships is below 5, indicating no significant multicollinearity. Overall, this model shows strong and significant relationships between the tested variables, with effect sizes varying depending on the strength of the influence between constructs. Table 3 shows this.
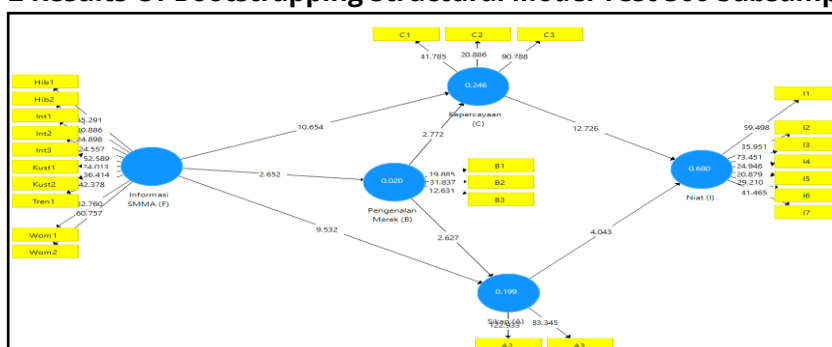
Hypothesis Testing
Table 4 Hypothesis Test Results

Relation/Hypothesis	β	T value	Supported
H1 : SMMA Information (F) -> Brand Recognition (B)	0.141	2,652	Yes
H2 : SMMA Information (F) -> Trust (C)	0.441	10,654	Yes
H3 : SMMA Information (F) -> Attitude (A)	0.383	9,532	Yes
H4: Brand Recognition (B) -> Trust (C)	0.173	2,772	Yes
H5: Brand Recognition (B) -> Attitude (A)	0.181	2,627	Yes
H6: Trust (C) -> Intention (I)	0.643	12,726	Yes
H7 : Attitude (A) -> Intention (I)	0.222	4,043	Yes
Note(s): n : bootstrapping 500 subsamples; $p < 0.01$; ns: note significant (one-tailed test)			

Figure 2 Results Of Bootstrapping Structural Model Test 500 Subsamples

Based on table 4 Path Coefficients Values of Bootstrapping Results with 500 Subsamples and explained in figure 2 which is carried out with the SEM-PLS statistical test. Table 4 shows the results of the hypothesis test that examines the relationship between constructs in the model. All hypotheses tested show positive and significant β values, with t values greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.01, indicating that all relationships between variables in the model support the proposed hypothesis. Hypothesis H1 shows a β value of 0.141 with a t-value of 2.652 and a p-value of 0.004, which means that "SMMA Information" (F) has a significant effect on "Brand Recognition" (B). Hypothesis H2 shows a β value of 0.441 with a t-value of 10.654 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that "SMMA Information" (F) has a significant effect on "Trust" (C).

Hypothesis H3 shows a β value of 0.383 with a t-value of 9.532 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect of "SMMA Information" (F) on "Attitude" (A). Hypothesis H4 shows a β value of 0.173 with a t-value of 2.772 and a p-value of 0.003, indicating a significant effect of "Brand Recognition" (B) on "Trust" (C). Hypothesis H5 shows a β value of 0.181 with a t-value of 2.627 and a p-value of 0.004, indicating a significant effect of "Brand Recognition" (B) on "Attitude" (A). Hypothesis H6 shows a β value of 0.643 with a t-value of 12.726 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant effect of "Trust" (C) on "Intention" (I). Hypothesis H7 shows a β value of 0.222 with a t-value of 4.043 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant influence of

"Attitude" (A) on "Intention" (I). Trust has the most dominant influence on the intention to register, with a coefficient of 0.643 and a t-statistic of 12.726 (p < 0.01).All of these results support the proposed model, with high t-values indicating a strong relationship between constructs in this study. These results suggest that strong trust in the university is a major driver of prospective students' intentions. Overall, the direct effects of the independent variables in this research model suggest that each element of the SMMA plays an important role in influencing prospective students' enrollment intentions. This supports the importance of social media marketing in building perceptions and interest in educational institutions.

Results Of The Mediation Variable Test
Table 5 Results Of Hypothesis Testing Of Mediating Variables

Variables	β	T Values	P Values	Supported
SMMA Information (F) -> Trust (C) -> Intention (I)	0.283	7,646	0,000	Yes
SMMA Information (F) -> Attitude (A) -> Intention (I)	0.085	3,671	0,000	Yes
SMMA Information (F) -> Brand Recognition (B) -> Trust (C) -> Intention (I)	0.016	1,823	0.034	Yes
SMMA Information (F) -> Brand Recognition (B) -> Attitude (A) -> Intention (I)	0.006	1,443	0.075	Ns
Note(s): *n* : bootstrapping 500 subsample; *p* < 0.01; ns: note significant (one-tailed test)				

Table 5 shows the results of the hypothesis test for the mediating variables in the research model. The mediating role of "Trust" (C) between "SMMA Information" (F) and "Intention" (I), shows a β value of 0.283, with a t-value of 7.646 and a p-value of 0.000, which means that this mediation effect is significant. The mediating role of "Attitude" (A) between "SMMA Information" (F) and "Intention" (I), also shows significant results with a β value of 0.085, a t-value of 3.671, and a p-value of 0.000. The hierarchical mediating role of "Brand Recognition" (B) and "Trust" (C) between "SMMA Information" (F) and "Intention" (I), shows a significant effect with a β value of 0.016, a t-value of 1.823, and a p-value of 0.034. However, the multilevel mediation role of "Brand Recognition" (B) and "Attitude" (A) between "SMMA Information" (F) and "Intention" (I), does not support significant results, with a β value of 0.006, t-value of 1.443, and p-value of 0.075, which is greater than 0.05, so this hypothesis is not significant (ns).

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis in this study shows that SMMA information has a direct influence on the mediating variables of brand recognition, trust, and attitude, which then contribute significantly to prospective students' enrollment intentions. Trust is proven to be the most influential mediator, indicating that increasing trust through SMMA is a key strategy that universities can optimize to attract prospective students. This study confirms the important role of SMMA in building brand recognition, increasing trust, and forming positive attitudes that ultimately increase prospective students' enrollment intentions.The analysis of the indirect effects of SMMA on prospective students' trust, attitudes, and intentions underscores the importance of strong and consistent brand management on social media. The indirect effects of SMMA on trust and attitudes through brand recognition suggest that exposure to quality content helps build confidence and emotional connection with prospective students. Furthermore, the effects of SMMA on enrollment intentions suggest that trust plays a major role in driving these intentions. These results support marketing and consumer behavior theories, such as CDM, which emphasize the importance of brand recognition and trust in influencing consumer decisions.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that the right SMMA strategy can influence prospective students' intentions through a mediation pathway involving trust and attitude. Trust

is more significant than attitude, indicating that building a trusted reputation on social media is very important to increase prospective students' intentions. This study is in line with the AIDA and CDM theories, which emphasize that brand recognition and trust formation are key elements in prospective students' decisions to choose UIN RM Said Surakarta as a place to study. Therefore, optimizing the SMMA strategy is very important to increase the attractiveness and registration intentions of prospective students.

The Influence And Role Of SMMA In Higher Education Communication

Research on the impact of SMMA in higher education shows the important role of social media in increasing brand awareness and prospective students' intention to enroll (Kim and Ko 2012; Dayoh, Ari, and Agrippina 2022) . Social media offers more personal interactions between institutions and prospective students, forming strong brand recognition, especially with an entertainment and interaction approach (Setiawan and Briliana 2021; Wu, Yang, and Liu 2023; Moriansyah 2015) . The study also underlined that SMMA can strengthen the emotional connection of prospective students with the institution, increasing the attractiveness of the university brand (Hudson and Hudson 2006; Philip Kotler & Kevin Lane Keller 2016; Mangopa et al. 2023 ; Juhji 2020) .Effective communication through SMMA can improve the reputation and competitiveness of higher education institutions (Mukhamadullin et al. 2023 ; Manggopa et al. 2023 ; Santosa 2021) . Trust in the brand of higher education institutions, built through social media, contributes to increasing the intention of prospective students to choose the higher education institution (Dayoh et al. 2022; Brown and Mazzarol 2009) . Recommendations from students and alumni, as well as interesting content, can build a positive image and strengthen students' intention to enroll (Kim and Ko 2012; Cheung and Thadani 2012 ; Juhji et. all 2020; Anizir; Wahyuni 2017).

CDM Consumer Decision Model

The Consumer Decision Model (CDM) theory explains the important role of marketing information delivered through SMMA in influencing prospective students' decisions, especially in forming beliefs, attitudes, and intentions to enroll in college (Howard et al., 1988; Jayawinangun & Syamsun, 2014; Dayoh et al., 2022). Duffett's (2017) research confirms that marketing through social media not only improves brand image but also strengthens positive word-of-mouth communication, builds trust, and consumer loyalty (Anizir & Wahyuni, 2017; Abbas, 2019). Trust in educational institutions can be built through consistent branding, especially when supported by interactive content and alumni testimonials (Manggopa et al., 2023; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Rutter et al., 2016).The engaging interaction experience of prospective students through social media can strengthen positive perceptions and increase trust in institutions, especially for well-known brands, which are associated with quality and credibility (Ahmad, 2015; Bîlgîn, 2018; Funeka et al., 2023). Social media marketing has been shown to have a significant impact on brand image in the higher education sector and helps create a competitive advantage in the education market (Eger et al., 2019; Erdoğmuş & Çiçek, 2012; Setyanto et al., 2017). Given the high number of social media users, this platform is an effective strategic tool to strengthen the image and attractiveness of educational institutions (Panggabean, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that social media marketing activities (SMMA) at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta play an important role in attracting prospective students, especially if managed in accordance with the principles of educational management that focus on stakeholder needs. Using the Consumer Decision Model (CDM), this study found that marketing information through SMMA increases brand recognition, trust, and positive attitudes of prospective students. This strengthens the image of the institution, which in turn increases the attractiveness of UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta in the higher education market.Effective brand recognition through SMMA

increases trust and positive attitudes of prospective students, which play a significant role in forming enrollment intentions. The success of SMMA shows that synergistic and consistent marketing is an important strategy in institutional development. As much as 68% of the variation in enrollment intentions can be explained by trust and attitude variables, making SMMA a strategic investment to strengthen prospective students' emotional connections with the university. Therefore, management needs to focus on credibility and transparency of information to build trust and positive attitudes towards the institution.

LIMITATION

A limitation of this study lies in the data collection method which was conducted entirely through social media platforms, specifically Instagram. While this approach is effective in reaching prospective students who are active on social media, it limits the representation of populations that are less or not active on social media. This may affect the generalizability of the study results, as the results are more relevant to groups that already have an interest in university social media activities. In addition, the non-probability sampling with a voluntary approach used also limited the variation in respondent characteristics, so the results may not be representative of the wider prospective student population.

Another limitation is the use of a cross-sectional survey design that only captures data at a single point in time. This approach makes it difficult to capture the dynamics of changes in prospective students' intentions over time or across different social media campaign contexts. In the context of higher education marketing, long-term interactions and changes in brand perceptions often require a longitudinal approach to understand the development of prospective students' enrollment intentions in more depth. This suggests a need for further research that captures long-term variability and trends in responses to university social media strategies.

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