

FACTORS INFLUENCING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF UNIVERSITY-MANAGED SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of college social media marketing on first-year students. In higher education, social media marketing activities mainly focus on creating or building brand equity. This study uses TAM theory. The samples in this study were first-year students (freshmen) of a private university in Yogyakarta. There were 190 data collected and analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4. The results of this study reveal that motivation, ease of use have a positive and significant effect on the intention to follow social media. Intention to follow social media has a positive and significant effect on social media effectiveness and university social media acceptance. Meanwhile, usefulness was found to have a negative influence on the intention to follow university social media. In addition to expanding the study of social media marketing in higher education, this research also offers insights related to the application of social media as a marketing medium for higher education.

KEYWORDS TAM, Motivation, Social Media Effectiveness, Social Media Marketing, Higher Education



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INTRODUCTION

Today, various organizations from different sectors see social media as one of the effective marketing channels to shape the success of products, services and brands, as it can reach a wide and potential audience base (Abbasi et al., 2022). Social media marketing is a new dimension in digital marketing activities, which can be defined as the dissemination of dialogue facilitated by organizations, consumers, products, and services to promote advertising information, enable usage orientation and shared experiences, and benefit all parties involved (Hafez, 2022). Therefore, identifying social media platforms and then integrating them into the marketing strategy is the best way to increase global visibility, facilitate and

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accelerate the dissemination of information about products, services and brands and as an organizational communication force (Subriadi & Baturohmah, 2021).

In higher education, one of the focuses of its marketing activities is to create or build brand equity. Brand equity allows colleges to increase brand awareness, increase market share, and differentiate themselves from competitors. In addition, brand or reputation is the main indicator that influences prospective students in determining which university to enter (Shields & Peruta, 2019). Therefore, universities in various countries are focusing on creating strong brands (Perera et al., 2022). In the digital era with increasing competition to attract and recruit prospective students, universities are adopting social media marketing to promote their offerings and services, build brand strength and as an interactive communication medium primarily to prospective, current and other stakeholders (Nguyen et al., 2021). This is also in line with the research of Rutter et al. (2016) found that prospective students use social media to find information related to universities and the more interactive social media is, the stronger the influence on prospective students in making decisions.

Basically, universities use various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram and the latest TikTok (Li et al., 2023). Although universities have various social media platforms, it is important to understand that social media is a complex field that requires understanding in its use, as Shields & Peruta (2019) explained that successful marketing is when marketers can target audiences on the media platforms they frequently use or the platforms they follow most. Generally, everyone has or uses more than one social media account. However, the purpose or motivation for using social media can be different depending on the platform they use. For example, in the study of Bonilla et al. (2019) explained that prospective students tend to switch between social media platforms to interact with universities. In addition, their research also found that the use of social media can differ depending on the audience, such as older audiences will generally use Facebook, while younger audiences use Instagram or newer platforms.

Several studies have discussed the use of social media as a new learning tool or as one of the new marketing media in higher education using TAM theory, such as research by (Alamri et al., 2020; Fuller et al., 2022; Salloum et al., 2019; Shields & Peruta, 2019). However, as previously explained, social media has a complex nature where the use of social media continues to grow from year to year. This development can affect the behavior of students to interact with social media managed by universities due to changes in preference differences, trends in changes in user preferences, and other push factors (Bonilla et al., 2019). In addition, one of the important issues of social media marketing is how much the effectiveness of using social media for recruiting prospective new students or the extent to which college social media can influence new students in their decision to choose the college they want to enter. Therefore, this study was conducted to further examine the acceptance of first-year students towards social media managed by universities.

Literature Review

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a framework developed by Davis (1989) that was created with the aim of predicting and understanding users' acceptance intentions towards new technological innovations (Thanomsing & Sharma, 2022). TAM is a popularly used model, because it is interaction-based, incorporating a number of factors that represent a person's intention both directly and indirectly on his behavior to use technology. In addition, this model also aims to improve understanding of the factors that influence a person's intention to adopt new technology (Cimbaljević et al., 2023).

Based on the TAM model, there are two main factors that become a person's personal beliefs, namely the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use of using new technology (Salloum et al., 2019). Usefulness is explained as a factor that represents the extent to which a person perceives the benefits of using technology in improving their performance. A person's attitude towards using technology, whether positive or negative, is formed from the way users perceive the usefulness of technology in their lives (Abdulaziz et al., 2021). The ease of use is explained as a factor that represents the extent to which a person's level of ease or comfort in using the technology (Thanomsing & Sharma, 2022). These two factors are believed to be the main factors that determine users' attitudes and directly affect their behavioral intentions in using new technologies (Alami & El Idrissi, 2022).

Social Media Marketing in Higher Education

Social media marketing is defined as an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept where social media acts as the main focus to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders. Social media marketing aims to attract audiences, increase brand awareness and image, reduce marketing costs, and build interactions between users on the same social media platform (Felix et al., 2016). Today, the higher education market is dominated by the digital native generation. Digital natives are the generation born from 1995 to 2010, the college generation and are referred to as the 'living online' generation because almost all of their social activities take place online, for example, searching, gathering and consuming information online (Wong et al., 2022). Looking at the target market of universities, the use of social media as a marketing channel is very important because it helps universities to connect and interact with prospective students and become one of the important factors that can influence their choice of universities to enter (Li et al., 2023). Some of the advantages of social media marketing for universities, namely social media marketing provides more opportunities to promote the services and products offered, can increase brand awareness, help build relationships with audiences through intense interactions, have many communication formats with a wide level of audience reach, for example social media marketing can create messages in the form of text, photos, videos or combine them for more attractive content delivery (Aman & Hussin, 2018).

Motivation to Use Social Media

Basically, the various behaviors of social media users are broadly divided into two types, namely, active users and passive users. Active users are users who interact with other social media users, both private and public. Meanwhile, passive users are users who only observe other users. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the motivations of individuals using social media. One of the theories to examine the motivation for media use is the theory of uses and gratifications. According to this theory, people use social media because it can fulfill basic needs both socially, psychologically, and physiologically, or needs and desires related to interpersonal utility, information seeking, entertainment, and other motivations related to satisfaction (Gao et al., 2022). The usefulness and satisfaction theory approach specifically examines the impact of social media from the user's perspective and characterizes users as active and goal-oriented individuals who choose which social media to use (Azar et al., 2016). Based on the theory of utility and satisfaction, there are four factors that motivate the use of social media, namely entertainment, integration and social interaction, personal identity, and information (Buzeta et al., 2020).

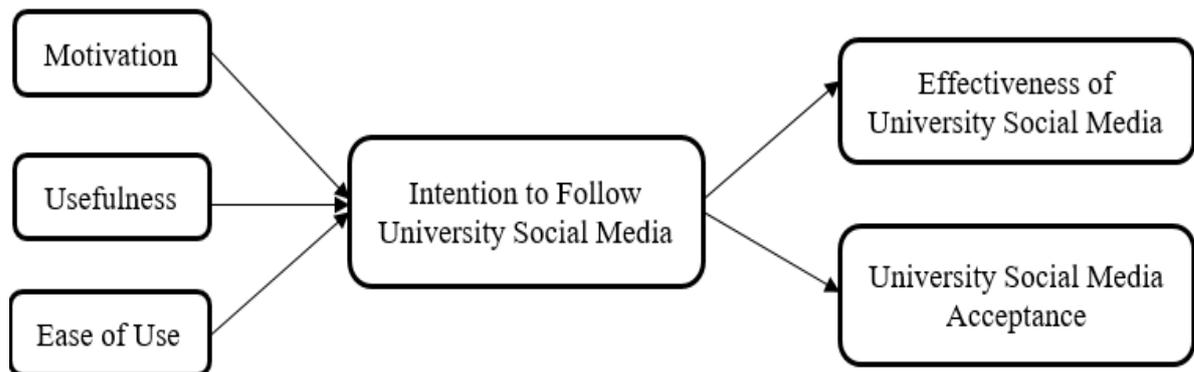
The Use of Social Media as a New Student Recruitment Tool

In higher education, social media helps strengthen promotions and build brand equity to attract new students. Therefore, it is clear that more and more universities are choosing to actively engage in using social media to support their marketing activities (Chen & Lien, 2017). For social media marketing to be an effective recruitment tool, universities must have professionals who can manage and control effective campaigns. For example, planning and creating the required social media content by considering engaging content ideas to target potential audiences. In creating content on social media platforms, universities should add value and ensure that the content is relevant, quality, creative and shareable to the audience. One of the other most important parts of college social media marketing is maintaining relationships and engagement with student alumni on social media. Because generally, student alumni can help colleges to spread information such as promoting content, sharing content, providing positive reactions and reviews, commenting and starting conversations with audiences (Aman & Hussin, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research using quantitative methods. Aims to produce evidence about the authenticity of facts in the field and be evaluated scientifically from a research framework. Research concerns the problems posed using figures and calculations carried out through surveys. The population used in this study were all first-year students of Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII). The sample of this research is students of Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) class of 2023 (new students) obtained using the quota sampling technique, namely sample selection based on target groups (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), by filling out a questionnaire via Google Form. The indicators in this study consisted of 23 questions with the resulting sample of 190 respondents. This research uses a Likert scale to fill in the answers to the questionnaire that will be used. For each question, the answer will be given based

on six points. The following are the answers given to respondents using a Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Somewhat Agree, (5) Agree, (6) Strongly Agree. This study uses statistical analysis which is a method for testing hypotheses using statistical methods. Hypothesis testing was carried out using the Partial Least Square-based Structural Equation Modeling



(PLS-SEM) method with the SmartPLS 4. Latent variables in this study are motivation (MT), usefulness (US), ease of use (EU), intention to follow university social media (IFSM), effectiveness of university social media (EUSM), and university social media Acceptance (USMA). The framework of this research can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Research Framework

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Based on Table 1, the total respondents in this study were 190 respondents who were students of class 2023.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Category	Frequencies	%
Gender		
Male	92	48,4%
Female	98	51,6%
Total	190	100%
Age group		
<20 years	133	70%
20-25 years	57	30%
26-30 years	0	0%
> 30 years	0	0%
Total	190	100%
Faculty		
Faculty of Business and Economics	102	53,7%
Faculty of Law	11	5,8%
Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences	18	9,5%
Faculty of Industrial Technology	26	13,7%

Faculty of Civil Engineering and Planning	5	2,6%
Faculty of Math and Natural Sciences	23	12,1%
Faculty of Medicine	2	1,1%
Faculty of Islamic Studies	3	1,6%
Total	190	100%
Frequency of social media use in a day		
<1 hours	3	1,6%
1-2 hours	24	12,6%
3-4 hours	69	36,3%
>5 hours	94	49,5%
Total	190	100%
UII's most visited social media platform		
Instagram	179	94,2%
Facebook	0	0%
X	0	0%
Youtube	3	1,6%
Tiktok	8	4,2%
Total	190	100%

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

PLS-SEM Result

SEM-PLS analysis was tested with SmartPLS 4 software, with outer model and inner model measurements. The purpose of the overall measurement model built by the outer model and inner model is to analyze the simultaneous validity and model fit of the five latent variables, namely motivation (MT), usefulness (US), ease of use (EU), intention to follow university social media (IFSM), effectiveness of university social media (EUSM), and university social media Acceptance (USMA).

Outer Model

In the outer model, validity and reliability tests are carried out. To test the validity of latent constructs, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and average variance extracted (AVE) are used. Meanwhile, reliability testing can be done using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is done to measure the extent to which indicators converge or agree in measuring the construct. To measure convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value can be used. The criteria for the AVE value which is considered good are above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. AVE Results

Variable	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Motivation	0.702
Usefulness	0.697
Ease of Use	0.687
Intention to Follow University Social Media	0.677

Effectiveness of University Social Media	0.668
University Social Media Acceptance	0.764

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

The calculated AVE of all variables ranges from 0.668 to 0.764. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables have met the requirements and support the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity tests whether indicators of one construct are more related to its own construct than to other constructs in the model. Based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion that the square root of the AVE of a construct should be greater than the correlation between that construct and other constructs in the model.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Result

Variable	MT	US	EU	IFSM	EUSM	USMA
MT	0.838					
US	0.673	0.835				
EU	0.667	0.797	0.829			
IFSM	0.710	0.670	0.734	0.823		
EUSM	0.631	0.655	0.654	0.714	0.818	
USMA	0.634	0.755	0.801	0.749	0.769	0.874

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

Reliability Test

The parameters of the reliability test in this study refer to the Cronbach's alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) values which are greater than 0.60 so that the variables can be declared reliable (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4. Reliability Test

Variable	CA	CR
Motivation	0.788	0.876
Usefulness	0.725	0.879
Ease of Use	0.768	0.896
Intention to Follow University Social Media	0.872	0.912
Effectiveness of University Social Media	0.867	0.919
University Social Media Acceptance	0.834	0.923

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

Based on Table 4 above, it shows that all variables have CA and CR values above 0.60, which means that all variables in this study are reliable.

Inner Model

The inner model is a model used to assess the causal relationship between latent variables. Testing this model is done with the R Square and Q Square tests.

Table 5. R Square and Q Square Result

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q ²
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IFSM	0.524	0.516	0.493
EUSM	0.321	0.318	0.337
USMA	0.492	0.489	0.467

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

The results of the R-Square coefficient of determination test are said to be able to explain well if the two endogenous variables exceed 0.330 or are in the moderate category ($0.33 < R^2 < 0.67$). In Table 5, the results of the R-Square coefficient of determination test show that the effectiveness of university social media (0.321) has not been able to be explained well by the independent variables in this study, namely the variables of motivation, usefulness, ease of use, and intention to follow university social media which is only 32.1%. This means that there are 67.9% other factors outside this study that can explain the effectiveness of social media in recruiting new students. However, for the other two variables, namely the intention to follow university social media 52.4% and the variable university social media acceptance 49.2% can be explained well by the independent variables.

The results of Q Square testing, it can be seen that the three endogenous variables including intention to follow university social media, effectiveness of university social media, and university social media acceptance have a Q2 value of more than zero ($Q^2 \geq 0$) (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is done by considering the t-value and p-value. The hypothesis in this study is accepted if the t-value is more than 1.96 ($t\text{-value} > 1.96$) and can be declared significant if the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 6.
Hypothesis Result

Variable	Original Sample	T Statistic	P Value	Conclusion
MT -> IFSM	0.385	4.332	0.000	Supported
US -> IFSM	-0.143	1.851	0.064	Rejected
EU -> IFSM	0.305	3.832	0.000	Supported
IFSM -> EUSM	0.567	7.763	0.000	Supported
IFSM -> USMA	0.702	14.849	0.000	Supported

Source: Primary data processed (2024)

Based on the results of the hypothesis, the first hypothesis, namely motivation on the intention to follow college social media (H1), has an original sample (O) of 0.385, a t-value of 4.332, and p-value of 0.000 (Table 6). Based on this value, prove that motivation has a positive and significant effect on the intention to follow university social media. This indicates that the better the management of college social media to create and provide content that is informative but also

creative, interesting and relevant to student needs, it will increase student interest in interacting with college social media. The results of this study are in line with the results of research (Buzeta et al., 2020) which found that users are willing to engage with brands if they find content that feels most suitable for them on a particular social media platform to fulfill their needs. This means that users are interested in interacting with social media on a particular brand if the content presented matches their expectations. Social media is not just a platform used to get "likes" or promotional media, but also as a medium that provides informative content, where the information can be shared in order to increase student engagement with the college to build a positive brand image (Qin, 2020).

In hypothesis H2 has an original sample (O) value of -0.143, a t-statistic value of 1.851, and p-value of 0.064 (Table 6). Based on this value, it is found that usefulness (US) has a negative and insignificant effect on the intention to follow college social media, so it can be concluded that H2 is not supported. This means that the use of college social media has not been able to make students feel the benefits of improving their performance, so they are not interested in following the college's social media. The results of this study contradict several previous studies (Alamri et al., 2020; Alsaleh et al., 2019) which found that students tend to want to use social media because of the usefulness or benefits they feel. The negative effect in the direct relationship between usefulness and intention to follow university social media occurs because some of the information uploaded on college social media does not always contain the information they need. In addition, students also generally choose to go to campus directly or ask the source to ask for information that is important to them, especially academic information. This is in line with (Saadeh et al., 2020) research that students do not rely on posts on social media as a source of academic information.

Hypothesis H3 has an original sample (O) value of 0.305, a t-statistic value of 3.832, and a p-value of 0.000 (Table 6). Based on this value, it is found that ease of use (EU) has a positive and significant effect on the intention to follow university social media, so it can be concluded that H3 is supported. These results can explain that students prefer social media that is easy to understand or understand. For example, the message to be conveyed in each uploaded content in the form of images or videos can be easily understood. The results of this study are in line with the results of research (Cimbaljević et al., 2023; Mufadhal et al., 2018) which found that ease of use increases students' interest in adopting social media. Although the majority of respondents in this study are those under the age of 20 (Gen-Z) where this generation is considered a digitally literate generation, for academic-related information, they prefer the presentation of content that is easy to understand (Al-rahmi et al., 2022).

The next hypothesis, H4 has an original sample (O) value of 0.567, a t-statistic value of 7.763, and p-value of 0.000 (Table 6). Based on this value, it is found that intention to follow university social media (IFSM) has a positive and significant effect on the effectiveness of university social media, so it can be concluded that H4 is supported. This result shows that the interest of prospective students (in this study represented by respondents who are new students) to visit college social media can influence their decision to choose the college they want to

enter. This research is in line with research (Fuller et al., 2022; Mufadhal et al., 2018; Shields & Peruta, 2019) which explains that through social media, prospective students can strengthen their decisions in choosing a college. This happens because social media has the nature of an interactive channel, can be accessed anywhere and anytime, especially for prospective students who are outside the area, allowing them to search and view information related to universities before deciding to enroll (Hass et al., 2019).

The last hypothesis, H5 has an original sample (O) value of 0.702, a t-statistic value of 14.849, and p-value of 0.000 (Table 6). Based on this value, it is found that intention to follow university social media (IFSM) has a positive and significant effect on the university social media acceptance, so it can be concluded that H5 is supported. The results of this study support previous research (Desta et al., 2022; Nawi et al., 2017; Rekhter & Hossler, 2020) found that intention to use social media has a positive and significant effect on social media actual use. This indicates that when students have a strong tendency to follow university social media, their intention to follow social media is greater. By students following the university social media, posts about the college will appear on the student's homepage, so they will get information faster than students who do not follow the university social media. The right social media management will increase student interest in actually following college social media. As explained by Mishra et al. (2022) that colleges should evaluate their social media and utilize social media well to increase actual usage.

CONCLUSION

In this study, of the five hypotheses proposed, only H2 was found to be negative and insignificant. while the other four hypotheses, H1, H3, H4, and H5 proved to have a positive and significant effect. Overall, the findings of this study found that the relationship between the variables of intention to follow college social media and college social media usage had the highest t statistic (t-value = 14.849) in table 6. This indicates that the higher the student's interest in university social media, the higher the desire to actually follow the social media. In this regard, the university's social media management team needs to ensure that social media content is appropriate or relevant to student expectations.

The results of this study also emphasize that motivation and ease of use can trigger students' intention to follow campus social media. In addition, the results also found that the intention to follow college social media has implications for the effectiveness of social media, and can increase students who follow college social media.

The findings of this study has potentially important implications for university social media management teams to maximize content management in order to strengthen university branding. In the future, researchers can use diverse respondents from various university backgrounds, so that differences in university social media management will be known and the extent to which these differences affect student acceptance of their university's social media. In addition, can add new variables that are relevant to the development of social media, so that changes

in student behavior can be analyzed in line with changes or developments in social media.

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