

Beyond The Click: How Digital Marketing, E-WOM, and Brand Image Shape Students' Perception of Digital Business Program

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ABSTRACT

Competition in attracting prospective students to enter college, encourages private universities to provide a variety of information on the advantages and study programs offered through the delivery of digital information. The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of Digital Marketing, E-WOM, Brand Image and their interactive effects on student interest in choosing the Digital Business study program at Darmajaya Institute of Informatics and Business (IIB). Questionnaire data collection with a sample of 119 Bandar Lampung high school students was processed using SEM-PLS with Smart-PLS software. The results showed that Digital Marketing and E-WOM had an effect on the Interest in Choosing the IIB Darmajaya Digital Business Study Program, while Brand Image had no effect on the Interest in Choosing the IIB Darmajaya Digital Business Study Program. Digital Marketing allows direct interaction between universities and prospective students through platforms. E-WOM through social media as a place for students to find information. While Brand Image, is improved through the attractiveness of the study program.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this era of increasingly fierce competition for private campuses, prospective students are faced with a variety of interesting study program options. To attract these students, private campuses compete to offer their advantages such as technological support, industry, state-of-the-art facilities, and innovative curriculum. Competition between campuses encourages private universities to continue to improve the quality of education and provide a better learning experience that is wider by providing diverse study programs. This provides opportunities and challenges for prospective students to choose

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the right course of study with their career goals and aspirations, as well as create a diverse and dynamic academic environment.

Digital Marketing allowing universities to interact with students and prospective students. This makes it an effective tool for selling college goods and services to the public, in addition to Digital Marketing can make universities more known by the general public. According to Kotler (2019) in Maria et al. (2023) marketing is a combination of two interactions of marketing approaches both offline and online. Due to the range audience wider and more affordable costs, Digital Marketing is the main strategy for universities.

Digital campaigns allow colleges to reduce the cost of advertising, promotional content creation, and distribution compared to traditional marketing strategies. The college can also reach students around the world through Online Platform. Colleges can attract attention from different walks of life without incurring significant costs due to their ability to quickly disseminate information through digital advertising campaigns, websites, and social media. Strategy Digital Marketing This allows colleges to achieve their marketing goals more sparingly and effectively.

In addition to Digital Marketing, E-WOM or commonly known as online conversation, is increasingly becoming an important force in the world of education. According to Ismagilova et al. (2020) in Dewi and Sulistyani (2021), E-WOM is the level of a person's perception of the quality of a product or service, which contributes to the process of determining consumer decisions in the future. Today, opinions and reviews from students, alumni, and other education stakeholders can greatly affect the reputation and image of an institution.

E-WOM is not only a highly trusted source of information for prospective students, but it also provides direct feedback that helps educational institutions understand their strengths and weaknesses. Educational institutions can use E-WOM to build good relationships with the wider community, foster trust, and create marketing strategies that are in line with the evolving needs and expectations of the world of education.

Not only Digital Marketing and E-WOM which can influence students' interest in choosing their further education, according to research Wuryanto dkk. (2023), brand image has a significant and positive influence on the interest in choosing a university. Brand Image in a college is Image or the image or perception possessed by the institution, which includes the unique image, principles, and identity recognized by the community. Besides Digital Marketing and E-WOM Formation brand image It is very important to attract new students to choose a college. Reputation Brand which strongly gives confidence to prospective students about the quality of education and campus experience. A college that has a clear and positive identity will stand out in the minds of prospective students and encourage them to choose it as the desired place of education. Therefore, managing brand image It is very important to pique interest in students.

Apart from the benefits that can be provided, Digital Marketing, E-WOM, and brand image formation can present several challenges. In the Digital Marketing industry, fierce competition and changes in the algorithms of social media platforms can make it difficult to reach the target audience. While E-WOM can provide advantages for enhancing a strong campus reputation, it is also susceptible to misinformation or negative criticism that can be detrimental to reputation.

Building a brand image can create a consistent and positive campus image, on the other hand, it takes time and effort, as well as risks such as changes in market trends and images that are difficult to fully control. Addressing these three elements simultaneously requires a mature approach and the ability to adapt quickly to changes that occur in the digital environment as well as people's perspectives.

Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the influence of Digital Marketing on the interest of prospective students in choosing the Digital Business Study Program, investigate the impact of E-WOM on the interest in choosing the Digital Business Study Program, and want to find out the influence of Brand Image in a university on the interest in choosing the Digital Business Study Program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kotler (2019) in (Maria et al., 2023) marketing, it is a combination of two interactions of marketing approaches both offline and online. According to Asyikin & Heryenzus, (2023) in Tarigan et al. (2023) Digital Marketing is a way to interact with potential buyers without talking to them directly. Society's concept of online purchases has changed. Corporate digital marketing can save time and effort by explaining the company's products and brand. Often Digital Marketing offers more benefits for sellers and consumers because consumers have easy access to different types of products, so companies can reduce product marketing costs.

According to Ismagilova et al. in (Dewi and Sulistyani, 2021), E-WOM is the level of a person's perception of the quality of a product or service, which contributes to the future consumer decision-making process. This includes comments, testimonials, and consumer opinions submitted through digital communication platforms such as social media, review sites, forums Online and platform Other. Fauziah dkk (2023).

According to David A. Aaker, the brand or Brand is a set of assets or responsibilities associated with names and symbols that increase or decrease the value provided by a product or service. These names, such as logos, stamps, or packaging, can be used to identify goods or services sold by a particular seller or group of sellers. According to Schiffan and Kanuk (2014), brand image is a perception that is long-lasting, shaped by experience, and relatively consistent. According to Aecker in (Feb. 2019) states that brand image is a set of associations that have meaning for consumers. In other words, the perception or image that consumers have of a brand is an important element to encourage consumers to buy or use a product or service in a brand.

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), interest can be defined as a very large tendency towards something, passion, or desire. According to Kamisa in Ndruru et al. (2023), interest means will, desire, or liking. Thus, interest does not only mean desire; It also means will and favor. Likes are attractions; In other words, liking is attraction.

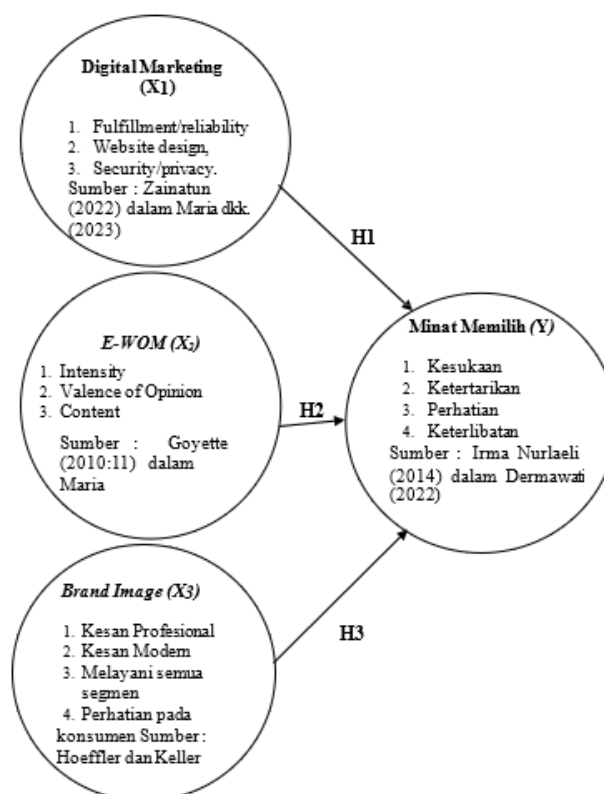
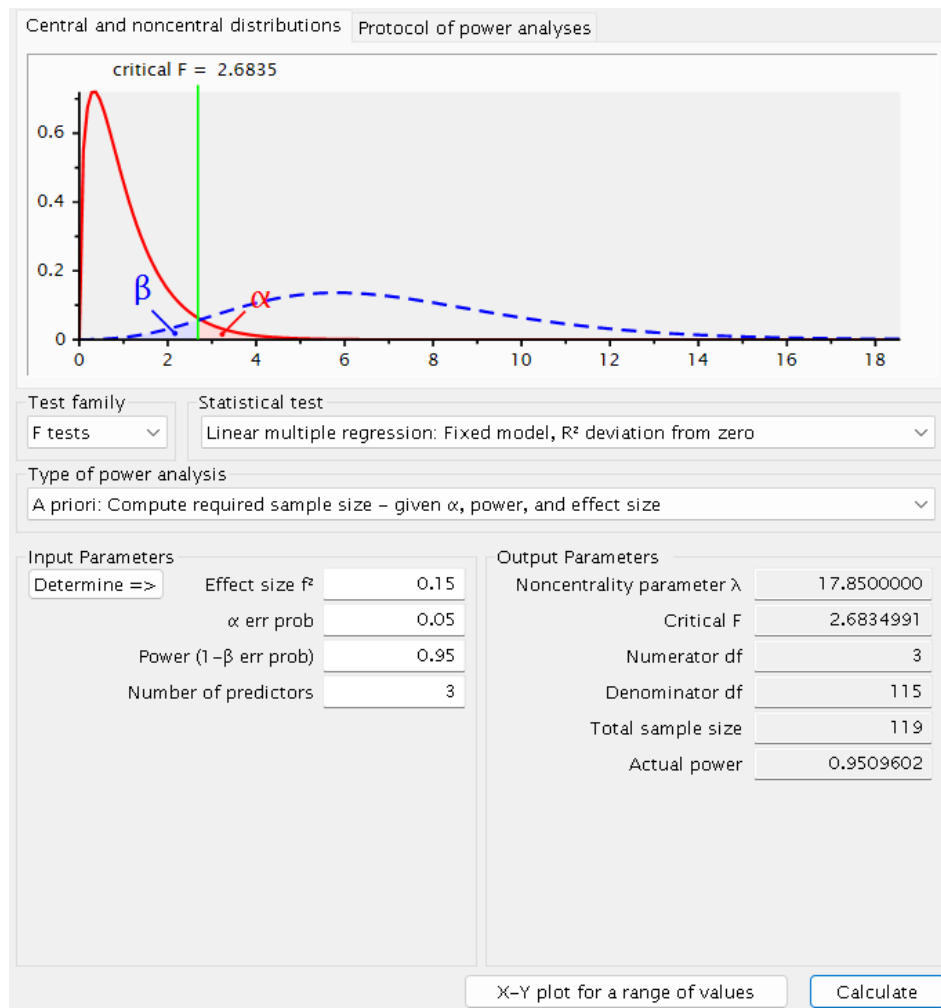


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework Drawing

3. METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research method with a causal associative approach and uses SEM-PLS data analysis techniques. The population is all students of SMA Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung with a total of 889 students with a sampling method, namely *Non Probability Sampling* and using *Gpower software* according to Faul in Mega, Rukmigarsari and Walida, (2021) so that the sample was obtained as many as 119 respondents. The data used is primary data collected through questionnaire research instruments on a scale of 1-5 and analyzed quantitatively/statistically. The instrument in this study is to provide a list of written statements through *e-form* to 119 students of SMA Negeri 15 Bandar Lampung.



Source: Data Processed In 2023

Figure 2. Image of Sample Calculation Results with G*Power

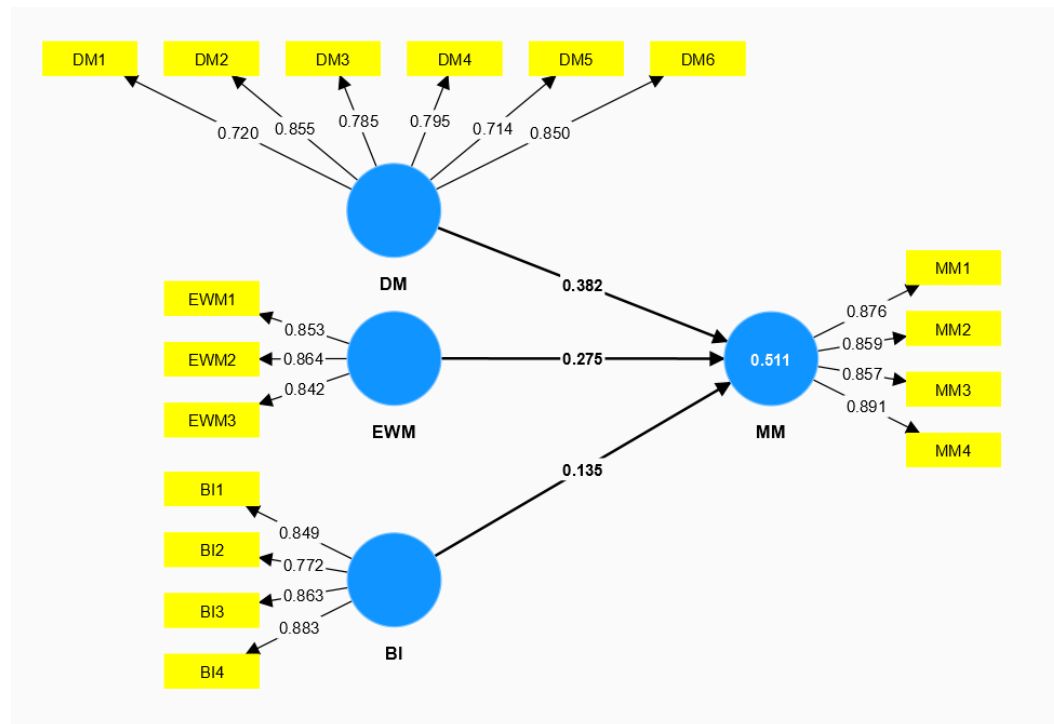
G*power is used for estimation alternatively, the sample size (N) can be considered by taking into account statistical power ($1 - \beta$), significance level (α), and effect size that has not been detected in the population. In this study, a significant level of α 0.05, statistical power 0.95 (95%), and effect size 0.15 were used. G*power software can help researchers determine the minimum sample on statistical tests in this study. The results of the analysis

using G*power show that the number of respondents needed is as many as 119 people with the G*power process image attached in this study. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires directly through google forms to 119 respondents.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pada penelitian ini menggunakan alat analisis Smart PLS 4.0. Diagram jalur yang sebelumnya telah menggambarkan model teoritis dianalisis berdasarkan data-data yang diperoleh. Model strukturalnya yaitu :

4.1. Model Structural



Source: Data Processed In 2023

Figure 3. Structural Model Drawings

The figure explains that the Digital Marketing variable is measured with 6 indicators, E-WOM is measured by 3 indicators, Brand Image is measured by 4 indicators, and interest in choosing is measured by 4 indicators. The figure shows a structural model of the relationship between the latent variable and its indicators in the SEM analysis. The latent variables consist of DM (Digital Marketing), EWM (E-WOM), BI (Brand Image), and MM (Interest in Selecting) with each indicator having a loading factor value above 0.7, indicating good validity. DM has the largest influence on MM (0.382), followed by EWM (0.275) and BI (0.135). MM, as the main variable, is significantly influenced by the three latent variables, with the MM1 to MM4 indicators having the highest loading factor between 0.857 to 0.891.

4.2. Bootstrapping Results

The hypothesis testing can be observed through the calculation of the path coefficient on the internal model test using the bootstrapping technique with Smart PLS 4.0. In hypothesis testing using t-statistical values, the relevant statistical t-value is 1.96 for alpha 0.05. Therefore, the criteria for acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis is that Ha is

accepted and H_0 is rejected when the t-statistic value > 1.96 . While in a hypothesis using a probability value, an alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted if the p value < 0.05 .

Table 1. Bootstrapping Test Results

	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>	<i>Info</i>
Digital Marketing -> Intesert in Choosing	0.382	0.377	0.126	3.040	0.001	Accepted
E-WOM -> Intesert in Choosing	0.275	0.274	0.134	2.044	0.021	Accepted
Brand Image -> Intesert in Choosing	0.135	0.147	0.099	1.365	0.086	Rejected

The results that can be concluded based on the results of the bootstrapping test in table 4.26 are as follows:

- H1 accepted, Digital Marketing has a significant and positive impact on election interest. This is evident from the positive original sample of 0.382, as well as the t-statistical value of 3.040, which exceeded 1.96. In addition, the p-value is 0.001, which is less than 0.05.
- H2 was accepted, E-WOM had a significant and positive impact on election interest. This is evident from the positive original sample value of 0.275, as well as a t-statistical value of 2.044, which exceeds 1.96, and a p-value of 0.021, which is less than 0.05.
- H3 was rejected, Brand Image had no impact on election interest. This can be seen from the original sample of 0.135 which is positive.

The Digital Marketing variable has a significant and positive effect on the interest in choosing a digital business study program. This is supported by research conducted by Ndruru et al. (2023) which states that Digital Marketing has a significant and positive effect on voting interest. This is in line with the theory of Purwana et al, (2017) in (Maria et al., 2023) which says that if businesses or business owners can implement digital marketing that suits their business goals, they will naturally get greater flexibility, better customer relationships, and greater profits.

In the Accessibility indicator of "Information and services in the content of the IIB Darmajaya digital business study program are easily accessible (Instagram & Tiktok)" obtained the highest total score, this explains that the content in the IIB Darmajaya digital business study program already has good accessibility so that it is easy to reach by the audience. Accessibility refers to the ease with which users can access information and services provided online in the context of advertising. It is generally related to the way users can access social media sites and other online platforms. This ease of access is important because with easy access, the information conveyed by IIB Darmajaya's digital business can obtain a wider reach and the information conveyed can be clearer.

The E-WOM variable has a significant and positive effect on the interest in choosing a digital business study program. This is supported by Sigit's research (2023) which states that E-WOM affects buying interest, both purchase decisions and voting interests have one concept in common, namely the decision-making process.

This is in accordance with the theory of Delpiero and Istriani (2023) who said that E-WOM through social media is a place for respondents to find information related to the advantages of a product in the form of reviews and other user experiences. The Content

indicator on "The content of the digital business study program contains information related to the digital business study program" obtained the highest total score, this is because the digital business study program uploads content relevant to the digital business study program. The Valence of Opinion indicator on "Comments on posts of the Darmajaya digital business study program are positive and negative" obtained a median total score, this explains that the comments of the digital business study program have negative and positive comments but not all content has comments.

Meanwhile, the Intensity indicator of "Many comments entered on social media of the Darmajaya digital business study program" obtained the lowest total score, this is shown by the highest neutral data from the respondents' answers, which is 40.34%, this is because the content of the Digital Business study program has not been widely spread and is only known by a few circles.

The Brand Image variable has no effect on the interest in choosing a digital business study program. This is supported by research by Katamso, et al. (2024) which stated that E-WOM has no effect on purchase decisions. In accordance with the theory of Katamso, et al. (2024) who said that the brand image of a product does not always make someone feel interested in the product, because a person can be disinterested in a product because they do not feel suitable.

The Modern Impression Indicator of "Digital business study programs seem modern or have technology that always follows the times" received the highest total score, this is because the digital business study program integrates the latest technology in its curriculum. The Serving All Segments indicator on "Digital business study programs serving all existing segments/circles" obtained a median total score. This explains that the digital business study program is good in terms of service, but still with a limited number of people.

Meanwhile, the Professional Impression indicator of "The field of expertise in the digital business study program seems professional" received the lowest total score, it is because the Darmajaya digital business study program is still new so it does not have a professional impression.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and hypothesis testing, this study has examined the influence of Digital Marketing (X1), E-WOM (X2), and Brand Image (X3) on Interest in Choosing a Digital Business Study Program. It can be concluded as follows: 1) Digital Marketing has a significant and positive effect on the Interest in Choosing the Digital Business Study Program of the Darmajaya Institute of Informatics and Business. 2) E-WOM has a significant and positive effect on the Interest in Choosing a Digital Business Study Program at the Darmajaya Institute of Informatics and Business. 3) Brand Image has no effect on the Interest in Choosing the Digital Business Study Program of the Darmajaya Institute of Informatics and Business.

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