



Unlocking the Potential of Instagram Marketing: Boosting New Student Acceptance in Higher Education

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Abstract. The study aimed to investigate the impact of marketing and Instagram communication on the acceptance of prospective new students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo for the academic year 2021. The research method used was quantitative with a sample of 338 new students who were randomly selected using proportional sampling. Data was collected through questionnaires that were distributed to the new students via WhatsApp. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS 25. The study found that marketing and Instagram communication significantly influenced the acceptance of new students at Umsida. The research suggests that social media platforms such as Instagram can be an effective tool for educational institutions to promote their services and attract prospective students. It highlights the importance of utilizing various media to disseminate marketing communication and to cater to the needs of prospective students.

Keywords: Education · Marketing Communication · Instagram · Prospective Students · Acceptance

1 Introduction

Marketing communication is the process of conveying information persuasively to strengthen marketing strategies regarding goods and services provided by the corporate to consumers [1, 2]. Marketing communications have an important meaning and become strategic for private tertiary institutions including Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University in providing information on higher education services, brand awareness, and accreditation status, as well as educating prospective students. Without marketing communications, the public and especially prospective students are not aware of the existence and condition of the tertiary institution. Several studies show that marketing communications influence consumer decisions [3–6]; college admission decisions [7]; the number of new students [8–10].

The media used for higher education marketing communications include online promotional media, social networking media, print advertising promotional media, broadcast advertising, public service advertisements on radio, and offline promotions to regions

through a network of cooperation with schools or tutoring institutions. Which includes online promotional media are Google Ads and LinkedIn ads. While social media promotion media include Instagram, Twitter, Facebook Ads, Pinterest, Tiktok, and Youtube. One of the social networking media used by the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo (read: Umsida) is Instagram. The results of a survey conducted by the Umsida PMB Team stated that prospective new students received a lot of information about Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University from the Umsida website (25.9%) and Instagram (46.63%). [11] said that the Instagram used by Sidoarjo Muhammadiyah University was unattractive because it had no response at all from prospective students who wanted to know more about study programs and other information at Sidoarjo Muhammadiyah University. This study is interesting because Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University rejects the use of social media such as TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook Ads as a medium for promoting new student admissions. Meanwhile, the targeted new student admissions are always high each year.

From the problems above, the research objective is to analyze and explain the influence of marketing communications and the use of Instagram on the reception of prospective new students at Umsida. The research hypothesis states that marketing communications and Instagram simultaneously and partially have a positive affect on the reception of prospective Umsida new students.

2 Methodology

This quantitative research uses an explanatory approach, namely measuring the relationship between marketing communications and the use of Instagram as a promotional medium with the reception of new students at Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University in 2021. The total respondents to this study were 338 new students as samples. The sampling technique was carried out by proportional random sampling. The selection of the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo as the research location was related to the decline in the number of students from 2019 to 2022. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic era in 2020–2021. The decrease in the number of students has had an impact on the performance of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University.

Research data collection was carried out through online questionnaire distribution using Google Forms and WhatsApp media. The questionnaire was prepared using marketing communication variables, the use of Instagram, and receptions. The answers to the research questionnaire were prepared using five alternative answers that were given a weighting of 1–5.

Marketing communications include advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, personal selling, and direct marketing [2], [1]. Advertising has banner indicators, billboards, and billboards, as well as brochures. Service sales promotion has indicators such as gifts, vouchers, discounts, and scholarships through KIP or associations. Public relations and publicity have indicators, namely press releases, sponsorships, special events, and web pages. Sales of personal services have indicators such as field selling, retail selling, and executive selling. For direct marketing, the indicators are product portfolio, call center, new digital technology (podcasts), and Instagram.

Instagram variables include content, communication, collaboration, and connection sub-variables. Content indicators are grammar, message content, and information

form. The communication indicator is the understanding of information and opinions of prospective students regarding the study program and its facilities. For collaboration, the indicator is the views of prospective students regarding quality and good study programs. The connection indicator is a good relationship between prospective students and Umsida management.

Reception variables include perceptions, preferences, attitudes (attitude), and behavior [12]. Perception has indicators of the experience of prospective students with study programs at Umsida, the need for students to pursue education by the wishes and skills expected, and the environmental conditions that exist at Umsida. Preferences consist of the intensity of seeking and exploring information about Umsida through Instagram and making Umsida the main choice in selecting studies in Sidoarjo Regency. Attitude is measured through positive and negative indicators, good and bad, likes and dislikes, and whether there are benefits to studying at Umsida. Behavior can be observed through indicators of the decisions of prospective students who enroll in the intended study program at the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo.

The collected primary data is processed and tested for validity and reliability, normality, and freedom from classical assumptions such as autocorrelation, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. The results of the validity test on the variables of marketing communication, use of Instagram, and recipes show valid results with a value above the critical R (0.30). The instrument reliability test showed varying Cronbach's alpha values. Marketing communication has a value of 0.848 (reliable), Instagram usage is 0.580 (quite reliable), and new student reception is 0.655 (reliable). Testing the normality of the data with one Kolmogorof sample of the three variables shows normal data. Detection of the presence or absence of multicollinearity in the regression model shows results that are free from multicollinearity with a variance inflation factor (VIF) value of less than 10. Marketing communications and the use of Instagram have a VIF of 1.572. The classical assumption test for the presence or absence of autocorrelation shows a Durbin-Watson value of 2.048. The Durbin-Watson value is at $1.65 < 2.048 < 2.35$ which means there is no autocorrelation. Meanwhile, the results of the heteroscedasticity test show that the points spread randomly above and below the Y-axis numbers on the Scatterplot graph.

The research hypothesis says that marketing communications and the use of Instagram have a positive, simultaneous, and partial effect on the reception of new students at the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo. Testing the hypothesis using Multiple Linear Regression analysis with the help of the SPSS 25 program. The conditions for accepting the hypothesis are as follows:

H₀ is accepted if the probability of the calculated result is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05 ($P \text{ count} \geq 0.05$).

H_a is accepted if the probability of the calculated result is smaller than the alpha significance of 0.05 ($P \text{ count} \leq 0.05$).

Table 1. Marketing Communication (X1)

No	Sub-variable	%
1	Advertising	86.2
2	New student enrollment promotion	84.4
3	Public relations and publicity	69.9
4	Sales of new student registration services face to face	72
5	Direct marketing	72.6
	Average	77
Source: Primary Data 2022		

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Marketing Communications, Instagram, and Receptions

Marketing communication in this study is promotion carried out by the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo (UMSIDA) through sales promotions, public relations and publicity, advertising, private sales of services, and direct marketing to consumers to increase the number of new student admissions. Table 1 shows the marketing communications carried out by Muhammadiyah University according to new students, including the good category (77%). The quality of marketing communications that has a very good category is advertising in the form of banners, billboards (billboards), and brochures. The second very good category is a promotion in the form of gifts/grants to Muhammadiyah schools, vouchers, discounts, and scholarships through the Smart Indonesia Card. Each has a quality of 86.2% and 84%.

Two marketing communication activities have been carried out by Umsida, namely offline and online. Offline activities such as advertising, promotion, public relations and publicity, sales of educational services, and direct marketing. Meanwhile, online Umsida uses social media Instagram. Through Instagram social media all educational services can be introduced. The form can be in the form of text, images, audio, and video that are of interest and easily accessible to students both at home and from other places. Instagram in this study is to provide information through content, communication collaboration, and connection to the followers of the account. According to new students, the best quality of Umsida’s Instagram is content (85.1%). Meanwhile, the quality of Instagram, which has the lowest score, is found in collaboration (69.4) and connection (69.4).

Reception in this study is student acceptance of educational services and information on various facilities at Sidoarjo Muhammadiyah University (UMSIDA). (Table 2) This reception includes the perceptions, preferences, attitudes, and behavior of the community when they first want to register as new students. Perception is the consumer’s view of information, services, and environmental conditions at Umsida. Preference is the goal of prospective students in choosing study programs that are in great demand. Attitude is the condition of prospective students in assessing existing facilities at Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University (UMSIDA) either positively or negatively. Behavior is the

Table 2. Instagram sub-variables (X2)

No	Sub-variable	%
1	<i>Content</i>	85.1
2	<i>Communications</i>	70.2
3	<i>Collaboration</i>	69.4
4	<i>Connection</i>	69.4
	Average	73.5
Source: Primary Data 2022		

Table 3. Reception (Y)

No	Indicator	%
1	Perception	87.5
2	Preference	84.3
3	Attitude	84.6
4	Behavior	80.9
	Average	84.3
Source: Primary Data 2022		

decision-making of prospective students towards the selection of the study program taken. The 2021 new student reception has a very good category (84.3%) for academic services, scholarship programs, and study program accreditation promoted by the Umsida marketing communication team both offline and online on Instagram (Table 3).

3.2 Factors Influencing the Reception of Prospective Umsida New Students for the 2021 Academic Year

The hypothesis of this study states that marketing and Instagram communication have a joint and partial effect on the reception of prospective new students at Umsida for the 2021 Academic Year. The results of the F test as in Table 4 show that marketing communication (X1) and Instagram (X2) together have a significant effect on new student admissions (Y) with a probability F count of 0.000 which is smaller than the alpha significance (0.05). The coefficient (R2) for the effect of the two variables, namely marketing communication and the use of Instagram on reception, is equal to 0.354. This means that marketing and Instagram communications affect the reception of new students at Umsida by 35.4 percent and the remaining 64.6 percent are influenced by other factors.

Table 4. Factors influencing the reception

No	Variables	Regression Coefficient	t-count	Sig
1	Constanta	7.543	7.012	.000
2	Marketing Communication (X1)	.152	5.395	.000
3	Instagram (X2)	.447	6.841	.000

Information:
 N (Sample): 338
 R-Square: 0.358
 F-count: 94.670
 Sig α : 0.05
 Durbin-Watson :2.048 (no autocorrelation)
 Data Distribution: Normal
 Regression Model: $Y = 7.543 + 0.152 X1 + 0.447 X2$
 R: 0.598
 Adjusted R-Square: 0.354
 df: 2 Sig f: 0.000

Predictors: constants, marketing communications, Instagram usage.
 Dependent Variable: Reception.

Partially, the factors that have a positive influence on the reception of new Umsida students are marketing and Instagram communications. The effect of marketing communication on student admissions to Umsida student reception is t-count 5.395 with a significance of $0.000 \leq \alpha$ significance (0.05). The hypothesis states that marketing communications for new student admissions affect Umsida student reception can be accepted. The contribution of the influence of marketing communications on reception is 15.7 percent. This means that every unit increase in costs for marketing communications can increase student reception by 15.2%.

The influence of marketing communications on reception in this study is in line with Helmi and Nurhayati’s research [7] which states that marketing communications influence the decision of prospective students to enter the intended tertiary institution. Fadli [8] and Rismiatiun [9] emphasized that marketing communications affected increasing the number of students enrolling in tertiary institutions. Marketing communications carried out include visits to high schools, sponsorships, SMS blaze, exhibitions, events, call centers, and e-marketing [9]. Suriyok [10] added that the marketing communication indicator that was most interesting and influential in increasing the number of new students was quality lecturers, prices in the form of achievement scholarship programs, and scholarships for underprivileged students.

Instagram partially has a positive effect on new student admissions by t count 6.841 with a significance of $0.000 \leq \alpha$ significance (0.05). The working hypothesis which says that “the use of Instagram affects the reception of new students in 2021” can be accepted. Instagram’s contribution to influencing receptions is 44.7 percent. This means that every increase in the use of Instagram in one unit can increase student reception by 44.7%. The use of Instagram as a marketing communication medium in this study contributed to an increase in the reception of prospective new students by 44.7%, in line with research conducted by Yusufkahayasti [12]. Yusufkahayasti’s research explains that promotion through social media affects increasing the interest of prospective students to

enter the intended tertiary institution. Its influence contribution is 35.5%. Mardhiyyah [13] in his qualitative research explained the comparison of the use of social media by universities ranked 1–5 with groups ranked 96–100. The results of his research say that the use of social media for marketing communications by universities ranked 1–5 is superior to universities ranked 96–100. The use of social media by universities has a positive impact on popularizing and portraying the quality of higher education. Unlike the case research conducted by Panggulu [14] regarding the use of Bhayangkara University Instagram social media. The results of his research say that the use of Instagram social media at Bhayangkara University is still not running optimally so it cannot be used to measure its effectiveness in increasing the number of students. This is because social media Instagram was only created in 2021.

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that marketing communications carried out by the Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo to provide information on new student registration to the public are included in the good category (77%). Information conveyed via Instagram is in a good category (73.5%). New student receptions regarding new student registration, accreditation status and study programs, academic services, student achievement, and the academic climate at Umsida are included in the very good category (84.3%). Factors that influence student reception of Umsida both jointly and partially and positively are marketing communications and the use of Instagram. The contribution of the influence of marketing communications and the use of Instagram to student reception is 35.4%.

This research implies that Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo University needs to optimize marketing communications with effective strategies to provide information and education to prospective student targets, brand Umsida, and create brand awareness, and community loyalty to send their sons and daughters to Sidoarjo Muhammadiyah University. The Muhammadiyah University marketing communications team needs to maximize the use of social media besides student events on campus, campus websites, and Instagram, namely Facebook ads, inbound marketing, content marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), video ads on Tiktok or Youtube, participating in educational exhibitions or holding exhibitions to the regions, as well as establishing cooperation with schools and tutoring institutions. Given the limited research time, in the future, there need to be relevant studies related to the use of social media, other than Instagram, such as Facebook Ads, TikTok, SEO, e-WOM, beauty vloggers/influencers in their influence on new student admissions at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo.

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