



The Role of Digital Marketing and New Students' Trust to Opt for Darma Agung University

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to discuss the influence of digital marketing and the new students' trust in the decision to opt for Darma Agung University (UDA) both directly and indirectly. The target population is new students class of 2023, with a sample of 290 people taken randomly. The primary data analysis technique applies a structural equation model (SEM) with the lisrel application program supported. The SEM uses the weight least squares estimation method. Digital marketing has a stronger influence on trust than on decisions to opt for. Trust influences decisions to opt. Trust mediates the influence of digital marketing on decisions to choose, but it's partial. The Darma Agung University's leaders should pay attention to social media.

KEYWORDS: Darma Agung University, Decision to opt, Digital Marketing, New Students' Trust, Structural Equation Model.

INTRODUCTION

The number of students as well as quality is very urgent for private universities because apart from the social aspect of educating society, they must also consider the business aspect for sustainability. High school graduating students are expected to evaluate their options and continue by registering as new students at Darma Agung University. The number of prospective students who register at a higher education institution provides the opportunity to carry out the selection to improve the quality of one of the inputs of higher education. New students who pass the selection will be able to fulfill the available capacity. In general, the portion of fixed costs in university operations is relatively larger than variable costs. If the classes provided for the learning process are not filled as expected, it will cause problems. Apart from that, it is important to optimize human resource compensation in Tridharma operations. The number of students registering shows public interest in a university. If this interest decreases, prospective students decrease, and in turn, the number of new students decreases. In the 2023/2024 academic year, prospective students registering for UDA will be lower than in previous years. In turn, the number of new students is lower compared to previous years. This fact needs serious attention from management. The questions that need to be answered are as follows: Does prospective new students' trust in UDA have an impact on the high school graduates' decision to choose? Does digital marketing have an impact on the new students' trust; Does digital marketing have an impact on the decision to choose Darma Agung University to explore their knowledge or skills?; Does new students' trust have an impact on their decisions to opt for UDA?

The results of research by Erpurini, (2022) with a student analysis unit stated that there was an influence of digital marketing on the decision to choose a university. The research area is in the cities of Bandung and Cimahi. The highest dimension of digital marketing is SEO. The highest decision dimensions to choose are payment time and payment method. The research population was 13,402 students at the research locus. Another research result shown by Setyowati, (2022) is that digital marketing which includes interesting content, interactive communication, good product descriptions, contests and giveaways, and advertising influences the decision to choose a study program/college. The respondents in this research were grade 12 high school students. The sample used for analysis was less representative because they had never chosen a college. So the unit of analysis should be students. Purchasing or choosing decisions are an element of behavior so in a marketing context they should have already been implemented.

Okta & Ambarwati, (2022) ; Syahidah, (2021) proves through their research that digital marketing and consumer trust partially influence purchasing decisions. Digital marketing will strengthen consumer commitment. A stronger commitment to a product or service will encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions more strongly. However, this research does not discuss the mediation or moderation of customer trust in the causal relationship between digital marketing and purchasing/choosing decisions. This fact is not the same as the findings of Hidayat et al., (2021) in their research. It is said that the e-commerce industry in Indonesia is growing along with the increasing number of internet users in Indonesia. Poor trust can raise doubts about digital marketing in improving purchasing decisions. Unfortunately, there are still many internet users in Indonesia who are still hesitant about deciding



to shop online because of the lack of trust buyers have in sellers and service providers. Pappas, (2016) said, that for those who make bookings via the Internet, there is a risk of e-channels in consumer trust. Lack of consumer trust can reduce consumer desires (Odusanya et al., 2022). Furthermore, the purchase decision will not occur.

In research conducted by Alam et al., (2022), the results showed that three exogenous variables, namely digital marketing, product quality, and price, each had a positive effect on purchasing decisions, but it had an Rsquare of only 47.3% or $0.47 < 0.50$. Exogenous variables are meaningless (Hair et al., 2019). Digital marketing has no meaning for purchasing decisions because the dominant endogenous variables are influenced by variables outside the model

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Conceptual synthesis

Conclusions from various references that are relevant to the author's needs in a scientific manuscript are called synthesis (Cahyadi, 2019). In this manuscript, three concepts are synthesized, namely: Purchase decision, consumer trust, and digital marketing.

1. Purchase decision

Traditionally, the consumer purchasing decision-making process sequentially includes Problem emergence or need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Armstrong et al., 2023; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Blythe & Martin, 2019; Perreault et al., 2017; Boone & Kurtz, 2016). The purchase decision is the only stage that generates revenue for marketers. All stages can be said to be effective if a purchase occurs. Therefore, it is important to get the seller's attention.

Referring to the conceptual synthesis that has been done, purchasing decisions are defined as determining choices between alternatives rationally and effectively through a purchasing process (Kotler et al., 2020; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Hoyer et al., 2013; Brassington & Pettitt, 2013). Alternatives may be in different features, attributes, or even brands. Choices can be made sequentially, carefully, and based on studies of valid information. Decisions can be made directly based on experience, pleasure, situational, or based on aesthetic values. However, every purchasing decision starts from the emergence of a need. So the stages we go through are not always the same.

Fahy & Jobber, (2015) stated that there are two important paradigms in purchasing decisions, namely first, based on rational information (cognitive) and second, decisions that are less rational or conscious (consumer culture theory). Generally, the consumption goal in the first context is based on benefits (utilitarian), and the second is based on experience or can be called hedonic, relating to the pleasure or aesthetic aspects of the product. It was revealed further that there are four types of purchasing decisions, namely: Extended problem solving, which occurs when consumers are very engaged in the purchase, significant differences were perceived between brands and there is enough time to consider them; Habitual problem solving occurs in situations of low consumer involvement and limited perception of differences between brands; Limited problem solving, consumers have certain experience with the product in question so that information search is mostly done internally through memory; Search behavior is varied, product involvement is low but there are significant differences in perception between brands. In the context of the decision to choose a university, prospective students are relatively very involved or perhaps just based on habit. Following what has been previously experienced by friends or family. On the other hand, it is difficult to differentiate between private universities in Medan, especially if they have similar accreditation ratings. In-depth information from various trusted sources is needed.

There are three perspectives on consumer purchasing decisions, namely: Rational perspective, consumers are rational and careful in arriving at a decision; An experiential perspective, decision making is often influenced by feelings related to consumption; Behavioral perspective, decisions to respond regarding environmental influences (Babin et al., 2017). Solomon, (2020), purchasing decisions include three categories, namely: Cognitive, the outcome of a series of stages that occur in selecting one product compared to competitors (intentional, rational, sequential); Habitual decisions rely on rules of thumb for making routine decisions (behavioral, unconscious, automatic); Affective decisions, product choices that are framed can determine decisions to opt, consumers are not aware of this influence (emotional, immediate).

Blythe & Martin, (2019), Purchase decisions can be stalled by environmental stimuli, which include in-store promotions (perhaps posters of other products that attract attention or aromas and sounds that may attract attention); Affective states, which include physiological needs (sudden need to drink coffee); Unexpected information: For example changes in store layout or changes in



product attributes; Conflict, which occurs when consumers realize that the initial decision-making plan cannot be followed, or alternative plans emerge that are not by the initial plan, for example, the desired product has run out. In other words, the four aspects determine whether or not a purchase is decided.

Babin et al., (2017), revealed that consumers face several risks in making purchasing decisions including Financial risks, related to product costs; Social risks, related to how other consumers will view the purchase; Performance risks, related to the likelihood of a product performing as expected; Physical risks, related to product safety and the possibility of physical damage resulting from its consumption; Time risk, related to the time it takes to search for a product and the time it takes for the product to be serviced or maintained. Babin et al., (2017), distinguish purchasing decisions as follows: Decisions based on product attributes: Attribute processing, comparing brands, one attribute at a time; Additive differences model, a compensatory model in which brands are compared based on attributes, two brands at a time; Lexicographic model, a non-compensatory model that compares brands based on attributes, one by one based on their importance; The elimination-by-aspect model, is similar to the lexicographic model but adds the notion of acceptable limits.

The purchasing decisions' characteristics depend generally on the locus, time, subject, etc. Referring to the empirical research and description above, the authors formulate the dimensions of purchasing decisions including Perspective, risk, and attributes. Furthermore, indicators that reflect perspectives are rational, habitual, and affective perspectives. The risk perspective is reflected by social risk, performance risk, and time risk. Attributes are reflected by: Attribute processing, additive difference models, and Lexicographic models.

2. Consumer Trust

Understanding consumer attitudes or tendencies after learning to behave consistently (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) is very important for marketers to be able to determine whether consumers are interested and will adopt new products. Marketers develop their promotional and positioning strategies based on what they know about consumer attitudes toward their products and services. One of the elements of attitude is trust. Trust is a multidimensional concept with different components: Trust in disposition, trust in sellers, trust in members, and trust in the site (Wang et al., 2022). In this article what is meant is trust in institutions or sellers of higher education services.

Based on the conceptual synthesis, the authors define consumer trust as a strong psychological belief that consumers have that the seller or service provider will fulfill and protect their interests and tend to make decisions by the seller's instructions. (Napitupulu, 2023; Macready et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2019; Siagian & Cahyono, 2014; Kim & Park, 2013).

Lewis, (2018) said there are 4 dimensions of trust in business, namely: Competence, benevolence, integrity, and predictability. It is further explained that competency is related to the ability, commitment, knowledge, and skills demonstrated by the company's human resources to customers; Benevolence is more closely related to the impression customers gain when they deal with staff and more specifically, the employees' soft skills demonstrate when they interact with customers; Benevolence includes concern, empathy, confidence, and acceptance; Integrity can be seen from several angles such as fairness (justice), fulfillment, loyalty, honesty, relatedness or dependence, and reliability; Predictability includes a brand's reputation and customers' expectations of the brand based on the information they collect and learn. According to scientific research, certainty builds an optimistic outlook and inspires more positive impressions. Liébana-Cabanillas et al., (2014) argue that trust can be integrated into cognitive and behavioral perspectives, the cognitive perspective is related to benevolence, integrity, and competence towards other parties. Research by (Ratnasari et al., (2021); Mahliza, (2020); Hayuningtyas & Widiyanto, (2015); Lu & Fan, (2014) used competence, benevolence, and integrity as dimensions of consumer trust toward sellers.

The trust's dimensions in this research are Competence, integrity, and benevolence. Competence is reflected by the lecturer's knowledge, the lecturer's experience, and the education staff's skills. Integrity is reflected by justice, loyalty, and honesty of human resources. Benevolence is reflected by receptivity, empathy, dependability, and reliability.

3. Digital Marketing

The rapidly changing digital landscape provides many opportunities for marketers. It is important to understand key concepts such as computing and technology that are developing very quickly (Hanlon, 2019). Marketers should take advantage of advances in digital technology to improve marketing performance.



Based on the author's synthesis of several relevant concept definitions, digital marketing is defined as marketing communication activities to inform, remind, and persuade the target market using digital technology and the internet so that marketing performance is increasingly optimized (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Kundu, 2021; Nozari et al., 2021; Peter et al., 2020; Kannan & Li, 2017).

Communication activities mean that there are messages conveyed by marketers to consumers or target markets, both individually and in groups or organizations. Increasingly advanced digital technology can make programs aimed at consumers more effective and efficient. Wider reach, on time, and reducing costs. Relevant communication via the Internet can increase competitiveness. In other words, marketing performance is increasing.

Several authors have grouped the digital marketing components. Charlesworth, (2018) states that digital marketing elements include: Search engine optimization (SEO), web page development, E-commerce, online advertising, e-mail marketing, social media marketing, metrics, and analytics. Another author, Jarboe et al., (2023) said digital marketing includes digital analytics, digital advertising such as price-per-click, SEO, content marketing, social media marketing, conversion optimization (UX), mobile marketing, and e-mail marketing. Zahay, (2015) revealed four basic digital marketing delivery mixes integrated with core website strategies, namely email, search, mobile, and social. Furthermore, Kundu, (2021) emphasized that an effective digital marketing strategy involves SEO, SEM, PPC, digital display advertising, and electronic mail marketing techniques. Sukaini, (2022) states social media, SEO, and content marketing are some of the most common forms of digital marketing.

The term e-commerce is often equated with digital marketing because the commercialization is carried out electronically. Web page development can be considered to have a broad meaning. Everything can be held on a web page including non-marketing activities. The term price per click is no different from pay per click or PPC for short. Based on the grouping above, the dimensions of digital marketing include Search engine marketing, social media marketing, and content marketing. Search engine marketing indicators include Search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click, and directories. Social media marketing has indicators: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Content marketing indicators include e-mail marketing, YouTube marketing, and mobile marketing.

B. Conceptual Framework

In this research, there are constructs (digital marketing, consumers' trust, and purchase decisions) that are related to each other, both recursively and reciprocally. The hypothesis and statistical analysis techniques that will be used, including assumptions and data collection patterns depend on the relationship between latent variables.

1. Digital marketing effect on consumers' trust

One of the important factors influencing lifestyle, including consumer behavior, is the technological revolution, which has caused the interpenetration of the virtual world and the real world. This is an era of change caused by the development of computerization and modern technology which in turn leads to digital inclusion (Adam & Dzang Alhassan, 2020). This phenomenon can be characterized by rapid technological progress, widespread digitalization, and its impact on all areas of life.

Smartphones, computers, wearable devices, in-store kiosks, and mobile payment devices influence online and in-store shopping behavior worldwide (M.Pride & O.C.Ferrel, 2019). There is the use of various digital devices in shopping anywhere. This situation is certainly related to their belief that it is better.

Information is usually considered trustworthy because it is conveyed not only by producers but also by other consumers (Geng et al., 2021; Vithayathil et al., 2020). Widespread access to social media and digital marketing platforms makes information available to a group of potential consumers looking for reviews that are not professionally written but rather shared by other internet users (Moran et al., 2014). the shopping experience using a digital marketing platform is seamless, can provide large amounts of product data, and is safer.

The research results of Nurohman et al., (2018), show that digital marketing (social media) can increase students' confidence so they choose the IAIN Surakarta Sharia business management study program. Increasing trust in digital marketing can increase the value of the study program. Research that has been carried out by several researchers such as: (Yeo et al., 2023 ; Christian & Kurniawan, 2023; Yunus et al., 2022; Hirapara, 2020; Hairunnisa et al., 2019) has shown that digital marketing influences consumer trust.



Based on the description above, the authors propose the following hypothesis: There is an influence of digital marketing on the new student's trust.

2. Digital marketing effect on purchase decision

Changes in consumers' environments also influence their behavior. Some of these factors are the development of the internet and information and communication technology, especially those related to for searching information about products, places, and services, as well as purchasing transaction methods (Vinerean et al., 2013). Modern customers make up decisions in an environment surrounded by new technologies, and online tools (e.g. social media) that significantly influence their behavior (Set al., 2020). The second and third decades of the 21st century were characterized by consumers spending more time online (Kemp, 2021) and consumers becoming more skilled in using modern tools to communicate and obtain information. Saura et al., (2017), customers can get extensive information online quickly before making a purchasing decision. They can access suppliers worldwide and also know the current real market prices.

This situation is influenced not only by more permanent Internet access but also by the development of mobile devices that allow communication almost at any time, while users, via the Internet, have constant access to up-to-date information (L. Wang et al., 2021; Hou & Elliott, 2021). Mobile apps enable consumers to search for information, products, and services at a time and place that is convenient for them. Such use of the Internet and mobile devices has led to a change in consumers' needs and expectations of manufacturers and they now expect omnichannel entities with seamless integration between all channels – offline, online, and mobile. It is also worth mentioning the increasing number of consumers who choose to use mobile phones to make purchases (Malter et al., 2020).

Yeo et al., (2023) mentioned that social media marketing which includes identity function, information sharing function, conversation function, and social influence was found to be a predictor in consumer decision-making. The research results of Gawas et al., (2018) show that digital marketing influences consumer purchasing decisions. Digital marketing and customer purchasing decisions are interrelated. Clients are the primary beneficiaries of the impact of digital marketing. This means that a company's digital marketing activities must take into account the preferences of its customers.

Research conducted in Iraq by Sukaini, (2022) demonstrated the large impact of digital marketing on purchasing decisions. Digital marketing in Iraq has influenced consumer behavior in purchasing various product categories. Previous researchers also found that digital marketing influences consumers' purchasing decisions (Ilham et al., 2023; Tchanturia, 2022; Digidowiseiso & Sari, 2022; Diventy et al., 2020).

Based on the description above, the authors propose the following hypothesis: There is an influence of digital marketing on the decision to opt for Darma Agung University.

3. Consumers' trust effect on purchase decision

Trust is the foundation of business (Chauhan & Hudaya, 2020). If there is no trust as a basis between the seller and the buyer, then no transaction will occur. A transaction of business between two or more parties will occur if parties trust each other. This trust cannot simply be acknowledged by other parties, but must be built from the start and can be proven. Trust has been recognized as a catalyst in various transactions.

From a cognitive purchasing perspective, consumers carefully evaluate various relevant information so that they are truly sure that the choice meets the criteria. If the desired specifications have been met, the consumer decides to purchase. If what is believed is proven to be true, a behavioral tendency will tend to be formed in the form of liking the product.

Digital marketing platforms and other social media platforms disseminate product information to consumers who happen to be aware of a need, consumers get the information first, then are interested in participating, and then produce purchasing decision-making behavior (Wongsunopparat & Deng, 2021). Consumers decide to make online transactions because they trust the supplier, so sellers need to consider the trust aspect so that consumers decide to make a purchase (Putra et al., 2017).

Several studies related to the causal relationship between consumer trust and purchasing decisions have similar directions, in other words, consumer trust influences purchasing decisions (Eriyanti & Ardhiyansyah, 2023; Karunasingha & Abeysekera, 2022; Bachri et al., 2022; Fadhilah et al., 2021; Liusito & Tulung, 2020; Mahliza, 2020; Pasaribu & Purba, 2020; Irawan, 2018; Jayanti, 2015).



Referring to the description above, the authors propose the following hypothesis: There is an influence of the new students' trust on the decision to opt for Darma Agung University.

METHODOLOGY

The main research designs in marketing include exploratory research, descriptive research, and causal research (Malhotra, 2020 ; Hair et al., 2020; Burns & Veeck, 2020). In this research, an exploratory and causal design was applied because the researchers wanted to discuss the influence of exogenous and endogenous constructs, both directly and indirectly. Exploratory design in the context of developing hypotheses. Causal design relates to the analytical techniques used. The population is all Darma Agung University students, while the target population is 829 new students from the class of 2023. They still have fresh and original memories regarding the reasons they made their choices. The sample was 290 people. Data distribution does not follow the univariate and multivariate normality assumptions, therefore the sample size is at least 10 times the number of indicators when using causal analysis techniques (Hasanah, 2020 ; Wang & Wang, 2020). Data was collected from samples using a simple random sampling technique. The chi-square test in causal design refers to a normal curve with random data (Collis & Hussey, 2021).

Research variables are measured through indicators or statement items on a Likert scale (1 – 7) (Budiaji, 2013; Boone & Boone, 2012). A measurement model that meets the requirements has convergent validity with standard factor loadings > 0.50, and ideal ≥ 0.70 where Z-value ≥ 1.96; Discriminant validity $\Phi \leq 0.90$ (Hair et al., 2019); Construct reliability (composite reliability, CR ≥ 0.70 and average variance extracted, AVE > 0.50) (Geiser, 2021; Collier, 2020; Byrne, 2016); Primary data processed using Structural equation model techniques analysis with the Lisrel application program supported, using the Weight Least Square estimation method, abbreviated as WLS (Whittaker & Schumacker, 2022 ; Wijanto, 2008; Diamantopoulos & A.Siguaw, 2000).

Generalized functional equations of exogenous variables measurement models: $x = \Lambda_x \xi + \delta$(1)

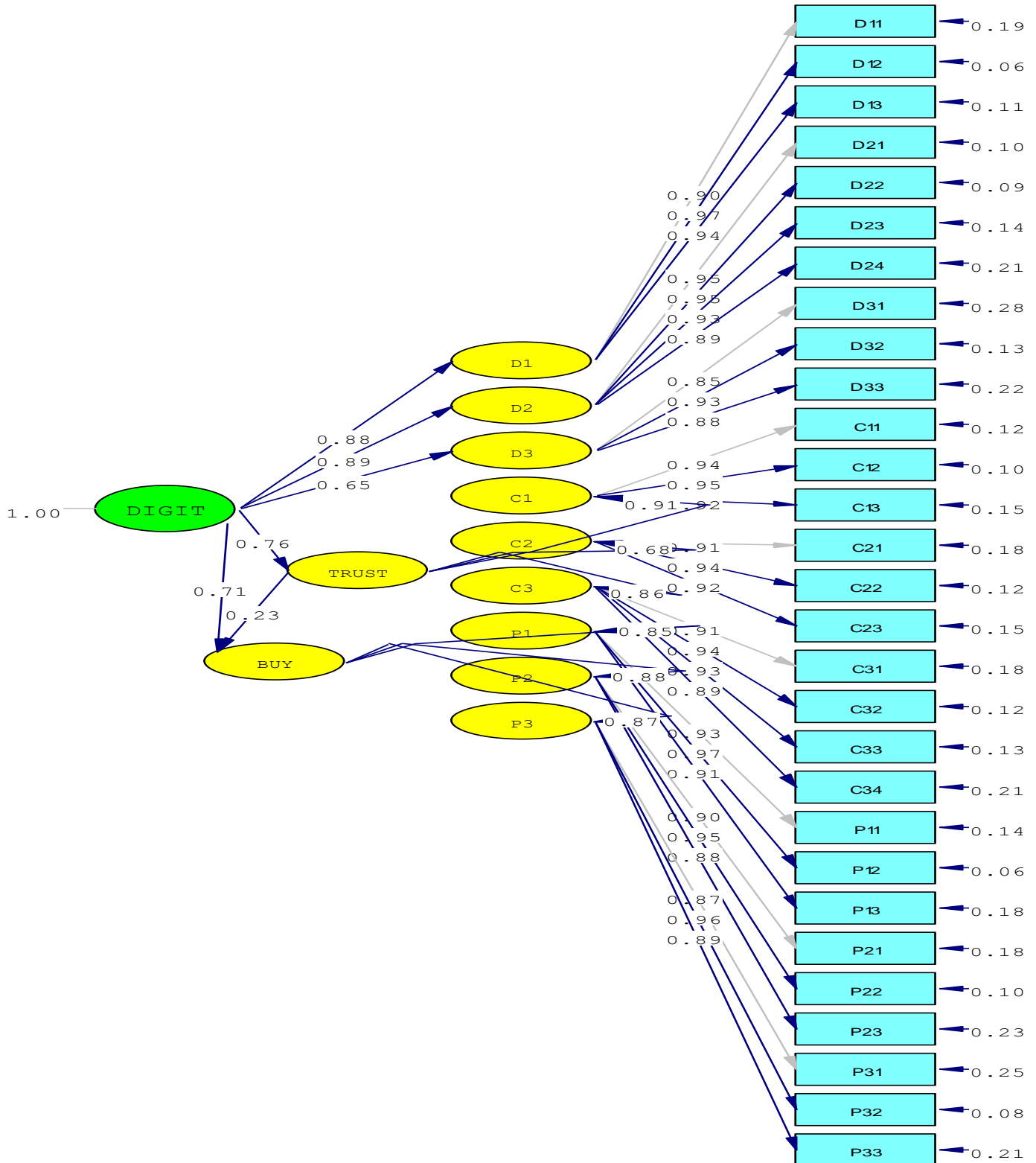
Generalized functional equations of endogenous variables measurement models: $y = \Lambda_y \eta + \epsilon$(2)

Generalized functional equations of structural model: $\eta = B\eta + \Gamma\xi + \zeta$ (3)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers have tested the instrument with the KMO-Barlett test for sample adequacy. Anti-image matrix for item validity. Crobach's Alpha for item reliability testing. Model testing engages in testing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability of measurement models both first-order confirmatory factor analysis and second-order confirmatory factor analysis. Testing the goodness of fit index of the structural equation model. The fit full research model path diagram (standardized solution) that generated primary data processing with the Lisrel software supported can be seen in Figure 1.

The path diagram consists of three levels, namely: The first column consists of 29 manifest variables; The second column includes 9 dimensions; The third column includes 3 constructs. Indicators reflect dimensions and constructs are reflected by dimensions. The numbers on the one-way arrows from construct to dimension and then to indicator show the standardized loading factors. This number shows the strength of the indicators in reflecting each dimension and the strength of the dimensions reflecting each construct. The one-way arrow connecting the constructs shows the causal relation weight.



Chi-Square=754.04, df=365, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.061

Figure 1. Diagram path of fit research full model by standardized solution (Source: Processed from primary data,2023)



A. Dominant Manifest Variable

The path diagram figure above shows the dominant path standardized factors loading in the first and second-order measurement models. The perspective dimension is predominantly reflected by the habitual perspective indicator (P12). The consideration is that after graduating from high school, it is mandatory to continue higher education to improve welfare in the future. The dominant risk perspective is reflected by performance risk (P22). If the university's performance is considered good or the risks can be anticipated then it is likely that the decisions taken will produce good results. The dominant attribute dimensions are reflected by the additive difference model (P32) often called the compensation model. New students compare two universities at once and assess the compensation they receive. Universities that provide better compensation are an option.

The dominant competency dimension is reflected by lecturer experience (C12). So the main consideration in this context is the number of senior lecturers. Although the competency and skills aspects of educational staff remain important. The dominant integrity dimension is reflected by loyalty (C22). In the context of credibility, loyalty in serving students is more important than fairness and honesty. Although both indicators are still important. The benevolence dimension is reflected predominantly by the empathy indicator (C32). Human resources' benevolence in institutions is most important in the context of empathy. Personally understanding students' aspirations and desires is the main key to success, in addition to acceptance, dependability, and reliability. The pay-per-click manifest variable (D12) predominantly reflects search engine marketing. To optimize search results for information about institutions on the website, the contribution is greatest compared to SEO and directory pages. The social media marketing dimension is reflected predominantly by two indicators with the same standardized factors loading, namely Facebook (D21) and Instagram (D22). Understandably, new students surf these two types of social media most often. Video/YouTube marketing predominantly reflects the content marketing dimension. It must be admitted that information disseminated through this platform is the easiest and fastest to understand, especially if the information is still just being realized.

B. Dominant Dimention

In the second order confirmatory factor analysis (2nd CFA) , the dimensions reflect their respective constructs. Social media marketing (D2) predominantly reflects digital marketing. This platform is more important than the the other, namely search engine marketing and content marketing. Competency (C1) dominantly reflects the construct of new students' trust. This dimension is most prominent compared to integrity and benevolence. The decision to opt construct is reflected predominantly by the risk dimension (P2).

C. Construct Dominant Path

The influence weight of the digital marketing construct (DIGIT) on new students trust (TRUST) is 0.76; The influence weight of the digital marketing construct on the decision to opt construct (BUY) is 0.71; The influence weight of the new students' trust construct on decisions to opt construct is 0.23. The influence weight of the first proposition (DIGIT → TRUST) is the strongest among the three causal relationships.

D. Causal Relationship of Research Model Constructs

In the path diagram above, information is provided about the dominant indicators reflecting each dimension, the dominant dimensions reflecting each construct, and the dominant path propositions contained in the research model. Additional information can be extracted from the research fully fitted structural equation model. There are two functional equations as presented below.

TRUST = 0.76*DIGIT, Errorvar.= 0.42, R² = 0.58.....(4)
(0.081)
9.35

BUY = 0.23*TRUST + 0.71*DIGIT, Errorvar.= 0.20, R² = 0.80.....(5)
(0.077) (0.11)
2.98 6.44



In functional equation (4), it can be seen that the influence weight of digital marketing on new students' trust is 0.76, standard deviation = 0.081 with Z-value = 9.35 > 1.96, significant with a 95% degree of confidence in the two tails test. The residual is 0.42 or Rsquare = 0.58 > 0.50 which means meaningful (Hair et al., 2019). Changes in digital marketing are in line with new students' trust. If there is an increase in the exogenous construct by 1 unit it will result in an increase in the endogenous construct worth 0.76. Conversely, a decrease in the exogenous construct of 1 unit will result in a decrease in the exogenous construct with an amount of 0.76 units. Digital marketing contributes to new students' trust by 0.58 or 58%. In other words, the construct of new students' trust is dominantly determined by the digital marketing construct. The remaining 42% is influenced by variables outside the functional equation (4).

In functional equation (5) two constructs influence the decision to opt (BUY), namely digital marketing (DIGIT) and the new students' trust (TRUST). The weight of the causal relationship between digital marketing and the decision to opt is 0.71, standard deviation = 0.11, with Z-value = 6.44 > 1.96 showing a significant relationship with $\alpha = 0.05$ two tails test. Changes in the digital marketing construct are in line with changes in the decisions to opt construct. An increase in digital marketing by 1 unit will result in an increase in the decision to opt construct by 0.71 units, assuming new students' trust construct is constant or does not change. On the other hand, a decrease in digital marketing by 1 unit will result in a decrease in the decision to opt construct by an amount of 0.71 units, assuming the new students' trust construct is constant. The causal relationship weight between the new students' trust construct in decisions to opt is 0.23, standard deviation = 0.077, with Z-value = 2.98 > 1.96 showing a significant relationship with $\alpha = 0.05$ two tails test. Changes in the new students' trust construct are in line with changes in the choosing to opt construct. An increase in new students' trust by 1 unit will increase the decision to opt construct by an amount of 0.23 units, assuming the digital marketing construct does not change. On the other hand, a decrease in new students' trust by 1 unit will result in a decrease in the decision to opt construct with a value of 0.23 units, provided that the digital marketing construct is constant.

Residual (errorvar) = 0.20 and Rsquare = 0.80 > 0.50 can be called functional equation (5) meaningful. In other words, the dominant decision to opt construct is determined by the two exogenous constructs. The influence of factors outside the model is only 0.20 or 20%. The greater the Rsquare of a model, the better it is said to be. Functional equation (5) is better than equation (4) because the contribution of exogenous variables is greater. The addition of new students' trust construct to exogenous variables can strengthen the effect toward endogenous construct.

The two models or functional equations in the research model generate an indirect effect of digital marketing on decisions to opt for. The indirect effect weight is 0.17, standard deviation = 0.06 with Z-value = 3.11 > 1.96, meaning it is significant with a confidence level of 95% in the two-tailed test. However, the direct effect of digital marketing on decisions to opt is greater than its indirect effect or what is called partial mediating (Collier, 2020; Hair et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

Digital marketing has a positive effect on new students' trust. The exogenous construct is reflected specifically by social media marketing, more specifically Facebook and Instagram, which play a role in increasing the competence of experienced lecturers in particular. Digital marketing has a positive influence on decisions to opt, meaning that this exogenous construct plays a role in increasing the decisions to opt construct, especially risk, more specifically performance risk. New students' trust has a positive influence on the decision to opt. This means that this exogenous construct plays a role in increasing the construct of decisions to opt for.

The influence of new students' trust on customer trust is stronger than on decisions to opt. Changes in digital marketing with changes in new students' trust are more in line with changes in decisions to opt. Therefore, the influence of digital marketing is stronger on the new students' trust than on the decisions to opt.

Even though digital marketing influences the new students' trust at Darma Agung University and their purchasing decisions (decisions to opt), on the other hand, their trust influences their decisions to opt, but the intermediate construct does not increase the influence of digital marketing on their decisions to opt. Information obtained from social media and various web pages is their basis for evaluating information about private universities in Medan to strengthen their trust. It is proven that the direct influence of digital marketing is stronger on decisions to opt compared to the direct influence of new students' trust on decisions to opt.



B. Recommendation

The Darma Agung University's leaders should pay attention to social media marketing programs or policies, especially Facebook and Instagram, indirectly increasing both the new students' trust and their decision to opt for this institution. Mediation through the new students' trust is partial, therefore increasing the decision to opt for Darma Agung University with digital marketing is carried out directly, in other words not through a mediator.

Future researchers can still add constructs such as excellent service or relationship marketing which can positively influence decisions to opt because there are still model residuals.

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