From Likes to Enrolment: Using Social Media to Capture Students' Attention

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Abstract: The development and progress of universities have spread to developing countries, including Indonesia. The development of university programs has resulted in increasing levels of competition, thus requiring universities to build different identities to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This competition forces universities to leverage their strategic reputation to achieve a more favorable market position. Therefore, a university's reputation acts as a significant catalyst for attracting prospective student interest. The aim of this research is to determine the correlation between university reputation and prospective student attractiveness, especially in relation to the perceived trustworthiness of information obtained through social media using the IAM framework. The results indicate that a university's reputation significantly influences student attractiveness. Specifically, both the arguments presented and the sources of credibility information on social media play pivotal roles in enhancing a university's reputation. These, in turn, have a direct and positive impact on attracting prospective students. The findings highlight the importance of delivering credible and high-quality content through social media to boost a university's reputation and appeal to students. This study offers practical insights for universities, particularly in the digital age, by providing strategies to effectively leverage social media for reputation management and student engagement. The research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical applications in university marketing strategies.

Keywords: Information Adoption Model, Social Media, Student Attractiveness, University Reputation

1. Introduction

The expansion and development of higher education have permeated developing nations, such as Indonesia. High competition has resulted from the proliferation of higher education programs, compelling universities to establish unique identities to distinguish themselves from their competitors (Miotto et al., 2020). Therefore, a robust presence in the education sector is crucial for institutions. The highly competitive nature of academics directly contributes to the close relationship between university

management and university reputation (Khoshtaria et al., 2020). This competition compels the university to seek a more lucrative market position by leveraging its reputation. Therefore, the university has shifted from being merely a higher education institution to operating as an educational enterprise (Bunzel, 2007).

The growth of educational institutions in Indonesia has experienced a substantial surge, particularly in the case of public universities, which have garnered numerous accomplishments (Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, 2022). Public universities can experience rapid advancement in terms of achievements and development due to the government's provision of special assistance and attention (Yu et al., 2022). Public universities can attract potential students due to their brand image (Shehzadi et al., 2021), reputation (Miotto et al., 2020), and quality (Graf & Menter, 2022), making them the focal point of interest. This contrasts with private universities, which must devise strategies to endure the fierce rivalry among other private universities and public universities. In addition, the establishment of private universities, which are affiliated with overseas universities, has led to their expansion (Wilkins et al., 2023). Private universities face a particular challenge in effectively managing their reputation to attract potential students (Columbu et al., 2021). Ultimately, the rise of competition among universities aims to incentivize them to enhance their standing, transforming them into not only educational institutions for students, but also more desirable living environments (Alessandri et al., 2006). Universities, like companies, also possess reputations. Reputation, conceptually, refers to the anticipation of stakeholders regarding the fulfillment of their expectations and the shared ideas about an entity's identity and superiority. In this scenario, students are considered as one of the stakeholders (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004; Rao, 1994). Prospective students desire universities to fulfill their expectations. Hence, the reputation of a university is seen as a pivotal aspect in fostering the attention of potential students (Azizi & Sassen, 2023).

Over the past decade, the organisation's reputation has been extensively debated on social media, which has emerged as a significant platform for public disclosure (Guo et al., 2020; Schaarschmidt & Walsh, 2020; Silaban et al., 2023; Tajpour & Hosseini, 2021) and extending organisational reach to broader market (Appel et al., 2020). Social media involves engaging in interactive communication, facilitating the exchange of ideas, and disseminating information via virtual networks, made feasible by technological advancements (Silaban et al., 2023). Over the past decade, individuals have relied on social media platforms as a source of reliable and dependable information (Schaarschmidt & Walsh, 2020; Seo et al., 2020). Utilizing social media as a means of acquiring knowledge is significant due to its capacity to facilitate extensive dissemination (Khan et al., 2021). Universities utilize social media platforms to effectively convey their position to the public and pique the interest of potential stakeholders, in addition to the general public, government entities, and businesses (Aljumah et al., 2021; Farinloye et al., 2020; Kolhar et al., 2021). For this reason, a large number of prospective students may utilize social media platforms to obtain reliable and trustworthy information about their preferred university. By increasing their communication efforts, universities can effectively use social media platforms to disseminate information about their reputation. In order to effectively engage prospective students and generate interest in the university, the content distributed via social media platforms must be legitimate, appealing, and truthful (Clayton et al., 2020; Naeem et al., 2021). Eventually, utilizing social media platforms as a means to disseminate trustworthy information and communicate the university's position can serve as a strategic method for boosting the appeal of universities.

The objective of this research specifically strives to enhance comprehension of the factors that precede and follow prospective student attractiveness. This research includes university reputation as a mediator into the research model, in addition to the previously found antecedent of social media on prospective student attractiveness. Moreover, other studies have also recognized university reputation as a determinant that augments the attraction of potential students towards university. However, the research specifically concentrates on public universities (Abdelmaaboud et al., 2021; Azizi & Sassen, 2023; Miotto et al., 2020; Moslehpour et al., 2020) and international branch universities (Wilkins & Huisman, 2013). The present study was undertaken through a comprehensive analysis of relevant scholarly literature, with a particular focus on investigating the factors of social media, reputation, and attraction. Subsequently, we present a theoretical framework and propose hypothesis, followed by an examination of each variable within the context of a study on university reputation. Moreover, this research aims to generate enthusiasm among prospective students towards their preferred educational institution. In the concluding section of the study, we proceed to provide a comprehensive overview of

the primary contributions made, constraints encountered, theoretical and practical implications derived, and potential avenues for future research.

Additionally, this investigation employs partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to investigate the impact of social media on student engagement, with a particular emphasis on the need for information, argument quality, information source credibility, and university reputation. The validity, reliability, and hypothesis presented will be evaluated through partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, which will investigate the causal relationships between exogenous, mediating, and endogenous variables. This investigation offers universities critical insights regarding the enhancement of their reputation and the stimulation of prospective student engagement. It improves the theoretical framework and practical and strategic approaches for universities by utilizing new technologies, such as social media, and gaining a more profound comprehension of prospective student behaviour in the digital era.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Social Media Information

Social media has emerged as an effective instrument for disseminating promotions and exerting influence on prospective students in the educational sphere (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Specifically, social media has emerged as a vital platform for rapidly and extensively sharing information, enabling users to engage in discussions and express their personal experiences about study programs and university services (Hussain et al., 2018). Hence, social media has emerged as a significant marketing communication platform as it enables potential students to instantly access information (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017).

Presently, social media communication has emerged as a potent technology that is acknowledged as a pivotal force for marketing, particularly university marketing. The efficacy of information disseminated by social media is very high due to its wide user reach (Brotto et al., 2021). Universities are driven to regulate information on social media in order to cultivate a favorable perception among prospective students (Yalçinkaya et al., 2018). Various aspects can promote the utilization of social media, such as assessing and choosing educational programs or campus services (Alamri et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media facilitates the sharing of reviews and comments, which can foster trust and aid in decision-making (Kircaburun et al., 2020). Therefore, social media has numerous advantages for universities since it enables prospective students to discuss and exchange their university experiences, consequently affecting their future enrollment intentions (Tapanainen et al., 2021).

2.2 Information Adoption Model

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) refers to the process by which individual intentions are shaped by the acquisition and acceptance of information conveyed by a message (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). This intention is derived from the acquisition of information that is deemed either supportive or unsupportive to the decision-making process (Khwaja et al., 2020). Within the realm of social media, the reactions to communicated messages differ, despite the fact that the material being given remains unchanged. This phenomenon occurs due to the increased availability of channels for sharing information and the potential for individuals to perceive that information in varying ways (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Hence, IAM's objective is to comprehend the impact of information on individuals inside a specific platform (Sussman & Siegal, 2003).

The differentiation of IAM might be based on the quality of arguments, the legitimacy of sources, the usefulness of information, and the acceptance of information (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Precise, unambiguous, and comprehensive information has the potential to enhance the caliber of argumentation (Chen & Chang, 2018). In addition, Mohammadi et al. (2017) assert that while assessing attitudes, it is crucial to consider material that is of superior quality. In addition, Little and Green (2022) emphasized the importance of establishing the credibility of an information source through the reputation and trustworthiness of the author. Hence, people will embrace knowledge on social media platforms if they perceive it to be beneficial (Sussman & Siegal, 2003).

The IAM model enables the comprehension and recognition of potential students' preferences by utilizing influential information that affects their institution selection process (Aljuboori et al., 2020). Furthermore, university marketers must possess an understanding of how potential students acquire information regarding courses and campus amenities through social media platforms. Practically, certain prospective students perceive information based on its substance. For instance, while examining study program reviews on social media, potential students are more inclined to focus on the precise information communicated (Johng et al., 2021). These individuals are commonly known as prospective students who place a high importance on the quality of arguments. Reviews serve as a marketing communications tool, making it crucial for university marketers to effectively control the material they provide. In addition, when conducting online research, prospective students have the opportunity to access comments from other social media users regarding a specific academic program, which can provide a more comprehensive perspective (Le et al., 2020). Hence, it is imperative for university marketers to possess the skills to effectively handle comments and evaluations of study programs on social media platforms, since these can significantly influence the acceptance of information by prospective students.

2.3 Social Media Information and Attractiveness

The impact of social media platforms has greatly influenced today's advancement in information distribution. Social media is widely acknowledged as a strategic communication tool in multiple fields, including marketing communications (Rehman et al., 2022), finance (Li, Goodell, et al., 2021), investing (Grizane & Jurgelane, 2017), and organisational communication (Krzyżanowski, 2018). This is crucial for enabling the realization of the organiational vision and objectives. Hence, institutions must recognize the significance of employing social media platforms to effectively communicate and enhance their reputation.

Universities can enhance their reputation by using social media platforms to facilitate smooth and engaging relationships among stakeholders (Lariscy et al., 2009). Multiple scientific studies have demonstrated that sharing information through social media platforms enhances the worth of organisations, fosters transparency, and facilitates communication among stakeholders (Avery & Graham, 2013; Füller et al., 2010; Kent, 2013). Hence, the influence of the legitimacy of information on user involvement is readily apparent within the realm of social media platforms.

The Information Adoption Model (IAM) elucidates the process by which humans acquire and assimilate messages in order to develop intents, influenced by the information they consume (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). This study demonstrates that the quality of arguments (central path) and the credibility of sources (peripheral path) have significant roles in affecting the acceptance of information (Shu & Scott, 2014). Within the realm of social media, people evaluate the precision and value of information prior to accepting the message (Khwaja et al., 2020). When universities provide reputable and high-quality content through social media, it can enhance their reputation and attract more potential students (Chen & Chang, 2018).

The veracity of information distributed through social media platforms is uncertain (Buchanan, 2020). This phenomenon can be explained by the tendency of consumers to seek and consume content that aligns with their personal interests, causing them to label less reliable information as untrue or misleading. Despite the diminished reliability of information, users who utilize social media platforms will continue to actively seek out the required information (Buchanan, 2020). Consequently, universities must prioritize the credibility of the information they disseminate and ensure it is conveyed through suitable venues. Opting for a social media platform that lacks credibility in sharing information might have detrimental effects for the university, as the content given may be inaccurate. Furthermore, the dissemination of inaccurate information might result in personal misdirection (Muhammed & Mathew, 2022). According to prior scientific research, reliable information shared through social media platforms has the capacity to enhance the involvement and curiosity of prospective students (Muduli & Trivedi, 2020). Consequently, universities can enhance their reputation by effectively adopting IAM to ensure that the content shared on social media platforms is of superior quality and reliable. This will assist potential students in their decision-making process and ultimately enhance the university's reputation in the public's perception. Thus, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: Need of information positively promotes the university reputation.

H1b: Argument quality positively promotes the university reputation.
H1c: Information source credibility positively promotes the university reputation.

2.4   University Reputation and Attractiveness

The idea of corporate reputation holds significant significance within an organisational framework as it is a fundamental element of company social identity, consequently exerting an impact on organisational performance and business sustainability (Feng et al., 2022). Hence, the examination of corporate reputation is commonly conducted within the framework of a business environment (Baah et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the existing body of work on corporate reputation can be valuable in framing the understanding of university reputation, notwithstanding the presence of contextual variations.

The concept of organisational reputation has been defined from different perspectives. Generally, it is understood as an evaluation made by multiple stakeholders regarding a company's capacity to fulfill their expectations (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Additionally, it can be seen as a collective set of subjective beliefs held by members of a social group (Bromley, 2002). Furthermore, it can also be measured by the visibility and favorability an organisation receives in the media (Deephouse, 2000). The disparity lies in the fact that the concept of an organisation's reputation pertains to the enduring perceptions held by its many stakeholders towards the business (Cintamür, 2023; Mahmood & Bashir, 2020; Pfajfar et al., 2022). Based on diverse conceptualizations of organisational and corporate reputation, the reputation of a university can be characterized as the cumulative perception held by a range of stakeholders, encompassing both internal and external constituents, along with media entities, towards the university over its history (Qazi et al., 2022). According to the existing literature on reputation formation (Bromley, 2000; Grunig & Hung-Baesecke, 2015), scholars suggest that the reputation of universities can be established through different means, such as firsthand encounters, indirect or mediated encounters, and information obtained from diverse communication channels, including both social media (Shah et al., 2024) and traditional media (Vogler & Schäfer, 2020). The association between garnering student interest and information acquired through communication channels, specifically the reputation of the university, is noteworthy.

A positive evaluation of an organisation is linked to arousing customer interest, and according to signal theory input, organisations with a strong reputation are generally perceived as more reliable by customers (Keh & Xie, 2009). A positive company reputation generates anticipation over the items or services offered, hence fostering customer attractiveness (Zhang et al., 2020). Silaban et al. (2023) also holds the belief that maintaining a good attitude towards an organisation has the capacity to enhance customer interest. Therefore, connecting university reputation with positive appraisal enhances the significance of arguments that consider university reputation as a factor that influences the appeal of potential students. Thus, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H2: University reputation positively influences prospective students' attractiveness.

2.5   Mediating Relationship

Even though the existing knowledge of how social media information affects the attractiveness of potential students is still limited, it has been demonstrated that social media information can effectively address attractiveness-related issues, particularly through relational mechanisms (Trainor et al., 2014). Social media offers the opportunity for enhanced attractiveness (Kowal et al., 2022; Weismueller et al., 2020) as a result of its broader scope and is comparatively economical. Social media platforms facilitate the rapid dissemination of information and enhance the exchange of expertise (Chan et al., 2020). Benitez et al. (2020) proposed that corporations should employ social media as a strategic measure to disseminate their reputation. Hence, the utilization of social media within organisations can enhance the dissemination of information, consequently augmenting customers' attractiveness.

Similar to social media, the reputation mechanism demonstrates that organisations that effectively leverage their reputation can stimulate customer attractiveness (Zhang et al., 2020). Reputation is a key factor that influences attractiveness (Li, Liu, et al., 2021). Consequently, improving one's reputation can enhance the attractiveness. The information transmitted through social media frequently shapes the perceptions and attitudes of the receiver (Silaban et al., 2023; Tayal & Bharathi. S, 2021). Users' opinions are influenced when they trust (Chen & Cheng, 2020) and find value (Nguyen

& Le, 2021) in the information shared on social media. Similarly, universities can employ social media as an optimal approach to disseminate their reputation (Farinloye et al., 2020; Vogler, 2020). Hence, employing social media as a means to disseminate the university's reputation is thought to foster the attractiveness of prospective students. Thus, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H3a: University reputation positively mediated the relationship between need of information and prospective students' attractiveness.

H3b: University reputation positively mediated the relationship between argument quality and prospective students' attractiveness.

H3c: University reputation positively mediated the relationship between information source credibility and prospective students' attractiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Model

The objective of this research is to comprehend the impact of social media on university reputation, which in turn influences the level of attraction shown by prospective students. To propagate a university reputation and generate attention, this study rely on the need of information, argument quality, and source credibility information. Consequently, the attitude of prospective students is influenced by social media information and university reputation, which serve as predictors. Figure 1 displays the theoretical structure of the investigation.

Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Model
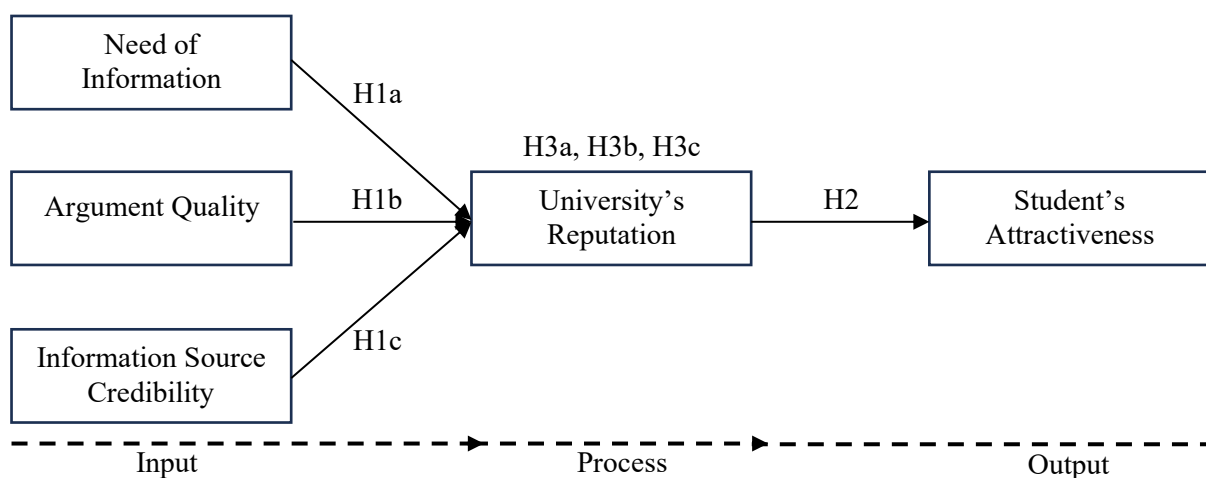
3.2 Analysis Technique

In order to forecast the observed results, particularly the interest of potential students, the research objectives are accomplished through the utilization of the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis technique with Smart-PLS 3.0 software. This technique allows for the direct evaluation, mediation effects, and comparative configuration analysis. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is capable of handling intricate models that consist of numerous indicators and latent variables (Ringle et al., 2012), even with the small sample sizes (Chin, 1998). This characteristic makes it well-suited for research that involves multiple constructs and indicators.

3.3   Sample Method and Data Collection

Based on a survey, this study examines social media information, university reputation, and student attractiveness towards university. There are three portions to this survey. The initial section assesses the components of social media information, next is the university reputation, and eventually this study assesses student attractiveness. Prospective students in Indonesia including graduated students who intend to continue their study are the target demographic. Using an online survey methodology, the developed questionnaire instrument was then distributed. Before sending the questionnaire to the intended population, a pilot study needs to be conducted for this investigation. This study consisted of the following stages: first, an analysis of the measurement model using construct validity and discriminant validity techniques. Second, testing hypothesis. Next, the results of this investigation will be discussed in depth.

The total of respondents collected in this survey were 277 participants from Indonesia. The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents were female, specifically 181 respondents (65.34%), while male accounted for 96 respondents (34.66%). Regarding the utilization of social media for information retrieval, the majority of participants opt for Instagram (57.4%), followed by TikTok (28.83%), Facebook (11.91%), YouTube (5.42%), and a small portion prefer Twitter (1.81%). Regarding the degree of education that they pursue, the majority of respondents (67.51%) expressed a preference for bachelor's degree, followed by master's degree (19.13%), and doctoral degree (13%), while only 1 respondent (0.36%) indicated a preference for an associate degree.

3.4   Measures

The survey was translated into Indonesian using a double-blind back translation procedure to ensure that the meaning of the original English items was preserved. This was done to facilitate understanding of the questions by respondents, as English is not the primary language in Indonesian society. Participants were guaranteed absolute confidentiality. Moreover, there are a total of 37 measurement items utilized to evaluate all variables. Furthermore, the data collection tool used in this study was a questionnaire that employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

This study initially evaluated the reputation of universities using an instrument developed by Alessandri et al. (2006) and Fombrun and Gardberg (2000). This instrument employs ten items to evaluate three dimensions of university reputation: academic quality, external performance quality, and emotional engagement. Prospective students evaluate the private university they intend to pursue. Examples of items include: "The university offers high quality education", "The social media reports of the university are in general positive", and "I have a good feeling about the university" ($\alpha = 0.868$). The subsequent step involves the dissemination of a measurement instrument that has been adapted from Erkan & Evans (2016) in order to assess social media information. The construct of the need of Information construct, 4 items to evaluate the quality of argument, and 4 items to measure the source credibility information. Example items for need of information include: "Whenever I look for information about the university I'm going to pursue, I use information from social media" ($\alpha = 0.897$), quality of argument include: "I believe there is enough information to support my opinion" ($\alpha = 0.888$), and source credibility information include: "The information presented on social media is convincing me" ($\alpha = 0.908$). Finally, this study assessed the attractiveness of students by employing fifteen questions derived from three dimensions (general attractiveness, ambition to pursue, and prestige towards university) as outlined by Highhouse et al. (2003). The sample items provided are as follows: "For me, this university would be a good place to study", "I would accept a study offer from this university ", and " I am probably proud to say that I study at this university" ($\alpha = 0.911$).

4.   Results

4.1   Validity and Reliability Assessment

This study conducted several phases to assess the validity and reliability. The construct validity test was conducted by assessing the factor loading value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). In this study all items

met the criteria for construct validity. Next, this study conducted a convergent validity assessment by examining the average variance extracted (AVE). According to Hair et al. (2017), the minimum threshold for this test is set at 0.5. In our study, the convergent validity test successfully surpassed this threshold, indicating a significant result. Subsequently, this study assesses the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 and composite reliability value of 0.7 to gauge the internal consistency of each construct. This research demonstrates that the outcomes achieved are satisfactory. Table 2 provides a comprehensive presentation of the test results. Furthermore, this study conducted discriminant validity tests employing three different approaches. Initially, this study assessed the Fornell-Lacker criterion by comparing the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the construct correlation. The findings of this study indicate that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) holds greater statistical significance compared to the correlation between constructs. Therefore, the assessment of discriminant validity is satisfied (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root value of the AVE is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

The Discriminant Validity of Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	NOI	AQ	SCI	UR	SA
NOI	0.874				
AQ	0.615	0.866			
SCI	0.628	0.794	0.886		
UR	0.436	0.616	0.559	0.929	
SA	0.495	0.584	0.582	0.683	0.921

Note. NOI, Need of Information; AQ, Argument Quality; SCI, Source of Information; UR, University Reputation; SA, Student's Attractiveness

The subsequent assessment of discriminant validity involves employing the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which is a novel and comprehensive method for evaluating the discriminant validity of values that are less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 provides a comprehensive presentation of the HTMT ratio. In this investigation, all HTMT values were found to be less than 0.85, demonstrating a significant discriminant validity of the HTMT ratio.

Table 2

Heteroit-Monotrait Ratio

Construct	NOI	AQ	SCI	UR	SA
NOI	-				
AQ	0.688	-			
SCI	0.693	0.881	-		
UR	0.500	0.712	0.638	-	
SA	0.544	0.646	0.633	0.778	-

4.2 Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

This research employs the Smart-PLS 3.0 software to conduct the structural analysis. In order to assess the structural model, this study examines each endogenous research model, which is determined based on the R2 value. A structural model in the research is deemed plausible if it possesses an R2 value more than 0.1 or in close proximity to 1. The R2 value in this research fulfils the specified criteria, specifically 0.396, and is elucidated by the path coefficient of university reputation. On the other hand, the structural model, which incorporates social media information, exhibits an R2 value of 0.550. This study assesses the suggested hypothesis, which posits that the reputation of the university and the information available on social media have a noteworthy impact on the attractiveness of the prospective

students. Therefore, H2b (β = 0.410*** and t = 6.103), H2c (β = 0.215** and t = 2.901), and H1 (β = 0.509*** and t = 7.289), are accepted, while H2a (β = 0.050 and t = 0.707) has demonstrated insignificant influence on university reputation. Moreover, this study investigates the role of social media data in connecting university's reputation with the attractiveness of prospective students. Thus, the present study examined the mediating effects of need of information, argument quality, and information source credibility on the relationship between university's reputation and student's attractiveness. The results show that H3a (β = 0.025 and t = 0.714) indicate the university's reputation insignificantly mediates the relationship between need of information and student's attractiveness. Conversely, H3b (β = 0.209*** and t = 04.729) and H3c (β = 0.110* and t = 0.015) indicate the mediating of a university's reputation in the association between argument quality and information source credibility on student's attractiveness. The findings of this study demonstrate that argument quality and information source credibility have a positive impact on student's attractiveness, with content university's reputation playing a mediating role. Table 3 and figure 2 reveal the comprehensive result of hypothesis testing.
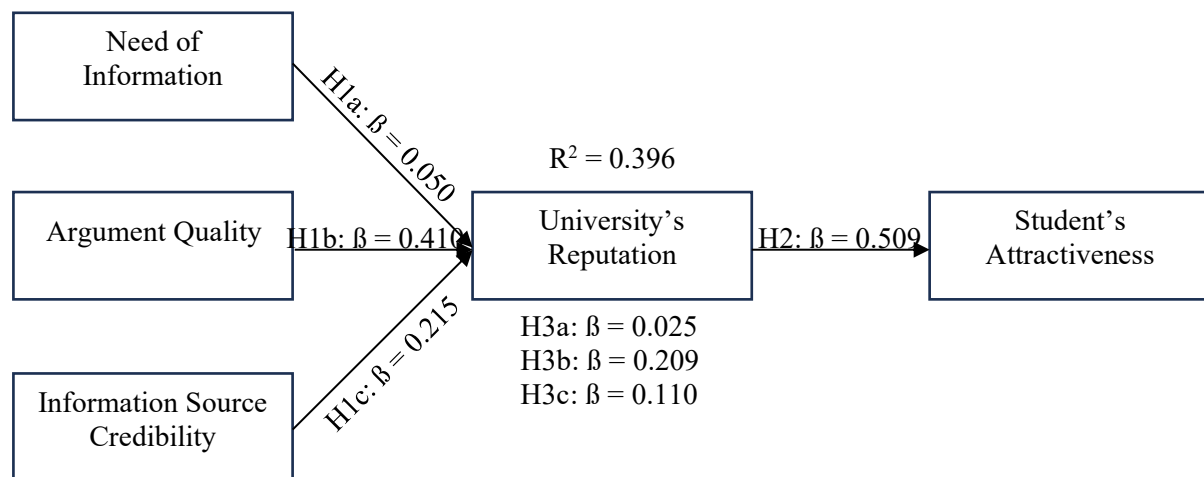
Figure 2

Structural Model Results

Table 3

Hypothesis Results

Causative Correlation	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Conclusion
Direct correlation				
H1a: NOI ⮕ UR	0.050	0.707	0.480	Rejected
H1b: AQ ⮕ UR	0.410	6.103	0.000	Supported
H1c: ISC ⮕ UR	0.215	2.901	0.004	Supported
H2: UR ⮕ SA	0.509	7.289	0.000	Supported
Indirect correlation				
H3a: NOI ⮕ UR ⮕ SA	0.025	0.714	0.475	Rejected
H3b: AQ ⮕ UR ⮕ SA	0.209	4.729	0.000	Supported
H3c: ISC ⮕ UR ⮕ SA	0.110	2.437	0.015	Supported

5.   Discussion

This study provides significant insights into a strategic approach for boosting interest among prospective students by promoting a university's reputation through digitalization, namely by utilizing social media platforms. The university's reputation is a key factor that attracts prospective students, as universities must establish a great reputation to generate interest among prospective students. Universities can leverage technology advancements and the growing prevalence of social media to enhance their reputation and specifically to attract prospective students. The research findings suggest that the reputation of a university has a substantial impact on shaping the interests and intents of prospective students. Similarly, social media information exerts a substantial impact on the preferences of prospective students. In addition, social media, which is considered as determinant factors in encouraging university reputation, plays a crucial role in determining the correlation between university's reputation and the attractiveness of prospective students.

This study utilizes partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyse the data. This analysis approach will offer a more comprehensive and profound comprehension of research, both in an academic and theoretical context. The PLS-SEM analysis conducted with the SmartPLS software revealed that the university's reputation positively influences the development of attractiveness among prospective students, either directly or through social media information. The study suggests that a university's reputation, as determined by its academic quality, external performance quality, and emotional engagement, can impact the attitudes of prospective students, influencing their decision to enroll at the university. Therefore, social media information plays a crucial role in shaping a university's reputation among prospective students. This is influenced by three key factors: the arguments quality presented, the source credibility information, and the need for information. This discovery aligns with Silaban et al. (2023), indicating that an organisation's reputation, as shown through social media, impacts individual interest.

Upon analysing the results of this research and doing experiments to examine the components of the research model, a hypothesis is formulated. These data indicate that the reputation of a university has a favourable influence on the ability to capture the attention of prospective students. This is corroborated by prior research, wherein the scholars discerned that students are more likely to exhibit interest in a university if the institution can demonstrate its esteemed reputation, hence instilling a sense of pride among the students for being affiliated with said university. This is feasible because when a university can demonstrate its exceptional academic standards, strong institutional performance, and a deep sense of connection to the community, it will have the capacity to generate interest among potential students.

Furthermore, social media information exerts a substantial and favorable impact on the level of interest exhibited by potential students. Given the advancements in digital technology, social media has emerged as a crucial platform for rapidly and extensively spreading information. The literature highlights the significance of social media in cultivating interest. If the information provided on social media addresses users' inquiries and originates from a reliable source, it will effectively persuade users and generate their interest when accessing information through social media. Given the significance of digital technology in the era of digital transformation, the utilization of social media is highly critical.

Social media information plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between university reputation and the attractiveness of prospective students. Social media information was designated as a mediator in this investigation. The results of this study suggest that social media information plays a role in connecting the reputation of a university with the interests of prospective students. These findings indicate that universities should utilize social media as a means to enhance their reputation and facilitate the acquisition of information for prospective students. This will help generate interest and confidence among prospective students, ultimately encouraging them to enrol in the university. Hence, the incorporation of social media data is crucial for establishing and promoting the university's reputation. Therefore, social media information plays a crucial role in establishing a university's reputation and generating interest among prospective students.

6.   Implications

6.1   Theoretical Implications

In general, this research enhances the understanding of how university reputation can be utilized as a marketing strategy to attract prospective students during the recruitment process within universities. Specifically, a university's standing on social media platforms can enhance the appeal of the university to potential students. Research suggests that a university's reputation, which encompasses the quality of academics, quality of external performance, and emotional engagement, enhances the likelihood of attracting attention from individuals. Moreover, social media plays a significant function as a platform for extensively and extensively spreading information regarding the university's reputation. The reputation of a university is shaped by both its overall image and the material available on social media. Prospective students' assessment of a university's reputation is influenced by how they perceive the value of this information.

According to the research, every aspect of a university's reputation has a noteworthy influence on the attention of potential students. Additionally, social media information serves as a mediator that can enhance a university's reputation and generate interest in the institution. This study demonstrates the utility of social media information in generating interest among potential students, as it is influenced by the university's reputation on social media platforms. This investigation highlights the substantial impact of a university's reputation on student interest, with social media information serving as a catalyst for generating interest among potential students. Hence, institutions should be urged to utilize social media as a tool to enhance their reputation while selecting the most qualified student candidates.

6.2   Practical Implications

The university's reputation, as portrayed on social media, can influence prospective students when making decisions. Social media is an effective tool for universities to disseminate all information pertaining to enhancing their reputation. Universities can acquire knowledge and develop effective strategies by leveraging their reputation to enhance the appeal of the university to potential students. Universities should recognize the significant impact of social media in distributing information to shape the preferences of potential students. Moreover, if the university's reputation is effectively communicated through social media, it is probable that potential students will be intrigued and have a solid foundation for deliberation when deciding to join the university. Consequently, university administrators must enhance the dissemination of information pertaining to their reputation in order to stimulate prospective student interest. In addition, university administrators must take into account the caliber of the arguments put forth and the credibility of the information source when uploading content regarding their institution. Similarly, prospective students acquire information from social media platforms when they perceive a need for information. Universities must meticulously deliberate on the information they choose to communicate on social media platforms. This ensures that prospective students are equipped with comprehensive and thoughtful information, enabling them to develop a profound interest in their desired university. When showcasing university reputation on social media, it is important to take into account the cogency of the argument, the quality of the conveyed information, and the users' information requirements. Users often seek out diverse information shared on social media platforms regarding their desired university and consult multiple reviews to assess the credibility of the arguments presented. If the information about a university's reputation on social media is deemed to be of high quality, accurate, and aligned with the needs of prospective students, it will have a greater impact on their intentions and generate increased interest. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that the level of interest exhibited by potential students is closely associated with the university's reputation as portrayed on social media platforms. Hence, it is imperative for university administrators to effectively employ social media as a powerful tool for formulating marketing strategies, aiming to sway potential students by leveraging the university's reputation and providing high-quality information. Additionally, universities can harness the potential of social media reviews to bolster the interest of prospective students by providing them with relevant information, which is displayed.

7.   Limitations and Future Research

This research is not without a limitation. As the initial, this research focuses on examining the university's reputation as an antecedent that stimulates the attractiveness of prospective students. In addition to the reputation of the university, it is anticipated that future research will provide novel insights into university reputation that can impact the preferences of prospective students, such as the university brand image and university brand identification (Schlesinger et al., 2023). Similarly, Tóth et al. (2020) asserted that social media serves as a precursor for evaluating attractiveness. Nevertheless, additional factors such as the level of social media involvement (Abbasi et al., 2023) and trust on social media (Keh & Xie, 2009) should be employed to assess the level of attractiveness among potential students. In addition, this study solely concentrates on analysing the determinants that impact the attractiveness of prospective students in social media. Additional research is required to forecast the inclination of potential students to be drawn towards the university based on their interest in the institution as portrayed on social media.

8.   Co-Author Contribution

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author1 carried out the fieldwork and prepared the literature review. Author2 wrote the introduction, literature review, and research methodology, as well as did the data entry. Author3 carried out the discussion. Author4 carried out the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results. Author 5 wrote the implications and limitations.

9.   Acknowledgements

10.   References

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