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The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing in The Promotional Program at Higher Education

Silviana✉, Abdul Kholik, Irman Suherman, Mira Salvia
Universitas Djuanda, Indonesia

Abstract

The number of higher education institutions in Indonesia continues to grow year after year. Fundamental changes in consumer behavior in this era of digital disruption—driven by the advent of information technology, computers, and the internet—have contributed to a shift in marketing strategies, as the market transitions from a conventional model to a technology-based one. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional program of Djuanda University, Bogor. This study employs a quantitative approach using survey analysis and the Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) method. The results of the study, which applied the MAUT method to the case study on the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional programs of Djuanda University in Bogor, yielded a more objective ranking, with "Interest" (0.696) receiving the highest score, followed by "Action" (0.662), "Attention" (0.661), "Share" (0.626), and "Search" (0.616) as the lowest. Thus, since the "Interest" indicator ranked first among the five other indicators, it can be concluded that students have a high level of interest in Djuanda University of Bogor's digital marketing efforts.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Digital Marketing, Higher Education

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✉**Correspondence Author:** silviana190998@gmail.com
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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed how organizations communicate with their target audiences, including institutions in the higher education sector. Universities increasingly operate in a competitive environment in which attracting prospective students requires more than traditional promotional activities. Digital marketing provides opportunities to disseminate institutional information, communicate educational offerings, and establish relationships with prospective students through online channels (Chaudhari & Bhornya, 2022; Farwati, 2024). These activities are particularly relevant because social media and other digital platforms have become important sources of information during students' university search and selection processes. Social media marketing in higher education encompasses several strategic objectives, including institutional branding, student engagement, relationship management, and enrollment decision-making (Chaker et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Husna et al., 2023). Consequently, understanding how digital marketing contributes to university promotion has become an important issue for higher education management.

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Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels and technologies to communicate value, promote products or services, and engage target audiences. In higher education, these activities may include institutional websites, social media accounts, online advertisements, digital content, and messaging applications (Chang et al., 2023; Subhan et al., 2023). Unlike conventional promotional approaches, digital marketing enables universities to communicate interactively, distribute information rapidly, and reach audiences across geographical boundaries. However, the availability of digital platforms does not automatically guarantee successful promotional outcomes (Gonzalez, 2024; Maulidia, 2023; Santoso et al., 2024). The effectiveness of a campaign depends on several factors, including content relevance, communication quality, audience engagement, platform suitability, and the alignment between promotional objectives and institutional resources. Research on social media marketing for student recruitment demonstrates the importance of developing evidence-based promotional strategies rather than relying solely on the presence of social media accounts (Queen, 2023; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). Therefore, evaluating digital marketing requires attention to both promotional activities and their measurable outcomes.

Investigated digital marketing and advertising in higher education and identified the relevance of social media, blogs, and short-message marketing to students' departmental choices and admission decisions (Chaker et al., 2022; Chaudhari & Bhornya, 2022). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of digital marketing should not be assumed to be uniform across institutions or communication channels. Different audiences may respond differently to promotional messages, while engagement indicators such as views, likes, and comments do not necessarily translate into inquiries or actual enrollment. Similarly, a platform with a large audience may generate less qualified interest than a channel that reaches a smaller but more relevant group of prospective students.

Digital platforms can support these objectives by facilitating the distribution of promotional information and interaction with prospective applicants. However, identifying the platforms used by a university is insufficient to establish whether its promotional program is effective (Shabur & Siddiki, 2024; Taufikin, 2023). An empirical assessment must examine how digital marketing activities are implemented, which indicators are used to evaluate their performance, and whether the observed outcomes correspond to the university's promotional objectives. Institutional data on audience reach, engagement, inquiries, and enrollment, where available, can provide a more comprehensive basis for assessment.

Although digital marketing in higher education has received growing scholarly attention, the literature remains diverse in its theoretical perspectives, institutional settings, research methods, and measured outcomes. A systematic literature review by Saputra et al. (2023) highlights the need to connect findings across studies of social media marketing and student recruitment, while Subhan et al. (2023) examine the broader role of social media in higher education marketing. These studies establish a valuable foundation for understanding digital promotion, but their broader scope does not automatically explain how promotional programs perform in a specific institutional context. Accordingly, an institution-level investigation can provide context-sensitive evidence about the implementation and performance of digital marketing at University. The contribution of this study lies in evaluating promotional practices against relevant empirical indicators rather than presuming that digital channels are inherently effective.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional program of Djuanda University Bogor. Specifically, it examines the digital channels employed, the implementation of promotional activities, and the available evidence of their performance in supporting institutional promotion and student recruitment. Where sufficient data are available, the evaluation may consider audience reach, engagement, prospective-student inquiries,

application numbers, and enrollment outcomes. These indicators can help determine whether digital marketing activities are achieving their intended objectives and identify areas requiring improvement. The study also seeks to generate practical recommendations for optimizing platform selection, promotional content, audience targeting, and performance measurement. By focusing on a specific university, this research is expected to contribute institution-level empirical evidence to the literature on digital marketing in higher education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional program of Djuanda University Bogor. A quantitative approach is appropriate because it enables the systematic measurement of research variables using numerical data and statistical analysis. The study uses a survey method to collect information from respondents through a structured questionnaire. Survey research facilitates the collection of standardized data from a defined population or sample. The questionnaire is designed to obtain information relevant to the research objectives, particularly regarding the implementation and perceived effectiveness of digital promotional channels.

Data are collected through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents selected according to the established sampling criteria. The questionnaire items are developed based on relevant indicators of digital marketing effectiveness, which may include promotional reach, content quality, audience engagement, accessibility of information, and the perceived contribution of digital media to university promotion. Responses are coded into numerical values to facilitate systematic analysis. Before the data are analyzed, the research instrument should be assessed for validity and reliability, while the collected data should be examined for completeness and consistency. The population, sample size, sampling technique, measurement scale, and data collection period must be specified to ensure methodological transparency.

The collected data are analyzed using the Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) method to evaluate digital marketing effectiveness across multiple criteria. MAUT is a multi-criteria decision analysis approach that transforms measurements of different attributes into utility values, allowing alternatives to be compared using a common evaluation framework. The criteria and their respective weights are established based on the research objectives and a clearly defined weighting procedure. The observed performance of each digital marketing alternative is then normalized into utility values, which are aggregated using the corresponding criterion weights to obtain an overall utility score. The resulting scores are used to rank the alternatives and identify the digital marketing channels that perform best according to the selected criteria. The interpretation of these rankings depends on the quality of the data, the justification of the criteria and weights, and the suitability of the MAUT model for the research objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 378 active undergraduate students from University Bogor participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed via Google Forms and printed copies, and all 378 questionnaires were reported as complete and eligible for analysis. Respondent characteristics were examined based on faculty affiliation, semester of study, gender, and age. These demographic characteristics provide an overview of the sample composition and contextualize the interpretation of students' perceptions of the university's digital marketing activities. Understanding the respondent profile is important for assessing the characteristics of the participants and considering the extent to which the findings may apply to the broader

undergraduate student population.

The semester distribution shows that second-semester students represented the largest proportion of respondents, accounting for 60% of the sample, followed by sixth-semester students (20%), eighth-semester students (16%), and fourth-semester students (4%). Regarding gender, female students accounted for 66% of respondents, while male students represented 34%. In terms of age, 62% of respondents were below 20 years old, 37% were between 21 and 25 years old, and 1% were above 25 years old. These distributions indicate that the sample was predominantly composed of younger undergraduate students, particularly those in their second semester.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents according to semester of study, gender, and age. The table consolidates the demographic information into a single presentation to facilitate comparison across categories. Faculty affiliation is also relevant to the respondent profile; however, the corresponding faculty distribution data are required to complete that part of the table accurately.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Percentage (%)
Semester of study	Second semester	60
	Fourth semester	4
	Sixth semester	20
	Eighth semester	16
Gender	Female	66
	Male	34
Age	Below 20 years	62
	21–25 years	37
	Above 25 years	1

Source: Authors' survey data (n = 378)

The demographic profile indicates that the sample was concentrated among second-semester students, female students, and respondents below 20 years of age. This composition provides relevant context for interpreting perceptions of digital marketing because the respondents represent a predominantly young undergraduate population. Nevertheless, these descriptive findings do not establish that younger students or female students are more responsive to digital promotional activities. Such conclusions would require additional analyses comparing digital marketing perceptions or responses across demographic groups. Furthermore, the representativeness of the sample cannot be determined from these percentages alone; it also depends on the sampling technique and the demographic distribution of the university's undergraduate population.

Descriptive Analysis

The researchers present the results of the descriptive analysis of the independent variable (X) data. This section presents a description of the data for each variable, including the mean, median, standard deviation, lowest score, and highest score. The following explains the descriptive statistics, which describe the data for all variables. The Attention Indicator (X1) has a mean of 18.59, a median of 19.0, and a standard deviation of 3.58, with a minimum (min) of 5.00 and a maximum (max) of 25.00. The Interest indicator (X2) has a mean of 19.38, a median of 20.00, and a standard deviation of 3.17, with a minimum (min) of 9.00 and a maximum (max) of 25.00. The Search indicator (X3) has a mean of 10.54, a median of 10.00, and a standard deviation of 2.41, with a minimum value of 3.00 and a maximum value of 9.00. The Action indicator (X4) has a mean of 14.10, a median of 15.00, and a standard deviation of 3.02, with a minim um value of 5.00 and a

maximum value of 20.00. The "Share" indicator (X5) has a mean of 10.58, a median of 11.00, and a standard deviation of 2.54, with a minimum value of 3.00 and a maximum value of 15.00.

MAUT Method

Determining Alternatives

There are five alternatives in this case study for recommending digital marketing in the promotional program of Djuanda University, Bogor (see Table 2).

Table 2. MAUT Method Alternatives

No.	Alternative
1	Attention (U1)
2	Interest (U2)
3	Search (U3)
4	Action (U4)
5	Share (U5)

Determining Criteria and Weights for Each Alternative

The determination of the level of importance for each criterion, based on the weight values used to recommend the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional program.

Table 3. Criteria and Weights for Each Alternative

No.	Criterion	Weight
1	FAIPG (K1)	0,25 - 0,90
2	FAPERTA (K2)	0,25 - 0,90
3	FE (K3)	0,25 - 0,90
4	FH (K4)	0,25 - 0,90
5	FIPHAL (K5)	0,25 - 0,90
6	FISIPKOM (K6)	0,25 - 0,90

Table 3, each assessment perception is rated as SB (Very Good) = 0.90, B (Good) = 0.75, C (Fair) = 0.50, and TB (Not Good) = 0.25. The following are the number of respondents for each alternative and the average score for each criterion (see Table 4).

Table 4. Average Scores for Each Criterion

Alternative	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6
U1	0,78	0,69	0,76	0,74	0,69	0,75
U2	0,81	0,74	0,81	0,76	0,72	0,76
U3	0,72	0,67	0,70	0,74	0,65	0,72
U4	0,78	0,70	0,75	0,75	0,70	0,75
U5	0,74	0,64	0,74	0,73	0,62	0,70

Assigning Preference Weights

Each criterion is assigned its own preference weight as follows Table 5.

Table 5. Preference Weights

No.	Criterion	Weights
1	FAIPG (K1)	0,25
2	FAPERTA (K2)	0,10
3	FE (K3)	0,25
4	FH (K4)	0,15
5	FIPHAL (K5)	0,10
6	FISIPKOM (K6)	0,15

Matrix Normalization Results

The normalization of the matrix of effective recommendations for digital marketing in the University of Djuanda Bogor's promotional program was obtained using equation (2).

Table 6. Matrix Normalization Results

Alternative	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6
U1	0,69	0,57	0,65	0,71	0,59	0,69
U2	0,72	0,62	0,70	0,73	0,62	0,72
U3	0,63	0,55	0,59	0,71	0,55	0,63
U4	0,69	0,58	0,64	0,72	0,6	0,69
U5	0,65	0,52	0,63	0,72	0,52	0,65

Results of Matrix Normalization with Preference Weights

The normalization of the matrix using preference weights for effective digital marketing recommendations in the promotional program was obtained using Equation (1).

U1 = (0.69 × 0.25) + (0.57 × 0.10) + (0.65 × 0.25) + (0.71 × 0.15) + (0.59 × 0.10) + (0.69 × 0.15)
= 0.661

U2 = (0.72 × 0.25) + (0.62 × 0.10) + (0.70 × 0.25) + (0.73 × 0.15) + (0.62 × 0.10) + (0.72 × 0.15)
= 0.696

U3 = (0.63 × 0.25) + (0.55 × 0.10) + (0.59 × 0.25) + (0.71 × 0.15) + (0.55 × 0.10) + (0.63 × 0.15)
= 0.616

U4 = (0.69 × 0.25) + (0.58 × 0.10) + (0.64 × 0.25) + (0.72 × 0.15) + (0.60 × 0.10) + (0.69 × 0.15)
= 0.662

U5 = (0.65 × 0.25) + (0.52 × 0.10) + (0.63 × 0.25) + (0.70 × 0.15) + (0.52 × 0.10) + (0.65 × 0.15)
= 0.626

Results of Multiplying the Normalized Matrix by Preference Weights

Table 7. Results of Multiplying the Normalized Matrix by Preference Weights

No.	Faculty	Result	Rank
1	Attention (U1)	0,661	3
2	Interest (U2)	0,696	1
3	Search (U3)	0,616	5
4	Action (U4)	0,662	2
5	Share (U5)	0,626	4

The results of the MAUT method applied to the case study on the effectiveness of digital marketing in the promotional program of Djuanda University, Bogor, yielded a more objective ranking, with Interest (0.696) as the highest score, followed by Action (0.662), Attention (0.661), Share (0.626), and Search (0.616) as the lowest.

Discussion

The MAUT analysis revealed that Interest achieved the highest utility score of 0.696, followed by Action (0.662), Attention (0.661), Share (0.626), and Search (0.616). These findings indicate that Interest received the most favorable overall assessment among the five indicators

within the evaluation framework. The result highlights the importance of promotional activities that capture and maintain audience interest. However, the ranking reflects the criteria and preference weights applied in the MAUT model and should not be interpreted as direct evidence of increased student enrollment.

The Attention indicator ranked third, with a utility score of 0.661. who emphasized the importance of comprehensive university information in influencing enrollment decisions. Dariah et al. (2019) similarly highlighted the role of creative, informative, and relatable social media content in engaging audiences. Promotional content featuring campus activities, scholarship opportunities, academic programs, and alumni experiences may help attract prospective students. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these approaches should be evaluated using actual engagement metrics rather than inferred solely from the MAUT score.

Interest ranked first, with a utility score of 0.696, suggesting that this indicator received the strongest overall assessment across the six faculty-based criteria. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of information completeness and relevant promotional content in attracting audience interest (Fadilah et al., 2022; Sharifi et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2021). In higher education, prospective students may be more interested in promotional messages that provide clear information about academic programs, tuition fees, scholarships, facilities, and admission procedures. Therefore, universities should prioritize informative and audience-oriented content while evaluating its performance through engagement indicators and prospective students' responses.

Search obtained the lowest utility score, at 0.616. This result suggests that the Search indicator received a comparatively less favorable assessment than the other indicators. Previous research has shown that digital platforms facilitate information seeking by providing access to websites and other online sources (Gupta, 2023; Yunita & Mulyadi, 2024). One possible explanation is that respondents may require more accessible and comprehensive information to explore university offerings further. Accordingly, Djuanda University Bogor could strengthen the connection between social media content and official information sources, including program descriptions, admission requirements, scholarship details, and contact information. However, the present findings do not establish the specific reasons for the relatively low Search score.

Action ranked second, with a utility score of 0.662, indicating a relatively favorable assessment within the MAUT framework. Previous studies have emphasized the role of information accessibility and direct interaction in supporting decision-making (Ortan et al., 2021; Siswanto et al., 2023). In university promotion, these interactions may include inquiries about academic programs, tuition fees, scholarships, and enrollment procedures. Digital communication channels can facilitate such interactions and help prospective students obtain relevant information. Nevertheless, the Action score cannot independently demonstrate that digital marketing has increased applications or enrollment. Further evaluation should incorporate measurable outcomes, such as inquiries, completed applications, and student registrations.

Share ranked fourth, with a reported utility score of 0.626, suggesting that sharing-related responses received a lower assessment than Interest, Action, and Attention. Previous studies have discussed the role of information sharing in exchanging experiences and influencing decision-making (Kenfack & Öztüren, 2021; Perović & Kosor, 2020). In higher education promotion, shareable content may include scholarship announcements, admission guides, student experiences, and alumni achievements. Such content may extend promotional reach through users' personal networks. However, the current results do not establish why Share received a lower score or whether sharing behavior contributes directly to enrollment. Further analysis using social media sharing metrics and referral data would help clarify its practical contribution.

Digital marketing evaluation at Djuanda University Bogor should consider the relationship between audience interest, subsequent actions, initial attention, information sharing, and information seeking. The MAUT ranking provides a structured comparison of these indicators, but its results depend on the selected criteria, preference weights, and normalization procedure. Moreover, because the respondents were active undergraduate students, their perceptions may not fully represent the behavior of prospective students during the admission process. Future research should combine survey findings with social media analytics, prospective-student data, and admission records to assess whether the observed indicator rankings correspond to measurable promotional outcomes. This approach would provide a stronger empirical basis for improving the university's digital marketing strategy.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of digital marketing for the "Interest" indicator ranked first with a value of 0.696, "Action" ranked second with a value of 0.662, "Attention" ranked third with a value of 0.661, "Share" ranked fourth with a value of 0.626, and "Search" in last place with a value of 0.616. Thus, the "Interest" indicator is considered the most effective, as it ranks first among the other indicators. These results indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing in the University of Djuanda Bogor's promotional program lies more in social media's ability to generate interest than in encouraging respondents to conduct further information searches. The high "Interest" score suggests that the information and content shared via social media successfully capture respondents' interest in the University of Djuanda Bogor. Meanwhile, the low "Search" score indicates that the activity of conducting further information searches via social media remains relatively low compared to other stages. Therefore, Djuanda University of Bogor's digital marketing strategy needs to maintain content that can build interest while simultaneously strengthening the provision of more comprehensive and easily accessible information, so that the process—from attention, to interest, to information search, to action—can proceed more optimally.

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