



Factors Influencing Students' Higher Education: Marketing, Fees, Word of Mouth

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of digital marketing, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth (WOM) promotion on students' decision to choose the Faculty of Economics and Business at Dr Soetomo University. This multi-faceted decision-making process is shaped by various factors, including the interaction between digital marketing efforts, tuition fees, and WOM promotions. This study aims to understand how these factors interact and influence student choice. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data was collected from 100 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Dr Soetomo University. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms. The results showed that digital marketing alone did not significantly influence students' decision to choose Unitomo. However, tuition fees and WOM have a significant partial impact on student choice. In addition, when considered together, digital marketing, tuition fees, and WOM significantly influence the decision-making process. The most dominant factor influencing students' decision is tuition fees. The implications of these findings suggest that while digital marketing needs to be optimised, conventional methods and word of mouth remain important in influencing student decisions. Universities should consider integrating effective digital marketing strategies with strong word-of-mouth campaigns to enhance their recruitment efforts. This study contributes valuable insights for higher education marketers and policy makers who aim to attract and retain students effectively.

Keyword: Digital Marketing, Word of Mouth, Student Decision, Tuition Fee

Introduction

The decision-making process of prospective students in choosing a university is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors, including digital marketing strategies, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth communication (Hsu et al., 2020; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2013). This study, set at Dr. Soetomo University's Faculty of Economics and Business in Surabaya, explores these dynamics, focusing on how digital marketing and word-of-mouth interact to shape the decision-making of domestic students. Digital marketing is the process of promoting a product, service, or brand through digital media. It involves the use of an internet network for its operations (Riswandi et al., 2024).

Digital marketing has emerged as a crucial tool for universities to attract prospective students, significantly affecting their perceptions of the institution's brand and, consequently, their educational choices (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2013). Additionally, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) reinforces or changes these perceptions, playing a vital role in this context (Hsu et al., 2020).

Although significant research has examined the impact of digital marketing and tuition fees on college choice, there remain gaps in understanding how these factors interact with word-of-mouth recommendations within specific socio-economic and cultural contexts. For instance, the influence of digital marketing on college choice, when combined with word-of-mouth in a local context like that of economics and business students in Surabaya, is not well understood. This study hypothesizes that while digital marketing and tuition fees directly influence student decisions, positive word-of-mouth can significantly modulate this effect (Bahrs & Siedler, 2019; Rahayu, 2021). To address this gap, this research dissects the dynamics between marketed information and informal peer interactions, aiming to offer a nuanced understanding of how marketing strategies can be optimized in the presence of strong social influence, thereby assisting educational institutions in crafting more targeted and effective new student admission strategies.

The literature suggests that integrating digital marketing with strategies that leverage word-of-mouth can enhance their effectiveness. For example, testimonials and experiences from current students and alumni can increase the credibility and appeal of digital marketing campaigns (Hsu et al., 2020). Aligning digital content with the interests and values of word-of-mouth promotions can also increase the relevance and impact of marketing messages (Suhaily & Darmoyo, 2017). Theoretical models of social influence and marketing communications suggest that integrating digital marketing with word-of-mouth can create a coherent narrative that resonates with prospective students' aspirations and concerns (Ambarwati & Sari, 2024).

Despite extensive research on digital marketing and word-of-mouth, comprehensive studies that examine these factors along with tuition fees in the specific context of economics and business education in Indonesia are lacking (G. A. Aghivirwiati, 2022).

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Previous research often treated these elements separately or focused on broader, less specific student populations (Bahrs & Siedler, 2019). This study addresses this gap by focusing on how digital marketing, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth influence the decision-making process of prospective students at Dr. Soetomo University. This focus provides valuable insights into the relative weight of these factors in students' college selection process

within the economic and business education landscape of Surabaya.

Digital marketing in the education sector has been recognized as a powerful tool to influence the perceptions and decisions of prospective students (Rawat et al., 2022a). The rise of social media and digital platforms has transformed traditional marketing approaches, allowing institutions to reach a wider audience with more targeted messages (Wu & Chen, 2021). Jalilvand & Samiei (2013) highlighted that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) significantly impacts brand image and purchase intention, including in education. Muis et al. (2020) emphasized that eWOM, combined with digital marketing efforts, substantially shapes student decisions by enhancing university reputation. This interaction suggests a crucial link between digital marketing strategies and eWOM in influencing how prospective students perceive educational institutions.

Digital marketing strategies play an important role in shaping students' perceptions of higher education institutions and influencing their decision-making process (Rajkumar et al., 2022a). Utilizing digital platforms, social media, and online advertising can influence student awareness, engagement, and interaction with educational offerings (Rajkumar et al., 2022b). The impact of rising tuition fees on student mobility and dropout rates underscores the importance of understanding the financial implications of higher education choices (Stoyanova, R. & Goranova, 2021). Moreover, the integration of digital marketing in students' decision-making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of alternative promotion methods and digital communication channels (Rawat et al., 2022b).

Therefore, digital marketing, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth communication are interconnected factors that influence students' decisions regarding higher education (Arnott & Gao, 2021). Understanding these nuances, such as the moderating effect of customer commitment on word-of-mouth communication and the influence of financial concerns on student engagement, is crucial for educational institutions to effectively tailor their marketing strategies and support students in making informed decisions about their higher education journey.

Tuition fees are a significant determinant in the college selection process. (Bahrs & Siedler, 2019) documented that tuition fees shape students' educational choices, indicating that higher fees may deter some prospective students unless perceived value or financial aid options offset these costs. Le et al. (2021) discussed how tuition fee policies impact student engagement and decision-making, suggesting that understanding these dynamics is crucial for institutions looking to attract a diverse student body. This research underscores the importance of tuition fee structures in influencing prospective students' decisions, especially in an economic climate where cost is a significant issue.

The relationship between commitment and word-of-mouth communication in the context of higher education is significant (Oraedu et al., 2020). Commitment influences students' conversations about higher education, highlighting the link between marketing strategies and students' decision-making processes (Cownie, 2019). The discourse around tuition fees in higher education reflects a multifaceted landscape encompassing financial management, student decision-making, institutional sustainability, and educational equity (Lee et al., 2020). Understanding the complex dynamics of tuition fee policies and their implications for students, institutions, and the broader education system is critical to promoting transparency, accessibility, and success in higher education.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is a powerful form of communication that influences consumer behavior and decision-making processes. It includes informal interactions regarding products, services, brands, or social issues (Syah & Wijoyo, 2021). WOM has evolved into electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), involving online platforms like blogs, reviews, and social networking sites (Hussain et al., 2020). The impact of WOM extends to various aspects of marketing, including brand sensitivity, consumer purchase intention, and product quality (G. Aghivirwati, 2022). In the realm of students' decision-making process regarding higher education, the interaction between word-of-mouth, digital marketing, and tuition fees is crucial. Reference groups, which serve as benchmarks for individuals, significantly influence students' choice of educational institutions (Ambarwati & Sari, 2024). Positive word-of-mouth from peers and online platforms can enhance students' perceptions of educational offerings and contribute to their decision-making process (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022). In addition, word-of-mouth moderation, such as the influence of customer engagement experiences, can play a role in shaping student satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately enrolment decisions (Thakur, 2019).

This study explores how word-of-mouth, digital marketing, and tuition fees influence students' choices in selecting higher education institutions. By looking closely at Dr. Soetomo University's Faculty of Economics and Business, the research aims to uncover how these elements shape students' perceptions and decisions. The findings will provide useful insights for educational policies and marketing strategies. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for institutions and marketers to effectively connect with prospective students and enhance their brand credibility.

Method

Research Design

This research utilises a cross-sectional survey design to quantitatively assess the influence of digital marketing, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth promotion on college decision-making among prospective students, with a focus on word-of-mouth influence (Hands, 2022). This design facilitates the examination of the relationship between these variables at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the factors that influence student choice during the current educational year. This approach is appropriate for testing the proposed hypotheses and for establishing correlations between various factors and students' decision-making processes.

Variable Identification

According to Sugiyono (2019: 68), variables are attributes or properties that have certain variations that are studied to draw conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019). This study uses two types of variables: independent variables and dependent variables. Independent variables are variables that affect or cause changes in the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the independent variables include digital marketing (X1), tuition fees (X2), and word-of-mouth (X3).

Digital Marketing (X1) is an online marketing method that utilises digital technology and social media. Indicators of digital marketing include website information quality (X1.1), website accessibility (X1.2), SEO optimisation (X1.3), social media interaction (X1.4), and social media content (X1.5). Education Cost (X2) is a financial contribution to education. Indicators include the amount of tuition fees (X2.1), the cost of college equipment (X2.2), the ease of payment procedures (X2.3), the benefits received (X2.4), and the availability of scholarships (X2.5). WOM (X3) is an individual or group that influences a person's decision. WOM indicators include the influence of social power (X3.1), the influence of reference power (X3.2), the influence of informative power (X3.3), the influence of value expression (X3.4), and the influence of coercive power (X3.5).

The dependent variable is the variable that is influenced by the independent variable (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, the dependent variable is the decision to choose (Y), namely consumer behaviour in making choices after going through the evaluation

process. Indicators of the decision to choose include college reputation (Y1.1), tuition fees (Y1.2), college facilities (Y1.3), college location (Y1.4), study programme (Y1.5), and academic environment (Y1.6).

Variable Measurement

This study uses the Likert scale technique to evaluate the views, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals or groups towards social phenomena (Sugiyono, 2019). Likert scale responses vary from strongly agree to strongly disagree with each statement on the instrument.

Research Instruments

The main instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire developed based on the research objectives. The questionnaire will include Likert-scale items and multiple-choice questions to evaluate students' perceptions of digital marketing, the impact of tuition fees, the influence of their word-of-mouth promotion, and their experience with word-of-mouth promotion about Dr Soetomo University Surabaya. The questionnaire will also include demographic questions to enable subgroup analysis.

Score (5-1)	Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Strongly Agree
3	Agree
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Source: Sugiyono (2019: 147)

Participants

Participants for the quantitative survey will consist of The total population in this study was 598 students consisting of 164 students in the class of 2020, 208 students in the class of 2021, and 226 students in the class of 2022. The population used in this study are undergraduate students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Dr Soetomo University Surabaya Class of 2020-2022 who have Her Registration for the 2022/2023 academic year. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that the sample was representative of the student population in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, and previous educational background. Eligibility criteria included students who were actively exploring their higher education options within the geographic and demographic scope of the study.

Sample

According to Sugiyono (2019: 127), the sample is part of the population chosen as a representation of the population as a whole. This study uses the probability sampling method, which provides equal opportunities for each member of the population to be selected as a sample (Sugiyono, 2019). This technique ensures that all members of the population have an equal opportunity to be involved in the research.

In this study, a proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used, which is suitable for populations that are not homogeneous and have strata proportionally. Respondent criteria include active students of the Faculty of Economics and Business, undergraduate students, and students of the 2020-2022 batch who have her-registered. From a population of 598 students, the sample was calculated using the Slovin formula with an error rate of 10%, resulting in a sample of 86 respondents. In order for the questionnaire to be evenly distributed, the 86 respondents were divided according to their respective batches using a proportional formula. As a result, 24 students of class 2020, 30 students of class 2021, and 32 students of class 2022 will be respondents in this study.

Data Type

According to Sugiyono (2019: 193), primary data is a data source that directly provides information to data collectors. In this study, primary data was obtained through a survey method, in which a questionnaire or questionnaire containing written questions was distributed online (Sugiyono, 2019). The use of online questionnaires allows researchers to collect data efficiently from widely dispersed respondents.

On the other hand, secondary data is a source that does not directly provide information to data collectors (Sugiyono, 2019). In this study, secondary data was obtained from various supporting sources, such as previous research and literature. This secondary data helps enrich the analysis and provides additional context that is relevant to understanding the phenomenon being studied.

Data Collection Technique

In order to collect primary data, this study used the distribution of questionnaires. Data is obtained by asking various sets of questions or statements to respondents to obtain the necessary information (Sugiyono, 2019). Primary data collection was carried out through an online survey using Google Form, which was distributed to active undergraduate students from 2020 to 2022 from the Faculty of Economics and Business at Dr Soetomo University Surabaya. Respondents were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing questions related to indicators of the independent variable and the dependent variable, and provide answers based on personal opinion. Meanwhile, secondary data, the collection technique was carried out through literature studies, including literature from books and research journals. This secondary data supports the research by providing additional context and references from previous studies.

Analysis Method

Validity Test: The validity test is used to determine whether the questionnaire is valid or not (Purnomo, 2016). A question is considered valid if the r_{count} value is greater than r_{table} at a significance of 0.10. If the r_{count} value is less than r_{table} , then the question is invalid.

Reliability Test: The reliability test measures the consistency of the measuring instrument, which in this case is a questionnaire (Purnomo, 2016). The method used is Cronbach Alpha. If the Cronbach Alpha value is above 0.60, the measuring instrument is considered to have good consistency and is acceptable. Conversely, a value below 0.60 indicates that the measuring instrument is not reliable.

Classical Assumption Test: Classical assumptions must be met in multiple linear regression analysis and include several tests:

Normality Test: This test uses the Kolmogorov Smirnov test to determine whether the data is normally distributed. Data is considered normal if the probability value is greater than 0.10 (Purnomo, 2016: 83).

Multicollinearity Test: This test checks whether there is a correlation between independent variables using the tolerance value (>0.1) and VIF (<10) (Purnomo, 2016: 116). If these conditions are met, there is no multicollinearity.

Heteroscedasticity Test: This test uses the Glejser test to test whether there is a difference in variance in the data. There is no heteroscedasticity if the significance value of the regression equation is greater than 0.10 (Purnomo, 2016).

Hypothesis Testing: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Used to analyse the effect of independent variables (digital marketing, tuition fees, and WOM) on the dependent variable (decision to choose) (Purnomo, 2016: 161). The formula used is:

$$Y = a + b1.x1 + b2.x2 + b3.x3 + e$$

Description:

Y = Decision to choose

a = Constant

b = Regression coefficient

x1 = Digital marketing

x2 = Tuition fee

x3 = WOM

e = 10% error

F test: Used to determine the simultaneous effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. H₀ is rejected if F_{count} is greater than F_{table} with a significance of less than 0.10 (Purnomo, 2016: 169).

The t test: Used to test the partial effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. H₀ is rejected if T_{count} is greater than T_{table} with a significance of 0.10 (Purnomo, 2016: 172).

Test Coefficient of Determination (R²): Shows how much the independent variable explains the dependent variable. The R² value is located on the Model Summary in SPSS. A small R² value indicates a limited ability of the independent variables to explain the dependent variable (Purnomo, 2016).

In this study, the data were processed and analysed using SPSS 21. After the data were collected, they were tabulated in Excel and analysed using hypothesis testing to answer the research problem formulation.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis of Respondent Characteristics

This study involved undergraduate students of the Faculty of Economics and Business in the 2020-2022 batch of Development Economics, Accounting, and Management Study Programmes who had her-registered. The selection of subjects was carried out based on preliminary observations by the researcher to determine the problem to be studied. In accordance with the proportionate stratified random sampling method, researchers ensure that each sample member has an equal portion, which is in accordance with the characteristics of the population and research objectives. The respondent's identity includes name, NIM, major or study programme, class year, and employment status. A total of 86 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business were selected as respondents, consisting of students from the Development Economics, Accounting, and Management programmes. Respondents completed a questionnaire to provide primary data. The percentage of respondents was grouped by major, year of study, and employment status, which will be explained further in this study

Descriptive Analysis of Respondent Data Characteristics

1) Study Programme

Table 2. Data Characteristics of FEB Student Study Programmes 2020-2022 Study Programme

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Morning Management	45	52,3	52,3	52,3
	Afternoon Management	11	12,8	12,8	65,1
	Morning Accounting	21	24,4	24,4	89,5
	Afternoon Accounting	4	4,7	4,7	94,2
	Development Economics Afternoon	5	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	86	100,0	100,0	

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Respondents in this study came from five study programmes: Morning Management, Afternoon Management, Morning Accounting, Afternoon Accounting, and Development Economics. Of the total 86 respondents, 45 respondents came from Morning Management, 11 from Afternoon Management, 21 from Morning Accounting, 4 from Afternoon

Accounting, and 5 from Development Economics. This data shows that Morning Management students dominated the questionnaire filling with 52.3% of the total respondents. This dominance occurs because the distribution of questionnaires is easier to do to morning class students and because the number of Management students is greater than other majors.

2) Class Year

Table 3. Characteristics of FEB Student Data FY 2020-2022 Class Year

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2020	24	27,9	27,9	27,9
2021	30	34,9	34,9	62,8
2022	32	37,2	37,2	100,0
Total	86	100,0	100,0	

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

This study collected data from three batches: 2020, 2021, and 2022. The questionnaire was distributed randomly through social media groups. Of the 86 respondents, 24 respondents were from the class of 2020, 30 respondents from the class of 2021, and 32 respondents from the

class of 2022. Batch 2022 had the highest number of respondents with 32 respondents (37.2%). This is due to the easy access to distributing questionnaires through Google Form, chat groups, and coordination from class leaders who facilitate the distribution of questionnaires both online and offline.

3) FEB Student Status

Table 4. Characteristics of FEB Student Status Class of 2020-2022 Student Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not Employed	64	74,4	74,4	74,4
Already Working	22	25,6	25,6	100,0
Total	86	100,0	100,0	

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

This study included questions about students' working status to understand how working conditions affect motivation to continue their studies and consideration of education financing. Of the 86 respondents, 64 were unemployed and 22 were employed. The majority of respondents were unemployed students (74.4%). This is because the questionnaire is easier to distribute to morning (regular) class students who are easier to meet than afternoon class students. Morning classes are generally attended by students who have not worked, while afternoon classes are more often attended by students who work and also want to continue their higher education.

Respondents' Assessment of Variables

From distributing questionnaires to respondents, the distribution of independent variables such as digital marketing (X1), tuition fees (X2), WOM (X3), and the dependent variable of choice decision (Y1) can be analysed. The intervals of these variables are determined using Likert scale data and calculations with relevant formulas.

$$\text{Interval level value} = \frac{\text{Highest Score} - \text{Lowest Score}}{\text{Number of Criteria}}$$

$$\text{Scale width} = \frac{5-1}{5} = 0,8$$

Description:

- Minimum Index = 1
- Maximum Index = 5
- Interval = 5 - 1 = 4
- Interval Distance = (5-1) : 5 = 0,8

Scale	Interval Value	Category
1	1,8	Strongly Disagree
1,81	2,6	Disagree
2,61	3,4	Agree
3,41	4,2	Strongly Agree
4,21	5	Strongly Agree

Source: Sugiyono (2019)

From the analysis of the responses of 86 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, the following results were gathered regarding each variable: digital marketing (X1), tuition fees (X2), WOM (X3), and choice decision (Y1). These responses provide insight into how each variable influences the decision to choose a college

1) Digital Marketing Variable (X1)

Table 6. Distribution of respondents' results related to Digital Marketing variables Descriptive Statistics

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
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X1.1	86	2	5	3,60	,771
X1.2	86	2	5	3,80	,852
X1.3	86	2	5	3,63	,827
X1.4	86	2	5	3,57	,728
X1.5	86	1	5	3,64	,825
Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on table 6, the results of the distribution of respondents' responses regarding digital marketing variables show a "strongly agree" category with an average score of 3.64 for five digital marketing indicators. The highest score of 3.80 is in indicator X1.2, namely "The Unitomo website is easily accessible from various devices such as computers, mobile phones, or tablets." This shows that respondents strongly agree that the Unitomo website is easily accessible via various devices. This shows that respondents strongly agree that the Unitomo website is easily accessible through various devices.

2) Tuition Fee Variable (X2)

Table 7. Distribution of respondents' results related to the variable Cost of Education Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X2.1	86	2	5	3,80	,733
X2.2	86	1	5	3,69	,801
X2.3	86	3	5	4,07	,682
X2.4	86	3	5	4,17	,654
X2.5	86	1	5	3,71	,838
Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on table 7, the results of the distribution of respondents' responses regarding the education cost variable show a "strongly agree" category with an average score of 3.88 for five indicators of education costs. The highest score of 4.17 is in indicator X2.4, namely "Unitomo provides various kinds of scholarships such as KIP, Prestasi and others which can reduce the cost of attending college." This shows that respondents feel very helped by the various scholarships provided, thus increasing their interest in choosing Unitomo.

3) Word of Mouth Variable (X3)

Table 8. Distribution of respondents' results related to WOM variables Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
X3.1	86	3	5	3,91	,713
X3.2	86	1	5	3,48	,808
X3.3	86	1	5	3,35	1,135
X3.4	86	2	5	3,77	,777
X3.5	86	1	5	3,60	,974
Valid N (listwise)	86				

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on table 8, the results of the distribution of respondents' responses regarding the WOM variable show the "strongly agree" category with an average score of 3.62 for the five WOM indicators. The highest score of 3.91 is in indicator X3.1, namely "I tend to consider other people's opinions or suggestions to get a more complete understanding of a topic." This shows that respondents strongly consider other people's suggestions and opinions in making decisions, including in making decisions. This shows that respondents strongly consider the advice and opinions of others in making decisions, including in choosing a place of further study such as Unitomo

4) Choice Decision Variable (Y1)

Table 9. Distribution of respondents' results related to the Choice Decision variable Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Y1.1	86	1	5	4,06	,859
Y1.2	86	3	5	3,99	,759
Y1.3	86	1	5	3,77	,697
Y1.4	86	3	5	4,05	,649
Y1.5	86	1	5	4,02	,751
Y1.6	86	3	5	4,15	,660

Valid N (listwise)	86
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Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on table 9, the results of the distribution of respondents' responses regarding the choice decision variable show the "strongly agree" category with an average score of 4.00 for the six indicators of choice decisions. The highest score of 4.15 is in indicator Y1.6, namely "The academic environment at Unitomo facilitates me to develop myself through a Student Activity Unit that supports the exchange of ideas and collaboration between students and lecturers." This shows that respondents strongly agree that the academic environment at Unitomo supports self-development through academic and non-academic activities, which is an important factor in their decision to choose Unitomo as a place of further study.

Instrument Test

1) Validity Test

Table 10. Digital Marketing Validity Test Results (X1)

		Correlations					
		X1.1	X1.2	X1.3	X1.4	X1.5	Average_X1
X1.1	Pearson Correlation	1	,489**	,542**	,573**	,513**	,790**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X1.2	Pearson Correlation	,489**	1	,579**	,487**	,484**	,786**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X1.3	Pearson Correlation	,542**	,579**	1	,493**	,439**	,785**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X1.4	Pearson Correlation	,573**	,487**	,493**	1	,561**	,784**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X1.5	Pearson Correlation	,513**	,484**	,439**	,561**	1	,768**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
Average_X1	Pearson Correlation	,790**	,786**	,785**	,784**	,768**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the analysis results, the score value of each question item is compared with the total score. R table is sought at 10% significance with a two-sided test and $n = 84$, resulting in an r table of 0.1786. Based on the table, the Pearson correlation value (r count) for each question item on the digital marketing variable is greater than r table (0.1786), so all question items are declared valid.

Table 11. Educational Cost Validity Test Results (X2)

		Correlations					
		X2.1	X2.2	X2.3	X2.4	X2.5	Average_X2
X2.1	Pearson Correlation	1	,374**	,263*	,490**	,614**	,767**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,014	,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X2.2	Pearson Correlation	,374**	1	,299**	,263*	,423**	,677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,005	,014	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X2.3	Pearson Correlation	,263*	,299**	1	,420**	,365**	,635**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,014	,005		,000	,001	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X2.4	Pearson Correlation	,490**	,263*	,420**	1	,415**	,697**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,014	,000		,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X2.5	Pearson Correlation	,614**	,423**	,365**	,415**	1	,805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,001	,000		,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
Average_X2	Pearson Correlation	,767**	,677**	,635**	,697**	,805**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the table analysis results, the score value of each question item is compared with the total score. With 10% significance and $n=84$, the r table is 0.1786. Based on the table, the Pearson correlation value (r count) for each question item on the tuition fee variable is greater than r table (0.1786), so all question items are declared valid.

Table 12. Reference Group Validity Test Results (X3)

		Correlations					
		X3.1	X3.2	X3.3	X3.4	X3.5	Average_X3
X3.1	Pearson Correlation	1	,486**	,433**	,406**	,319**	,646**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000	,003	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X3.2	Pearson Correlation	,486**	1	,638**	,460**	,527**	,798**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X3.3	Pearson Correlation	,433**	,638**	1	,600**	,552**	,860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X3.4	Pearson Correlation	,406**	,460**	,600**	1	,561**	,774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
X3.5	Pearson Correlation	,319**	,527**	,552**	,561**	1	,781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003	,000	,000	,000		,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86
Average_X3	Pearson Correlation	,646**	,798**	,860**	,774**	,781**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the table analysis results, the score value of each question item is compared with the total score. With a significance of 10% and $n = 84$, the r table is 0.1786. Based on the table, the Pearson correlation value (r count) for each question item on the WOM variable is greater than r table (0.1786), so all question items are declared valid.

Table 13. Student Decision Validity Test Results (Y1)

		Correlations						
		Y1.1	Y1.2	Y1.3	Y1.4	Y1.5	Y1.6	Average_Y1
Y1.1	Pearson Correlation	1	,308**	,298**	,375**	,290**	,399**	,656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,004	,005	,000	,007	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Y1.2	Pearson Correlation	,308**	1	,373**	,455**	,578**	,215**	,691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,004		,000	,000	,000	,047	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Y1.3	Pearson Correlation	,298**	,373**	1	,570**	,437**	,435**	,721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Y1.4	Pearson Correlation	,375**	,455**	,570**	1	,529**	,423**	,776**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Y1.5	Pearson Correlation	,290**	,578**	,437**	,529**	1	,349**	,750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007	,000	,000	,000		,001	,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Y1.6	Pearson Correlation	,399**	,215**	,435**	,423**	,349**	1	,645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,047	,000	,000	,001		,000
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86
Average_Y1	Pearson Correlation	,656**	,691**	,721**	,776**	,750**	,645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	N	86	86	86	86	86	86	86

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the table analysis results, the score value of each question item is compared with the total score. With a significance of 10% and $n = 84$, the r table is 0.1786. Based on the table, the Pearson correlation value (r count) for each question item on the student decision variable is greater than r table (0.1786), so all question items are declared valid.

Reliability Test

Variable reliability is determined based on the Cronbach's Alpha value, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is more than 0.60, the research variable is considered reliable. The results of the reliability test are as follows:

1) *Digital Marketing Variable (X1)***Table 14.** Digital Marketing Reliability Test (X1) Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,840	5

Table 15. Item total statistic

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If Item Deleted	Corrected Total-Item Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted
X 1.1	14,64	6,586	,664	,803
X 1.2	14,44	6,344	,639	,810
X 1.3	14,62	6,427	,664	,808
X 1.4	14,67	6,763	,664	,804
X 1.5	14,60	6,524	,618	,816

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the table above, it can be seen that the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.840 is greater than 0.60. Then the Digital marketing variable is proven to be reliable

2) *Tuition Fee Variable (X2)***Table 16.** Reliability Test of Education Costs (X2) Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,763	5

Table 17. Item total statistic

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If Item Deleted	Corrected Total-Item Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted
X 2.1	15,64	4,657	,690	,693
X 2.2	15,76	4,869	,455	,749
X 2.3	15,37	5,272	,411	,749
X 2.4	15,27	5,116	,533	,722
X 2.5	15,73	4,222	,637	,679

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the table above, it can be seen that the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.763 is greater than 0.60. Then the variable Cost of education proved to be reliable.

3) *Word of Mouth Variable (X3)***Table 18.** WOM Reliability Test (X3) Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,828	5

Table 19. Item total statistic

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If Item Deleted	Corrected Total-Item Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted
X 3.1	14,20	9,196	,498	,827
X 3.2	14,63	8,072	,683	,780
X 3.3	14,76	6,422	,721	,770
X 3.4	14,34	8,320	,655	,789
X 3.5	14,60	7,571	,624	,795

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

The data table above shows that the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.828 is greater than 0.60. Then the WOM variable is proven to be reliable

4) *Choice Decision Variable (Y1)***Table 20.** Reliability Test of Choosing Decision (Y1) Reliability Statistic

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
-------------------------	-------------------

,795 6

Table 21. Item total statistic

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If Item Deleted	Corrected Total-Item Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted
Y 1.1	19,98	6,799	,447	,793
Y 1.2	20,05	6,845	,553	,767
Y 1.3	20,27	6,928	,579	,756
Y 1.4	19,99	6,859	,665	,740
Y 1.5	20,01	6,623	,608	,748
Y 1.6	19,88	7,327	,497	,775

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

The data table above shows that the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.795 is greater than 0.60. So the decision to choose variable is proven to be reliable.

Classical Assumption Test

1) Normality Test

In this study, the researcher used the exact approach in Kolmogorov-Smirnov testing to calculate the significance level based on the exact distribution of the test statistic. This approach allows the acquisition of an accurate p-value without having to rely on assumptions that may not be met by the research data. Using SPSS 21, the results of the normality test using the exact approach were obtained as follows:

Table 22. Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
	Unstandardised Residual	
N	86	
Normal Parameters^{ab}	Mean	,0000000
	Std. Deviation	,39662509
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,081
	Positive	,053
	Negative	-,081
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	,749	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,629	
Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	,600	
Point Probability	,000	
a. Test distribution is Normal.		
b. Calculated from data.		

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

The normality test uses Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) with a significant requirement > 0.10 . Based on the table, the Digital Marketing (X1), Tuition Fee (X2), WOM (X3), and Choosing Decision (Y1) variables show an Absolute value of 0.081. When compared to the Kolmogorov table value for the N = 86 sample, which is 0.131, then $0.081 < 0.131$, which means the data is normally distributed. This is supported by the results of the probability test on SPSS using the Exact value approach, with Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) of 0.600 > 0.10 , which confirms that the data is normally distributed.

2) Multicollinearity Test

Table 23. Multicollinearity Test Results Coefficients^a

	Model	Uncategorized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	1,440	,398		3,617	,001		
	Digital Marketing Reference Group	,033	,073	,040	,448	,655	,921	1,086
	Tuition Fees	,409	,096	,423	4,247	,000	,727	1,376
		,236	,073	,315	3,221	,002	,756	1,323

a. Dependent variable: Choosing Decision

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on the calculation of SPSS version 21 for the multicollinearity test on the independent variables Digital Marketing (X1), Education Cost (X2), WOM (X3), and the dependent variable Choosing Decision (Y1), analysis is carried out by looking at the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value and tolerance value. The tolerance value for Digital Marketing (X1) is 0.921, Education Cost (X2) is 0.727,

and WOM (X3) is 0.756, all of which are greater than 0.1. In addition, the VIF values for Digital Marketing (X1) of 1.086, Education Cost (X2) of 1.376, and WOM (X3) of 1.323, are all less than 10. Thus, it can be concluded that the regression model does not experience multicollinearity.

3) *Heteroscedasticity Test*

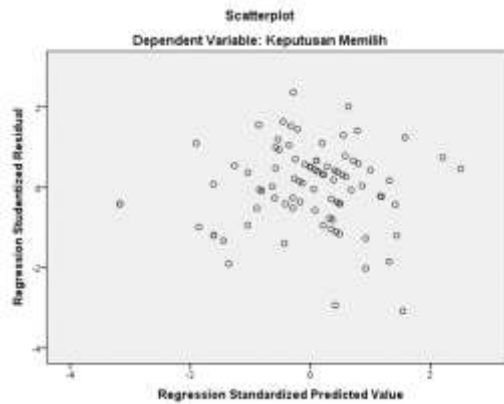


Fig 2. Scatterplot Graph of Heteroscedasticity Test Results

From the Scatterplot graph, it can be seen that the points spread randomly and do not form a certain pattern that is clearly spread both above and below the number 0 on the Y axis. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model, so that the regression model is suitable for predicting the decision to choose based on input variables Digital marketing, tuition fees, and WOM.

Table 24. Heteroscedasticity Test Results Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,052	,243	,215	,830
	Digital Marketing	,031	,044	,079	,485
	Education Costs	,088	,059	1,500	,137
	WOM	-,055	,045	-1,241	,218

a. Dependent Variable: RESIDUAL

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on tests using the Glejser correlation test exposed in the table above, it can be seen that digital marketing, tuition fees, and WOM have significant values of 0.484, 0.137, and 0.278.

With the decision-making criteria, namely: The significant value of correlation > 0.10 (α = 10%), it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity.

Hypothesis Test

1) *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis*

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to analyse the effect between two or more independent variables and the dependent variable. In this study, the analysis was carried out to see the effect of independent variables such as Digital Marketing (X1), Tuition Fees (X2), and WOM (X3) on the dependent variable, namely the Decision to Choose (Y1). The following is the formula used:

$$Y = a + b1 \cdot x1 + b2 \cdot x2 + b3 \cdot x3 + e$$

Table 25. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
	Unstandardised Coefficients	Standardised Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,440	,398	3,617	,001
	Digital Marketing	,033	,073	,040	,655
	Education Costs	,409	,096	,423	,000
	WOM	,236	,073	,315	,002

a. Dependent Variable: Choosing Decision

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on the table above, the constant value (α) is 1.440. The regression coefficient (β) for each independent variable is as follows: Digital Marketing by 0.033, Tuition Fee by 0.409, and WOM by 0.236. Thus, the multiple linear regression equation obtained is:

$$Y = 1.440 + 0.033X_1 + 0.409X_2 + 0.236X_3$$

Interpretation of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

- Constant (α): The constant of 1,440 indicates that if the variables Digital Marketing (X_1), Tuition Fees (X_2), and WOM (X_3) are 0, then the value of the Choosing Decision will remain at 1,440, assuming other variables that influence the decision to choose remain.
- Regression Coefficient of Digital Marketing (X_1): The regression coefficient of 0.033 means that if Digital Marketing increases by 1 unit, the Choice Decision will increase by 0.033. Conversely, if Digital Marketing decreases by 1 unit, the Decision to Choose will decrease by 0.033.
- Regression Coefficient of Education Cost (X_2): The regression coefficient of 0.409 indicates that if the Education Cost increases by 1 unit, the Choice Decision will increase by 0.409. Conversely, if the Education Cost decreases by 1 unit, the Voting Decision will decrease by 0.409.
- WOM Regression Coefficient (X_3): The regression coefficient of 0.236 indicates that if WOM increases by 1 unit, the Choice Decision will increase by 0.236. Conversely, if WOM decreases by 1 unit, the Decision to Choose will decrease by 0.236.

2) F test

The F test is used to test simultaneously whether variable X (Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM) together have a significant influence on variable Y (Choosing Decision). The F test is done by comparing F_{count} with F_{table} . Based on the results of the analysis using SPSS, the output in the table shows these results

Table 26. F Test Results (Simultaneous Test)
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9,228	3	3,076	18,864	,000 ^b
	Residuals	13,371	82	,163		
	Total	22,600	85			

a. Dependent Variable: Choosing Decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

Based on the results of the model feasibility test table (F test), the F_{hitung} value of 18.864 is greater than the F_{table} of 2.15, with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.10$. This shows that the independent variables (Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM) simultaneously have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Decision to Choose).

3) Test t

The t test was conducted to test the effect of each independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) individually. This test compares t_{count} with t_{table} at a significant level $\alpha = 0.10$. The t test is considered significant if $t_{count} > t_{table}$ or the significance value is less than 10% ($sig < 0.10$). In this study, the t-table value used is 1.66277. The following are the results of the partial test analysis

Table 27. The results of the t test (Partial Test)
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients			t	Sig.
		Standardised Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,440	,398		3,617	,001
	Digital Marketing	,033	,073	,040	,448	,655
	Education Costs	,409	,096	,423	4,247	,000
	WOM	,236	,073	,315	3,221	,002

a. Dependent Variable: Choosing Decision

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

- The effect of Digital Marketing (X_1) on the Decision to Choose: The significance value is $0.655 > 0.10$ and the t_{count} value of 1.095 is smaller than the t_{table} ($0.448 < 1.66277$). This shows that the Digital Marketing variable (X_1) partially has no significant effect on the decision to choose Unitomo.
- The effect of tuition fees (X_2) on the decision to choose: The significance value is $0.000 < 0.10$ and the t_{count} value of 4.247 is greater than the t_{table} ($4.247 > 1.66277$). This shows that the variable Education Cost (X_2) partially has a significant effect on the decision to choose Unitomo.
- The effect of WOM (X_3) on the Decision to Choose: The significance value is $0.002 < 0.10$ and the t_{hitung} value of 3.221 is greater than the t_{table} ($3.221 > 1.66277$). This shows that the WOM variable (X_3) partially has a significant effect on the decision to choose Unitomo.

4) Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination test is used to determine the extent to which the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. It measures how far the independent variables (Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM) explain the dependent variable (Choosing Decision). The coefficient of determination is expressed by the adjusted R square value, as shown in the following table.

Table 28. Test Results of the Coefficient of Determination R²

Model Summary ^a				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,639 ^b	,408	,387	,40382

a. Predictors: (Constant), WOM, Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees

b. Dependent Variable: Choosing Decision

Source: Primary data processed with SPSS 21

From the analysis of the table above, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.387 indicates that the independent variables (Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM) together contribute 38.7% to the dependent variable, namely the Decision to Choose.

Discussion

Research on undergraduate students at Dr. Soetomo University's Faculty of Economics and Business reveals varied impacts of digital marketing, tuition fees, and word-of-mouth (WOM) on their enrollment decisions. Digital marketing (X1) doesn't have a significant effect, as shown by its significance value of 0.655 and a t-value of 0.448, which are both below the t-table value of 1.66277. This indicates that students primarily rely on information from friends, print media, and traditional promotions, with 66% opting for offline registration. On the other hand, tuition fees (X2) play a significant role in decision-making, with a significance value of 0.000 and a t-value of 4.247, well above the t-table value. This supports findings from Nuryadin & Yunida (2022) and Ekasari & Hairunisy (2019) about the critical role of affordability. WOM (X3) also has a significant impact, with a significance value of 0.002 and a t-value of 3.221, exceeding the t-table value.

Studies by Nuryadin and Yunida (2022) and Khairani et al. (2022) show that word-of-mouth (WOM) from alumni and influential figures plays a significant role in motivating prospective students. When considering digital marketing, tuition fees, and WOM together, they collectively impact student decisions, supported by an F_count value of 18.864, which is greater than the F_table value of 2.15, and a significance value of 0.000. This confirms that these factors simultaneously influence student decisions, aligning with other similar studies. The limited effect of digital marketing is attributed to a lack of trust in online information, as Kwartawaty (2023) pointed out, emphasizing the need for a strong institutional image. WOM's credibility, as discussed in the ASEAN Marketing Journal by Salsabela and Gayatri (2023), is also vital.

Furthermore, limitations in digital marketing strategies and the selection of appropriate media and messages, as noted by (Kurniawan & Lim, 2022), contribute to its reduced effectiveness. Tuition fees and academic quality often outweigh digital marketing in influencing decisions, as shown by (Ningratri, 2017) in the International Journal of Education. Understanding these factors, Unitomo can enhance its digital marketing strategy, build a strong institutional image, and optimize WOM and other significant factors to attract new students. Unitomo's reputation as a national and populist campus with affordable fees, appropriate facilities, scholarships, active student organizations, and a strategic location also plays a vital role in attracting students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examines the impact of Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM on students' decisions to choose the Faculty of Economics and Business at Dr Soetomo University Surabaya. The

results show that Digital Marketing has no significant effect on the decision, Tuition Fee has a partial effect, and WOM has a partial effect. Moreover, Digital Marketing, Education Costs, and WOM simultaneously have a significant effect on the decision to choose Unitomo.

This research aims to explore the impact of Digital Marketing, Tuition Fees, and WOM on education. It suggests optimizing digital marketing for branding, promotion, and product introduction to attract students. Tuition fees significantly influence student choices, and Dr Soetomo University should evaluate fees, scholarships, and accessibility. WOM plays a significant role in university reputation, and Unitomo should evaluate services to maintain its reputation and understand student preferences. Interviews or surveys can help identify experiences, decision factors, and fulfilled expectatio.

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