



The Influence of Instagram Promotional Content on the Decision to Choose a Study Program at Hang Tuah University Pekanbaru

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ABSTRACT

As a visual social media platform, Instagram exerts significant influence in conveying promotional messages, including within the context of higher education. Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru actively utilizes this platform to introduce its study programs to the general public, particularly the digital-savvy younger generation. However, there is a lack of research specifically measuring the impact of Instagram promotional content on students' decisions regarding their choice of study program, particularly within the campus community. This study aims to analyze the extent to which Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru's Instagram promotional content influences second-semester students' decisions in selecting a study program. The research focuses on second-semester students from the Communication Science, Information Systems, and Informatics Engineering study programs. The objective is to identify the visual factors, promotional messages, and content interactivity that shape their perceptions and decisions. A quantitative research method employing a survey approach was used. Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire designed based on promotional content indicators and decision-making variables. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including regression and correlation analyses. The correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between Instagram promotional content and the decision to choose a study program ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). These findings support Social Media Marketing theory, which posits that engaging, informative, and relevant content can generate audience interest and influence their decisions.

Keyword: *Instagram; Promotional Content; Choice Decision; Study Program; Hang Tuah University Pekanbaru.*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has brought about significant changes in communication patterns and promotional strategies across various sectors, including higher education. Instagram is currently one of the most popular social media platforms, known for its strong visual appeal and high levels of engagement among the younger generation (Praulina et al., 2024). In the context of marketing educational institutions, social media has become a primary channel for disseminating information, building an institutional image, and attracting prospective student (Indriansyah et al., 2024). Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru, a growing higher education institution committed to establishing a strong digital presence, has utilized social media—specifically Instagram—to promote its academic programs.

This strategy aims to reach Generation Z, a demographic that tends to seek information via digital platforms and social media before making important decisions, such as choosing a field of study (Septiana et al., 2025). However, the effectiveness of promotional content presented on Instagram regarding student decision-making has not yet been fully examined in a scientific and systematic manner. Second-semester students—specifically those in the Communication Science, Information Systems, and Informatics Engineering programs at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru—represent an ideal group for study in this context, as they are currently undergoing academic adaptation and orientation. Having already navigated the decision-making process, they are able to reflect on their reasons for choosing their programs based on the digital promotional content they encountered (Mei et al., 2025).

Social media has become an effective promotional tool for higher education institutions to showcase their identity, academic programs, facilities, achievements, and various academic activities to the general public. The evolution of digital technology and the high prevalence of social media usage among the younger generation make platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube strategic channels for reaching prospective students (Syukerti & Mulyadi, 2022). Through engaging, informative, and interactive content, campuses can cultivate a positive image while raising public awareness of their existence and strengths. Furthermore, social media enables the rapid, widespread, and cost-effective dissemination of information compared to conventional promotional methods (Nasrullah, 2023).

Beyond serving as a medium for information dissemination, social media acts as a platform for two-way communication between the campus and various stakeholders—including prospective students, current students, alumni, and the general public. Interactions facilitated through comment sections, direct messages, live broadcasts, and other features can boost audience engagement and foster trust in the educational institution (Abdullah, D. M. R., Rukmana, A. Y., Rahmah, S., 2023). Content highlighting academic activities, student testimonials, organizational events, faculty and student achievements, and new student admission information can influence the perceptions and decisions of prospective students when choosing a university.

Consequently, managing social media in a planned, consistent manner that aligns with the target audience's characteristics is crucial to the success of a campus's promotional strategy in the digital era (Sarbani & Lestari, 2022).

Therefore, this research is crucial for understanding whether, and to what extent, Instagram promotional content actually influences their decisions. The research questions addressed are: 1. Does Instagram promotional content influence students' decisions regarding their choice of study program at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru? 2. Which content factor—visuals, messaging, or interactivity—most dominantly influences this decision? 3. How do second-semester students perceive the effectiveness of promotional content on Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru's official Instagram account? The urgency of this study lies in the institution's need to conduct data-driven evaluations of its digital communication strategies. Amidst increasingly fierce competition among higher education institutions to attract new students, a deep understanding of the effectiveness of promotional media is vital (Hulu et al., 2025). The findings of this study are not only beneficial for campus social media managers but also contribute theoretically to the development of the literature regarding the influence of social media in the context of educational promotion.

To address the research questions outlined above, this study employs a quantitative approach utilizing both descriptive and inferential survey methods. The survey targets second-semester students from the Communication Science, Information Systems, and Informatics Engineering study programs at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru. This subject selection is based on the fact that these students have already undergone the decision-making process regarding their choice of study program and possess experience as active social media users, particularly on Instagram. Data collection is conducted via an online questionnaire utilizing ordinal and interval measurement scales, developed based on dimensions of digital promotional content—such as visual appearance, promotional messaging, and interactivity (Nugroho et al., 2022). The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to illustrate respondent response patterns, as well as simple linear regression and Pearson correlation analyses to determine the relationships between variables. This approach is expected to provide an objective overview of the influence of promotional content on student decisions, while also serving as a basis for policy formulation regarding the development of the university's digital promotion strategies.

Previous research has demonstrated that social media significantly influences consumer behavior and purchasing decisions, including within the education sector (Anggraeni et al., 2024). For instance, found that perceptions regarding the credibility and visual aesthetics of Instagram content positively correlate with interest in enrolling at a higher education institution. However, most existing research focuses on prospective students or high school students; few studies have examined the reflections of students who have already selected a study program based on their exposure to digital promotional content. Furthermore, the local context—specifically Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru, with its unique socio-cultural characteristics and promotional approaches—has not yet been extensively explored in academic research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method employed to achieve the study's objectives is quantitative descriptive. This method aims to provide an objective description or depiction of a situation using numerical data, encompassing data collection, interpretation, and the presentation of results (Sugiyono, 2020).

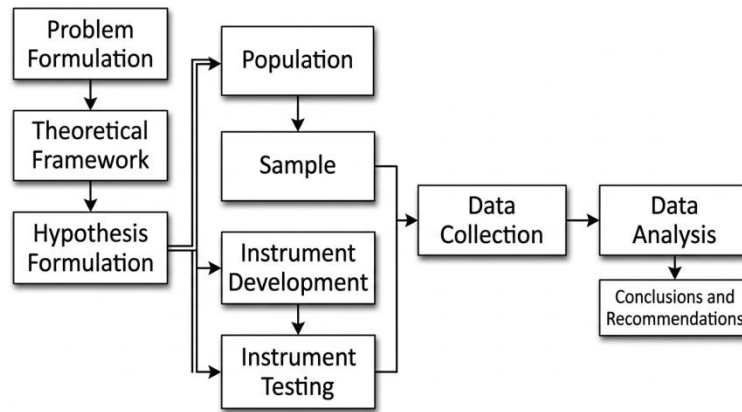


Figure 1. Reserch Design

The following is a description of each stage in the research flowchart you attached:

1. **Problem Formulation:** At this stage, the researcher identifies the problem to be investigated. The problem must be clear, specific, and researchable to ensure the study has a proper direction.
2. **Theoretical Framework:** This stage incorporates theories, concepts, and findings from previous studies relevant to the research problem. The theoretical framework serves to provide a solid foundation and guide the data analysis process.
3. **Hypothesis Formulation:** Based on the problem formulation and theoretical framework, the researcher formulates a hypothesis—a tentative prediction regarding the research outcome that will be tested through data collection and analysis.
4. **Population:** The entire set of objects or subjects possessing specific characteristics that are the focus of the research.
5. **Sample:** A subset of the population selected to represent the population as a whole. Proper sample selection is crucial for ensuring that research findings can be generalized.
6. **Instrument Development:** At this stage, the researcher designs and develops measurement tools (instruments)—such as questionnaires, tests, or interview guides—to be used for data collection.
7. **Instrument Testing:** The developed instruments undergo validity and reliability testing to ensure they can measure research variables accurately and consistently.
8. **Data Collection:** Once the instruments are confirmed to be valid and reliable, the researcher begins collecting data from the selected sample using the prepared instruments.
9. **Data Analysis:** The collected data is analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to test the hypothesis and address the research problem.
10. **Conclusions and Recommendations:** Based on the data analysis results, the researcher draws conclusions and offers recommendations that are useful for future research, policymakers, or other stakeholders.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the influence of Instagram promotional content on the decision to choose a study program at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru, involving a sample of 20 first-semester students from the Communication Science program. The respondent profile consisted of 12 male and 8 female new students. The research instruments underwent validity and reliability testing prior to the main analysis. Validity test results indicated that all questionnaire items had item-total correlation values exceeding 0.31, confirming their validity. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded values of 0.85 for the Instagram promotional content questionnaire and 0.87 for the study program selection decision questionnaire, both indicating that the instruments were reliable. Correlation and simple linear regression analyses were conducted. The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between Instagram promotional content and students' decisions to choose a study program ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). These results suggest that higher-quality promotional content leads to greater interest in the study program. Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis showed that Instagram promotional content significantly influenced the decision to choose a study program at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 5.22$, $p < 0.01$). This regression model explained 38% of the variability in student information consumption ($R^2 = 0.37$). The research results indicate that Instagram promotional content has a significant influence on the study program selection decisions of new Communication Science students at Hang Tuah University Pekanbaru. These findings align with digital marketing communication theory, which emphasizes that social media content quality influences user perceptions, interests, and behaviors (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Instrument validity and reliability tests demonstrated that all questionnaire items were valid and reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.85 and 0.87, respectively, reflecting strong internal consistency. This ensures that the resulting data can be used to accurately analyze the relationships between variables.

Correlation analysis revealed a positive and significant relationship between Instagram promotional content and the decision to select a study program ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). These results support Social Media Marketing theory, which posits that engaging, informative, and relevant content can generate audience interest and influence their decisions (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). In the context of this study, new students were likely influenced by visual aesthetics, information on activities, student testimonials, and the study program's reputation as presented on the university's Instagram account. Higher content quality fostered a stronger positive perception of the study program among students, thereby increasing their likelihood of choosing it.

Furthermore, simple linear regression analysis indicates that Instagram promotional content significantly influences the decision to select a study program ($\beta = 0.61$, $t = 5.22$, $p < 0.01$). These findings support the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), wherein effective promotional content captures attention, builds interest, fosters desire, and drives action—in this case, the decision to choose a study program (Strong, 1925). An R^2 value of 0.37 indicates that 37% of the variation in study program selection decisions can be explained by the quality of Instagram promotional content, while the remainder is influenced by other factors such as personal interests, family support, career prospects, and institutional reputation. This percentage is substantial, considering that social media is merely one of many factors influencing an individual's academic decisions.

Overall, the study's findings reinforce the view that Instagram, as a visually-oriented social media platform, plays a strategic role in shaping the image of study programs and attracting prospective students. Well-designed promotional content can enhance positive perceptions and influence students' decisions to choose a specific university. Therefore, universities must continue to develop creative, informative, and relevant content strategies to strengthen the appeal of their study programs in the digital era. Examples of creative content found on the Instagram accounts @uinv.hangtuahpekanbaru and @himakomuhtp are as follows:



Figure 2. Examples of Creative Content on Instagram

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Instagram promotional content has a positive and significant influence on students' decisions regarding their choice of study program at Universitas Hang Tuah Pekanbaru. Correlation analysis reveals a moderately strong relationship between Instagram promotional content and the decision to choose a study program ($r = 0.61$; $p < 0.01$). Simple linear regression analysis further confirms that Instagram promotional content significantly affects students' decisions ($\beta = 0.61$; $t = 5.22$; $p < 0.01$); the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.37$) indicates that 37% of the decision-making regarding the choice of study program is influenced by the quality of Instagram promotional content, while the remaining 63% is influenced by other factors. Thus, Instagram can be utilized as an effective promotional medium for higher education institutions to build a positive image and boost prospective students' interest through creative, informative, and engaging content.

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