Optimization of Social Media Strategies in The Academic Environment: A Case Study of Internships in The Digital Business Study Program at Umsida

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study aims to examine the effectiveness of social media strategies in enhancing the image and credibility of the Digital Business Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo (UMSIDA), with a focus on promoting the program through social media platforms. *Method*: A case study approach was employed to analyze the use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok in promoting the program. Data were collected from social media analytics, user engagement metrics, and surveys of students and prospective students to assess the impact on brand awareness, student loyalty, and overall program reputation. *Results*: The findings show that social media optimization significantly increases audience reach, engagement, and user interaction. Effective use of visual content and responsiveness to user comments enhances the program's reputation, leading to higher conversions and stronger student loyalty. *Novelty*: This study introduces a comprehensive approach to social media marketing within the academic environment, highlighting the potential of digital platforms not only for marketing but also for fostering student interest and academic achievement in the modern digital era.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, information technology has grown so rapidly and made the internet a very popular means of communication among the public. The rapid development of the internet has shifted communication from conventional methods to modern, digital-based methods. Easier internet access allows people to keep up with global developments. The development of the internet in Indonesia has experienced extraordinary growth. The increasingly widespread access to various regions, including remote areas, has made the internet an inseparable part of people's lives [1]. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) recorded that internet users in Indonesia in 2024 reached 221,563,479 people out of a total population of 278,696,200. With a penetration rate of 79.5%, Indonesia is recorded as the seventh country with the most internet users in Southeast Asia. The use of the internet is certainly inseparable from social media; currently, almost all layers of society from various backgrounds and ages have and use social media.

Social media is a media platform that focuses on user existence with the aim of facilitating users in activities and collaboration with others [2]. Social Media is an activity of virtual socializing that allows its users to interact without face-to-face contact. So that users can receive information or communicate anytime and anywhere. The large number

of social media users in Indonesia creates a new public space to influence communication patterns and build interactions [3]. The current social media landscape is very diverse, according to research by "We Are Social," the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The survey results indicate that active social media users in Indonesia reach 49.9% or around 139 million of the total population. Indonesian society tends to spend their time on social media. This is what academic institutions take advantage of to serve as a means of promotion or marketing.

The Instagram platform, which has become one of the most popular social media platforms, offers significant opportunities for promotional activities. Instagram is a photo and video sharing platform that allows its users to take pictures, add digital filters, and post on social networks. Instagram users are dominated by millennials and Generation Z, with an age group of 18-24 years.

Facebook has also become a social media platform with many enthusiasts. This is because Facebook provides a space for users to interact and communicate virtually with each other. Facebook offers many features to its users, especially for promoting and marketing products. In Indonesia, Facebook users are predominantly millennials, who are Indonesians aged 25-34 years.

Besides Instagram and Facebook, TikTok is also an application that has become very popular in recent years. Tiktok is an application from China that allows users to create and share short videos [4]. This application is known for its creative video content with a duration of 15-60 seconds. We Are Social noted that in 2024, the majority of TikTok users in Indonesia were from the age group 18-24 years, with a proportion of 20.9% female and 17.5% male.

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Figure 1. Time spent on social media
Source: blog.slice.id

These three platforms can be very effective tools in adapting to the age characteristics of their users to build the image of institutions and attract the interest of prospective students. Currently, educational institutions in Indonesia are beginning to experience rapid development. Technological advancements, curriculum changes, and improvements in educational facilities have driven the growth of educational quality in various institutions [5]. The image of educational institutions plays an important role in parents' decisions when choosing a school for their children. Image is the impression received by individuals or groups based on the information or experiences they have [6]. Improving the institution's image or branding activities is an important task that needs to be carried out. Based on this, social media can be used as an intermediary to build the image of educational institutions.

The Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo is a new program that was officially opened in 2021. The Digital Business Study Program has experienced rapid development, even though it is a new program, it has successfully attracted the interest of many prospective students. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of applicants each year, which shows the enthusiasm and trust of the public in the Digital Business Study Program. In 2023, the Digital Business Study Program successfully achieved "Very Good" accreditation based on the LAMEMBA decision. This achievement shows that the Digital Business Study Program at Muhammadiyah University Sidoarjo has competitive quality and is able to compete with other study programs.

This research aims to explain how the role of social media can be optimized to enhance the image of educational institutions, particularly in the Digital Business Study Program, to attract the interest of prospective new students. The research is beneficial for understanding how the role of social media can enhance the image of educational institutions. The results of this research can serve as a reference for educational organizers and as a reference for future researchers studying similar topics. This research highlights the importance of using effective social media strategies to build and strengthen the image of educational institutions in the digital era.

Problem Formulation: How can an optimal social media strategy be implemented in an academic environment, particularly in the Digital Business Study Program at UMSIDA, as well as the challenges and opportunities encountered in its implementation to enhance the program's image and reputation?

Research Questions:
1. How can an effective promotional media strategy be implemented to enhance the image of the Digital Business Study Program at UMSIDA?
2. What challenges are faced in optimizing the use of social media in the academic environment of the Digital Business Study Program at UMSIDA?
3. How can social media be optimized as a promotional tool for the Digital Business Study Program?

SDGs Category: Based on the introduction above, the problem formulation in this research focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the pillar of Quality Education, specifically covering Goal 4.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method to understand the investigated phenomenon, focusing on research subjects' perceptions, actions, motivations, and behaviors expressed through words and language. According to Kusumawati (2023), the qualitative approach emphasizes in-depth understanding, interpretation, and uncovering the meaning behind the collected data [7].

The research adopts a case study approach, as it allows for an in-depth examination of the context, processes, and complexity of the studied phenomenon. This approach enables the exploration of perspectives, experiences, and hidden meanings related to the strategy of using social media as a promotional tool for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo (UMSIDA).

Through this research, valuable insights, contextual understanding, and detailed findings can be obtained, which are beneficial for policy-making, practical applications, and further theoretical development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Digital Business Study Program at UMSIDA

The Digital Business Study Program is one of the newest programs at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo (UMSIDA), established in 2021. The increasing demand for professionals with expertise in digitalization within the business world has driven the creation of this study program. It serves as a response to the growing market demand for business professionals with a strong understanding of digital technology, especially in the rapidly evolving Industry 4.0 era.

Since its inception, the Digital Business Study Program has successfully attracted significant interest from prospective students in a short period. Its curriculum integrates conventional business concepts with the latest digital skills, including e-commerce, data analytics, digital marketing, and more [8]. The program emphasizes practical skill development through various activities such as internships, industry-based projects, and collaborations with startups and technology companies, enabling students to gain hands-on experience in the digital business field.

The program's success in responding to industrial and academic developments is evident from its remarkable accreditation achievements. In its first accreditation process, the Digital Business Study Program received a "Baik Sekali" (Excellent) accreditation from LAMEMBA (The Independent Accreditation Agency for Economics, Management, Business, and Accounting). This achievement demonstrates that, despite being newly established, the program has built a strong foundation and can compete with other study programs.

This success is attributed to the quality of its curriculum, teaching resources, and infrastructure that support the learning process. Additionally, the Digital Business Study Program actively follows digital trends and forms partnerships with companies and the digital industry to ensure its graduates remain relevant to market demands. Supported by experienced lecturers in business and technology, the program not only focuses on formal education but also encourages innovation, research, and meaningful contributions to society.

The Digital Business Study Program's success is further reflected in its increasing student enrollment numbers each year.

Table 1. Number of applicants for the digital business study program at UMSIDA

No	Academic Year	Number of Applicants
1	2021/2022	28 College students
2	2022/2023	50 College students
3	2023/2024	60 College students
4	2024/2025	90 College students

The Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo has become an attractive choice for prospective students aiming to build a career and compete in the digital industry era. The interest in this study program is further driven by wide-ranging career opportunities across various sectors. To increase its appeal and reach a broader audience, effective promotional efforts through various digital platforms are essential.

A. Promotional Media for the Digital Business Study Program

The Digital Business Study Program employs various marketing strategies to introduce itself and showcase its strengths to the public. One of the key approaches is leveraging social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. By utilizing these platforms, the program aims to reach a wider audience and strengthen its presence among internet users.

The use of social media as the primary promotional and marketing tool allows the program to connect with different audience segments effectively. Each platform offers unique characteristics and advantages, enabling the Digital Business Study Program to expand its reach:

1) Facebook: A widely used social media platform, especially among parents and older audiences, Facebook provides opportunities for direct interaction within online communities [9]. It serves as an efficient and cost-effective promotional tool for creative industries, businesses, and educational institutions to expand their market reach globally. Through various content formats and features, users can publish and promote products or brands. The Digital Business Study Program

utilizes Facebook not only for promotion but also to build stronger relationships with prospective students and their parents through interactive discussions.

2) Additionally, Facebook's group and community page features create a space for students to share experiences and access the latest information about the study program.

By implementing an effective social media strategy, the Digital Business Study Program aims to enhance engagement, attract more students, and establish a strong digital presence.
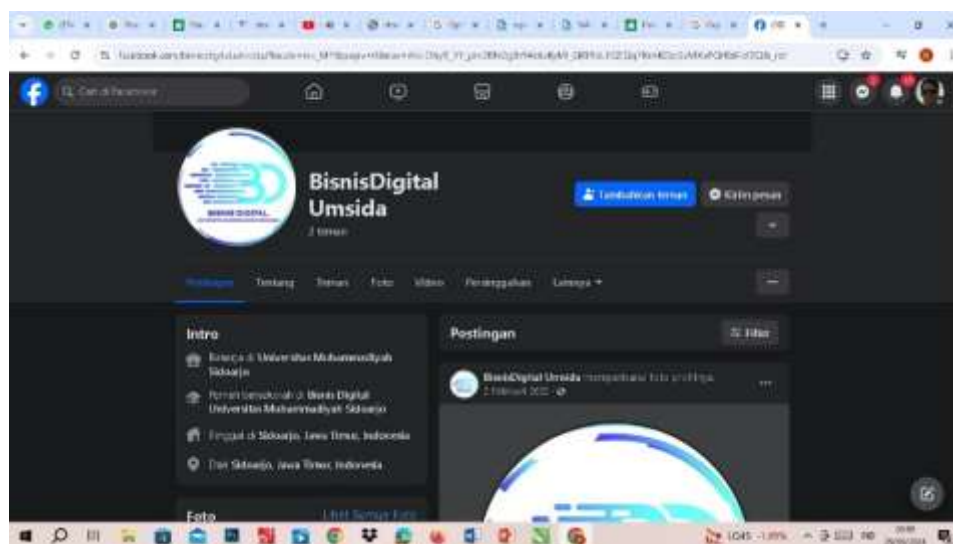

Figure 2. Homepage of the digital business study program facebook page

In addition to using Facebook, the Digital Business Study Program also utilizes Instagram as a promotional platform on social media through the account @bisnisdigital.umsida. As a photo and video-sharing platform, Instagram is optimally leveraged to showcase creativity and uniqueness in the form of visually appealing content. The Digital Business Study Program consistently posts photos and videos highlighting various activities, such as seminars, workshops, competitions, study exchanges, and various educational programs, both internal and external, including events held at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo.

The profiles of educators, lecturers, and outstanding students or those who appear at public events are frequently featured, giving special attention to the talents within the Digital Business Study Program. The Instagram page of the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo is designed to be effective and visually engaging, making the information about the offered programs more detailed and accessible.

The @bisnisdigital.umsida account is also proactive in responding to comments and questions from users on Instagram. This creates the impression that @bisnisdigital.umsida is caring and responsive to the needs of its community and prospective students. Amidst intense competition, responsiveness and open

communication become standout differentiating factors, further strengthening the reputation of the Digital Business Study Program.
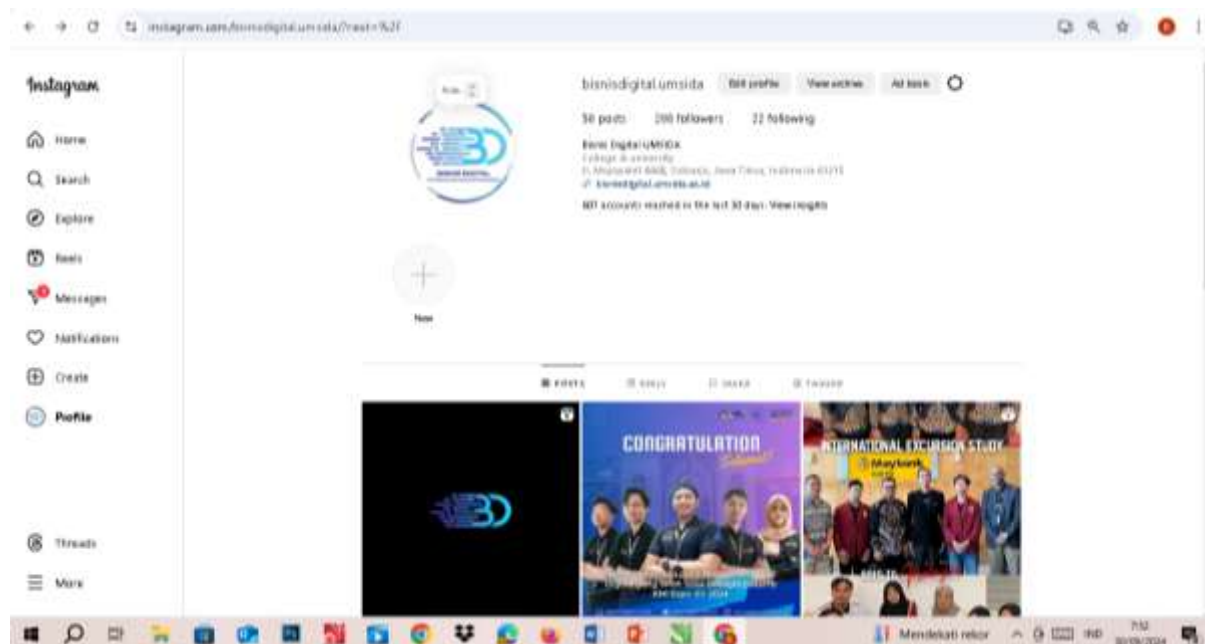

Figure 3. Instagram page of the digital business study program at UMSIDA

In addition to static content, @bisnisdigital.umsida utilizes various interactive features on Instagram, such as Stories and Reels, to present more diverse, engaging, educational, and interactive content. These features allow the program to reach a wider audience in real-time, showcasing various activities and even hosting short Q&A sessions. This makes the @bisnisdigital.umsida Instagram account more appealing to prospective students.

The account also leverages hashtags, a well-known feature on Instagram, to increase content visibility. By using relevant and trending hashtags, the program aims to attract users specifically interested in digital business, thus expanding its audience beyond its current followers. This hashtag strategy highlights Instagram's crucial role in strengthening the image and visibility of the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo.

TikTok, a short-video-based social media platform, has gained massive popularity in recent years. Originally launched in China in September 2016, TikTok initially only allowed video uploads but has since expanded to include photo posts and even e-commerce features. TikTok's user-friendly content creation tools have made it widely used by individuals and brands for entertainment, promotions, and viral campaigns [10]. With millions of active users, TikTok has evolved into a global phenomenon.

Recognizing this potential, the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo has effectively utilized TikTok as a marketing and promotional tool. Recently, the program has reactivated its TikTok platform to expand its promotional efforts. With TikTok's majority user base consisting of Generation Z and Millennials, this

initiative presents a significant opportunity for the program to connect with a younger audience familiar with short-form video content.
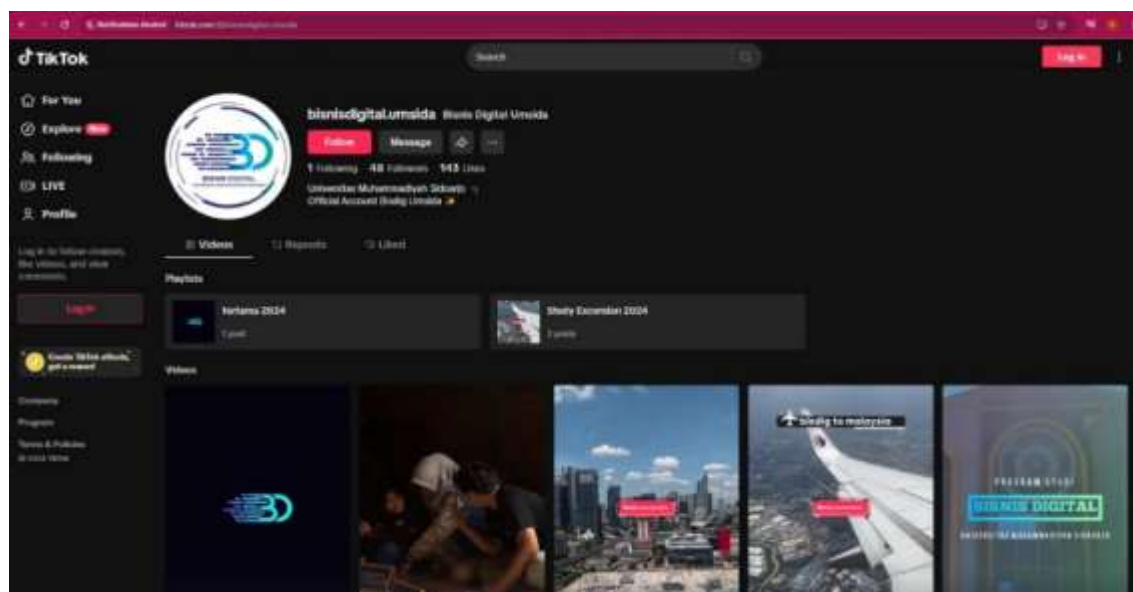

Figure 4. TikTok page of the digital business study program

To strengthen its brand image and attract new prospective students, the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo utilizes TikTok through creative and informative content. This includes highlights of academic and non-academic activities, student achievements, and more. Additionally, students are actively involved in the marketing strategy, where they are encouraged to share their experiences on social media by posting about their campus activities. The optimization of TikTok as a promotional tool for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo is an effort that must be continuously developed and refined.

B.   Analysis of Social Media Optimization for the Digital Business Study Program

Promotional activities are strategic efforts aimed at achieving specific goals and targets. The rapid advancement of information technology has significantly influenced behavioral changes in marketing and information dissemination. As a result, social media has become an essential tool for spreading information and promotional campaigns. Social media serves as a platform for communication, information distribution, and interaction across both personal and professional fields.

Social media plays a crucial role in marketing. According to Joice Manurung (2023), social media enables direct interaction between organizations and their audiences. It also provides opportunities for institutions to build a strong brand image [11].

Social Media Optimization (SMO) refers to the process of enhancing effectiveness and performance across multiple social media platforms. It goes beyond just increasing content visibility—it also aims to boost engagement, expand audience reach, and drive higher conversion rates [12]. The primary goal of social media optimization is to maximize results. By implementing the right optimization strategies, institutions can

foster stronger relationships with their audience, increase brand awareness, and achieve greater benefits from their social media campaigns [12], [13].

Instagram Insight Analysis for the Digital Business Study Program

A comparative analysis of Instagram insights for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo was conducted, examining engagement metrics in July (before the internship period) and August (after the internship period).

Figure 5. Instagram insights of @bisnisdigital.umsida for the month of july

Figure 6. Instagram insights of @bisnisdigital.umsida for the month of august

From the insight analysis, a significant comparison was observed between the Instagram engagement metrics in July (before the internship period) and August (after the internship period). The findings indicate noticeable differences in audience reach, engagement levels, and overall content performance, demonstrating the impact of social media optimization and student involvement in promotional activities.

Table 2. Comparison of instagram insights results

Metric	July (before internship)	August (after internship)	Change
Accounts Reached	276	499	↑
Impressions	537	944	↑

Watch Time	9 seconds	10 seconds	↑ slightly
Likes	14	44	↑ significant
Saves	0	2	↑
Shares	0	0	-

General Performance Improvement on Instagram

Overall, there has been a significant improvement in the performance of Instagram posts for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. This can be observed through several key aspects:

1) Wider Audience Reach – The number of accounts reached has significantly increased, indicating that the strategies implemented during the internship successfully expanded content reach.

2) Higher Engagement – The number of likes and saves has also increased, demonstrating that the audience is more engaged with the content.

3) Increased Watch Time – Although the increase is not very significant, there has still been a noticeable rise in average watch time, indicating that the content is successfully capturing audience attention.

The analysis results show that the strategic changes implemented have had a positive impact. The improved Instagram performance of @bisnisdigital.umsida is clear evidence that the applied strategy has been effective.

TikTok Account Analysis for the Digital Business Study Program

The analysis of the TikTok account performance was conducted after reactivating the platform for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo.
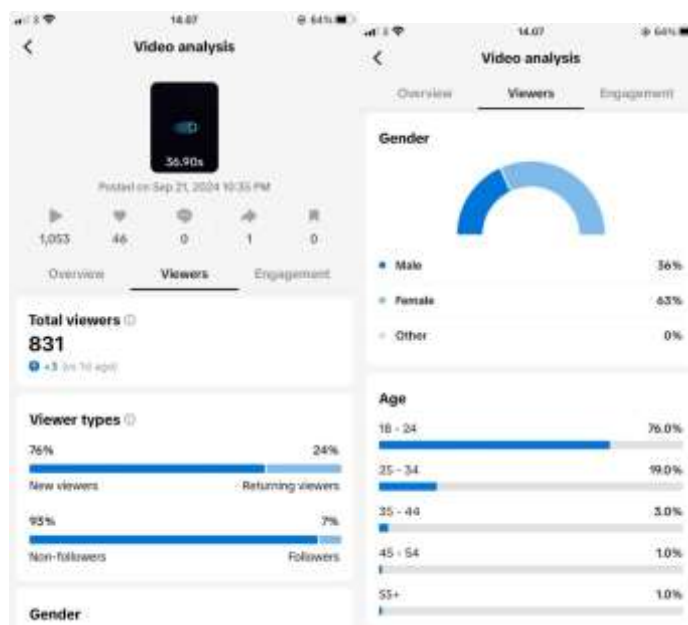

Figure 7. Latest TikTok video insights of the digital business study program
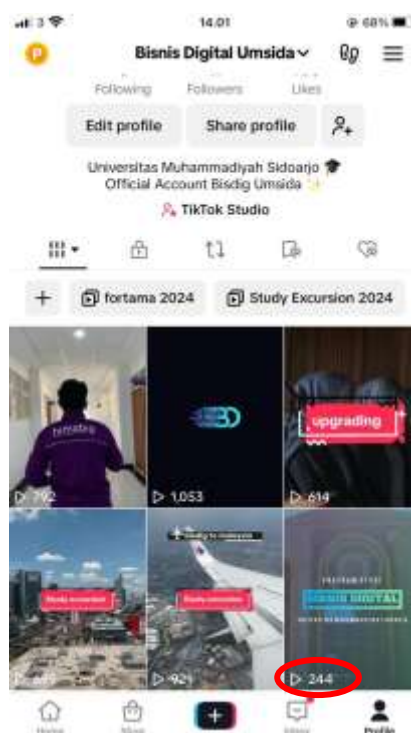
Figure 8. Homepage of the digital business study program TikTok page

From the displayed data, there is a significant increase, which can be seen from several points:

1) Number of Viewers: It can be observed that the number of viewers continues to increase with each video. The first video uploaded before the reactivation of the TikTok account for the Digital Business Study Program had only 244 viewers.

2) New Viewers: Based on insights, a total of 76% of viewers are new users, indicating that the TikTok content presented successfully attracts a new audience. Additionally, 93% of viewers are non-followers who have not yet followed the Digital Business Umsida account.

3) Content Relevance: The content created is highly relevant to the interests and lifestyle of Generation Z, the primary target audience. This is evident from the insights, which show that 76% of viewers fall within the 18-24 age range.

Overall, the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo has successfully optimized marketing potential by utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. With this approach, the brand not only reaches a wider audience through social media but also enhances its marketing effectiveness. The analysis of social media promotion optimization involves several aspects, including reach, interaction, conversion, and the success rate in achieving marketing goals.

a) Reach

Social media can reach a large audience in a short amount of time. Research shows that using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok allows the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo to expand its

audience and reach various demographic segments. The frequency of posting and the use of relevant hashtags are key components that influence reach. The Digital Business Study Program can utilize paid promotions or advertisements, as they have the ability to reach more potential customers.

b) Engagement

Engagement describes how actively the audience participates in a social media promotional campaign. This can be measured by audience interaction with the provided content through features such as likes, comments, shares, and direct messages. Analysis results show that content that directly involves users — such as event highlight videos or engaging and interactive visual content — tends to generate higher engagement levels.

c) Conversion Rate

The optimization of social media as a promotional tool can be measured not only by the number of interactions and reach but also by the conversion rate — how many audiences are interested in the product or service, such as by visiting a website. Analysis results indicate that campaigns utilizing social media are more effective in encouraging user interactions. Increasing conversions can be achieved by targeting ads based on user interests and demographic data.

d) Brand Awareness and Loyalty

Brand awareness refers to how well a brand — in this case, an institution — is recognized by users through social media platforms. Social media can enhance the "market value" and improve brand awareness and customer loyalty. Analysis results show that campaigns that consistently present valuable and relevant content to the audience can increase brand recognition.

e) Real-Time Feedback

Social media has the ability to receive real-time feedback. Organizations that respond to customer comments, reviews, and direct messages on social media can enhance their image and build trust. Immediate feedback also allows businesses to identify customer issues or needs more effectively.

C. Optimization of Institutional Image Building Through Social Media

In promotional activities, institutional image or reputation is an important aspect that must be considered. Enhancing and building an institution's image is not an easy task and requires a continuous process. Institutional image is a perception held by individuals, groups, or organizations based on their knowledge or experiences [14]. Institutional image can be shaped through the implementation of operational activities that focus on quality services. Additionally, individual impressions and experiences with an institution contribute to forming its image. Institutional image plays a crucial role in the decision-making process when choosing an educational institution [15]. Therefore, building a positive image is essential to increasing the "market value" of an institution.

Social media serves as a tool for building an institution's image by creating a positive and appealing impression on the public.

Image is a perception or impression that emerges from an understanding of a given reality. This understanding is formed through the reception of information. Such information can come from various sources, including social media, which now plays a significant role in shaping and influencing the reputation of institutions [16]. By delivering targeted information, a positive and strong image can be established in the minds of the audience, ultimately influencing their views, attitudes, and decisions.

The presence of social media with its various positive benefits presents a great opportunity for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. The program can engage with prospective students through social media to promote various activities and share important information. Additionally, social media plays a role in building a positive image and increasing public awareness of the Digital Business Study Program. Through a well-planned and consistent approach, social media becomes an effective promotional tool for building a sustainable reputation and institutional image. This strategy can be optimized to enhance institutional credibility, strengthen loyalty, and attract more potential audiences.

In the context of optimizing institutional image through social media, it plays a crucial role as a tool for promoting the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo and building a positive reputation. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok provide a space for educational institutions to expand audience reach and create a positive impression through engaging and interactive content. Social media enables the direct and accurate dissemination of information, allowing positive user experiences to be reflected through reviews or interactions.

D. Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of Social Media Usage

Educational institutions, as key players in shaping future generations, can leverage technology and digital platforms to reach prospective students [17]. Active participation in creating engaging content can expand reach and build networks with potential students. However, the implementation of social media to enhance institutional image also comes with various challenges. Some of the challenges faced in implementing social media usage include:

The first challenge is intense competition among educational institutions, all of which use social media as a promotional tool, making implementation difficult. Some content that has been created may not receive sufficient attention compared to other institutions that have more attractive marketing strategies.

The second challenge is algorithm changes. Algorithm shifts can impact content visibility. Algorithms are processes used by platforms to determine which content will be displayed to users. Each platform has a different algorithm, and these algorithms are continuously updated [18]. This makes it difficult to predict how many audiences can be reached.

The third challenge is consistent content management, which is crucial for effective social media usage. Producing high-quality and relevant content consistently requires significant resources. Adequate allocation of manpower and time is necessary to create quality content [19]. This is a challenge for the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, as there is still a lack of resources to manage this aspect effectively.

Despite these challenges, the implementation of social media also presents many profitable opportunities. These include increased brand awareness and visibility, market expansion, higher engagement, and stronger relationships with the audience [20]. To understand and maximize these opportunities, the Digital Business Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo can implement social media usage more effectively to enhance its image and attract the interest of prospective students.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study found that the Digital Business Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo effectively utilizes social media to enhance its visibility, engage a wider audience, and strengthen its institutional image. The optimization of social media strategies, through active interaction, appealing visual content, and responsiveness, has led to increased brand awareness, student loyalty, and high conversion rates. **Implication** : The findings suggest that integrating social media into academic promotion strategies is crucial for higher education institutions to stay competitive and meet the growing demand for digital business professionals. It also highlights the importance of staying updated with digital trends to maintain a positive institutional reputation. **Limitation** : One limitation of this study is that it focuses solely on one university and its specific Digital Business Program. The impact of social media strategies may vary across different programs or educational institutions. **Future Research** : Future studies could examine the long-term effects of social media optimization on student enrollment, retention rates, and academic performance across various educational institutions. Further research may also explore how different social media platforms influence different student demographics and academic programs.

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