Assessing the Determinants of Students' Intentions to Enroll in Higher Education: The Impact of Social Media, University Image, E-WOM, and Tuition Fees

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	University is the level of further education after high school. Several aspects need to be considered by students before deciding to continue to higher education. The purpose of this study is to find, analyze, and prove the effect of E-WOM, university image, tuition fees, and social media on students' intentions. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between 4 independent variables and 1 dependent variable. The sampling method used a purposive sampling approach with a total of 100 respondents, and data processing was done computationally. From the results of the study, it was revealed that the electronic word of mouth variable had a positive but not significant effect, the university image variable had a positive and significant effect, the social media variable had a significant positive effect, and the education cost variable had a positive but not significant effect on students' intentions. All variables had a positive effect simultaneously, and from the results of the dominance test, the social media variable (X2) is the most dominant variable.

INTRODUCTION

The process of choosing a higher education institution is a critical decision that significantly impacts an individual's academic and professional future. In recent years, several factors have emerged as influential drivers in this decision-making process. This research aims to investigate the role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), tuition fees, university image, and social media in influencing prospective students' intention when selecting a higher education institution. By understanding the interplay of these factors, policymakers, education institutions, and marketing professionals can develop more effective strategies to attract and retain students.

Higher education is a level of further education after high school. In entering lectures, students are required to improve the quality of their education. The higher the level of education, the greater the job opportunities obtained. Students who have graduated from high school usually want to continue their education to a higher level, with majors that match their interests and talents. The decision to choose a college that they think is good is not necessarily a good one.

Before the decision to choose a college, prospective students try to find a lot of information about the university they will choose, be it on social media, on the internet, about alumni, and others. According to the law of the Republic of Indonesia, number 12 of 2012

article 1 number 2; "Higher Education is a level of education after secondary education which includes diploma programs, undergraduate programs, master programs, doctoral programs, and professional programs, as well as specialist programs, organized by universities based on the culture of the Indonesian nation." (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 Article 1 Number 2 of 2012). In choosing a college, of course, there are many criteria, in this case the criteria in choosing a college are Electronic Word of Mouth, university image, social media, and education costs.

Higher education institutions worldwide are facing increasing competition in the recruitment of students. In today's digitally connected world, potential students have access to a vast amount of information through various online platforms, making the decision-making process more complex. E-WOM, defined as online discussions, recommendations, and reviews by individuals about educational institutions, has gained prominence as a significant factor affecting students' choices. According to [1], Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) is a negative or positive statement about a product or service that makes potential, actual, and shows consumers the products or services owned by the company through its business, internet media.

E-WOM, which includes reviews on websites, social media platforms, and online forums, plays a crucial role in shaping prospective students' perceptions of higher education institutions. Positive E-WOM can enhance a university's reputation, attract more applications, and ultimately influence enrollment decisions. Conversely, negative E-WOM can dissuade potential students from considering an institution, leading to a decline in enrollments.The physical appearance and overall atmosphere of a university can significantly impact students' perceptions and decision-making.

A well-maintained, modern, and aesthetically appealing university can create a positive impression, while a neglected or outdated university may deter prospective students. Additionally, factors such as university safety, facilities, and extracurricular opportunities contribute to the overall university image. According to Chen in [2], the image of the institution is a very important relationship between companies and consumers that influences decision making and makes an assessment of what products are purchased, in this case new student admissions. Several factors included in the institutional image are name, quality, service, ideology. And if according to the university's perspective, university image includes public opinion, student opinion, regarding university image, impression on university, accreditation owned by university, study program provided, lecturer competence, learning process, university reputation, facilities provided, as well as the services provided.

Social media platforms have revolutionized how information is disseminated and consumed, and they play a pivotal role in the decision-making process for potential students [3], [4]. Universities use social media channels to promote their programs, showcase university life, and engage with prospective students directly. Understanding the extent of social media's influence on students' perceptions and decisions can help institutions tailor their online presence strategically. According to Nasrullah in [5] social media is media on the internet that allows users to represent themselves and interact, cooperate, share, communicate with other users to form virtual social bonds.

Tuition fees have always been a key consideration for students when choosing a higher education institution. With rising education costs, students and their families carefully evaluate the affordability of an education program. However, it is essential to explore how students perceive the relationship between tuition fees and the perceived quality of education and facilities. According to [6], tuition fees incurred from all expenses, both monetary and non-monetary, as an expression of the sense of responsibility of all parties towards efforts to achieve predetermined goals.

The primary objectives of this research are as follows: (1) To explore the impact of E-WOM on prospective students' decision-making process when choosing a higher education institution. (2) To analyze the significance of university image in influencing students' perceptions of a higher education institution. (3) To assess the role of social media in shaping students' attitudes and preferences towards specific universities. (4) To investigate the relationship between tuition fees and students' perceptions of educational quality and value for money. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights for higher education institutions, policymakers, and marketing professionals. Understanding the factors that influence students' decisions will enable institutions to develop more effective marketing and recruitment strategies. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the improvement of higher education institutions' overall attractiveness and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

METHODS
Sampling and Data Acquisition
The sample is part of the population or some members of the selected population. Selection of members of the population as a sample must be representative, meaning that the sample must be able to represent or be able to explain the diversity that exists in the population [7]. In research that aims to examine the relationship between one or more variables (correlational research), a minimum of 30 samples are taken. In this study, the number of samples was determined by as many as 100 respondents who were at STIKI Malang, out of the total active students of STIKI Malang class of 2017-2021, which totaled 657 students. This amount has also exceeded the minimum limit in research.

Research Instrument
The measurement scale is a conclusion that is used as a reference to determine the short length of the interval in the measuring instrument. The research used in this study is to use a direct and open questionnaire so that respondents can answer by choosing the answers that have been provided according to the respondent's experience. To measure it, using the measuring instrument contained in the questionnaire, the measuring instrument used in this study is a Likert scale. The Likert scale is a scale that deals with statements of one's attitude towards something. For each answer choice is given a score, then the respondent must describe, support the statement (positive) or not support the statement (negative). The online questionnaire consists 2 parts. First part relates to information the respondents. The second part is factors that related to the role of e-WOM, university image, social media and tuition fee to the student's intention in choosing university. Each question evaluates to the situation using Likert criteria on 5 levels, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis
The research proves and test the relationship between the factors involved by developing multiple linear regression. Regression model with one dependent variable and more than one independent variable are called multiple linear regression [8]. It is an appropriate statistical method for analyzing the simultaneous correlations between multiple independent variables (predictors) and a single dependent variable (outcome) when the relationship is assumed to be linear. Multiple linear regression enables the examination of all independent variables simultaneously. This is important because E-WOM, tuition fees, university image, and social media are likely to interact and jointly contribute to students' decision-making process.

Development of Conceptual Framework
The present study aims to investigate the simultaneous correlations between Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM), tuition fees, university image, and social media, and their collective

impact on students' intentions in choosing higher education. Fig. 1 shows the research framework.
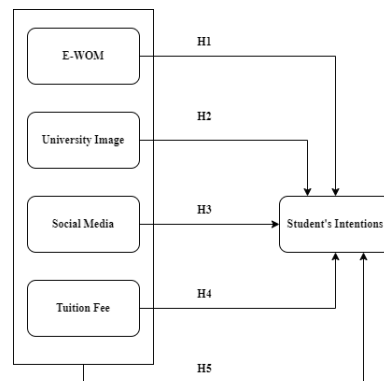

Figure 1. Research Framework

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)

Word of Mouth is the powerful tool to influence people and also can influence their buying behavior [9]. E-WOM plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior and decision-making processes, including the choice of higher education institutions. Prospective students often seek out information and feedback from current or past students, faculty members, and other stakeholders through E-WOM before making their enrollment decisions.

E-WOM acts as a huge source of information involving (1) enhanced volume, (2) dispersion, (3) persistence and observability, (4) anonymity and deception, (5) salience of valence, and (6) community engagement [10]. It allows consumers to conveniently access online information. There are also benefits for businesses in terms of using e-WOM to market themselves through electronic media. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The E-WOM positively correlates with student's intentions in choosing higher education

University Image

An image is the result of a complex and multifaceted struggle of attribute processed by the individual through message sent by the organization and through other intentional and unintentional social, historical, personal lived experiences and material factors [11]. University image refers to the overall perception and reputation of a higher education institution based on various visual, experiential, and symbolic elements associated with its physical university and academic environment. It encompasses the collective impressions that students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the broader community have about the institution's physical appearance, facilities, culture, values, and academic offerings. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: The university image positively correlates with student's intentions in choosing higher education

Social Media

Social media empower individuals in decision-making [12]. Social media has become an important communication platform in higher education marketing as the younger generation moves away from traditional media [13], [14]. Most of the studies conducted report that the social media influences purchase decision of the user [15]. Social media refers to online platforms and websites that enable users to interact, share content, and engage with others virtually. These platforms allow individuals and organizations to create and share information, ideas, messages, images, and videos with a network of connections or followers. Social media has become an integral part of modern communication and has transformed the way people connect, communicate, and consume information. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: The social media positively correlates with student's intentions in choosing higher education

Tuition Fee

Tuition fee, also known as tuition cost or tuition, refers to the amount of money that students are required to pay for their education at a school, college, university, or other educational institutions. It is the primary source of revenue for educational institutions and is typically charged to cover the costs of providing educational services and facilities to students. Tuition fees are a significant financial consideration for students and their families when choosing an educational institution. They can also vary based on whether a student is considered an in-state or out-of-state resident (for public institutions) or whether they are an international student. Some countries and regions may have government policies or financial aid programs in place to help students cover part of their tuition fees based on specific criteria, such as academic merit or financial need [16]. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: the tuition fee positively correlates with student's intentions in choosing higher education

Last but not least, all variables examined will then be tested to determine whether they have an effect simultaneously or not. Consequently, the final hypotheses are proposed:

H5: all variables positively correlate with student's intentions in choosing higher education simultaneously.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Validity and Reliability Test Result

The validity test is a measure of the accuracy that occurs between the data that occurs and the data that can be reported by researchers. This validity test is also carried out to determine the accuracy of the data that needs to be measured. The requirement for the validity of an item is if r_count > r_table is found at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.01$ or 0.05) then it is concluded that the instrument is considered valid and if r_count < r_table then the instrument is considered invalid. Based on the test results shown in Table 1, it can be concluded that the research instrument is valid.

Table 1. Validity Test Result

Variable	Number of Item	Sig.	Status
e-WOM (X1)	19	0.000	Valid
University Image (X2)	15	0.000	Valid
Social Media (X3)	4	0.000	Valid
Tuition Fee (X4)	3	0.000	Valid
Student's Intentions (Y)	3	0.000	Valid

Reliability test is a statistical method used to evaluate the consistency and stability of a research measure or instrument over time and across different conditions [17], [18]. It assesses whether the measure yields consistent results when administered to the same participants or samples on multiple occasions or under various circumstances. According to table 2, it can be concluded that the research instrument is reliable.

Table 2. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
X1	0.928	Reliable
X2	0.943	Reliable
X3	0.847	Reliable
X4	0.724	Reliable
Y	0.880	Reliable

Assumption Classic Test

Various statistical methods used for data analysis make assumptions about normality, including correlation, regression, t-tests, and analysis of variance [19]. Classic hypothesis testing is a

prerequisite for testing using multiple linear regression methods. The classical assumption test ensures that the data to be analyzed is usually distributed (normality test), and the model does not contain multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity. This test is carried out on scaled or serialized data and only using the Multiple Linear Regression method [20].

Normality Test

The normal distribution, also known as the Gaussian distribution, is a symmetric bell-shaped probability distribution characterized by its mean (average) and standard deviation. The purpose of the monte Carlo technique is to see whether the data is normally distributed or not from data that has been tested from samples that are random or too extreme in value. The solution to this problem is to use the monte Carlo equation method. This monte Carlo equation method is a method with repeated sampling. After conducting a normality test using the Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed), the value shows 0.156 which means more than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the research data is normally distributed.
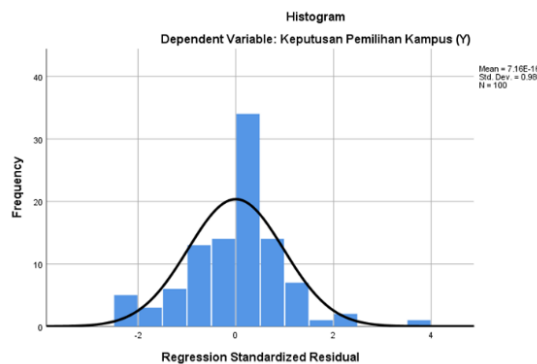

Figure 2. Normality test in Histogram

Multicolinearity Test

The multicollinearity test aims to test whether there is a correlation between independent variables. To find out this can be seen in Table 3 below, from the VIF column. If the VIF value < 10 or if the tolerance value > 0.10, it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity. In the absence of multicollinearity, one of the regression requirements has been met.

Table 3. Multicollinearity Test Result

		Coefficients						
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	**Collinearity Statistics**	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Tolerance**	**VIF**
(Constant)	-.529	1.108		-.478	.634		
E-WOM (X1)	.022	.020	.119	1.074	.285	.361	2.769
Univ. Image (X2)	.105	.026	.427	3.993	.000	.386	2.591
Social media (X3)	.253	.105	.277	2.408	.018	.332	3.010
Tuition Fee (X4)	.021	.085	.020	.241	.810	.639	1.565

a. Dependent Variable: Student's Intentions (Y)

Heteroskedasticity Test

Heteroscedastic models are widely used in economics, engineering, biology, physical sciences and so on [21]. It means that the spread or dispersion of the residuals changes as the values of the independent variable(s) change. The requirement that is carried out in this heteroscedasticity test is to use scatterplots, namely seeing plots between the predictions of the dependent variable,

namely ZPRED (X-axis) with SPRESID (Y-axis). Fig. 3 shows the result of heteroskedasticity test.
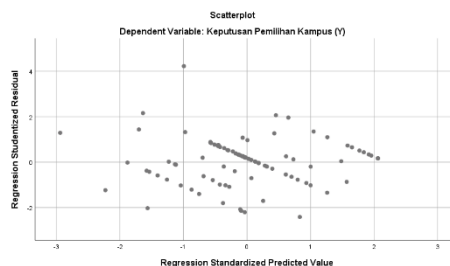

Figure 3. Result of Heteroskedasticity Test

Multiple Linear Regression
In the research data processing section, it is carried out using multiple linear regression analysis which has the aim of knowing the effect of E-WOM (X1), University Image (X2), social media (X3) Tuition Fee (X4) on the Student Intention (Y). Based on the results of data processing using SPSS version 25, there are analysis results using multiple linear regression shown in the table 4. The following is the formula for multiple linear regression analysis.

$$Y = b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3 X_3 + b_4 X_4 + \mu \quad (1)$$

Description:
Y = Student's Intention
b = regression coefficient
X1 = E-WOM
X2 = University Image
X3 = social media
X4 = Tuition Fee
μ = Residual

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Result

	Coefficients				
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.529	1.108		-.478	.634
E-WOM (X1)	.022	.020	.119	1.074	.285
University Image (X2)	.105	.026	.427	3.993	.000
Social media (X3)	.253	.105	.277	2.408	.018
Tuition Fee (X4)	.021	.085	.020	.241	.810

a. Dependent Variable: Student Intentions (Y)

Based on Table 4, it is shown that the variable Electronic Word of Mouth (X1), University image (X2), social media (X3), and tuition fees (X4) together have a positive influence on the decision to Student's Intention in choosing university (Y). A constant value of -0.529 is a Y value if X1, X2, X3, X4 are 0. If the Electronic Word of Mouth (X1), University Image (X2), social media (X3), and Tuition Fees (X4) variables have a value of 0, then the student's intention to choose the higher education has decreased by -0.529. The value of the regression coefficient obtained on the Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) variable is 0.22.

If there is an increase of 1%, the value of the Electronic Word of Mouth variable (X1) increases by 0.22. The value of the regression coefficient which has a positive value concludes that the Electronic Word of Mouth variable (X1) has a positive effect in the same direction but not too significantly with the decision to choose a college variable (Y). Furthermore, the value of the regression coefficient obtained on the Campus Image variable (X2) is 0.105. If there is an

increase of 1%, the value of the university image variable (X2) increases by 0.105. The positive value of the regression coefficient concludes that the university image variable (X2) has a direct and significant positive effect on the decision to choose college (Y). The value of the regression coefficient on the Social Media variable (X3) is 0.253. If there is an increase of 1%, the value of the Social Media variable (X3) increases by 0.253. This positive regression coefficient explains that the Social Media variable (X3) has a direct and significant positive effect on the decision to choose college (Y). Last but not least, the value of the regression coefficient obtained on the Education Cost variable (X4) is 0.21. If there is an increase of 1%, the value of the Education Cost variable (X4) increases by 0.21. The positive value of the regression coefficient concludes that the variable Cost of Education (X4) has a positive but not too significant effect in the same direction as the decision to choose college (Y).

F-Test

F-test is used whether the overall relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable is statistically significant [22]. The significance value used is 0.5 or 5%, and if there is a significance value of F <0.05, it can be concluded that the independent variables mutually influence each other on the dependent variable and on the independent variable. It is known that the decision-making from this simultaneous significance test is done by looking at the F value contained in the ANOVA table. Referring to Table 5, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This is shown from the calculated F value of 32,963 which means F_count 32,963 > F_table 2.47. And the significance value is 0.000 which means <0.05. And thus, it can also be concluded that the effect is jointly (simultaneously) between the independent variables on the dependent variable. And by using multiple linear regression models can be used in this study on the variables E-WOM (X1), University Image (X2), social media (X3), and Tuition Fee (X3) have an influence on the student's intentions to Choose a higher education (Y).

Table 5. F-Test Result

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		ANOVA^a				
1	Regression	212.241	4	53.060	32.963	.000[b]
	Residual	152.919	95	1.610		
	Total	365.160	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Student's Intention (Y)
b. Predictors: (Constant), Tuition Fee (X4), social media (X3), University Image (X2), *Electronic Word of Mouth* (X1)

T-Test Result

This test is essential to ensure that the assumptions of the t-test are met, such as the normality of the data and the homogeneity of variances. Decision-making is done by looking at the significance value in the Coefficients table. Usually, the basis for testing the regression results is carried out with a confidence level of 95% or with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). In this study, the number of known samples was 100 respondents and the number of variables (k) was 5, so that df = n-k became df = 100-5 = 95 with a significant level of 5%, namely t table has a value of 1,990. Table 6 shows the result of T-Test.

Table 6. T-Test Result

No	Variables	T_Count	Sig.
1	E-WOM (X1)	8.061	0.000
2	University Image (X2)	10.249	0.000
3	Social media (X3)	9.335	0.000
4	Tuition Fee (X4)	4.976	0.000

DISCUSSIONS

The results of hypothesis testing show that the Electronic Word of Mouth variable (X1) has a positive influence on the decision to choose college (Y). The tests that have been carried out include using the t-test. From the t-test on the Electronic Word of Mouth variable (X1) on the decision to choose higher education (Y), the T_count value is 8,061 > t table 1,990 with a significant value of 0,000 which means < 0.05 and the regression coefficient is positive by 0.115. This means that the variable Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) has a partial positive effect on the decision to choose a higher education (Y).

Apart from the t-test, the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) on the decision variable (Y) can also be seen from the R square value. It is known that the value of R square is 0.399 or 39.9%. This means that the ability to influence Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) on the decision to choose a higher education (Y) is 39.9%. Images, in this case, universities, which have a positive image in the eyes of consumers, allow consumers to make purchases more.

It's the same as choosing a tertiary institution, in choosing a tertiary institution, prospective students can see the quality of the tertiary institution so when the tertiary institution, has a positive image, it is very likely that prospective students will choose the tertiary institution they want. This was also stated by previous researchers [16], namely the image of a university is very important for prospective students to determine which college is appropriate and ultimately choose the right college to continue their studies. The results of the R square research obtained a value of 0.592, so the campus variable has an influence on student decisions in choosing to study at tertiary institutions by 59.20%, while the remaining 40.80% are explained by other factors outside of this research variable.

The conclusion from the research results shows that the image of a higher education institution has an influence on the student's decision to choose a study. Furthermore, research conducted by [23], research shows that there is a positive and significant influence between the image of a college, the cost of education, and the location of education on the decision to enter college. This is shown from the results of the t-test which obtained a significance level of 5% (a = 0.05) and the results of the R square test which obtained a correlation coefficient value of 51.8% and an R square value of 0.269 or 26.9%. The remaining 73.1% is influenced by other factors not included in the study.

There is a positive influence between social media (X3) on the decision to choose a university (Y) is accepted. Apart from the t-test, the influence of social media (X3) on the decision variable to choose a university (Y) can also be seen from the R square value. It is known that the value of R square is 0.471 or 47.1%. This means that the ability to influence social media (X3) on the decision to choose to a university (Y) is 47.1% and the remaining 52.9% is the influence of other variables.

The results of research conducted [24] entitled "Social Media and Its Influence on Student Decisions to Choose Stmik Royal" namely social media has an influence and is significant on student decisions. In choosing STMIK Royal through the promotion factor which has an R square value of 0.877 or 87.7%, and the remaining 12.3% is influenced by other factors not discussed in this study. In addition to the R square test, the t-test was also carried out to support that social media greatly influences student decisions in choosing to study at STMIK Royal. The t-test shows a t-count value of 13.358 greater than the t table which is 1.65734 at a significance level of 0.000 <0.05, thus it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis is accepted (Ha is accepted/ Ho is rejected).

Apart from the t-test, the influence of education costs (X4) on the decision variable to choose a university (Y) can also be seen from the R square value. It is known that the value of R square is 0.202 or 20.2%. This means that the ability to influence education costs (X4) on the decision to choose to a university (Y) is 20.2% and the remaining 52.9% is the influence of

other variables not included in this study. The results of hypothesis testing show that there is an influence between the independent variable (X) on the decision variable to choose a university (Y). The test that has been carried out is by using the f test. In this study, the calculated F value was 32,963, which means that F-count was 32,963 > F-table 2.47. And the significance value is 0.000 which means <0.05. And thus, it can also be concluded that the influence simultaneously (simultaneously) between the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Research Limitation

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion above, of course there are still many gaps that need to be improved. The following are some of the limitations of this study:

1. The variables analyzed in this study were limited to E-WOM, university image, social media, and tuition fees. There are other factors that may influence students' decisions in choosing a university, such as academic quality, location, or financial aid availability. Future research could include additional variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

2. Data collection was conducted using questionnaires, which may introduce response bias, as respondents may tend to give socially desirable answers. It is recommended that future research adopt a mixed-method approach, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to obtain richer and more nuanced data.

3. Since this study was conducted at a single institution with specific social and cultural conditions, the findings may not be widely applicable to other institutions with different social and cultural contexts. Further research across various institutions in different regions could help understand contextual influences on university selection decisions.

Research Implication

To attract prospective students, universities should enhance their digital marketing strategies by optimizing social media content to highlight facilities, campus activities, and academic experiences. Interactive efforts like webinars, virtual campus tours, and student-generated content can offer authentic insights. Leveraging social media analytics allows universities to tailor communication strategies to prospective students' preferences. In addition, addressing tuition affordability is crucial, as educational costs significantly influence student decisions. Providing scholarships, accessible financing schemes, and government-supported financial aid can promote equitable access to education, especially for underprivileged students. Universities can also collaborate with financial institutions to offer tuition installment programs, reducing the financial burden on students and their families.

CONCLUSION

E-WOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) has a positive but not significant impact on the decision to choose a university, indicating that while it contributes, its influence is not substantial. A stronger presence of E-WOM through social media correlates with an increased likelihood of prospective students choosing a university. In contrast, the university image plays a significant role, as a better reputation directly increases the decision of prospective students to enroll. Among the variables studied—E-WOM, university image, social media, and education costs—social media emerges as the dominant factor influencing university selection decisions. Social media serves as a powerful tool for disseminating information about higher education institutions, such as STIKI Malang. It provides prospective students with access to a wide range of relevant details, from admission processes to ongoing campus activities. This broad accessibility makes social media a critical platform for attracting and informing potential students.

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