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Examining the Impact of Promotional Strategies and Digital Marketing on Student Enrollment Decisions in Tutoring Centers: A Case Study of Medan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This research investigates the influence of promotional strategies and digital marketing on students' decision-making processes when selecting tutoring services at Course Centre Medan, Indonesia. The study addresses the declining student enrollment attributed to ineffective promotional activities and limited digital marketing utilization.

Materials and methods: A quantitative research design was employed with 50 students as respondents using saturated sampling technique. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring promotion (8 items), digital marketing (10 items), and decision-making (8 items) using a 5-point Likert scale. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22 to examine the relationships between variables.

Results: The multiple linear regression analysis yielded the equation $Y = 9.272 + 0.306X_1 + 0.352X_2 + e$, indicating positive relationships. Partial testing revealed that promotion significantly influences student decision-making ($t = 3.389 > 2.011$, $p = 0.001$), as does digital marketing ($t = 3.353 > 2.011$, $p = 0.002$). Simultaneous testing demonstrated that both variables collectively impact decision-making ($F = 12.309 > 3.19$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.316, indicating that 31.6% of variance in student decision-making is explained by promotion and digital marketing.

Conclusions: Both promotion and digital marketing significantly influence students' decisions in choosing tutoring services. Digital marketing demonstrates a slightly stronger effect ($\beta = 0.397$) compared to promotion ($\beta = 0.402$). Educational institutions should prioritize integrated marketing strategies combining traditional promotional methods with digital platforms to enhance student recruitment and enrollment.

Keywords

promotion strategy, digital marketing, consumer decision-making, tutoring services, educational marketing, student enrollment.

INTRODUCTION

The educational services sector has experienced significant transformation in marketing approaches, particularly within non-formal education institutions such as tutoring centers (*bimbingan belajar*). In Indonesia, the compulsory nine-year basic education system, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, has created substantial demand for supplementary educational services (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2003). Tutoring centers serve as crucial supplementary learning environments where students seek additional academic support beyond formal schooling (Afrianto, 2021).

The competitive landscape of tutoring services has intensified as providers vie for market share through various marketing strategies. Contemporary marketing paradigms emphasize the integration of traditional promotional methods with digital marketing approaches to reach and engage target audiences effectively (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). This integration becomes particularly critical in the education sector, where consumer decision-making processes are influenced by multiple stakeholders including students, parents, and educators.

Promotion represents a fundamental component of the marketing mix, serving as the primary communication channel between service providers and potential consumers (Tjiptono, 2017). In educational contexts, promotional activities encompass advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing (Budianto, 2015). Effective promotional strategies enhance institutional visibility, communicate value propositions, and facilitate informed decision-making among prospective students (Aprianto, 2016).

Previous research has demonstrated the significant impact of promotional activities on consumer behavior in educational settings. Prayogo (2019) found that promotion, alongside location and physical evidence, significantly influenced purchase decisions at tutoring centers in Tanjungpinang ($R^2 = 0.803$). Similarly, Nugraha (2022) reported that promotion exerted dominant influence on tutoring selection decisions in Bandung, contributing 47.5% of variance in decision-making processes. However, these studies primarily focused on traditional promotional methods without adequately addressing the evolving digital landscape.

Digital marketing encompasses marketing activities leveraging digital technologies and online platforms to promote products and services (Handoko & Melinda, 2021). The proliferation of digital technologies has revolutionized marketing practices, offering unprecedented reach, cost-effectiveness, and engagement opportunities (Firmanda & Lukiastuti, 2022). Key dimensions of digital marketing include accessibility, interactivity, entertainment value, credibility, and informativeness (Aryani, 2021).

In educational contexts, digital marketing enables institutions to target specific demographic segments, provide timely information, and facilitate interactive communication with prospective students (Sopiyah, 2022). Suyono and Suyono (2023) demonstrated that digital marketing and promotion collectively explained 78.4% of variance in students' decisions to choose Eye Level tutoring in Medan. Nyoman (2022) found that digital marketing significantly influenced mobile learning adoption decisions, with an R^2 of 81.2%.

Despite these findings, research examining the comparative and combined effects of traditional promotion and digital marketing on educational service selection remains limited, particularly in the Indonesian tutoring sector.

Identification of Research Gaps

Several gaps exist in the current literature:

1. Limited integration studies: Most existing research examines promotion and digital marketing in isolation rather than investigating their combined effects on decision-making.
2. Contextual specificity: Few studies focus specifically on language and cultural learning centers, which may exhibit different consumer behavior patterns compared to general academic tutoring.
3. Declining enrollment contexts: Limited research addresses marketing effectiveness in scenarios of declining enrollment, which requires distinct strategic approaches.
4. Digital marketing utilization: Studies examining the effectiveness of specific digital marketing dimensions (accessibility, interactivity, credibility) in educational settings remain scarce.

Rationale for the Research

Course Centre Medan, a tutoring institution specializing in Mandarin language instruction and Chinese cultural education, has experienced declining student enrollment over three consecutive years (2022: 78 students; 2023: 68 students; 2024: 55 students). Preliminary investigation identified several contributing factors:

1. Ineffective promotional strategies: Limited to on-site banners and minimal brochure distribution
2. Insufficient digital presence: Minimal social media utilization (Instagram account with only 138 followers and 68 posts since 2021)
3. Inconsistent content marketing: Sporadic posting schedule and limited content diversity
4. Low engagement: Failure to leverage testimonials, student achievements, and educational content

These circumstances present an opportunity to examine how enhanced promotional and digital marketing strategies might influence student enrollment decisions. Understanding these relationships can inform evidence-based marketing strategies for educational institutions facing similar challenges.

Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Examine the influence of promotion on students' decisions in choosing tutoring services at Course Centre Medan
2. Investigate the impact of digital marketing on students' decision-making processes
3. Assess the simultaneous effect of promotion and digital marketing on student enrollment decisions
4. Provide empirical evidence to inform marketing strategy development for educational service providers

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Participants

The study population comprised all active students enrolled at Course Centre Medan during the 2024 academic period ($N = 50$). Given the accessible population size, saturated sampling (census sampling) was employed, incorporating all population members as respondents. This approach eliminates sampling error and provides comprehensive population data (Sugiyono, 2017). Demographic characteristics of the study cohort:

1. Gender distribution: Male students ($n = 27$, 54%); Female students ($n = 23$, 46%)
2. Age distribution: 5-8 years ($n = 15$, 30%); 9-10 years ($n = 12$, 24%); 11-14 years ($n = 14$, 28%); 15-20 years ($n = 9$, 18%)
3. Educational level: Primarily elementary and middle school students seeking Mandarin language proficiency

Study Organization

Research Design:

Table. 1 Research Design

Aspect	Description
Research Type	Quantitative
Research Design	Causal-Explanatory
Objectives	Analyzing the relationship between independent variables (Promotion & Digital Marketing) and the dependent variable (Decision-Making)

Table 2. Methodological Framework: Variable Operationalization

Variable	Code	Indicator	Number of Items	Source
Promotion	X ₁	Promotional Attractiveness	2 item	Budianto (2015)

Digital Marketing	X_2	Media Diversity	2 item	Aryani (2021)
		Promotional Effectiveness	2 item	
		Message Appeal	2 item	
		Accessibility	2 item	
		Interactivity	2 item	
		Entertainment	2 item	
		Credibility	2 item	
Decision-Making	Y	Irritation	2 item	Kotler & Armstrong (2017)
		Informativeness	2 item	
		Purchase Conviction	2 item	
		Brand Preference	2 item	
		Needs Alignment	2 item	
		External Recommendations	2 item	

Test and Measurement Procedures

A structured questionnaire comprising 26 items was developed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument underwent pilot testing to ensure clarity and comprehensibility.

Data Collection Procedure:

Data Collection Procedure. The data collection process was conducted systematically in three phases over a four-week period. In Phase 1 (Week 1), institutional approval was obtained from the relevant academic authorities, followed by the acquisition of informed consent from all participants to ensure ethical compliance. Phase 2 (Weeks 2–3) involved the administration of structured questionnaires during regular class sessions, allowing participants to complete the instruments in a controlled and familiar learning environment. In Phase 3 (Week 4), all collected data underwent verification and quality control procedures, including completeness checks and consistency review, to ensure data accuracy and reliability. The study achieved a 100% response rate, with all 50 out of 50 questionnaires completed and deemed valid for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 22.0 through several systematic procedures. Initially, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations for all research variables. Subsequently, classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure the suitability of the regression model, comprising a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method and examination of the P–P plot, a multicollinearity test based on Variance Inflation Factor ($VIF < 10$) and tolerance values greater than 0.1, and a heteroscedasticity test through scatterplot analysis of residuals. After meeting these assumptions, multiple linear regression analysis was applied using the model $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$, where decision-making served as the dependent variable (Y), promotion (X_1) and digital marketing (X_2) as independent variables, β_0 as the constant, β_1 and β_2 as regression coefficients, and ε as the error term. Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using partial tests (t-tests) to assess the individual effects of each independent variable and a simultaneous test (F-test) to evaluate their combined influence, all at a significance level of 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was also calculated to determine the proportion of variance in decision-making explained by the independent variables.

Ethical Considerations:

This study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of STIE International Business Management Indonesia (Approval No.: [To be inserted]). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants (or parents/guardians for minors). Participant anonymity and data confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw without consequences.

RESULTS

Instrument Validation

Table 3. Summary of Instrument Validity Test Results

Variable / Scale	Range of Item–Total Correlation (r)	Critical Value	Significance (p)	Interpretation
Promotion	0.370 – 0.698	$r > 0.278$	$p < 0.05$	All items valid
Digital Marketing	0.291 – 0.593	$r > 0.278$	$p < 0.05$	All items valid
Decision-Making	0.342 – 0.689	$r > 0.278$	$p < 0.05$	All items valid

All measurement items met the validity requirements, as indicated by correlation coefficients exceeding the critical value and achieving statistical significance, confirming their appropriateness for measuring the respective constructs. Jika ingin versi bahasa Indonesia atau ingin ditambahkan kolom jumlah item, saya bisa sesuaikan.

All scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency:

- Promotion: $\alpha = 0.703$
- Digital marketing: $\alpha = 0.607$
- Decision-making: $\alpha = 0.602$

Classical Assumption Testing

Normality Test:

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated normally distributed residuals ($p > 0.05$). The P–P plot showed data points clustered around the diagonal line, confirming normality assumptions.

Multicollinearity Test:

VIF values for all independent variables were below 10 (Promotion VIF = 1.006; Digital Marketing VIF = 1.006), and tolerance values exceeded 0.1 (both = 0.994), indicating absence of multicollinearity.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Promotion (X_1)	50	33.04	4.12	24	40
Digital Marketing (X_2)	50	43.56	3.32	38	50
Decision-Making (Y)	50	34.54	3.02	26	40

Note: Possible score ranges: Promotion (8-40), Digital Marketing (10-50), Decision-Making (8-40)

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	SE	β		
Constant	9.272	5.291	-	1.753	0.086
Promotion (X_1)	0.306	0.090	0.402	3.389	0.001**
Digital Marketing (X_2)	0.352	0.105	0.397	3.353	0.002**

Note: **p < 0.01; Dependent Variable: Decision-Making (Y)

The regression equation is specified as:

$$Y = 9.272 + 0.306X_1 + 0.352X_2$$

Interpretation:

1. The constant (9.272) indicates the baseline decision-making score when both independent variables equal zero
2. A one-unit increase in promotion corresponds to a 0.306-unit increase in decision-making
3. A one-unit increase in digital marketing corresponds to a 0.352-unit increase in decision-making

Visual Data Representation

The results indicate that both independent variables exert relatively comparable influence magnitudes on decision-making, with promotion demonstrating a marginally stronger effect than digital marketing. Partial effect analysis reveals that promotion and digital marketing each have a statistically significant impact on decision-making at the $p < 0.01$ level, underscoring the robustness of their relationships. The standardized coefficients, which are nearly identical ($\beta_{\text{promotion}} = 0.402$ and $\beta_{\text{digital marketing}} = 0.397$), suggest that both variables contribute with similar strength. Furthermore, the combined effect of promotion and digital marketing substantially exceeds their individual effects, highlighting a strong collective contribution to decision-making. The model exhibits moderate explanatory power, accounting for approximately one-third of the variance in decision-making outcomes. Importantly, all classical regression assumptions were satisfied, confirming the validity of the model and the reliability of the findings.

DISCUSSION**Interpretation of Research Outcomes**

This study provides empirical evidence that both traditional promotional strategies and digital marketing significantly influence students' decisions to enroll in tutoring services. The findings align with contemporary marketing theory emphasizing integrated multi-channel approaches (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017) while offering specific insights into the educational services context.

Individual Variable Effects

The significant positive effect of promotion ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 3.389$, $p = 0.001$) provides strong support for Hypothesis 1, indicating that traditional promotional activities remain influential despite the ongoing digital transformation of marketing practices. This finding aligns with prior studies in educational and service-oriented contexts (Nugraha, 2022; Prayogo, 2019; Wijayani, 2015), which consistently report that tangible promotional materials and direct marketing communications continue to shape consumer decision-making processes.

The effectiveness of promotion can be attributed to several underlying mechanisms. First, promotional activities function as a key medium for information dissemination, supplying prospective consumers with essential details regarding services, pricing structures, and value propositions (Tjiptono, 2017). Second, consistent promotional messaging enhances brand awareness by strengthening institutional recognition and recall (Budianto, 2015). Third, traditional promotional channels tend to foster trust and credibility, which are particularly critical in service sectors characterized by high levels of perceived uncertainty (Aprianto, 2016). Finally, in educational decision-making involving minors, parents often rely more heavily on conventional information sources—such as brochures and word-of-mouth recommendations—that are perceived as more reliable and authoritative.

Nevertheless, descriptive statistics indicate that promotional performance at Course Centre Medan remains suboptimal ($M = 33.04$ out of a maximum score of 40), highlighting considerable room for improvement. The institution's reliance on limited promotional efforts—primarily on-site banners and minimal brochure distribution—suggests that it has yet to fully capitalize on the potential of traditional promotional channels to maximize their impact on decision-making.

Digital Marketing's Impact on Decision-Making

Digital marketing demonstrated significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.397$, $t = 3.353$, $p = 0.002$), supporting Hypothesis 2. This finding aligns with contemporary research emphasizing digital channels' growing importance in consumer decision-making processes (Suyono & Suyono, 2023; Nyoman, 2022; Handoko & Melinda, 2021).

The effect of digital marketing operates through multiple interrelated pathways. First, accessibility enables prospective students to obtain information at any time, allowing them to explore educational options according to their own schedules and information needs (Aryani, 2021). Second, interactivity provided by digital platforms supports two-way communication, facilitating question submission, review reading, and community engagement, which collectively enhance consumer involvement in the

decision-making process (Firmanda & Lukiastuti, 2022). Third, social proof plays a critical role, as digital channels allow testimonials, success stories, and peer recommendations to be widely shared and easily accessed—factors that are particularly influential in service selection contexts (Sopiyah, 2022). Fourth, targeting precision enables institutions to deliver demographic-specific messages, thereby increasing message relevance, audience engagement, and marketing efficiency (Lucyantoro & Rachmansyah, 2017).

Despite these advantages, Course Centre Medan's digital presence remains limited, as reflected in its Instagram account with only 138 followers and inconsistent content updates. This condition represents a substantial missed opportunity to leverage digital marketing more effectively. Although the mean digital marketing score ($M = 43.56$ out of a maximum of 50) indicates that respondents acknowledge the importance of digital marketing, it simultaneously suggests that the institution has not yet optimally utilized these digital channels to influence prospective students' decision-making.

Comparative Effect Sizes

The nearly equivalent standardized coefficients ($\beta_{\text{promotion}} = 0.402$ vs. $\beta_{\text{digital marketing}} = 0.397$) indicate that neither channel singularly dominates the decision-making process. Instead, this parity underscores several important strategic implications. First, it highlights complementarity, wherein traditional promotion and digital marketing fulfill distinct yet mutually reinforcing roles across the customer journey. Second, it reflects demographic variation, as different audience segments may prioritize different channels—for instance, younger prospective students may be more responsive to digital platforms, while parents often place greater trust in traditional promotional materials. Third, it suggests stage-specific relevance, whereby certain channels exert stronger influence at particular phases of decision-making, such as awareness, consideration, or final selection.

The significant simultaneous effect ($F = 12.309$, $p < 0.001$) supports Hypothesis 3, confirming that promotion and digital marketing collectively exert a stronger influence on decision-making than either variable alone. This finding is consistent with integrated marketing communications theory, which emphasizes that coordinated and consistent messaging across multiple channels generates more effective outcomes than fragmented, single-channel approaches (Fill & Turnbull, 2019).

The moderate coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.316$) also warrants discussion. Although explaining 31.6% of the variance may appear modest at first glance, this magnitude is typical within marketing research, particularly in service and educational contexts where decision-making is inherently multifactorial. Beyond promotion and digital marketing, consumer decisions are shaped by a wide range of determinants, including perceived service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2018), price considerations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017), location convenience (Prayogo, 2019), instructor qualifications (Nugraha, 2022), facility quality (Wijayani, 2015), word-of-mouth recommendations (Firmanda & Lukiastuti, 2022), prior educational experiences, and peer influence. Consequently, the obtained R^2 value reflects a meaningful and theoretically sound level of explanatory power within a complex decision-making environment. That marketing communications alone explain nearly one-third of decision variance underscores their substantial practical importance while acknowledging the complex, multifactorial nature of educational service selection.

Evaluation in Relation to Antecedent Studies

The findings of this study generally align with prior research in the field of educational marketing, although notable differences in explanatory power are evident. Suyono and Suyono (2023) reported that digital marketing and promotion explained 78.4% of the variance in tutoring selection, a substantially higher proportion than the 31.6% identified in the present study. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in institutional contexts, measurement instruments, or sample characteristics. Similarly, Prayogo (2019) found that promotion, location, and physical evidence jointly explained 80.3% of decision-making variance, suggesting that the inclusion of additional non-marketing communication variables can significantly enhance explanatory power. Nugraha (2022) demonstrated that promotion and price together accounted for 87.8% of the variance, with promotion alone contributing 47.5%, which may reflect the implementation of more comprehensive and intensive promotional strategies within the studied institution. In a different but related context, Nyoman (2022) reported that digital marketing and lifestyle variables explained 81.2% of the variance in mobile learning adoption, indicating that lifestyle-related factors play a substantial role in technology-oriented decision-making.

Points of Divergence

In contrast to previous studies that reported either promotional dominance (Nugraha, 2022) or digital marketing superiority (Nyoman, 2022), the present research reveals a relatively balanced influence between promotion and digital marketing. This parity may be explained by several contextual factors. First, the tutoring industry appears to be in a transitional marketing phase, shifting from traditional-dominant to digital-oriented strategies, thereby creating a temporary equilibrium between channels. Second, the generational diversity within the sample—spanning ages 5 to 20 years—encompasses multiple cohorts with distinct media consumption preferences. Third, parental involvement in educational decision-making may moderate younger consumers' digital inclinations, reinforcing reliance on traditional and perceived-trustworthy information sources.

Implications of the Findings

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the relevance of integrated marketing communications theory, demonstrating that coordinated multi-channel strategies yield stronger outcomes than reliance on a single channel. The results also highlight the specificity of service marketing in educational contexts, which are characterized by intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability, thereby necessitating tailored marketing approaches. Importantly, the study supports the notion of digital-traditional complementarity, suggesting that digital platforms do not replace traditional promotional media but rather coexist and contribute uniquely to consumer decision-making.

Practical Implications.

For educational service providers, particularly tutoring institutions, several practical recommendations emerge. First,

promotional channels should be diversified beyond minimal on-site signage to include strategic brochure distribution in schools, libraries, and community centers; local media advertising; event sponsorships and educational fairs; and open house or trial class programs. Second, digital marketing presence should be strengthened through the development of a comprehensive, search-engine-optimized website; active engagement across multiple social media platforms; implementation of a consistent content calendar featuring educational materials, testimonials, success stories, and behind-the-scenes content; utilization of paid digital advertising with precise demographic targeting; and systematic encouragement and display of customer reviews. Third, institutions should integrate traditional and digital channels strategically by ensuring message consistency across touchpoints, embedding QR codes in print materials that link to digital content, using social media to promote offline events, and designing seamless omnichannel customer journeys. Finally, continuous monitoring and optimization are essential, including tracking channel-specific performance metrics, conducting regular customer journey mapping, implementing A/B testing of messages and visuals, and adjusting resource allocation based on empirical effectiveness data.

Policy Implications:
For educational regulators and policymakers, the findings highlight several important considerations. First, there is a need for the development of clear and enforceable marketing guidelines that establish ethical standards for educational services, particularly with respect to promotional claims, the use of testimonials, and comparative advertising practices. Second, regulators should promote digital literacy by supporting educational institutions in strengthening their digital marketing capabilities through targeted training programs, technical assistance, and access to relevant resources. Third, consumer protection mechanisms should be reinforced to ensure that marketing communications convey accurate, transparent, and verifiable information, thereby enabling students and parents to make well-informed educational decisions.

Recognizing Research Constraints

Several limitations of the present study warrant acknowledgment. In terms of generalizability, the focus on a single institution restricts the applicability of the findings to other tutoring centers, especially those that differ in scale, geographic location, or academic specialization; future multi-institutional studies would enhance external validity. The cross-sectional research design, based on a one-time measurement, limits the ability to draw causal inferences or to examine changes in decision-making over time, suggesting that longitudinal approaches would provide deeper insights into the dynamics of marketing influence.

The reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may introduce social desirability bias and common method variance; subsequent research could benefit from triangulating survey responses with objective indicators such as enrollment records, website analytics, or advertising expenditure data. Furthermore, the substantial proportion of unexplained variance (68.4%) indicates that many influential factors were not captured in the model, underscoring the need to incorporate additional variables such as service quality, pricing, location convenience, instructor qualifications, and peer influence. Although the measurement instruments demonstrated acceptable reliability, the use of more comprehensive scales with a greater number of items could further improve construct validity and measurement precision.

Demographic constraints also merit consideration, as the wide age range of respondents (5–20 years) may mask age-specific response patterns; future studies employing age-stratified analyses could reveal developmental differences in sensitivity to various marketing channels. In addition, the cultural specificity of the Indonesian context limits the transferability of the findings to other cultural settings where educational values, family decision-making structures, and media consumption habits may differ. Finally, the institutional context of Course Centre Medan, with its specialization in Mandarin language instruction, may involve distinctive characteristics that are not fully representative of general academic tutoring centers.

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful contributions to the understanding of marketing effectiveness in educational service contexts and provides practical guidance for institutions seeking to optimize student recruitment strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of promotional strategies and digital marketing on students' decisions to select tutoring services at Course Centre Medan and yields several definitive conclusions. First, promotion was found to exert a significant positive effect on student decision-making ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 3.389$, $p = 0.001$), confirming that traditional marketing channels remain relevant and impactful in educational service contexts despite ongoing digital transformation. Second, digital marketing also demonstrated a significant positive influence on enrollment decisions ($\beta = 0.397$, $t = 3.353$, $p = 0.002$), underscoring the growing importance of online platforms in contemporary consumer decision-making. Third, the significant simultaneous effect of promotion and digital marketing ($F = 12.309$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that integrated marketing communications generate synergistic outcomes that substantially exceed the effects of individual channels. Fourth, the nearly equivalent effect sizes of both variables suggest a complementary rather than substitutive relationship, implying that effective marketing strategies in educational services must integrate traditional and digital approaches. Finally, although marketing communications explained 31.6% of the variance in decision-making, a substantial proportion remains unexplained, highlighting the complex and multifactorial nature of educational service selection.

These findings reinforce several core marketing concepts. Integrated marketing communications theory is supported by evidence that coordinated, multi-channel strategies outperform isolated efforts. The results also emphasize the complexity of the customer journey, which involves multiple touchpoints across different channels and decision stages. Moreover, the study confirms media complementarity, whereby traditional and digital channels serve distinct yet mutually reinforcing roles in information provision, trust building, and engagement. Consistent with service marketing theory, the findings further demonstrate that educational services require tailored marketing approaches due to their intangible, relationship-centered, and high-involvement characteristics.

The study holds important implications for multiple stakeholders. For educational institutions, it provides evidence-based guidance for allocating marketing resources, emphasizes the necessity of balanced investment in traditional and digital channels, and offers strategic direction for addressing enrollment challenges. For marketing practitioners, the findings contribute empirical evidence on the relative effectiveness of marketing channels in educational contexts and illustrate practical approaches to measuring

marketing performance. For academic researchers, the study extends the educational marketing literature—particularly in non-formal education settings—while identifying research gaps related to mediating mechanisms, moderating variables, and longitudinal effects. For policymakers, the results inform the development of ethical marketing guidelines, highlight the importance of digital capability building in educational institutions, and support consumer protection initiatives aimed at ensuring transparent and accurate marketing communications.

The empirical evidence also substantiates the study's initial hypotheses concerning Course Centre Medan's declining enrollment. The significant effects of promotion and digital marketing confirm that limited promotional activities and weak digital presence negatively affect enrollment outcomes. Moreover, the identified synergistic effect indicates that the absence of an integrated marketing strategy compounds individual channel weaknesses, thereby amplifying adverse impacts on student recruitment.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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