

Analysis of the Use of Instagram as a Promotional Media for Sumbawa University of Technology in Attracting the Interest of Prospective Students from Various Regions

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Abstract: *Social media has become an essential marketing tool for higher education institutions in promoting their academic programs and attracting prospective students. Among various social media platforms, Instagram has emerged as an effective promotional medium due to its extensive reach, interactive features, and visual communication capabilities. This study aims to analyze the utilization of Instagram as a promotional medium by Sumbawa University of Technology (UTS) in attracting prospective students from various regions of Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using Tom Peters' Personal Branding Theory as the analytical framework. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with the UTS Public Relations team and students from outside Sumbawa Island, and documentation. The findings indicate that Instagram has played a significant role in enhancing UTS's promotional efforts, as reflected by the substantial growth in followers over the past two years, increased audience engagement through comments, likes, and direct interactions, as well as improved dissemination of new student admission information. Furthermore, visually appealing and informative content, combined with consistent account management, has contributed to strengthening the university's institutional image and increasing prospective students' interest in enrolling at UTS. The study concludes that Instagram has been effectively utilized as a promotional medium and supports UTS's branding strategy in expanding its visibility and attracting students from diverse geographical backgrounds.*

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Introduction

The internet is currently developing rapidly to meet basic human needs in daily life. Therefore, with the internet, everyone can easily interact with each other to quickly obtain important news. The internet is not only used to obtain information but also as a platform for profit through product and service promotions. The use of the internet, along with its various advantages, is used as a trading platform known as online marketing (Nurani, 2021: 30). A digital marketing strategy frequently used by universities in Indonesia to promote their campuses to prospective students is promotion through online applications such as social media. Recent research shows that promotion using social media is an appropriate alternative in attracting prospective students. Using social media certainly makes it easier for them to choose a university (Sulistiyowati & Husda, 2023: 5). However, the digital promotion process certainly presents significant challenges, due to the intense competition between universities in utilizing social media as a promotional platform to the public. Currently, social media is used by universities as a primary alternative in the campus promotion process, because with social media, prospective students can easily obtain information about the campus and can be accessed anywhere. However, various obstacles remain in the delivery process; promotion through digital platforms does not always have a positive effect in attracting students who want to continue their education. Although various promotional efforts have been undertaken by higher education institutions, both through digital channels and print media, the results certainly do not always meet expectations. However, the use of conventional channels, when combined with the use of social media and positive reviews, has a very strong influence on shaping a consumer's final decision (Busolo et al., 2025: 41).

This situation emphasizes the need for active digital marketing development to utilize social media to achieve the desired marketing targets in accordance with the planned strategy. Research shows that promotional activities using digital media, combined with product value and price, have a significant impact on purchasing preferences (Saputri et al., 2024: 18). Promotion can be defined as a systematic effort to convey information about a product, both its advantages and benefits, to consumers. Promotional activities are nothing more than introducing the product to many people using currently available alternative media. However, unlike a university, what they provide is not goods but rather educational services, while the consumers in this promotion are prospective students (Kannada R, 2019: 57).

The wide reach makes social media the main platform that is often used in the process of disseminating information from educational institutions and other institutional organizations, the goal is to ensure that the information to be conveyed is delivered quickly and in real time, then used to form interactions, as well as managing the institution's reputation (Putri, 2017: 10). Changes in information media are now changing the communication landscape in certain fields, such as in higher education institutions. For example, in the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, there is a university that has participated in the active use of social media such as Instagram, one of which is UTS.



In its utilization, Instagram plays a crucial role in the interaction process. The platform is utilized for promotional activities at the Sumbawa University of Technology campus with the aim of attracting the attention of the public and prospective students at the university. Instagram has a significant reach in supporting marketing activities. This can be seen in the significant increase in the use of the platform by universities, especially private ones like the Sumbawa University of Technology. Typically, private universities play a more active role in interacting with other users, including news updates posted on Instagram, following each other, and sharing content, compared to public universities. This is certainly done in an effort to achieve a good image in the community and become a primary choice for pursuing education. (Yusanda A, 2021: 33).

Instagram has now evolved into a platform for enhancing reputation and marketing products or services. Utilizing Instagram's superior features makes it easier for users to reach a wide range of audiences. Furthermore, using Instagram allows for more precise targeting of specific audiences, thereby increasing the chances of achieving higher conversion rates. This statement aligns with the meaning of the Sumbawa University of Technology's slogan, "down-to-earth & global," which serves as a massive movement and the spirit behind every activity of the Sumbawa University of Technology's academic community (Hakim, 2022: 14).

The meaning of the slogan "down to earth and global" is the hallmark of UTS in carrying out its grand vision as a place for all those who want to learn and develop (Hakim, 2022: 14). This vision has a positive influence on the interest of prospective students to continue their undergraduate and postgraduate education through various programs provided by UTS, so that UTS is nicknamed as a miniature of Indonesia because it has succeeded in attracting the interest of prospective students from various regions, in 2020 UTS also succeeded in bringing in several foreign students who wanted to continue their education at UTS obtained from the U-GAS program. This program was a program initiated by Mr. Chairul Hudaya, Ph.D. as the campus leader at that time, this program was run under the auspices of Foreign Cooperation which played a major role and received support from the Academic Directorate (Amali, 2021: 4).

Furthermore, research specifically examining university promotion through Instagram to attract prospective students from various regions is still limited. Currently, much of the literature only discusses the general educational marketing process and also promotion through social media without providing specifics of the object to be studied. Therefore, the research gap in this study focuses on Instagram as a promotional tool for UTS in attracting the attention of prospective students, in accordance with UTS's slogan, which is down-to-earth and global. As a comparison, research by Amud Sunarya et.al. (2023) shows that promotion using the AIDAS model is a common method used by various campuses to attract students. However, the focus of this research is more on analyzing promotional strategies and obstacles in implementing strategies without Oktavian et.al. (2025) who examined the benefits of various digital platforms currently available to help students in choosing their campus. as a platform to get news about the campus they want. However, this study did not focus on one of the media used for the object of their research. For this reason, the research that will be conducted attempts to fill the existing research gaps so that it is more focused on just one media, and this research chooses Instagram

as its research reference because this research attempts to provide an overview of the benefits of an Instagram platform as a university promotional media, especially at the Sumbawa University of Technology.

From the background that has been explained by the researcher in the previous section, a research title was formed on "Analysis of the Use of Instagram as a Promotional Media for Sumbawa Technology University in Attracting the Interest of Prospective Students from Various Regions".

Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. In this study, the researcher plays a crucial role in the research, as he or she must also be the primary instrument in the data collection process. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which allows for strategic subject selection based on relevance and networks. Therefore, qualitative research results focus more on in-depth elaboration of meaning rather than making generalizations (Sugiyono, 2011: 58). This research is planned to be conducted in April 2026, this month being chosen because it coincides with the approval of the proposal submitted by the author. The research location is the Sumbawa University of Technology. The data sources for this research were obtained from primary and secondary data. The sampling and informant selection techniques were used. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques, according to Miles and Huberman, include data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction is a technique in qualitative data analysis that functions to group, simplify, and organize data, as well as discard data that is irrelevant to the research objectives. The purpose of this data reduction is to ensure that the data obtained can provide sound conclusions. Data presentation in qualitative research can take various forms, such as narrative descriptions in the form of field notes, matrices, graphs, networks, and charts. Data verification is tentative, as conclusions may change over time if supporting data is not available. Therefore, in-depth research is necessary to clarify initially vague conclusions after the research is conducted.

Results and Discussion

Research result

1. Utilization of Instagram Features by UTS Public Relations

Promotion using Instagram is an appropriate and effective strategy used today to promote a university. Judging from its features and functions, Instagram has a wide user reach and is supported by various superior and efficient features for conveying information. This platform is a communication medium that comprehensively integrates verbal information with visual elements, thus enabling more effective message delivery. Furthermore, Instagram has a clear function as a communication tool in promotions. The use of attractive design in conveying messages can increase the appeal of information, making it easier to attract the attention of the audience and be accepted by various groups. The use of Instagram features is also very important to pay attention to, for example, the use of the comment feature that can enable interaction between the institution and students. Through available features, students can provide responses, ask questions, and obtain explanations or clarification regarding the information provided through the comments column or direct messages (DM).

2. Content of interest

On an Instagram account, students will naturally look for various informational content about their chosen campus, such as scholarships, student activities, student achievements, and New Student Admissions (PMB) information. This is the first step prospective students want to know when considering joining their dream campus. Of course, conveying information requires a visual

aspect to support prospective students' understanding of the information provided. Academic information presented in visual media, such as posters or short videos, tends to be easier to understand, more engaging, and more memorable for prospective students than text.

with information presented solely in narrative form. In addition to providing content on various academic topics, UTS Public Relations also strives to present engaging visuals to prevent uploaded content from appearing boring and monotonous. Public Relations certainly takes steps to address this issue.

3. Building a Positive Image on Instagram

The positive image that is built is the goal of a company to attract the interest of the community and the general public so that this is in line and in line with the UTS Vision which wants to make UTS a comfortable place for teaching and learning so that the Human Resources (HR) in it can develop and be useful for the universe. From this statement it can be concluded that the way to build a good image in the community is of course by displaying positive things and can attract the attention of the wider public. The method that is always applied by UTS in building the campus image is to highlight the advantages that the campus has, such as academic and non-academic achievements from lecturers and students, also what differentiates it from other campuses is the uniqueness that UTS has that is rarely owned by other campuses such as the term UTS as "Miniature World", because it contains various tribes, languages and different backgrounds.

4. Advantages of Promotion Using Instagram

Of course, each social media platform has its own advantages. For example, UTS Instagram, which serves as a platform for campus PR, consistently utilizes its various features. This social media account was chosen because it has a large user base, making it easier to disseminate campus information to the global public.

5. Student Perceptions of UTS Instagram

Students' perceptions of the UTS promotional display on Instagram significantly determine the success of their content, as engaging content that captures the audience's attention increases engagement. It can be concluded that UTS Instagram content is quite beneficial for prospective students, including content about student activities and the campus environment. Furthermore, content about student achievements is also crucial for inspiring other students to continue their studies. This final statement is reinforced by content that follows current trends, making promotional content on Instagram more unique and creative.

6. Driving Factors for Joining UTS

In making a decision, of course there is something called a driving factor which is used as a guide for someone to be more confident in drawing conclusions.

"What really motivated me was the information about the students. I saw that UTS was always active in campus activities, both academic and non-academic, which made it interesting"
(Fahma, 2026).

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the motivating factors experienced by students generally come from UTS Instagram content which displays various student activities such as organizational activities, then lecture activities, both practical courses and in class.

7. The Role of Instagram Compared to Other Media

Different digital platforms certainly have different roles, and Instagram certainly plays a significant role compared to other media platforms. Instagram offers several features that allow users to upload a variety of content that aligns with its features compared to other promotional platforms.

"I think Instagram plays a significant role because it's more accessible. Considering that many Gen Z users use it, and for visual enthusiasts like me who don't want the hassle, Instagram is the best option. Compared to brochures or information from other people, Instagram is arguably more practical." (Fahma, 2026)

From this statement, it can be seen that the three of them agree that the role of Instagram for campus promotion is very large, apart from its easily accessible role, Instagram is also a platform that is much sought after by Generation Z because it is considered more cost-effective compared to other promotional media, for example, print media which takes a lot of time and money.

Discussion Contents

1. Analysis of UTS's Use of the Instagram Account to Attract Prospective Students

The use of digital platforms is part of a promotion that is widely used by most educational institutions today, both government and private. One of them is the Sumbawa Technology University, which also utilizes technological developments such as Instagram to promote the campus to the wider community and to prospective students. According to Andriani et al. (2019: 43), promotion is a very important element in marketing management. Because through promotional activities, consumer mindsets can change, from initially having no interest in something to being interested because of the product promotion. According to Wicaksono et al. (2022: 55), promotion is the ability to communicate whose delivery process uses several types of media, such as print and electronic media. Its use aims to attract the audience's attention to products and services promoted by government or private institutions. Sumbawa University of Technology through its Instagram tries to show the excellence and superiority of the campus through various interesting and creative visual content, because by using interesting visual elements in conveying information it can increase the effectiveness of message communication, through informative and attractive visual displays, so that the message conveyed becomes easy to understand, accept and remember by everyone, especially prospective students.

Instagram, characterized by its wide reach, is designed with a high degree of complexity. Nevertheless, information delivery is still ensured to be engaging, relevant, and unambiguous to the audience. The design of a private university's Instagram account requires attention to visual quality and appropriate font use to ensure the information is clearly legible. Furthermore, the information elements, layout, and presentation style are also crucial and must be well-organized and conceptualized to ensure the message is delivered accurately.

Based on the above explanation, UTS strives to present engaging content tailored to the needs of its audience. This statement aligns with the research theory, which examines various elements of personal branding theory, including target audience, visual identity and communication style, credibility, and expertise. The purpose of using personal branding theory in this research is to assist UTS in promoting its campus and also to assist students in determining their choice to continue their education at UTS.

UTS Public Relations utilizes various features to support its promotional efforts through Instagram, such as the Reels feature, regular posts, and the comments section, which serves as a platform for interaction between the university and prospective students. The content uploaded can be formal or informal, depending on the student's needs. The use of engaging visuals is also crucial in the promotional process, as it helps the audience understand the message. According to interview data, audiences tend to prefer visually appealing content, both in terms of color, font, and grammar, such as content that showcases campus life and a cheerful campus environment.

UTS Public Relations is required to remain sensitive to current viral trends so they can serve as references in creating engaging content. Considering the ever-evolving times and technology, we must think more creatively and develop. The level of engagement on a social media account depends on the type of content used to promote the campus. This can help PR gauge the level of audience attention to content, such as the number of likes, comments, and views.

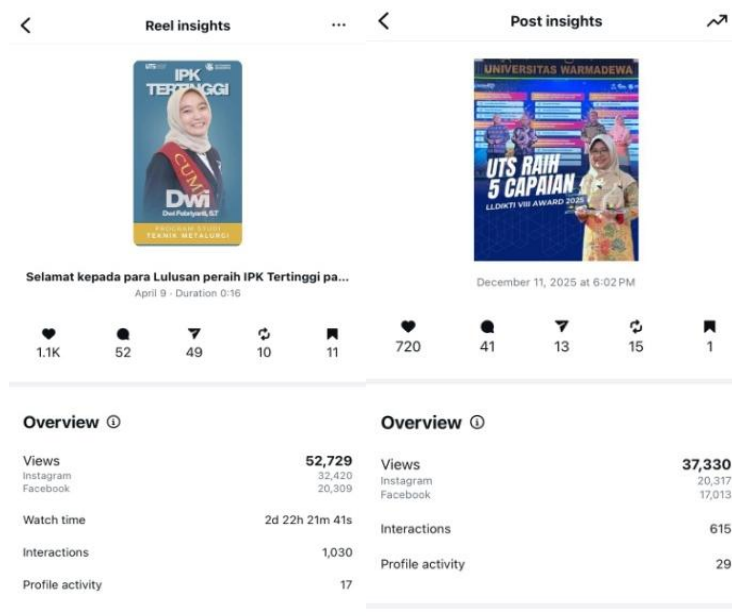


Figure 4.6 Insights on formal and non-formal content
Source: UTS Instagram admin

From the image above, it is clear that the insights of a reel are quite high compared to regular posts, because according to the results of interviews with public relations staff which are in line with existing data that:

"So far, the most frequently used feature is the reels feature, the regular feature. But the engagement with the reels feature is much higher" (Nurnaningsih, 2026).

The findings of the data also produced a perception from one research informant who was directly involved in the campus promotion process on Instagram who said that:

"The first thing that caught my attention when I saw the UTS was the post about graduates with GPA. I think it's interesting because it shows their achievements at UTS" (Niken, 2026).

UTS Public Relations carries out its work program as a liaison for internal and external campus communications. One of the work programs of UTS Public Relations is to consistently upload content that can provide an overview of the campus environment, for example, student activities, campus events, student and lecturer achievements in the UTS environment, as well as facilities provided by the campus for students.

UTS Public Relations strives to remain consistent in sharing and informing every campus activity on Instagram, because in that way prospective students feel helped to obtain information about campus activities carried out every day, by uploading every activity and achievement achieved regularly, it certainly helps prospective students in the decision-making process. Uploading content on Instagram consistently is able to attract the attention of prospective students intensively and from this process, prospective students' curiosity about the campus will grow deeper.

To learn more about the midterm exam (UTS) is the next step for prospective students. Because at this stage prospective students begin to dig deeper into their desired study program, so they are no longer focused solely on general activities and achievements, but try to dig deeper into the potential of each study program, both in terms of student interest in organizations within the study program environment and within the faculty. From the results of the research, content on

Instagram is sufficient to represent the condition of the campus, but not apart from that, of course there are still many other potentials that the campus has that have not been published. Therefore, students are advised not to always rely on Instagram as a sole source of information in getting to know the campus more deeply.

The final decision is the final step in the promotional activity, as it typically prompts prospective students to take action, such as asking questions directly (DM), commenting on new student admissions posts, or registering directly through a link provided by the university on posters or in captions on the UTS Instagram account. A university's promotional activity is considered successful if prospective students have registered at UTS and have met all the registration requirements set by the university.

2. Effectiveness of Using Instagram as a UTS Promotion Media

Instagram has become one of UTS's active platforms for campus promotion, as it has a wide reach for promotions, particularly for UTS. Instagram is currently popular with both teenagers and adults, providing an opportunity for public relations to be more active in promoting Universitas Teknologi Sumbawa through its Instagram account. Public relations can leverage Instagram's potential, such as leveraging its features to engage with prospective students.

The increase in followers of the UTS Instagram account can be seen from the previous 2 years until now as follows:

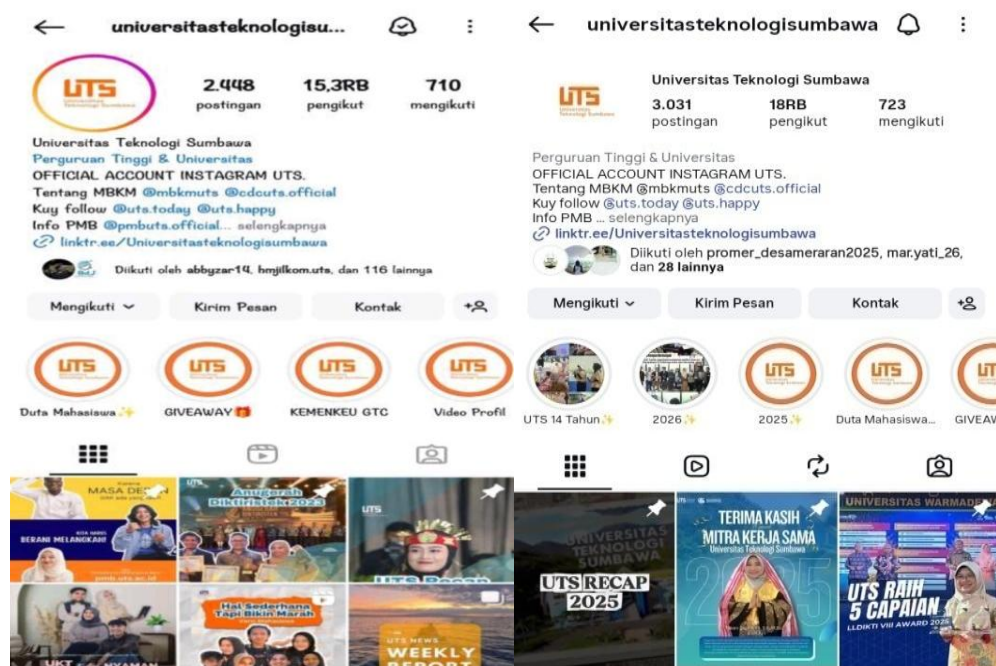


Figure 4.7 Increase in Instagram followers
Source: UTS Instagram account

From the image above, according to the results of interviews with UTS public relations staff, the following can be seen:

"Yes, there has been an increase, as evidenced by the continued increase in followers, and all of these are active followers, not purchased ones. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, certain content might attract the interest of prospective students, as evidenced by the number of comments, likes, and views." (Nurnaningsih, 2026).

In addition to increasing the number of UTS Instagram followers, the effects resulting from promotional activities through the UTS Instagram account also have an impact on increasing sources of information about UTS used by prospective students in obtaining information, this can

be seen in the diagram below:

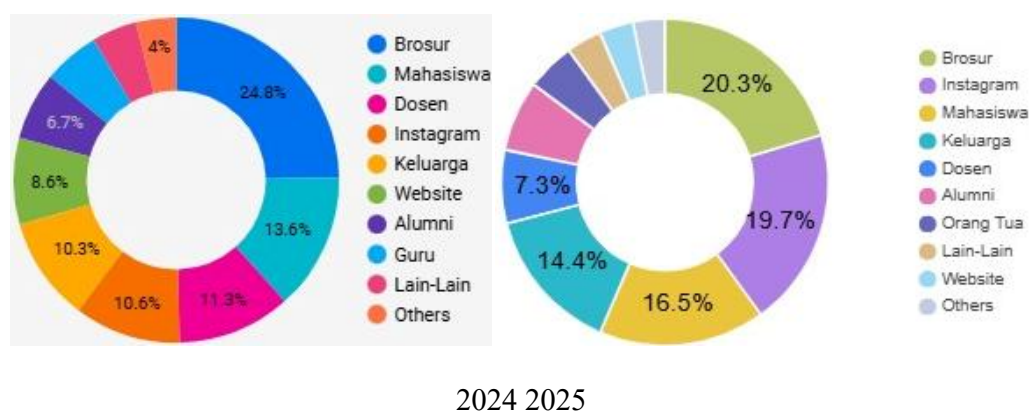


Figure 4.8 Diagram of prospective student information media
Source: New Student Admissions (PMB) Admin

From the image above, it can be seen that promotion through Instagram has become an effective promotional medium for Universitas Teknologi Sumbawa. The high percentage of Instagram as a source of registration information indicates a change in information-seeking behavior among the younger generation. As a generation growing up in the digital era, prospective students tend to be more active in using social media to seek information about higher education, with a percentage of 10.6% in 2024 and 19.7% in 2025, Instagram ranks second as the main source of information for prospective students and is only 0.6% behind brochures in 2025. This condition shows that prospective students are increasingly relying on Instagram to obtain information about Universitas Teknologi Sumbawa, ranging from information on study programs, campus facilities, student activities, to the new student admission process. In addition, Instagram has the advantage of presenting information in an attractive visual form through photo, video, reels, stories, live streaming features, as well as interaction through comments and direct messages. These characteristics make Instagram more effective in attracting the attention of prospective students compared to one-way promotional media such as brochures. Through engaging visual content, prospective students can gain an overview of the campus environment, student activities, learning facilities, and academic culture at Sumbawa University of Technology.

Based on the data on the increase in followers and media coverage described above, the number of students has increased, with a total of 3,526 students successfully registering at UTS. This demonstrates the positive impact of using Instagram for promotional activities on UTS. Analysis by class reveals a significant year-over-year increase in the number of students. The 2018 class had only 14 active students, then increased to 36 in the 2019 class, 61 in the 2020 class, and then jumped to 557 in the 2021 class. This increase continued in the 2022 class with 868 students, 879 in the 2023 class, and reached its highest number in the 2024 class with 1,111 students. This increasing pattern indicates that Sumbawa University of Technology has consistently increased its number of new students in recent years.

The increase in the number of students not only reflects the growing public interest in continuing their education at the University of Technology Sumbawa, but also demonstrates that the university's promotional and information dissemination strategies are increasingly effective in reaching prospective students. In today's digital era, information dissemination no longer relies solely on conventional media, but is supported by the use of social media, which can reach a wider and faster audience. The data described above shows that Instagram is one of the most widely used sources of information by prospective students before registering. These findings indicate that social

media, especially Instagram, plays a crucial role in prospective students' information search process. Through Instagram, the University of Technology Sumbawa regularly shares information regarding new student admissions, study programs, campus facilities, academic and non-academic activities, student achievements, institutional collaborations, and various student activities. This content not only serves as a medium for conveying information but also builds a positive image of the university in the eyes of the public.

So it can be concluded that the results of this study indicate that the use of the UTS Instagram application really has an impact or increasing effect, evidence can be seen from the increase in the number of followers of the UTS account in the last two years. This is clear evidence that the use of Instagram as a promotional medium is successful, because UTS Instagram followers are now continuing to increase every year. In addition, the increase in information sources is evidence that Instagram is one of the media most used by prospective students in obtaining information about the University of Technology Sumbawa. Thus, the increase in the number of students in several batches can be an indicator that the use of Instagram as a promotional medium has contributed to expanding the reach of information and increasing the interest of prospective students, although the decision to register is also influenced by other factors such as recommendations from family, friends, the quality of the study program, and the image of the university. Instagram has become part of the promotional process of a campus, especially for the University of Technology Sumbawa, now Instagram is a fairly important tool in the marketing strategy of many universities, both public and private campuses. The following is an analysis of the effective use of Instagram by UTS to achieve its goals:

1. Increase Brand Awareness

Instagram is an effective visual medium for universities to showcase their campus atmosphere, facilities, and important activities in an engaging way. By utilizing high-quality photos and videos, UTS can increase brand awareness and attract prospective students. For example, posts about campus activities, academic achievements, and student organization activities can build interest among prospective students seeking a vibrant and excellent educational environment.

2. Engagement rate

Instagram's strength lies in its ability to create engagement and interaction with audiences. Through features like Instagram Stories, IGTV, and Reels, UTS Public Relations can communicate and interact directly with audiences in real time.

3. Feedback and Evaluation Tools

Instagram can also be used as a platform to gather feedback and responses from students and alumni. With the Q&A feature in Stories, UTS PR can assess audience satisfaction with campus life and the academic programs offered. This information can be used for evaluation to improve communication strategies and align with audience needs.

4. Increasing the Number of Prospective New Students

Implementing the right content strategy on Instagram can help increase interest in new student applications. By showcasing the strengths of study programs, student achievements, and campus life experiences, UTS has the potential to attract prospective students from a wider range of backgrounds.

5. Content Performance Analysis

Instagram has analytics features like Instagram Insights that help UTS monitor the performance of published content. Information on follower counts, engagement rates, and audience demographics can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the target audience and assess the effectiveness of communication campaigns. Furthermore, this data allows the university to quickly adjust its strategy to achieve optimal results. UTS Public Relations' use of Instagram to attract prospective students must be maximized to ensure its

effectiveness. Therefore, its use includes increasing brand awareness, engagement rates, generating feedback, increasing the number of applicants, and analyzing content performance. Maximizing Instagram's features can increase audience interest in something and can create a positive image in the eyes of the audience/prospective students.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion: It can be concluded from the results of the research above that the use of Instagram by the public relations of the Sumbawa University of Technology in attracting the attention of prospective students has been successfully utilized well, the evidence can be seen from the interaction of the audience on Instagram with the campus, then it can also be seen from the increase in the number of followers which is quite high in the last 2 years, the increasing use of Instagram as a medium for registration information and the increase in the engagement rate which is quite high.

This study also shows that the use of Instagram in the campus promotion process can be an appropriate and fast alternative tool, because Instagram's reach is quite wide for UTS promotions, making it easier for information to be conveyed quickly to the audience. By utilizing Instagram as a communication tool between the campus and the community, it is certainly important for the University to improve and develop existing strategies so that there is an update to the promotional strategy every year, in order to maintain the good image that has been built for a long time in the community.

The Public Relations Department of the University of Technology Sumbawa has implemented the three elements of personal branding theory: campus promotional targets, communication style, and campus credibility. These three elements align with the results of interviews with several research informants.

Suggestion: After the research was conducted by the researcher, there were several suggestions for further researchers, including:

1. For Sumbawa University of Technology
 - a) Always maintain the existing strategy but must always update the promotional strategy every year.
 - b) Optimize all Instagram features in content creation
 - c) Always be sensitive to trends that are viral at the time so that they can be used as a reference in creating future content.
 - d) Try to ensure that the content you upload is always real time.

2. For prospective students of Sumbawa University of Technology

It is best not to rely solely on Instagram as a source for information, because Instagram only publishes a portion of campus activities.

3. For further research

This research certainly still has many limitations, both in terms of understanding, writing, and the reference sources used by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher recommends greater thoroughness in both the process and a deeper understanding of the research problem.

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