

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL INBOUND MARKETING ON ADMISSION INTEREST AT KEBANGSAAN REPUBLIK INDONESIA UNIVERSITY: THE MEDIATION ROLE OF CAMPUS REPUTATION AND BRAND AWARENESS



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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of inbound digital marketing on enrollment interest at Universitas Kebangsaan Republik Indonesia (UKRI), considering the mediating roles of university reputation and brand awareness. The findings indicate that inbound digital marketing significantly influences university reputation, brand awareness, and enrollment interest. However, the interactive communication aspect of inbound digital marketing needs improvement. University reputation and brand awareness were found to mediate the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. Although inbound digital marketing strategies are effective in increasing UKRI's recognition, branding strategies need to be strengthened to position UKRI as the top choice for prospective students.

Keywords: Inbound Digital Marketing, Registration Interest, National University of the Republic of Indonesia, Campus Reputation, Brand Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a growing, competitive business, and retention is an emerging issue at most colleges and universities. Competition among higher education institutions to attract new students has forced colleges to continuously adapt and innovate in response to changes in the environment in order to survive and remain relevant in the development of educational services. The efforts that higher education institutions must undertake involve observing and addressing trends occurring outside the institution, such as the progress of competitors and the needs of prospective students (Nasution, 2018).

Initially, higher education was viewed solely as a matter of prestige, but over time it has become a necessity for society (Aydin, 2015). This is evident due to the increasing demands in the labour market, which require individuals to have completed higher education to secure employment. Additionally, pursuing higher education provides greater opportunities to improve one's socio-economic status and secure more suitable employment (Latifah, 2015).

The interest in enrolling and continuing to higher education is a right for every citizen, as stipulated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 5, Paragraph (5). Minat merupakan aspek penting dalam pemilihan universitas. Interest is an important aspect in choosing a university. Interest will lead a person to become involved in a particular field, so sometimes a person's choice of university depends on the extent of their interest and desire to continue their studies (Novitasari, 2021).

Higher education institutions face increasingly fierce competition in attracting prospective students due to the growing number of institutions. This has led to the need for institutions to develop effective marketing strategies to increase enrolment interest. One such strategy is the implementation of inbound digital marketing.

In the context of higher education, inbound digital marketing is highly relevant as it enables institutions to attract prospective students by providing informative content such as articles, videos, or infographics about academic programmes, career opportunities, and alumni success stories. This not only helps prospective students make better decisions but also builds long-term relationships that can enhance trust and loyalty toward the institution (Lipsman, 2017).

Inbound digital marketing not only enhances brand awareness and institutional reputation but also fosters student interest in joining the institution, thereby increasing the number of applicants (Homburg, 2017). A more targeted and non-intrusive approach in implementing inbound digital marketing is not only effective in attracting audience interest but also builds audience trust and loyalty, leading them to decide to apply to the university (Chaffey, 2019).

In this case, campus reputation and brand awareness play an important mediating role in the relationship between inbound digital marketing and prospective students' interest in enrolling. A positive campus reputation and high brand awareness can mediate this relationship by enhancing prospective students' positive perceptions of the campus, which in turn increases their interest in enrolling due to the trust they feel from the content presented.

The University of the Republic of Indonesia (UKRI) is one of the private universities located in Bandung, West Java. This university is a development of the Adityawarman

Institute of Technology, established on 15 August 1985 by the Budi Dharma Pradesa Foundation, with its campus located at Jalan Rancabentang, Bandung.

UKRI faces several challenges in attracting prospective students, especially amid intensifying competition with other universities. One of the main challenges is how to compete with other higher education institutions that have already established strong reputations and high brand awareness. Many renowned universities have large marketing budgets and access to broader resources, enabling them to run more intensive and attractive marketing campaigns. This makes it necessary for UKRI to work harder to stand out among its competitors.

In addressing these issues, UKRI must employ the right marketing strategies to attract prospective students. The digital inbound marketing conducted by the University of the Republic of Indonesia (UKRI) utilises SEO, social media content, and email campaigns to build a strong digital presence and provide accessible information to prospective students seeking more information about UKRI. UKRI uses digital media such as its website and Instagram to provide the public with information about its educational services.

UKRI also uses Instagram to share information related to education and new student registration. The UKRI Instagram account has 754 posts about activities conducted each semester, 13,000 followers, and 88 following. Meanwhile, the UKRI PMB Instagram account has 1,294 posts related to information about studying at UKRI, 4,810 followers, and 118 following.

Prospective students typically assess an institution's brand by reviewing its rankings, the programmes offered, facilities, and career opportunities after completing their studies. UKRI is ranked 374th nationally among all public universities in Indonesia with 12 academic programmes. Currently, UKRI has established collaborations by signing an MOU with PT SEI, an MOA with FE UKRI, and an MOA with KPPIJA. The cooperation with these companies will make it easier for UKRI alumni to find employment after completing their education.

Research by (2023) and Mutmainna (2023) states that inbound digital marketing influences enrolment interest, while research by Lifani (2022) and Listania (2023) states that inbound digital marketing does not influence interest. Research by Hartono (2021), Harahap (2017) and Turnip (2022) states that institutional reputation influences students' interest in enrolling in a university, while research by Al Farisi (2022) states that reputation does not influence interest. Research by Kumar (2021) and Park & Kim (2021) shows that brand awareness has a relationship with increased interest in enrolment among prospective students, while research by Ghana (2023) states that brand awareness does not influence increased interest. Research by Yanto (2023) and Variansyah (2023) shows that inbound digital marketing influences brand awareness, while research by Septira (2023) states that inbound digital marketing does not influence brand awareness.

This gap indicates inconsistency in research results, prompting the author to conduct research on the Impact of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrolment Interest at the University of the Republic of Indonesia: The Mediating Role of Campus Reputation and Brand Awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behaviour is a theory designed to predict and explain a person's behaviour in a specific context. This theory raises the idea of a person's intention to do something. Intention becomes the reason a person is willing to try to engage in that behaviour. The stronger the intention to engage, the greater the likelihood that the behaviour will be carried out by that person (Ajzen, 2005).

Maslow's Motivation Theory

Abraham Harold Maslow's theory is that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy. The lowest level of need is physiological needs, and the highest is self-actualisation.

Higher Education

Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 1, Point 1, states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

Consumer Interest

Interest is a person's desire for something. Interest indicates acceptance of a relationship between oneself and the external environment. The closer the relationship with the external environment, the greater the interest generated. Interest in a person arises because of a person's personality that develops naturally or sometimes because of a desired effort (Pariansa, 2017).

Inbound Digital Marketing

Inbound digital marketing is a marketing activity through various web-based media. Inbound digital marketing is a digital technology aimed at marketing success, can be used for global communication, and can replace companies in meeting business needs with consumers (Febriyantoro, 2018).

University Reputation

According to Charles J. Fombrun in Trimanah (2012), reputation is a reflection of the relationship between a company's identity, name, and image. Foley and Kendrick in Hastowo (2020) state that reputation is feedback on a company's services, built on customer testimonials or experiences, as well as validation from third parties outside the company's stakeholders.

Brand Awareness

Under Article 1, Paragraph 1 of Law No. 15 of 2001 on Trademarks, a trademark is defined as a sign in the form of an image, word, letters, numbers, colour combinations, or a combination of these elements that has distinctive power and is used in the trade of goods and services.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is quantitative research. Quantitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of positivism, used to study specific populations or samples, collect data using research instruments, and analyse data quantitatively or statistically, with the aim of testing established hypotheses (Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D, 2019, p. 16). The quantitative method in this study is used

to analyse the impact of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrolment Interest at the University of the Republic of Indonesia, mediated by Campus Reputation and Brand Awareness.

The population is the generalisation area consisting of objects/subjects with specific qualities and characteristics applied by the researcher to be studied and then conclusions drawn (Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D, 2019, p. 129). The research population must have certain qualities and characteristics that have been determined by the research to be studied and conclusions drawn. The population in this study is students from SMAN 22 Bandung, SMAN 1 Bandung, and SMK 15 Bandung. The number of students in grade XII at SMAN 22 Bandung, SMAN 1 Bandung, and SMK 15 Bandung.

A sample is a part of the population that reflects the characteristics of the population (Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D, 2019, p. 126). The selected sample must represent all the characteristics of the population. The sampling method used in this study is the Slovin method with the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{1142}{1 + 1142(0.05^2)} = 293.95 \approx 293$$

Therefore, the sample used in this study consists of 293 students from Grade XII of SMAN 22 Bandung, SMAN 1 Bandung, and SMK 15 Bandung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Path Analysis

The path analysis in this study aims to determine the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrolment interest through the mediating variables of campus reputation and brand awareness. The results of the multiple linear regression are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Path Analysis

Variable	Direct Regression Coefficient	Indirect Regression Coefficient
Constant	-1.778	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → Enrolment Interest	0.282	-
Campus Reputation → Enrolment Interest	0.086	-
Brand Awareness → Enrolment Interest	0.935	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → Campus Reputation	-0.094	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	0.357	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → Campus Reputation → Enrolment Interest	-	-0.008
Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness → Enrolment Interest	-	0.334

Source: Data Analysis 2024

Based on Table 1, the path analysis equation for the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrolment interest through the mediating variables of campus reputation and brand awareness is written as follows:

$$Y = -1.778 + 0.282 X_1 + 0.086 Z_1 + 0.935 Z_2 - 0.008 (X_1 Z_1) + 0.334 (X_1 Z_2)$$

This relationship can be interpreted as follows:

1. Enrolment interest is -1.778 if the coefficients for inbound digital marketing, campus reputation, and brand awareness are constant.
2. The value of 0.282 for inbound digital marketing indicates that enrolment interest will increase by 0.282 if campus reputation, brand awareness, and inbound digital marketing mediated by campus reputation and brand awareness are constant.
3. A value of 0.086 for campus reputation indicates that enrolment interest will increase by 0.086 if inbound digital marketing, brand awareness, inbound digital marketing mediated by campus reputation, and brand awareness remain constant.
4. A value of 0.935 for brand awareness indicates that enrolment interest will increase by 0.935 if inbound digital marketing, campus reputation, inbound digital marketing mediated by campus reputation, and brand awareness remain constant.
5. The value of -0.008 for inbound digital marketing mediated by campus reputation indicates that enrolment interest will decrease by 0.008 if inbound digital marketing, campus reputation, brand awareness, and inbound digital marketing mediated by brand awareness remain constant.
6. The value of 0.334 for inbound digital marketing mediated by brand awareness indicates that enrolment interest will increase by 0.334 if inbound digital marketing, campus reputation, brand awareness, and inbound digital marketing mediated by campus reputation remain constant.

Correlation Test

The correlation test aims to measure the strength of the linear relationship between the research variables. In this study, the correlation test was used to determine the extent of the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest, mediated by university reputation and brand awareness. The correlation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Correlation Test Results

Variable	Direct Regression Coefficient	Indirect Regression Coefficient
Inbound Digital Marketing → Enrollment Interest	0.626	-
University Reputation → Enrollment Interest	0.004	-
Brand Awareness → Enrollment Interest	0.709	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → University Reputation	0,024	-
Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	0,579	-

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Table 2 shows the correlation results among the research variables, interpreted as follows:

1. Relationship Between Inbound Digital Marketing and Enrollment Interest
Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.626 between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. This means that the inbound digital marketing implemented by UKRI influences the enrollment interest of prospective new students by 62.6%.

2. Relationship Between University Reputation and Enrollment Interest
Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.004 between university reputation and enrollment interest. This indicates that UKRI's reputation affects the enrollment interest of prospective new students by 0.4%.
3. Relationship Between Brand Awareness and Enrollment Interest
Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.709 between brand awareness and enrollment interest. This means that prospective students' awareness of UKRI influences their interest in enrolling at UKRI by 70.9%.
4. Relationship Between Inbound Digital Marketing and University Reputation
Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.024 between inbound digital marketing and university reputation. This suggests that the inbound digital marketing carried out by UKRI can improve the university's reputation by 2.4%.
5. Relationship Between Inbound Digital Marketing and Brand Awareness
Table 2 shows a correlation of 0.579 between inbound digital marketing and brand awareness. This indicates that the inbound digital marketing implemented by UKRI can enhance the brand awareness of UKRI among prospective students by 57.9%.

Hypothesis Testing

The purpose of hypothesis testing is to examine whether there is an effect between the research variables, both direct and indirect. This test was conducted to determine the influence and mediating role of university reputation and brand awareness in the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. The results of the direct effect analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Hypothesis Testing Results for Direct Effects

Variable	T Value	Sign	Description
Inbound Digital Marketing → Enrollment Interest	8.250	0.000	Significant Positive
University Reputation → Enrollment Interest	2.323	0.021	Significant Positive
Brand Awareness → Enrollment Interest	12.893	0.000	Significant Positive
Inbound Digital Marketing → University Reputation	2.664	0.008	Significant Positive
Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	19.774	0.000	Significant Positive

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The interpretations of the hypothesis testing results in Table 3 are as follows:

1. Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrollment Interest
Table 3 shows that inbound digital marketing has a t-value of 8.250 and a significance value of 0.000. Since the t-value > t-table ($8.250 > 1.968$) and Sig. < 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$), inbound digital marketing has a significant effect on enrollment interest. This indicates that the inbound digital marketing strategies implemented by UKRI have a positive influence on increasing prospective students' interest in enrolling at UKRI.
2. Effect of University Reputation on Enrollment Interest
Table 3 shows that university reputation has a t-value of 2.323 and a significance value of

0.021. Since the $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ ($2.323 > 1.968$) and $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ ($0.021 < 0.05$), university reputation has a significant effect on enrollment interest. This means that UKRI's reputation positively contributes to increasing the interest of prospective students in enrolling.

3. Effect of Brand Awareness on Enrollment Interest
Table 3 shows that brand awareness has a $t\text{-value}$ of 12.893 and a significance value of 0.000. Since the $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ ($12.893 > 1.968$) and $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), brand awareness significantly affects enrollment interest. This indicates that strong brand awareness among prospective students has a positive impact on their interest in enrolling at UKRI.
4. Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on University Reputation
Table 3 shows that inbound digital marketing has a $t\text{-value}$ of 2.664 and a significance value of 0.008. Since the $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ ($2.664 > 1.968$) and $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ ($0.008 < 0.05$), inbound digital marketing has a significant positive effect on university reputation. This means that the inbound digital marketing conducted by UKRI is effective in improving the university's reputation in the eyes of prospective students.
5. Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on Brand Awareness
Table 3 shows that inbound digital marketing has a $t\text{-value}$ of 19.774 and a significance value of 0.000. Since the $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ ($19.774 > 1.968$) and $\text{Sig.} < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), inbound digital marketing has a significant effect on brand awareness. This indicates that the inbound digital marketing strategies implemented by UKRI play an important role in increasing brand awareness of UKRI among prospective students.

The results of the indirect effect correlation, examining the mediating role of university reputation and brand awareness in the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Sobel Test Results for the Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrollment Interest through University Reputation and Brand Awareness

Path	Relationship	Path Coefficient		Indirect Effect	Standar Error			t value	t tabel	Conclusion
					Direct		Indirict			
		a	b		Sa	Sb	Sab			
Inbound Digital Marketing → University Reputation → Enrollment Interest	Inbound Digital Marketing → University Reputation	0.156		0.010	0.035		0.001295	2.061	1.968	Memediasi
	University Reputation → Enrollment Interest		0.068			0.037				
Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	Inbound Digital Marketing → Brand Awareness	0.761		0.434	0.018		0.001314	7.691	1.968	Memediasi

→ Enrollment Interest	Brand Awareness → Enrollment Interest		0.571			0.0 73				
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Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The interpretations of the hypothesis testing results in Table 4 are as follows:

1. Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrollment Interest Through University Reputation

Table 4 shows that the direct effect of inbound digital marketing on enrollment interest is 0.367, while the indirect effect through university reputation is 0.010, resulting in a total effect of 0.377. Since the t-value > t-table ($2.061 > 1.968$), university reputation mediates the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. This means that the better the inbound digital marketing conducted by UKRI, the better the university's reputation will be, which in turn increases prospective students' interest in enrolling at UKRI.

2. Effect of Inbound Digital Marketing on Enrollment Interest Through Brand Awareness

Table 4 shows that the direct effect of inbound digital marketing on enrollment interest is 0.367, while the indirect effect through brand awareness is 0.434, resulting in a total effect of 0.801. Since the t-value > t-table ($7.691 > 1.968$), brand awareness mediates the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. This indicates that the better the inbound digital marketing strategies implemented by UKRI, the higher the brand awareness among prospective students regarding UKRI as an educational institution, which ultimately increases their interest in enrolling.

Table 4 shows that the direct effect of inbound digital marketing on enrollment interest is 0.367, the indirect effect through brand awareness is 0.434, resulting in a total effect of 0.801. Furthermore, since the t-value is greater than the t-table ($7.691 > 1.968$), brand awareness mediates the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. This means that the better the inbound digital marketing implemented by UKRI, the higher the brand awareness among prospective students regarding UKRI as an educational institution, which will ultimately increase their interest in enrolling at UKRI.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted on the impact of inbound digital marketing on enrollment interest at Universitas Kebangsaan Republik Indonesia (UKRI), with the mediating roles of university reputation and brand awareness, several conclusions were drawn to address the research problems formulated in this study. The conclusions are as follows:

1. Inbound digital marketing significantly influences university reputation. This means that well-implemented inbound digital marketing strategies can enhance UKRI's reputation in the eyes of prospective students. The overall quality of inbound digital marketing falls into the "fair" category, with the highest-scoring dimension being *accessibility*, reflected in the statement: "Information and services provided by the university via Instagram @pmbukri can be accessed easily." The lowest-scoring dimension is *online communication*, reflected in the statement: "Prospective students can engage in two-way communication with the university." This indicates that while inbound

digital marketing quality is generally fair, improvements are still needed in the online communication dimension.

2. Inbound digital marketing significantly affects enrollment interest. Although effective, the aspect of interactive communication needs to be strengthened for optimal results. This relationship falls into the “poor” category, with the highest score found in the statement: “There is a feeling of happiness” (fair category). The lowest score is associated with the statement: “The demands of the job market for higher education encourage me to continue my studies at UKRI” (poor category).
3. Inbound digital marketing has a significant effect on brand awareness. This strategy helps build recognition of UKRI among prospective students. The relationship is categorized as “poor,” with the highest score in the *brand recognition* dimension “I already know UKRI as one of the universities in Bandung” (fair category) and the lowest score in the *top of mind* dimension “I often search for information about UKRI.”
4. University reputation significantly affects enrollment interest. A positive perception of the university’s reputation increases prospective students’ trust, but social responsibility aspects require improvement. The relationship is “poor,” with the highest score in the *relevance* dimension “UKRI is among the leading private universities in Indonesia” and the lowest in the *trustworthiness* dimension “UKRI shows concern for social issues through community service activities” (poor category).
5. Brand awareness significantly affects enrollment interest. Prospective students who are familiar with the UKRI brand are more likely to apply, but branding strategies need to be improved to make UKRI a top choice when searching for universities. This relationship is “poor,” with the highest score in *brand recognition* “I already know UKRI as one of the universities in Bandung” (fair category) and the lowest in *top of mind* “I often search for information about UKRI” (poor category).
6. University reputation mediates the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. An enhanced reputation through inbound digital marketing indirectly increases enrollment interest. This mediation falls into the “poor” category, with the highest score in *relevance* “UKRI is among the leading private universities in Indonesia” (fair category) and the lowest in *trustworthiness* “UKRI shows concern for social issues through community service activities” (poor category).

Brand awareness also mediates the relationship between inbound digital marketing and enrollment interest. High brand awareness resulting from inbound digital marketing increases prospective students’ interest in enrolling at UKRI. This mediation is categorized as “poor,” with the highest score in *brand recognition* “I already know UKRI as one of the universities in Bandung” and the lowest in *top of mind* “I often search for information about UKRI” (poor category).

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