



Attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program and the Role of Social Media in Student Enrollment Decisions

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Abstract

Increasing competition among higher education institutions has prompted study programs to develop effective strategies to attract prospective students. Social media has become an important channel for disseminating academic information and presenting institutional identity, particularly among Generation Z. This study aimed to analyze the attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta and to examine the role of social media in students' enrollment decisions. A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted among 140 newly enrolled Agrotechnology students in 2026 using a structured questionnaire with five-point Likert scales. The questionnaire assessed factors influencing study program selection, perceptions of social media content, and social media utilization. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Modern agricultural technology was the highest-rated factor influencing enrollment decisions (mean = 4.11), followed by accreditation (4.06) and practical activities (4.04). Information obtained from social media received the lowest mean score among the enrollment factors (3.35). Modern agricultural technology and innovation was also the most attractive type of social media content (mean = 4.09). A positive correlation was observed between modern agricultural technology content and the decision to choose the Agrotechnology Study Program ($r = 0.45$). These findings indicate that social media may function primarily as an information and awareness channel, while students' enrollment decisions are also shaped by academic, practical, and career-related considerations. The study contributes empirical evidence for developing evidence-based digital communication strategies for agricultural higher education.

Keywords: *Agrotechnology, Enrollment decision, Higher education marketing, Social media, Student attraction*

INTRODUCTION

The higher education landscape has become increasingly competitive as universities strive to attract prospective students amid demographic changes and expanding educational choices. Beyond academic quality, students increasingly consider institutional reputation, career prospects, campus facilities, accessibility, and the availability of information when selecting a university (Maringe, 2006). Consequently, higher education institutions must adopt effective communication and marketing strategies that clearly present their strengths and distinguish their programs from those of competing institutions.

The emergence of digital technology has significantly transformed how prospective students search for and evaluate information about universities. Generation Z, who constitute a major segment of current university applicants, increasingly use digital platforms and social media to obtain information, compare institutions, and explore study programs (Shields & Peruta, 2019).

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Unlike traditional promotional media, social media enables higher education institutions to communicate directly with prospective students while presenting academic activities, student experiences, achievements, and institutional information through visual and interactive content (Suprihartini et al., 2025). However, the availability of information through social media does not necessarily mean that it becomes the primary consideration in students' final enrollment decisions.

This issue is particularly relevant to agricultural higher education. Agriculture is increasingly associated with technological innovation, sustainability, digital technology, and smart farming. Nevertheless, agricultural study programs may still be perceived by prospective students as traditional fields with uncertain career prospects (Kalariya, 2025). Communicating modern agricultural practices, technological innovation, practical learning experiences, research activities, laboratory facilities, student achievements, alumni outcomes, and career opportunities may therefore be important for strengthening the attractiveness of agricultural study programs (Solomonson et al., 2023). The way these characteristics are communicated through digital media may influence how prospective students perceive the relevance and attractiveness of agricultural education.

The Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta has actively used digital platforms to share information about academic activities, practical courses, research, student achievements, and campus life. However, empirical evidence on the extent to which social media influences students' enrollment decisions in this specific study program remains limited. It is important to distinguish social media as a source of information from other substantive considerations, such as accreditation, practical activities, technological orientation, career prospects, and institutional characteristics. Examining these factors together can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the considerations underlying students' enrollment decisions.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program and examine the role of social media in students' enrollment decisions. Specifically, the study investigates: (1) the factors affecting students' interest in selecting the Agrotechnology Study Program; (2) students' perceptions of social media as an information source; and (3) the types of digital content and social media platforms that are most attractive to students. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence to inform evidence-based digital communication strategies for higher education institutions, particularly in agricultural education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media in Higher Education Marketing

Social media has increasingly become an important component of higher education marketing because it provides institutions with opportunities to disseminate information, build institutional visibility, and communicate with prospective students. Constantinides and Zinck Stagno (2011) reported that social networking platforms can serve as information sources during the university selection process and complement information provided through official institutional websites. Similarly, Shields and Peruta (2019) found that visual content on Instagram can enhance prospective students' engagement with higher education institutions. These findings suggest that social media can provide higher education institutions with an additional channel for presenting institutional identity and communicating study program characteristics.

The role of social media has since expanded beyond simple information dissemination. Dwivedi et al. (2021) described social media as an increasingly important component of digital marketing and consumer decision-making. In higher education, social media can therefore be used to communicate academic quality, campus activities, student experiences, achievements, facilities,

and career opportunities. [Suprihartini et al. \(2025\)](#) similarly emphasized the potential of social-media-based digital promotion to strengthen the image of educational institutions. These functions indicate that social media can contribute to students' awareness and perceptions of a study program before they make an enrollment decision.

However, the relationship between social media exposure and enrollment decisions is not necessarily direct or uniform. [Shields and Peruta \(2019\)](#), for example, examined the role of social media in university decision-making and indicated that prospective students' use of social media should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that social media determines their final university choice. Social media may be more important during information searching and institutional exploration, while the final decision may involve additional considerations. Thus, the influence of social media needs to be examined alongside other factors associated with students' choice of university or study program.

Factors Influencing Study Program Selection

Students' decisions to select a university or study program are influenced by a range of academic, institutional, personal, and practical considerations. [Maringe \(2006\)](#) identified university and course choice as a multidimensional decision involving factors relevant to institutional positioning, recruitment, and marketing. In addition to promotional communication, prospective students may consider an institution's perceived quality and reputation, accessibility, career prospects, learning facilities, and the characteristics of the study program.

Institutional characteristics can also shape students' perceptions of a program's attractiveness. Accreditation, for example, can serve as an indicator of institutional quality and accountability and may contribute to stakeholder confidence in higher education institutions ([Roman, 2024](#)). Campus location and accessibility are also relevant because geographical proximity may affect access to higher education and students' attendance decisions ([Brownie et al., 2023](#); [White & Lee, 2020](#)). These factors indicate that enrollment decisions cannot be understood solely from the perspective of promotional media because students may simultaneously evaluate the academic and practical characteristics of the institution.

For agricultural study programs, practical learning and career-related considerations may be particularly relevant. Agricultural education requires integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experiences, including laboratory activities, fieldwork, and other forms of experiential learning. Previous research has identified experiential learning opportunities as factors that can attract students to agricultural programs ([Thielen, 2012](#)). In addition, students may consider whether agricultural education provides relevant knowledge and skills for future employment. [Solomonson et al. \(2023\)](#) examined factors influencing students' decisions to pursue agricultural degrees and demonstrated the importance of understanding students' motivations within the context of agricultural higher education.

Social Media and Agricultural Higher Education

The use of social media in agricultural higher education offers opportunities to communicate the evolving nature of agriculture and to present it as a field connected to technology, innovation, sustainability, and diverse career opportunities. Digital marketing strategies can be used to share information about agricultural activities and innovations while improving the visibility of agricultural-related institutions and programs ([Kumar et al., 2024](#)). For prospective students, content showcasing modern agricultural technology, practical activities, research, student experiences, alumni achievements, and career pathways may help address limited or outdated perceptions of agriculture.

Nevertheless, social media should not be assumed to be the sole or dominant factor in

students' enrollment decisions. Prospective students may encounter information on social media but then evaluate the credibility, quality, accessibility, and future value of the study program using other sources and criteria. [Kusumawati \(2019\)](#) examined the role of social media as an information source in higher education selection, while [Byrd et al. \(2023\)](#) highlighted the relevance of communication approaches in student recruitment within agricultural and environmental science education. These studies suggest that social media may be one component of a broader communication and decision-making process rather than an isolated determinant of enrollment.

The existing literature provides evidence that social media can support institutional visibility, information access, and prospective student engagement, while other studies and contextual considerations indicate that students' final choices may also depend on academic, institutional, practical, geographic, and career-related factors. This creates a need to examine the relative role of social media alongside other enrollment considerations, particularly within agricultural higher education. The present study addresses this gap by examining students' perceptions of social media alongside multiple factors influencing enrollment decisions in the Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to investigate factors associated with students' enrollment decisions and the role of social media in attracting students to the Agrotechnology Study Program. A survey approach was selected because the study focused on quantifying respondents' perceptions, ratings, and patterns of association among the measured indicators. The analysis was limited to descriptive statistics and correlation analysis based on responses collected through the questionnaire.

Participants and Sampling

The respondents were newly enrolled students in the Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta for the 2026 academic year. The questionnaire was administered to all newly enrolled students during registration. Because the survey targeted the entire accessible population of newly enrolled students in the study program, a census (total sampling) approach was used.

A total of 140 students participated in the study. The questionnaire was administered as part of the student registration process. Therefore, participation was tied to registration, which should be considered when interpreting the responses, as respondents may have had limited opportunity to decline participation or may have been influenced by the survey context.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from previous studies on university choice, higher education marketing, and social media engagement. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section collected respondent characteristics, including gender, age, educational background, and geographical origin. The second section measured factors influencing the attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program. Eleven indicators were assessed: career prospects, personal interest in agriculture, modern agricultural technology, university reputation, accreditation, lecturer quality, laboratory facilities, practical activities, campus location, recommendations from parents or peers, and information obtained from social media. Each item was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not influential) to 5 (very influential).

The third section measured respondents' perceptions of social media content related to the Agrotechnology Study Program. It consisted of 14 statements covering information accessibility, academic activities, practical courses, research, student organizations, career opportunities, visual content, and the perceived role of social media in enrollment decisions. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The fourth section examined social media utilization, including the platforms most frequently used by respondents, preferred content types, and respondents' perceptions of the role of social media in their decision to enroll. The questionnaire items were developed with reference to previous research on higher education choice, higher education marketing, and social media. The present study reports responses at the indicator level and does not interpret individual questionnaire items as independently validated psychological scales.

Instrument Development and Quality Considerations

The questionnaire was structured to align with the study's objectives, namely to identify factors associated with students' selection of the Agrotechnology Study Program, to describe perceptions of social media as an information source, and to identify preferred digital content and social media platforms.

The original study documentation does not report a separate pilot test, an expert validation procedure, an item-level validity analysis, or Cronbach's alpha. Therefore, no numerical validity or reliability coefficients are reported in this manuscript. The findings are consequently interpreted as descriptive evidence from the surveyed population rather than as validation of a standardized measurement scale.

Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected during the 2026 student registration process using a structured questionnaire. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the survey, and the information collected was used for research reporting in aggregate form. The analysis presented in this study does not disclose individual identities.

Because the questionnaire was administered to newly enrolled students during registration, the possibility of response bias should be considered. Respondents may have provided answers influenced by the registration context or by their perception of the institution. In addition, the use of a mandatory survey setting may limit the extent to which responses reflect completely voluntary participation. These considerations are taken into account when interpreting the descriptive findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics and responses to the enrollment and social media indicators. For the relevant indicators, frequency, percentage, mean score, and response distribution were calculated. The mean scores were used to describe the relative level of respondents' ratings across the measured factors.

The enrollment factors were presented using mean scores across the 11 indicators, while respondents' perceptions of social media were summarized using mean scores across the 14 perception indicators. The results were visualized with horizontal bar charts to facilitate comparison among indicators. Differences between male and female respondents were presented descriptively using mean scores. Because no inferential statistical test comparing the two gender groups was conducted, differences in their mean scores were not interpreted as statistically significant.

Correlation analysis was used to examine the direction and strength of associations between social media perception indicators and enrollment-related factors. Results were presented in a correlation heatmap. Correlation coefficients were interpreted by their direction and magnitude, with positive coefficients indicating that higher scores on one indicator were associated with higher scores on another. The strongest association was reported based on the correlation coefficient obtained from the analysis. Because the study used observational survey data, the results were interpreted as associations and were not used to infer causal relationships.

No additional causal modeling or predictive analysis was conducted. Therefore, the findings describe patterns among the surveyed respondents and associations among the measured indicators rather than demonstrating that social media directly causes students to choose the Agrotechnology Study Program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent characteristics were examined to describe the demographic profile and educational background of the respondents in the study. The characteristics analyzed included gender, age, secondary education level, and region of origin. This information is important for providing context for the respondents, who represent prospective students and constitute a relevant segment of the target market for higher education institutions.

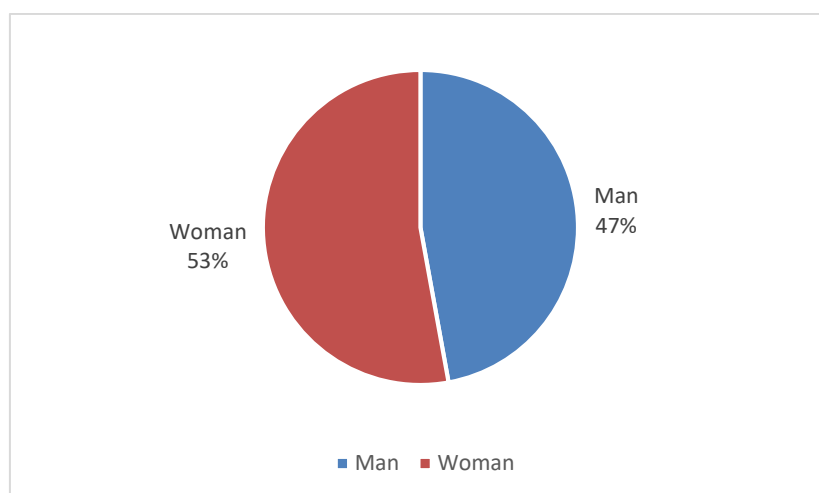


Figure 1. Respondent Characteristics by Gender

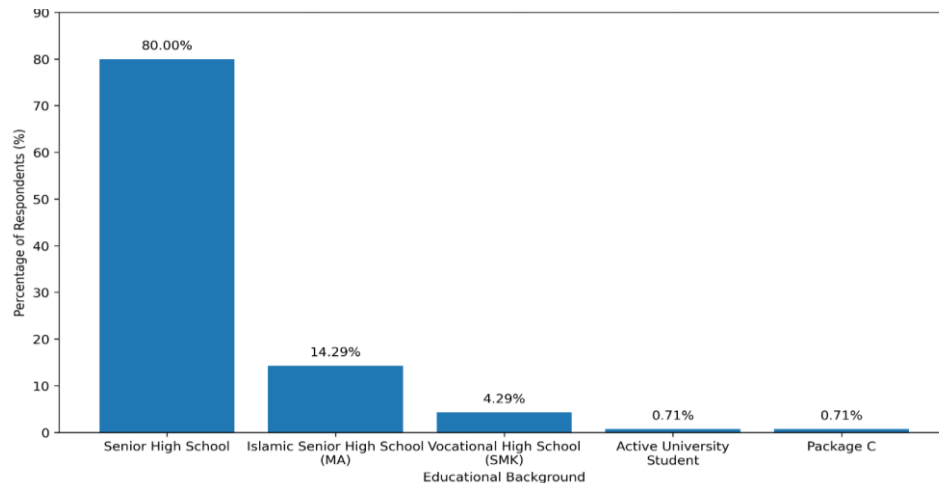


Figure 2. Respondent Characteristics by Educational Background

A total of 140 respondents participated in this study. Female respondents accounted for 52.86% (74 respondents), while male respondents represented 47.14% (66 respondents). The distribution indicates a relatively balanced proportion of male and female respondents. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were 18 years old (65.2%), followed by respondents aged over 18 years (28.4%), while 6.4% of respondents were 17 years old. This age composition indicates that most respondents were in the transitional phase from secondary education to higher education. Regarding region of origin, 46.1% of the respondents were from the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), while 41.8% were from Java, Bali, and Nusa Tenggara, excluding DIY. Furthermore, 10.6% of the respondents were from Sumatra, and 1.4% were from Kalimantan. This distribution indicates that the respondents had relatively diverse geographical backgrounds, although they were predominantly from the regions of Java, Bali, and Nusa Tenggara. Most respondents graduated from senior high schools (80.0%), followed by Islamic senior high schools (14.29%), vocational high schools (4.29%), and other educational backgrounds (1.42%). These findings indicate that the respondents represent the primary target market of higher education institutions, namely high school graduates seeking undergraduate education.

Factors Influencing Students' Enrollment Decisions

The attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program was evaluated using eleven indicators measured on a five-point Likert scale. The overall mean score was 3.82, indicating high attractiveness (Figure 3).

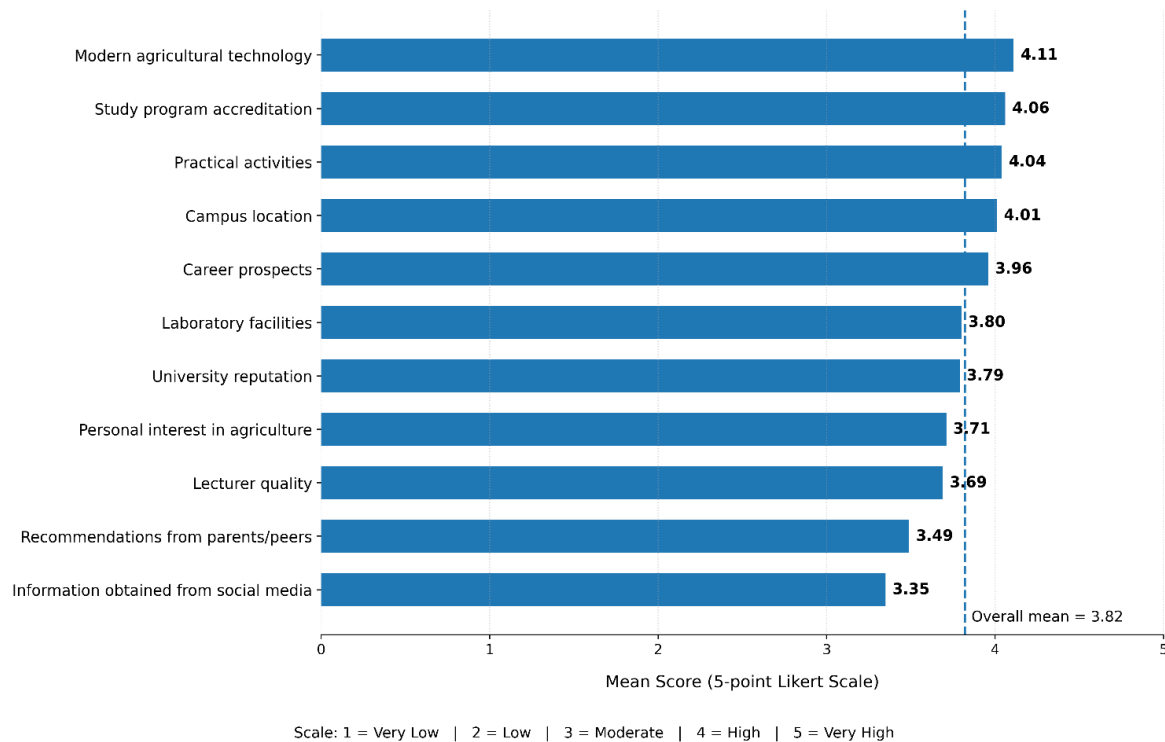


Figure 3. Mean score of factors influencing student's enrollment decision

The results revealed that modern agricultural technology was the most influential factor (mean=4.11). This finding suggests that prospective students increasingly view agriculture as a modern, technology-driven field rather than a traditional occupation. The result supports [Kalariya's \(2025\)](#) argument that students are more attracted to agricultural programs when they are associated with innovation, digital technology, and future-oriented career opportunities. Next came study program accreditation (4.06), practical activities (4.04), and campus location (4.01). These findings indicate that new students place considerable importance on the modernity of agricultural education, academic quality, opportunities for hands-on learning, and accessibility when considering enrollment.

The high scores for accreditation and practical activities indicate that institutional credibility and experiential learning are key factors in students' enrollment decisions. Accreditation is widely perceived as an indicator of institutional quality and public accountability. Prospective students and their families tend to associate accredited programs with higher educational standards, stronger institutional performance, and greater assurance of continuous quality improvement. According to [Roman \(2024\)](#), accreditation serves not only as an external evaluation mechanism but also as a strategic tool for enhancing institutional effectiveness, strengthening quality culture, and increasing stakeholder confidence in higher education institutions. Therefore, the high importance assigned to accreditation in this study suggests that students value programs that demonstrate a clear commitment to maintaining and improving educational quality over time. Practical activities were also identified as a major determinant of enrollment decisions.

Agricultural sciences require integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience; therefore, opportunities for laboratory work, field practice, and internships are highly valued by prospective students. [Thielen \(2012\)](#) found that experiential learning opportunities are among the factors attracting students to agricultural programs because they provide direct exposure to agricultural practices. In addition, Generation Z students tend to prefer active, experience-based learning that allows them to apply knowledge in real-world situations ([Subardi et al., 2026](#)).

Therefore, the high score for practical activities suggests that students expect learning experiences beyond classroom instruction and opportunities to develop practical skills relevant to their future careers.

Campus location was an important consideration in the student's enrollment decisions due to its accessibility and convenient transportation. A strategic location reduces travel burdens and provides greater access to academic, professional, and social opportunities. Consequently, geographical proximity and surrounding facilities significantly enhance a university's attractiveness to prospective students (Brownie et al., 2023; White & Lee, 2020).

Other factors, including career prospects (3.96), laboratory facilities (3.80), university reputation (3.79), personal interest in agriculture (3.71), and lecturer quality (3.69), also received relatively high mean scores. This pattern suggests that students consider both academic and career-related factors when selecting a study program. In particular, career prospects may reflect students' expectations that an Agrotechnology degree can provide relevant employment opportunities after graduation.

In contrast, recommendations from parents/peers (3.49) and information from social media (3.35) had comparatively lower mean scores. Information from social media recorded the lowest score and was categorized as moderate, suggesting that although digital media may contribute to students' awareness of the study program, it is not the primary consideration in their enrollment decisions. Overall, the findings indicate that students tend to prioritize academic quality, practical learning opportunities, technological orientation, and future career prospects over external recommendations or social media information when deciding to enroll in the Agrotechnology Study Program.

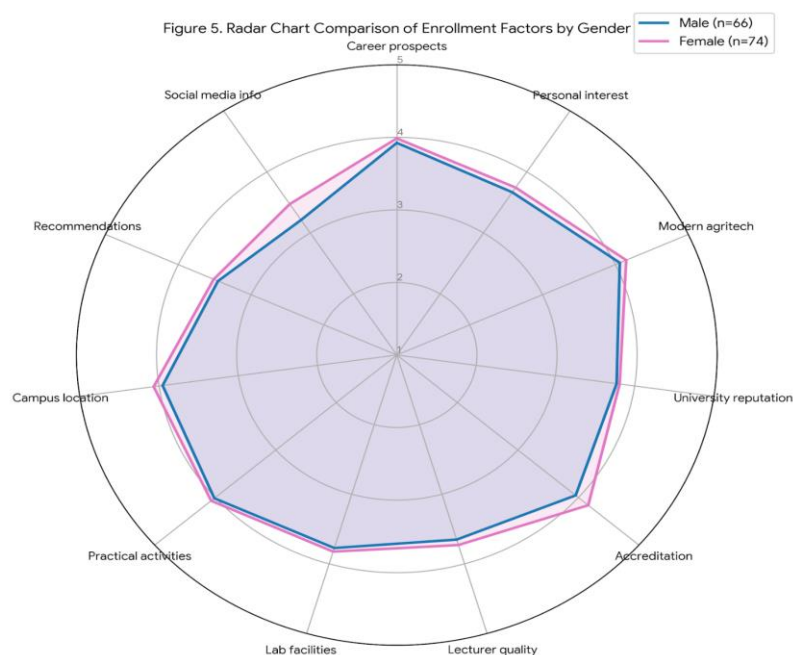


Figure 4. Radar chart comparison of enrollment factors by gender

As illustrated in Figure 4, the radar chart compares the mean scores of enrollment decision factors for male ($n = 66$) and female ($n = 74$) students. Overall, the overlap indicates a high degree of consensus between the two groups on their primary decision criteria. Modern Agritech and Practical Activities were the top considerations for both groups, each with mean scores exceeding 4.00. Nevertheless, female students consistently recorded slightly higher mean scores across all

evaluated dimensions. The most notable discrepancies were observed in Accreditation (4.16 for females vs. 3.95 for males) and Social Media Info (3.47 for females vs. 3.21 for males). These findings suggest that female students place greater emphasis on institutional accreditation and rely more heavily on social media channels during their university research and selection process.

Student's Perceptions of Social Media

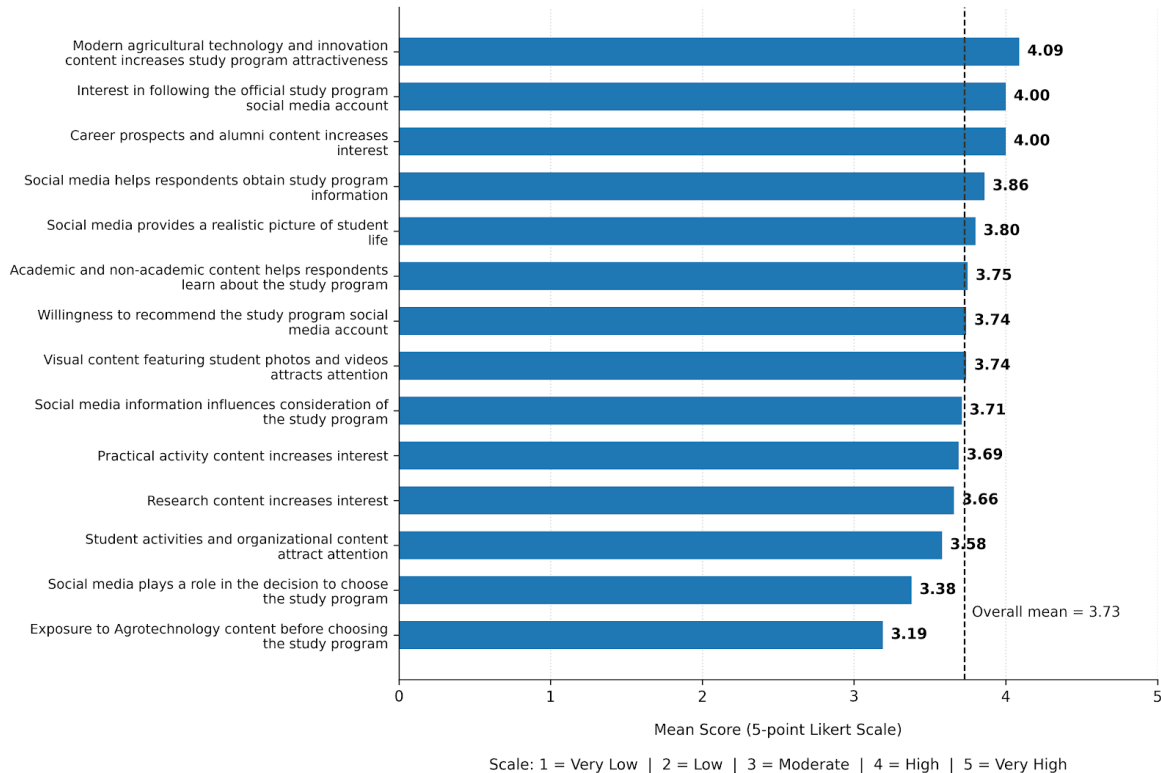


Figure 5. Mean scores of respondent's perceptions of social media content and its role in attracting prospective students to the Agrotechnology Study Program.

Social media serves as a strategic platform for attracting prospective students by providing diverse information and real-time access (Kusumawati, 2019). Figure 5 shows that all social media indicators had mean scores ranging from 3.19 to 4.09. The overall mean score was 3.73, indicating a high level of respondents' perceptions. The highest-rated indicator was the ability of modern agricultural technology and innovation content to increase the attractiveness of the study program (mean = 4.09). This was followed by career prospects and alumni content (mean = 4.00) and respondents' interest in following the official study program social media account (mean = 4.00). These findings indicate that informative and relevant content, particularly content related to agricultural innovation, career opportunities, and alumni, has strong potential to attract prospective students. Positive perceptions of academic quality, facilities, and graduates' career prospects significantly strengthen the influence of social media marketing strategies on prospective students' interest (Manullang & Simanjuntak, 2024).

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score was recorded for prior exposure to Agrotechnology content before choosing the study program (mean = 3.19), which was categorized as moderate. The indicator measuring the role of social media in the decision to choose the study program also showed a moderate score (mean = 3.38). This suggests that although social media is perceived as effective in providing information and generating interest, its direct influence on a student's final decision to choose the Agrotechnology Study Program remains relatively limited. Therefore, the

social media strategy should be strengthened by presenting more persuasive content, such as distinctive program advantages, student experiences, career pathways, achievements, practical activities, and research innovations, to strengthen the transition from information exposure to actual enrollment decisions. Communication in student recruitment also indicates that prospective students tend to require more personal and interactive communication channels, such as direct communication, video calls, or campus visits, to gain a deeper understanding of the academic environment and institutional culture. Social media plays an important role in building awareness and providing initial information to prospective students, although the final decision to choose a study program may be influenced by various communication channels and other considerations (Byrd et al., 2023).

Relationship Between Social Media Perception and Enrollment Decision Factors

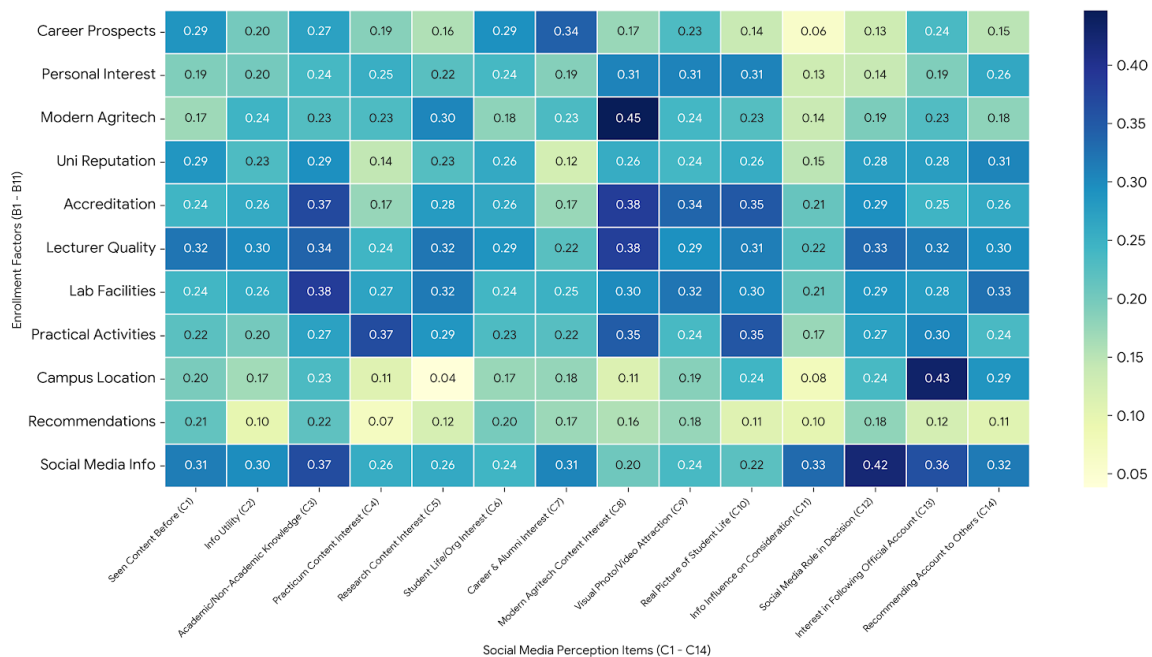


Figure 6. Correlation heatmap between enrollment factors and social media perception

Overall, all indicators show a positive trend, with correlation coefficients (r) ranging from 0.13 to 0.47. This finding indicates that a more positive perception of social media content and information corresponds to a higher level of consideration of enrollment decision factors. The strongest relationship was found between modern agricultural technology content and the decision to choose the Agrotechnology Study Program ($r = 0.45$), followed by campus location and interest in following the official study program account ($r = 0.43$) and social media information and interest in following the official account ($r = 0.42$) (Figure 6). These results indicate that social media has the potential to support the dissemination of information about the study program's advantages and to increase prospective students' interest.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the attractiveness of the Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta, students' perceptions of social media as an information source, and the types of content most attractive to newly enrolled students. Among the factors considered in students' enrollment decisions, modern agricultural technology received the highest mean score (4.11), followed by accreditation (4.06) and practical activities (4.04). In

contrast, information obtained from social media had the lowest mean score among the enrollment factors (3.35), indicating that students weighed social media information alongside other academic, institutional, and practical factors.

Among social media content, material on modern agricultural technology and innovation was the most engaging, with a mean score of 4.09, followed by information on career prospects and alumni (4.00). The correlation analysis showed a positive association between content on modern agricultural technology and innovation and the decision to choose the Agrotechnology Study Program ($r = 0.45$). However, this correlation should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence of a causal effect. Overall, the findings suggest that social media may function primarily as an information and awareness channel, while students' enrollment decisions are also shaped by substantive characteristics of the study program, including technological orientation, accreditation, practical learning opportunities, and career-related considerations.

The main contribution of this study is its empirical examination of social media perceptions alongside multiple enrollment considerations in the context of agricultural higher education. The findings indicate that digital communication strategies for agricultural study programs can emphasize modern agricultural technology, innovation, practical learning, and career opportunities rather than relying solely on general promotional information. This provides a basis for higher education institutions to align social media content with the characteristics students perceive as relevant when considering an agricultural study program.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved 140 newly enrolled students from one Agrotechnology Study Program at Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Yogyakarta. Therefore, the findings reflect the perceptions and enrollment considerations of this specific group and may not be directly generalizable to students in other agricultural study programs or higher education institutions. Second, the questionnaire was administered as part of the student registration process. Although this approach enabled the study to obtain responses from the newly enrolled student population, the mandatory survey context may have influenced respondents' willingness to provide fully independent responses and may introduce response bias. The study therefore reflects students' reported perceptions rather than independently verified measures of the factors that determined their enrollment decisions.

Third, the study primarily used descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The observed correlations indicate associations between variables but do not establish causal relationships between social media content and students' enrollment decisions. Differences between demographic groups were also presented descriptively and were not subjected to additional inferential group-comparison tests. Finally, the available study documentation does not report separate pilot testing, expert validation, item-level validity analysis, or Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the questionnaire. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive empirical evidence from the surveyed respondents rather than as evidence based on a formally validated standardized measurement scale. Future research could strengthen the evidence by using validated instruments, including respondents from multiple institutions, and applying longitudinal or explanatory designs to examine how social media exposure relates to students' decision-making over time.

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