

The Influence of Social Media on the Decision to Choose a Course and Training Institution with Word of Mouth Mediation and Trust at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar

Made Sumerte¹, I Komang Candra Dewi², Dewa Ayu Diah Sri Widari³

¹²³Triatma Mulya University, Badung, Bali

* Correspondence e-mail; made.sumerte@gmail.com

Article history

Submitted: 2026/06/01; Revised: 2026/07/11; Accepted: 2026/08/23

Abstract

The development of social media has transformed how people obtain information and make decisions, including when selecting course and training institutions. This study aims to analyze the effects of social media on word of mouth, trust, and students' decisions to choose a course and training institution, as well as the effects of word of mouth and trust on decision-making and their mediating roles. A quantitative approach was employed using descriptive and associative analysis. The population consisted of 70 active students at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar, all of whom were selected through a census method. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed with SmartPLS through outer model, inner model, and hypothesis testing. The results show that social media has a positive and significant effect on word of mouth, trust, and students' decisions. Word of mouth and trust also positively and significantly influence students' decisions. Furthermore, both variables significantly mediate the relationship between social media and students' decisions to choose a course and training institution. These findings highlight the importance of social media, trust, and positive word of mouth in attracting prospective students.

Keywords

Decision to Choose, Social Media, Word of Mouth, Trust



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY SA) license, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

INTRODUCTION

Course and Training Institutions (Lembaga Kursus dan Pelatihan/LKP) are an important component of non-formal education in Indonesia because they provide practical skills that complement formal education and support community employability and entrepreneurship. LKP programs are generally oriented toward competency development and the needs of the labor market. Research on LKP management indicates that effective management can strengthen institutional existence, improve the quality of graduates, and increase public trust. Therefore, LKP institutions need to continuously improve their educational services and marketing strategies to remain relevant to community needs and competitive in the increasingly

dynamic education sector.

One important factor influencing the development of educational service marketing is the growth of digital technology, particularly social media. Social media enables institutions to disseminate information, communicate directly with prospective students, display learning activities, and develop relationships with their audiences. Tuten and Solomon emphasize that social media marketing is not limited to promotion but also involves strategic communication, community development, publishing, entertainment, commerce, and the utilization of consumer insights. Consequently, social media can become an important source of information for prospective students when evaluating the quality, reputation, facilities, programs, and learning experiences offered by an LKP.

Social media may also encourage electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), because users can share experiences, recommendations, comments, reviews, and testimonials with wider audiences. Positive experiences distributed through social media can strengthen an institution's image and increase prospective students' consideration. Conversely, limited interaction and unattractive content may reduce audience engagement and weaken the effectiveness of digital communication. Previous research also shows that an effective social media strategy can improve customer engagement and contribute to better conversion outcomes. Thus, social media is potentially connected not only with promotional effectiveness but also with word of mouth and consumers' subsequent decisions.

Trust is another important variable in the decision-making process for educational services. Choosing an LKP involves expectations concerning training quality, instructor competence, certification, facilities, learning experiences, and future employment opportunities. Prospective students therefore require credible information before deciding to enroll. Testimonials, graduate experiences, institutional documentation, reviews, and transparent information disseminated through social media may contribute to the formation of trust. The importance of trust in LKP development is also supported by research showing that effective institutional management can contribute to increasing public confidence in training institutions. In addition, studies of LKP service quality indicate that students consider factors such as job-placement guarantees, learning materials, instructor quality, facilities, and employee services when selecting an institution.

These conditions are relevant to Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. The institution is a professional LKP based in Denpasar that focuses on vocational education and training in areas including hospitality, fashion design, and mind

technology. Its programs include bartender and barista training, fashion design and sewing, hospitality and culinary services, and other practical competencies. The institution states that its learning approach integrates practical vocational skills with mental development and aims to produce graduates who are competent, adaptive, and entrepreneurial. This positioning provides a strong basis for competing in the vocational training market.

However, Amerta Bakti College faces challenges in attracting prospective students and converting their interest into enrollment decisions. Based on the institutional data presented in this study, follower growth on several social media platforms declined substantially during 2021–2025. Facebook follower growth decreased from 28.1% to 4.0%, while Instagram declined from 36.8% to 4.6%. TikTok, which recorded very high growth in 2022, subsequently declined to 2.8% in 2025. Views also decreased after reaching a peak in 2023. These developments indicate that the institution needs to evaluate its social media strategy, particularly in relation to content relevance, consistency, audience interaction, and engagement.

The decline in social media engagement may have implications for word of mouth and trust. When prospective students rarely encounter engaging content, testimonials, graduate success stories, or meaningful interactions, they may seek information from friends, family, alumni, online reviews, and competing institutions. In this situation, social media may not fully perform its role as a communication channel for strengthening institutional credibility. The challenge is particularly important because digital transformation is increasingly becoming part of the development strategy for vocational and course institutions in Indonesia. Recent initiatives involving course and training institutions have emphasized the need to strengthen digital capacity and online learning ecosystems.

The decline in student numbers at Amerta Bakti College during 2024 and 2025 further strengthens the importance of examining this phenomenon. Prospective students may postpone their decisions because they need additional information regarding program quality, instructor competence, certificate recognition, career opportunities, and graduate experiences. Therefore, social media, word of mouth, and trust can be viewed as interconnected factors in the decision to choose an LKP. Social media can provide information and stimulate communication, word of mouth can strengthen recommendations from other users, and trust can reduce uncertainty before enrollment.

Based on the phenomenon and research gaps described above, this study investigates the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and

training institution, with word of mouth and trust as mediating variables at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. The study specifically examines the effects of social media on word of mouth, trust, and the decision to choose; the effects of word of mouth and trust on the decision to choose; and the mediating roles of word of mouth and trust in the relationship between social media and students' decisions. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to educational service marketing and consumer behavior studies and practically provide strategic recommendations for Amerta Bakti College and other LKP institutions in developing more effective digital marketing, communication, and trust-building strategies.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using descriptive and associative analysis to examine the relationships and effects among the research variables. The research model examined the influence of social media as the independent variable on the decision to choose a course and training institution as the dependent variable, with word of mouth and trust serving as mediating variables. The research was conducted at Amerta Bakti College, located at Jalan Tukad Citarum No. 5A, Renon, South Denpasar, from January to June 2026. The population consisted of 70 active students enrolled in course and training programs in 2025. Because the population was relatively small, a census sampling technique was applied, involving all 70 students as research respondents.

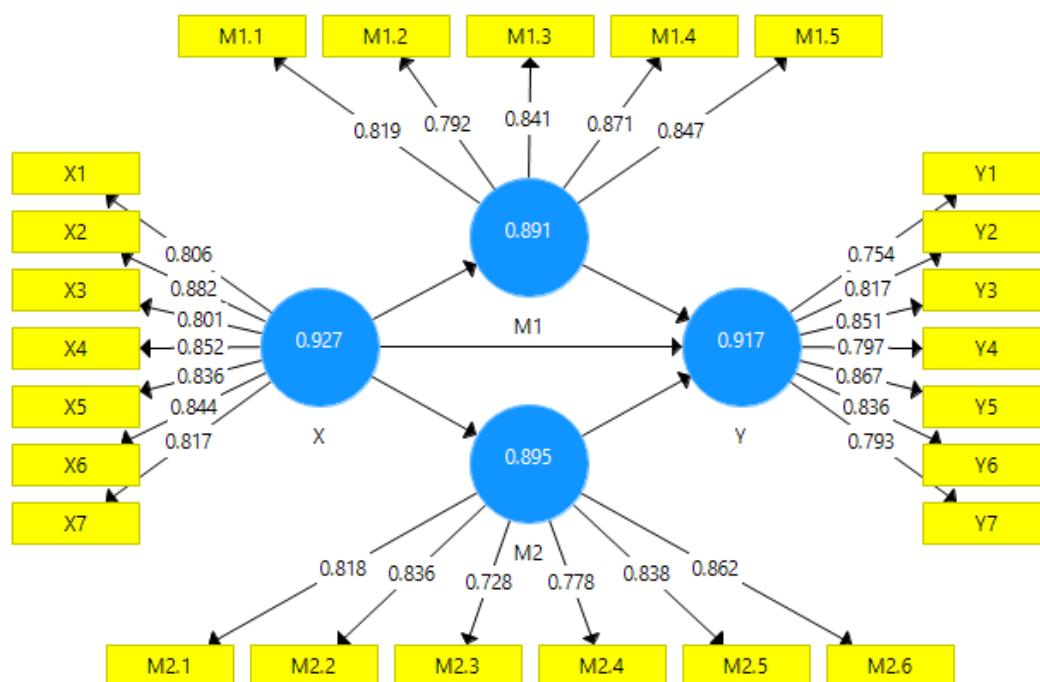
Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale and was developed based on indicators for each research variable. The decision-to-choose variable included institutional quality, cost, reputation, information accessibility, perceived value, motivation, and social influence. Social media was measured through account availability, content quality, posting frequency, engagement, feature utilization, content relevance, and responsiveness. Word of mouth was measured through satisfaction, alumni experiences, trust in information sources, social interaction, and communication channels. Trust included service quality, institutional credibility, consumer satisfaction, information transparency, responsiveness, and social recommendations.

Primary data were obtained from respondents, while secondary data were collected from institutional documents, social media platforms, and relevant literature. Instrument testing involved 30 respondents with similar characteristics. All questionnaire items were declared valid because their correlation coefficients exceeded 0.30, while Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicated adequate

reliability. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics with the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach through SmartPLS. The outer model was evaluated using outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), cross loading, HTMT, composite reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. The inner model was assessed through R^2 , f^2 , and SRMR. Hypotheses were tested using direct and indirect effects, with p-values below 0.05 considered significant. The Sobel test was additionally used to assess the mediating effects of word of mouth and trust.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

External model analysis



Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

Figure 1 Outer Model Analysis Results

Figure 1 can be explained the results of the outer model analysis shown by the outer loadings in the validity test measurement and composite reliability in the reliability test measurement. The full explanation can be seen in the description of the validity test measurement and reliability test carried out in the outer model analysis, which are as follows:

Convergent validity

Table 1 Outer Loadings On Convergent Validity Testing

Indicator	M1	M2	X	Y
M1.1	0,819			

M1.2	0,792			
M1.3	0,841			
M1.4	0,871			
M1.5	0,847			
M2.1		0,818		
M2.2		0,836		
M2.3		0,728		
M2.4		0,778		
M2.5		0,838		
M2.6		0,862		
X1			0,806	
X2			0,882	
X3			0,801	
X4			0,852	
X5			0,836	
X6			0,844	
X7			0,817	
Y1				0,754
Y2				0,817
Y3				0,851
Y4				0,797
Y5				0,867
Y6				0,836
Y7				0,793

Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

Table 2 Average Variance Extracted (Ave) In Convergent Validity Testing

Variabel	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
M1	0,696
M2	0,658
X	0,696
Y	0,668

Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

Discriminant validity**Table 3** Cross Loadings On Convergent Validity Testing

Indicator	M1	M2	X	Y
-----------	----	----	---	---

M1.1	0,819	0,265	0,495	0,453
M1.2	0,792	0,275	0,519	0,479
M1.3	0,841	0,453	0,549	0,520
M1.4	0,871	0,465	0,605	0,579
M1.5	0,847	0,360	0,488	0,414
M2.1	0,381	0,818	0,485	0,478
M2.2	0,424	0,836	0,354	0,416
M2.3	0,275	0,728	0,494	0,426
M2.4	0,274	0,778	0,401	0,482
M2.5	0,322	0,838	0,410	0,473
M2.6	0,474	0,862	0,496	0,461
X1	0,563	0,442	0,806	0,492
X2	0,602	0,539	0,882	0,556
X3	0,568	0,349	0,801	0,442
X4	0,488	0,521	0,852	0,613
X5	0,517	0,434	0,836	0,539
X6	0,503	0,442	0,844	0,491
X7	0,504	0,451	0,817	0,587
Y1	0,511	0,390	0,518	0,754
Y2	0,518	0,453	0,539	0,817
Y3	0,484	0,485	0,452	0,851
Y4	0,451	0,379	0,454	0,797
Y5	0,514	0,462	0,658	0,867
Y6	0,477	0,504	0,535	0,836
Y7	0,424	0,548	0,478	0,793

Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

Table 4 Heterotrait-Monotriat Ratio (Htmt) In Convergent Validity Testing

Variabel	M1	M2	X	Y
M1				
M2	0,488			
X	0,701	0,592		
Y	0,648	0,620	0,687	

Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

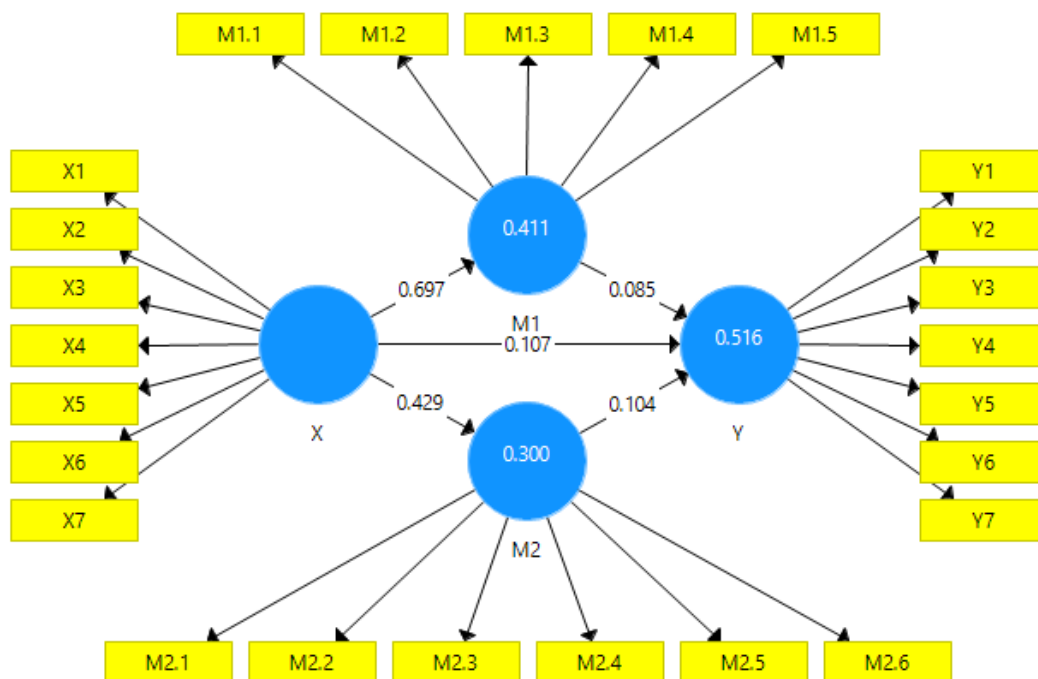
Internal consistency reliability

Table 5 Composite Reliability And Cronbach's Alpha In Internal Consistency Reliability Testing

Variabel	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
M1	0,920	0,891
M2	0,920	0,895
X	0,941	0,927
Y	0,934	0,917

Source: Appendix 6, 2026.

Analysis of the Inner Model (Structural Model)



Source: Appendix 7, 2026.

Figure 2 Results Of Inner Model Analysis (Structural Model)

Koefisien determinasi: R square dan R square adjusted

Tabel 6 Nilai R Square Dan R Square Adjusted

Variabel	R Square	R Square Adjusted
M1	0,411	0,402
M2	0,300	0,290
Y	0,516	0,494

Source: Appendix 7, 2026.

f square (f2)

Table 7 Value F Square (F2)

Variabel	M1	M2	X	Y
M1				0,085

M2				0,104
X	0,697	0,429		0,107
Y				

Source: Appendix 7, 2026.

Model fit

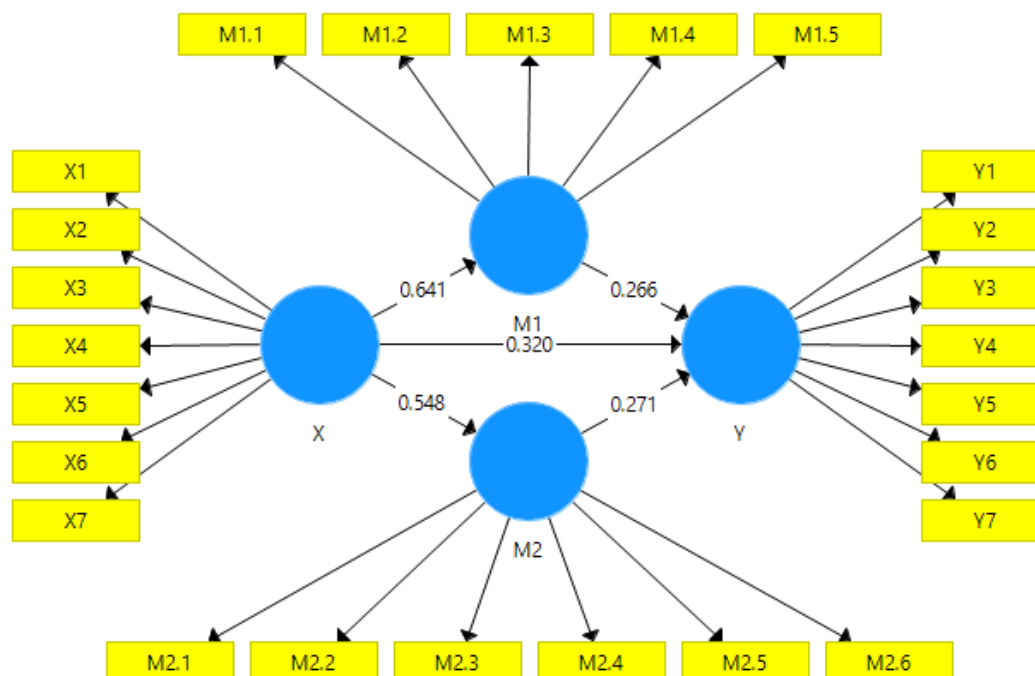
Table 8 Evaluation Of The Fit Model

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0,069	0,071

Source: Appendix 7, 2026.

Hypothesis testing

Direct effects analysis: path coefficients



Source: Appendix 8, 2026.

Figure 3 Direct Effects Model

Table 9 Results Of Direct Effects Analysis

Variable Relationships	Original Sample	T Statistic	P Values
X -> M1	0,641	9,551	0,000
X -> M2	0,548	6,744	0,000
X -> Y	0,320	2,809	0,005
M1 -> Y	0,266	2,094	0,037
M2 -> Y	0,271	2,869	0,004

Source: Appendix 8, 2026.

The Influence of Social Media (X) on Word of Mouth (M1)

Path coefficients or parameter coefficients $X \rightarrow M1$ ($pxm1$) of 0.641 means that there is a positive influence between social media on word of mouth. Positive influence explains the existence of a one-way influence, where if a social media score is one unit, it will be followed by an increase in word of mouth score by 0.641 units. Based on the results of direct effects analysis, the t-count $pxm1$ was 9.551 with significance or probability values (p values) = $0.000 < 0.05$, then the test results received the first hypothesis (H1) of the study, namely: social media has a positive and significant effect on word of mouth at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar.

The Influence of Social Media (X) on Trust (M2).

Path coefficients or parameter coefficients $X \rightarrow M2$ ($pxm2$) of 0.548 means that there is a positive influence between social media on trust. Positive influence explains the existence of a one-way influence, where if a social media score is one unit, it will be followed by an increase in the trust score of 0.548 units. Based on the results of the direct effects analysis, the t-count $pxm2$ was 6.744 with a significance or probability value (p values) = $0.000 < 0.05$, the test results accepted the second hypothesis (H2) of the study, namely: social media has a positive and significant effect on trust at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar.

The Influence of Social Media (X) on the Decision to Choose a Course and Training Institution (Y).

Path coefficients or parameter coefficients $X \rightarrow Y$ (pxy) of 0.320 means that there is a positive influence between social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution. Positive influence explains the one-way influence, where if the social media score is one unit, it will be followed by an increase in the decision score of choosing a course and training institution by 0.320 units. Based on the results of the direct effects analysis, the t-count pxy was 2.809 with a significance or probability value (p values) = $0.005 < 0.05$, the test results accepted the third hypothesis (H3) of the research, namely: social media has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar.

The Influence of Word of Mouth (M1) on the Decision to Choose a Course and Training Institution (Y).

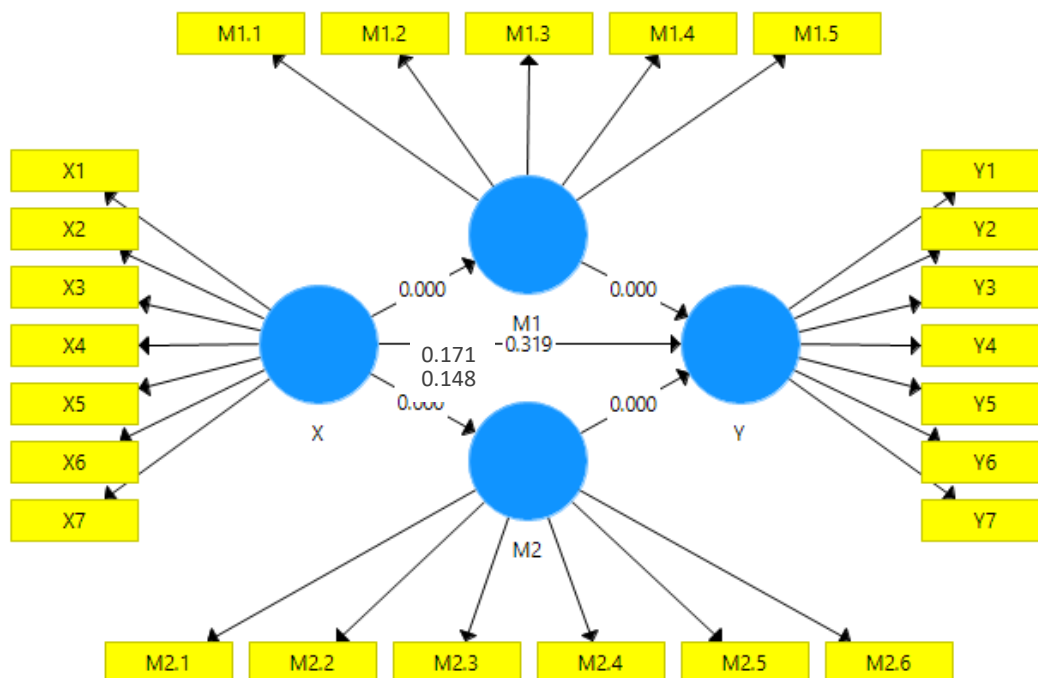
Path coefficients or parameter coefficients $M1 \rightarrow Y$ ($pm1y$) of 0.266 means that there is a positive influence between word of mouth on the decision to choose a course and training institution. Positive influence explains the one-way influence, where if the word of mouth score is one unit, it will be followed by an increase in the

decision score of choosing a course and training institution of 0.266 units. Based on the results of the direct effects analysis, the t-count of pm1y was 2.094 with a significance or probability value (p values) = $0.037 < 0.05$, the test results accepted the fourth hypothesis (H4) of the study, namely: word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar.

The Influence of Trust (M1) on the Decision to Choose a Course and Training Institution (Y).

Path coefficients or parameter coefficients M2 -> Y (pm2y) of 0.271 means that there is a positive influence between trust on the decision to choose a course and training institution. Positive influence explains the existence of a one-way influence, where if the trust score is one unit, it will be followed by an increase in the decision score of choosing a course and training institution of 0.271 units. Based on the results of the direct effects analysis, the t-calculation of pm2y was 2.869 with a significance or probability value (p values) = $0.004 < 0.05$, the test results accepted the fifth hypothesis (H5) of the study, namely: trust has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar.

Indirect effects analysis



Source: Appendix 8, 2026.

Gambar 5 Model Indirect Effects

Table 10 Results Of Indirect Effects Analysis

Variable Relationships	Original Sample	T Statistic	P Values
X -> M1 -> Y	0,171	1,986	0,048
X -> M2 -> Y	0,148	2,594	0,010

Source: Appendix 8, 2026.

Based on the results of the analysis, word of mouth and trust each played a role as a partial mediation in the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution. The indirect influence of social media through word of mouth showed a coefficient of 0.171 with a t-count of 1.986 ($p = 0.048$) and a Sobel Z test = 17.097 (> 1.96), which means significant. Similarly, the indirect influence through trust showed a coefficient of 0.148 with a t-count of 2.594 ($p = 0.010$) and the Sobel Z test = 22.242 (> 1.96), also significant. Because the direct influence of social media on voting decisions is also significant, the two mediation variables are classified as partial mediation. Thus, the sixth and seventh hypotheses are accepted.

Discussion

The influence of social media on *word of mouth*

The results of the study show that social media has a positive and significant effect on word of mouth at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. This indicates that more effective social media management increases students' willingness to recommend the institution, share experiences, and communicate positive information with others. Social media also serves as an important medium for delivering information about training programs, learning activities, student achievements, and institutional activities. Engaging, informative, and accessible content can create positive experiences that encourage students to share information with friends, family, and the wider community. This finding is consistent with Kotler and Keller (2021), who explain that social media facilitates the rapid and broad dissemination of information through user recommendations. Tuten and Solomon (2023) also emphasize that social media provides an interactive community space for sharing experiences and feedback, thereby encouraging word of mouth. Furthermore, the findings support previous studies by Orella and Anggraeni (2022), Kartika and Pandjaitan (2023), Lestari and Nurhasanah (2023), Rimiyati and Anisa (2024), and Febyola and Widyanesti (2024). Thus, optimizing social media can strengthen positive word of mouth and support institutional promotion.

The influence of social media on trust

The results of the study show that social media has a positive and significant effect on the trust of Amerta Bakti College students in Denpasar. Positive influences show one-way relationships, namely the better the management of social media, the

higher the level of student trust in the institution. On the other hand, a decrease in the quality of social media use can reduce the level of student trust. Significant influence shows that social media is an important factor in forming trust, so that changes in social media activities have a real impact on student trust. In the context of Amerta Bakti College, social media plays a role as a means of conveying information about training programs, learning activities, student achievements, and institutional activities openly. Consistent, accurate, and relevant information helps increase students' confidence in the quality of service. Responsive interaction also makes it easier for students to obtain information so as to strengthen trust in the institution.

This finding is in line with the theory of Kotler and Keller (2021) which states that social media is able to build trust through the provision of information, reviews, and user experiences as a basis for assessing the credibility of a service. In addition, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) explain that two-way communication through social media can strengthen the relationship between organizations and consumers thereby increasing trust. The results of this study support the research of Saputra (2023), Firmansyah et al. (2024), Nugraha et al. (2024), and Hariyani et al. (2024) which shows that social media has a positive and significant effect on trust. This shows that effective social media management can increase credibility, transparency, and closeness of the relationship between institutions and students.

The influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution

The results of the study show that social media has a positive and significant influence on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. Positive influences show a one-way relationship, that is, the better the use of social media, the higher the tendency of students to choose the institution. Conversely, a decrease in the effectiveness of social media can decrease students' tendency to make decisions. Significant influence shows that social media is an important factor that plays a role in providing information and supporting the student decision-making process. At Amerta Bakti College, social media acts as a means to introduce training programs, learning activities, job opportunities, and alumni success. Information that is easily accessible, relevant, and interesting helps prospective students understand the benefits of participating in training so that social media is one of the considerations in choosing a course and training institution.

This result is in accordance with the theory of Kotler and Keller (2021) which states that social media is able to disseminate information and user experience so as to influence consumer perceptions and decisions. Through social media, prospective students can obtain information about training programs, service quality, facilities, institutional achievements, and previous participant experiences. In addition, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) explain that user interaction and engagement on social media can increase consumer confidence in making choices. The results of this study support the research of Pamuji (2025), Ardiansa and Oetarjo (2021), Sriyanto et al. (2024), Tomaszewicz and Chrachol-Barczyk (2024), and Sewata (2025) which found that social media has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose an educational institution. The findings confirm that optimal social media management can increase Amerta Bakti College's chances of attracting students.

The influence of word of mouth on the decision to choose a course and training institution

The results of the study show that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. Positive influences show that the better the recommendations, information, and experiences conveyed by friends, family, alumni, and other service users, the higher a person's tendency to choose Amerta Bakti College. On the other hand, less positive word of mouth can reduce the interest of prospective students in choosing the institution. Significant influence shows that word of mouth is an important factor that has a real influence on decision-making. At Amerta Bakti College, positive recommendations regarding the quality of training programs, instructor competencies, learning facilities, and job opportunities after training can increase the confidence of prospective students. The positive experiences shared by service users are able to form a good perception of the quality and credibility of the institution so as to encourage the decision to choose.

At Amerta Bakti College, positive recommendations from alumni regarding the quality of training programs, instructor competencies, learning facilities, and job opportunities after participating in the training were able to increase the confidence of prospective students in making choices. Recommendations from alumni are more trusted than direct promotions from institutions because they come from real experience of service users who are considered more objective and authentic. The positive experiences shared by alumni can shape the perception of the quality and credibility of Amerta Bakti College so as to encourage the decision of prospective students to choose the institution.

This result is in accordance with Hasan's (2022) theory which explains that word of mouth is communication between individuals in the form of recommendations, experiences, and assessments of products or services that are considered more honest and convincing than company promotions. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2022) also stated that communication between consumers can influence the process of evaluating alternatives to the decision to choose a service. In the context of course and training institutions, information from friends, family, and alumni has high credibility because it comes from real experience.

The results of this study support the research of Napitupulu and Simanjuntak (2024), Wijaya et al. (2023), Wulandari and Irwansyah (2024), Lukitaningrum and Untari (2024), and Arief and Brabo (2024) which found that word of mouth has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose an educational institution. This shows that recommendations and user experiences are a credible source of information in increasing the confidence of prospective students. Thus, the more positive the word of mouth about Amerta Bakti College, the greater the chance that the institution will be chosen as a place to take courses and training.

The influence of *trust* on the decision to choose a course and training institution

The results of the study showed that trust had a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. The positive influence shows a one-way relationship, namely the higher the level of trust students have in the institution, the greater their tendency to choose Amerta Bakti College as a place to take courses and training. Conversely, a decrease in confidence levels can reduce students' interest in choosing the institution. Significant influence shows that trust is an important factor that significantly influences students' decisions.

The results of this study are in line with Priansa's (2021) theory which states that trust is a consumer's belief in the credibility, reliability, and integrity of an institution in providing services according to expectations. Suryani (2021) also explained that a high level of trust is able to reduce uncertainty and risks felt by consumers, thereby increasing confidence in making decisions. In the context of course and training institutions, students tend to choose institutions that are believed to be able to provide quality education, services, and learning outcomes as needed.

At Amerta Bakti College, student trust can be built through the institution's reputation, the quality of training programs, instructor competence, learning facilities, and alumni success. Trust is an important factor in educational services because educational services are intangible, so prospective students cannot fully assess the quality of services before experiencing the benefits directly. Therefore,

confidence in the credibility and ability of the institution to meet expectations is the basis for student consideration in making decisions to choose a course and training institution. The results of this study support the research of Maulana (2023), Muzakki and Putri (2022), Lestari et al. (2025), Al-Dmour et al. (2025), and Xu and Keat (2024) which found that trust has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose an educational institution. This shows that trust is an important factor in increasing the confidence of prospective students to choose Amerta Bakti College as a place to develop professional skills and competencies.

The role of word of mouth mediates the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution

The results of the study show that word of mouth plays a role in mediating the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. In other words, social media has a positive and significant effect indirectly on the decision to choose a course and training institution through word of mouth. The positive influence shows that the more optimal the use of social media by Amerta Bakti College, the stronger the word of mouth activity formed among students and the community. Furthermore, the increase in word of mouth is able to encourage prospective students to make decisions to choose course and training institutions. This shows that social media not only functions as a means of conveying information, but also as a medium that is able to build recommendations, positive experiences, and the dissemination of information from users to others. Significant influence shows that word of mouth has a real role in strengthening the relationship between social media and the decision to choose a course and training institution.

The test results showed that the influence of social media on voting decisions occurred directly or indirectly through word of mouth, thus indicating the existence of partial mediation. This condition shows that word of mouth acts as a reinforcement of the relationship between social media and voting decisions, but it is not the only path that influences student decisions. The implication is that Amerta Bakti College needs to optimize social media directly while building positive experiences in order to encourage the formation of recommendations that can improve voting decisions. The results of this study are in line with the theory of Tuten and Solomon (2023) which states that social media can encourage interaction between users so as to expand the dissemination of information and shape public perception of a service. Information obtained through social media can develop into recommendations or personal experiences that then form word of mouth.

Furthermore, Keller (2021) explained that positive word of mouth has high credibility because it comes from the user's real experience so that it is more effective in influencing decisions than direct promotional communication.

At Amerta Bakti College, publications about training programs, instructor quality, facilities, learning activities, and alumni success through social media can encourage students to share positive experiences with others. These findings support the research of Ningtias and Asnawi (2024), Septyansyah and Abadi (2022), Nisadiayanah et al. (2025), Pratiwi (2024), and Djafar et al. (2024) who stated that electronic word of mouth is able to mediate the influence of social media on consumer decisions. Thus, the more effective the management of Amerta Bakti College's social media, the stronger the positive word of mouth that is formed and the greater the chance for students to choose the institution.

The role of trust in mediating the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution

The results of the study show that trust plays a role in mediating the influence of social media on the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. In other words, social media has a positive and significant effect indirectly on the decision to choose a course and training institution through trust. The positive influence shows that there is a one-way relationship, namely the better the use of social media by Amerta Bakti College, the higher the level of student trust in the institution, which further increases the student's decision to choose the course and training institution. This shows that social media not only functions as a means of delivering information, but is also able to build students' confidence in the quality of service, credibility, and reputation of the institution. Significant influences show that trusts play an important role in bridging the relationship between social media and the decision to choose a course and training institution.

The test results showed that social media variables had a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose directly or through trust, thus indicating the existence of partial mediation. This condition indicates that trust plays a reinforcing factor in the relationship between social media and voting decisions, although social media still has a direct influence. The implication is that Amerta Bakti College needs to manage social media effectively to convey credible information while building student trust so that the decision to choose will increase. The results of this study are in line with the theory of Kingsnorth (2022) which states that digital marketing strategies through social media are able to build consumer

relationships and trust through continuous interaction between organizations and users. Effective social media management allows institutions to convey information clearly, transparently, and easily accessible, thereby increasing public confidence in the services offered. Furthermore, Ryan (2021) explained that trust formed through digital communication can strengthen the influence of social media promotion on consumer decisions in choosing a service.

In the context of Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar, information about training programs, instructor competencies, learning facilities, student achievements, and alumni success published through social media is able to form positive perceptions and increase student confidence. This trust is an important factor in determining the choice of course and training institutions. The results of this study support the research of Setiawan and Susilawati (2024), Ismail et al. (2024), Ahmad et al. (2023), Salman and Prasetyo (2025), and Pulumbara and Widyastuti (2024) who found that social media marketing has a positive and significant effect on consumer decisions through trust as a mediating variable. These findings confirm that the more effective the social media management of Amerta Bakti College, the higher the students' trust, thus increasing their decision in choosing the institution.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, this study concludes that social media has a positive and significant effect on word of mouth, trust, and the decision to choose a course and training institution at Amerta Bakti College in Denpasar. Word of mouth and trust also have positive and significant effects on students' decisions. Furthermore, both variables partially mediate the relationship between social media and the decision to choose, indicating that effective social media management strengthens recommendations and trust, ultimately encouraging students to select the institution. Therefore, Amerta Bakti College should improve the quality and completeness of digital information, maintain consistent posting schedules, publish testimonials and alumni experiences, and provide transparent information about programs, costs, career prospects, and instructor quality. Future research should consider additional variables, such as service quality, institutional image, and career prospects, while expanding the research setting to other educational institutions. The study is limited by its single-institution scope, restricted variables, cross-sectional quantitative design, potential response bias, and limited exploration of students' motivations and experiences.

REFERENCES

- Adawiyah, I., Churiyah, M., & Dhewi, T. S. (2024). *Building brand loyalty through trust: The impact of social media marketing and service quality*. *International Journal of Economics Development Research*, 5(2), 215–228.
- Ardiansa, F. S., & Oetarjo, M. (2021). *The influence of social media, brand trust, and word of mouth on parents' decisions to choose Muhammadiyah elementary schools*. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen dan Sains*, 6(1), 45–56.
- Arief, Z., & Brabo, N. A. (2024). *The influence of word of mouth and social media marketing on students' decision to choose a university*. *Journal of Economics, Commerce and Business*, 4(2), 111–123.
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022). *Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Ghozali, I. (2021). *Aplikasi Analisis Multivariate dengan Program IBM SPSS*. Badan Penerbit Universitas Diponegoro.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*. Sage Publications.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2021). *Manajemen Pemasaran* (Edisi 16). Erlangga.
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity*. Wiley.
- Nasrullah, R. (2023). *Media Sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sosioteknologi* (Edisi Revisi). Simbiosis Rekatama Media.
- Nugraha, D. E., Wilujeng, I. P., & Siswanto, E. (2024). *Trust as a mediating variable of social media marketing and content quality on purchase decision*. *Jurnal Ekonomi Balance*, 20(1), 102–115.
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2022). *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sugiyono. (2024). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2023). *Social Media Marketing* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Wijaya, N. P. N., Hurriyati, R., & Dirgantari, P. D. (2023). *Pengaruh word of mouth dan world class university terhadap pemilihan perguruan tinggi*. *Coopetition: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen*, 14(2), 247–260.
- Xu, M., & Keat, O. B. (2024). *Influencing factors on university choice decision making among students in private universities*. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 3(2), 55–69.