KEY OPINION LEADER (KOL) MARKETING STIE SAKTI ALAM KERINCI

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Abstract
Key Opinion Leader Marketing has significant urgency in the higher education environment to increase institutional visibility, support student recruitment, and strengthen connections with various stakeholders. This research provides an initial understanding of the role and potential of KOL Marketing in the tertiary environment and highlights the importance of developing communication strategies that suit the characteristics and special needs of the tertiary institution's target market. You can also explore aspects of implementing and measuring the impact of KOL Marketing in more detail. The research method used is descriptive analysis with a quantitative approach. Data was collected through interviews with related parties at several universities that have implemented Key Opinion Leader Marketing, observation of KOL activities on social media, and a review of related literature. The data is analyzed to identify patterns, trends and implications of the use of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in the higher education environment. The research period started from April to June 2023. The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling, a total of 78 respondents. In this research, the data analysis method used was the structural equation model (SEM) analysis technique, and using the help of Smart PLS 3 results software. Research shows that Key Opinion Leader Marketing has a significant and positive effect on Corporate Image.

Keywords : New students; Authentic and Consistent; Relevance; Engagement Rate; Followers.

INTRODUCTION

(Kol et al., 2021; Wang & Park, 2023) Higher education is a complex entity with unique needs in managing its image and reputation. In today's digital and social media era, marketing strategies are becoming increasingly important for universities to increase their attractiveness, reach more students, and strengthen their position in the competitive education market. One marketing strategy that is increasingly getting attention is Key Opinion Leader Marketing. Key Opinion Leader Marketing involves using authoritative or influential figures in a particular industry or field to influence consumer opinions and behavior. In the context of higher education, Key Opinion Leader Marketing can include prominent lecturers, outstanding students, successful alumni, or other well-known figures who have significant influence among the target market. The rapid growth of social media has changed the marketing paradigm, with a clear shift towards content and influence-based marketing. Key Opinion Leader Marketing has been proven effective in various industries, such as fashion, food, and beauty. However, the application of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in the tertiary environment has not yet been studied in depth. Universities are unique in terms of their target audience, the message they want to convey, and their ultimate goals. Therefore, research is needed that focuses on

implementing KOL Marketing in accordance with the characteristics and special needs of higher education institutions.

(Ayu et al., 2023; Hsu & Tseng, 2023; Xue et al., 2023; Zhu & Wang, 2020) The use of KOLs in marketing has become a trend in the business sector, there is adequate research on the implementation of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in higher education still limited. Questions that arise about Key Opinion Leaders in higher education are: How does the application of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in a tertiary environment influence the institution's brand image, increase attractiveness for prospective students, and influence new student admissions decisions and What are the problem solving approaches that can be used to implement Key Opinion Leader Marketing in higher education effectively

(Ayu et al., 2023; Xue et al., 2023) Research related to the implementation of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in higher education is still limited. However, several studies have shown the great potential of this strategy in increasing institutional visibility, supporting student recruitment, and strengthening connections with various stakeholders. The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the application of Key Opinion Leader Marketing in higher education environments, by exploring various strategies, best practices, and their impact on institutional image.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Key Opinion Leader (Kol) Marketing

Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Marketing theory originates from communication and marketing concepts that focus on individuals or groups who have significant influence on certain audiences. KOL is a figure who has credibility, expertise, and the ability to influence the opinions and behavior of other people. They are often respected and recognized as experts or authoritative figures in certain fields (Gong et al., 2022; Hasan & Liana, 2022; Marjerison et al., 2020; McCartney & Pek, 2018; Sah & Fugh-Berman, 2013; Wu et al. al., 2023) .

(Cheung et al., 2021; Huang, 2023; Lestari, 2022; Ong et al., 2022; Sarathy & Patro, 2023; Zhu & Wang, 2020) KOL marketing dimensions include several aspects that are important to consider in identifying and utilizing KOL. These dimensions are:

1. Credibility: Credibility is the level of trust the audience has in the KOL. This involves the expertise and integrity of the KOL. High credibility makes the messages conveyed by KOLs more trusted and adopted by the audience.
2. Relevance: Relevance refers to the extent to which KOLs and the content they share match the interests and needs of the audience. Relevant KOLs have greater influence because their messages are more accepted and applied by the audience.
3. Reach: Reach is how wide and large an audience a KOL can reach. KOLs with a wide reach are able to spread messages to a larger and more diverse audience.
4. Resonance: Resonance is the degree to which the message conveyed by the KOL matches and resonates with the audience. Messages that resonate will be easier for the audience to remember and internalize.
5. Activity: Activity refers to how often and how much the KOL interacts with its audience. Active KOLs often share content, participate in discussions, and establish two-way communication with their audience.

6. Affiliation: Affiliation is a KOL's relationship or association with a particular brand, product or institution. KOLs who have strong affiliations with certain institutions or products tend to be more influential in promoting and building reputation.
7. Engagement: Engagement measures how actively the audience interacts with the content shared by KOLs. This could be a like, comment, share, or other form of interaction that shows the audience's interest and attention.

Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz **,** stated that information does not reach the general audience directly but through KOLs who then disseminate the information to their audience. This emphasizes the important role of KOLs as information intermediaries.

Social Network Theory

Duncan J. Watts and Steven Strogatz **,** study how individuals or nodes in social networks relate to and influence each other. In the context of KOL marketing, KOLs are nodes with many connections that can disseminate information quickly and widely.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers explained how ideas, products, or innovations spread within a population through certain communication channels over time. KOLs play a key role in the early stages of innovation adoption.

Corporate image

(Albetris et al., 2022; Ashraf et al., 2018; Balmer, 1995; Poiesz, 1989; Shee & Abratt, 1989) corporate image is an image that has 2 important parts, namely full of emotion and functional, the functional part is related to the character that it is easy to measure and the emotional part is related to the psychological dimensions experienced and actions towards the company from Kennedy (1977). Corporate image has 6 measurements that influence customer perceptions stated by Nguyen & LeBlanc (1998) such as corporate identity, reputation, service offerings, physical environment, personal contact and service access.

(Alrayees & Saleh, 2019; Ashraf et al., 2018; Kargün, 2018; Shee & Abratt, 1989; Sinar et al., 2003) Sutojo (2004) also stated that a company's success in creating an image is influenced by various aspects, namely: 1). The image is formed based on the direction to the benefits needed and desired by the target group, 2). The benefits highlighted are quite realistic, 3). The image displayed matches the company's expertise, 4). The image that is highlighted is easy for the target group to understand, 5). The image that is highlighted is a tool, not the goal of the effort.

(Amini et al., 2012; Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Gray & Balmer, 1998; Jo Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Pina et al., 2006) there are 4 types of indicators to measure corporate image; The first is Personality: Social Responsibility, Vision and Mission, Awards, Public Trust, the second is Reputation: Competitive Ability, Competency Standards, Security, the third is Value: Quick response, Friendliness and the fourth is Corporation Identity (company identity): Company name, mass media information, office structure and design.

Problem Formulation

Although the use of KOLs in marketing has become a trend in the business sector, adequate research on the implementation of KOL Marketing in higher education is still limited. Therefore, the formulation of this research problem is:

1. How can the application of Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Marketing in a higher education environment influence the institution's brand image, increase its attractiveness to prospective students, and influence new student admissions decisions?

2. What problem solving approaches can be used to effectively implement KOL Marketing in higher education?

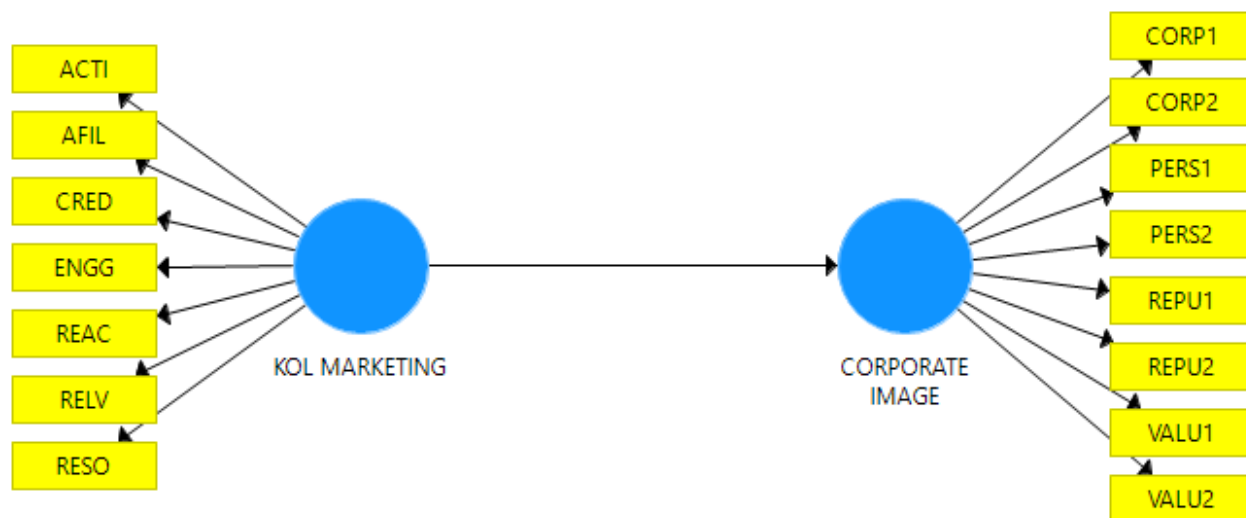Based on the explanation above, the framework of thinking can be described as follows:

Figure 1research model

H1   : KOL Marketing has a significant and positive effect on Corporate Image

METHODS

This research will use a quantitative approach and descriptive analysis to investigate the application of KOL Marketing in the higher education environment. Data will be collected through interviews with related parties at several universities that have implemented KOL Marketing, observation of KOL activities on social media, and a review of related literature. Data analysis will be carried out to identify patterns, trends and implications of the use of KOL Marketing in the higher education environment.

The data used in this research are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained from direct observation in the field and data obtained from interviews and filling out questionnaires is the entire academic community of Sakti Alam Kerinci High School using a Likert scale. Secondary data is a data collection technique obtained through journals, books and other supports (Gupta et al., 2018). The research period starts from April to August 2023. The sampling technique used is non-probability sampling. The sample size in this research refers to the sampling formula from Hair et al (2010), with a total of eleven statements and 2 dimensions, the sample size is The planned number of respondents was 78 respondents or the same as 13 x 6.

The determination of this sample size was based on research efficiency, where most respondents were expected to be diverse and not come from one concrete community group. In this research, the data analysis method used is the structural equation model (SEM) analysis technique, and using the help of Smart PLS 3 software (Hair et al., 2014), the use of PLS is based on the SEM technique used in this research as well as the large number of reference literature provided. use this software because it is more accurate and easier to translate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Characteristics of the 78 respondents from the Skeloah Tinggi Sakti Alam Kerinci academic community who were sampled in this research, if seen from the gender of visitors to the Rawa Bento tourist attraction, the largest number of visitors sampled in the research was 40 people, men, while the smallest number of samples was female, namely 40 people. 38 people. The following are the descriptive results of respondents:

Table 1is descriptive of respondents

NO	AGE CATEGORY (Years)				GENDER		MARITAL STATUS	
	≤ 25	> 25 to 35	> 35 to 45	≥ 45	W	L	Marry	Not married yet
AMOUNT	24	28	20	6	38	40	64	14
PERCENTAGE	31%	36%	26%	8%	49%	51%	82%	100%

Outer Model

The measurement model shows how the manifest variable or observed variable represents the latent variable to be measured. The loading factor value has high validity if it has a value greater than 0.5. Chin (1998) in Ghozali and Latan (2015) below is a picture of the path resulting from the measurement model (outer model) for each indicator using the PLS analysis tool:
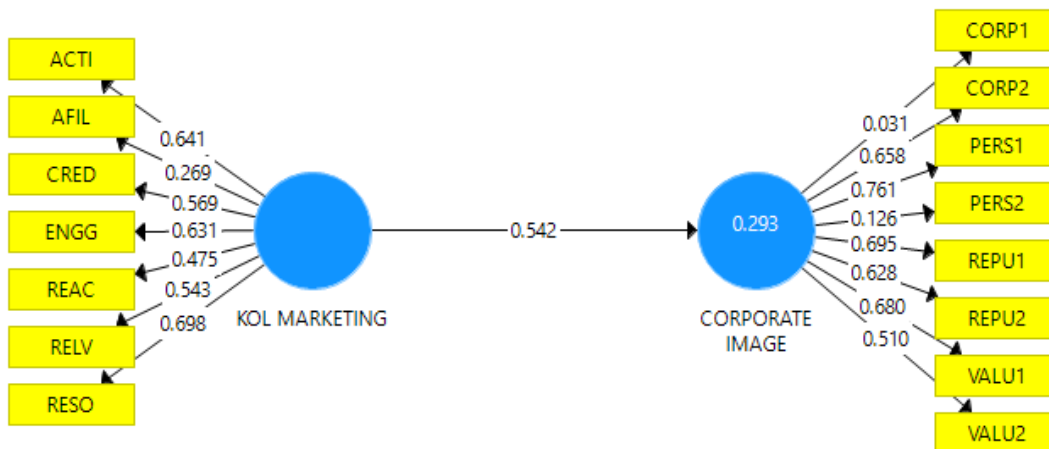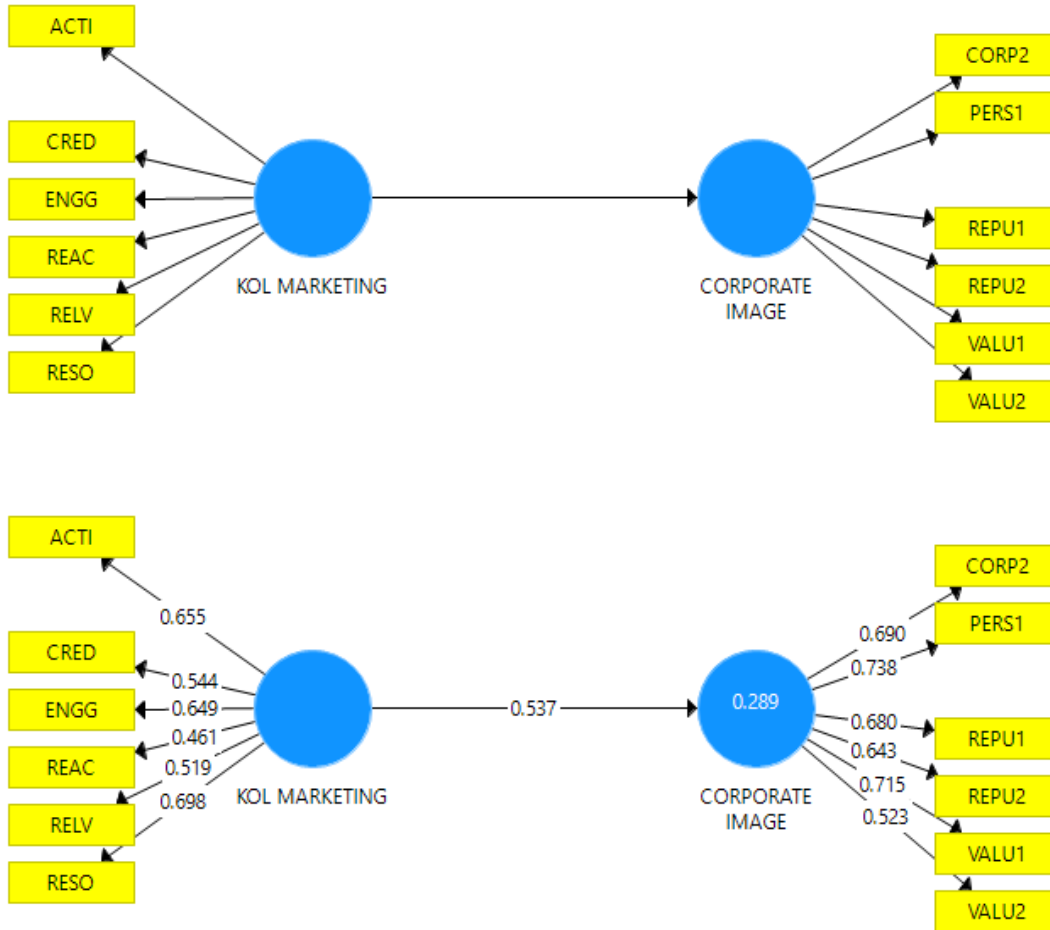

Figure 2Outer Model

Figure 3Outer Loading of Research Variables

Figure 1. Outer Model

From this picture, it can be seen that all indicators have met the requirements for testing the outer model. For more details, you can see each variable in the following table:

Table 2Outer Loading of Research Variables

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading
KOL Marketing	CRED	0.544
	RELV	0.519
	REAC	0.461
	RESO	0.698
	ACTI	0.655
	ENGG	0.649
corporate image	PRESS1	0.738
	REPU1	0.68
	REPU2	0.643

VALU1	0.715
VALU2	0.523
CORP2	0.69

Source: data processed by researchers, 2023

From Table 5.9. It can be seen that there is 1 KOL Marketing indicator and 2 Corporate Image indicators that measure research variables that do not meet the requirements. The condition for an indicator to be said to be good is greater than 0.5, so it can be concluded that all indicators can be said to be valid or can describe the latent variable measured in the research. This.

Research Validity and Reliability Test

The next test is testing the validity and reliability of the construct. Each construct is said to be valid if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be greater than 0.50, while reliability testing uses the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the Composite reliability coefficient which must be greater than 0.7. The following are the test results using SmartPLS 3.0:

Table 3Instrument Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability		Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
		Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	
KOL Marketing	0.672	0.665	0.762	0.352
Corporate Image	0.777	0.848	0.827	0.447

From table 5.10 it can be seen that all variables in this study have met the requirements for validity and reliability, namely having Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability coefficient values greater than 0.7 (>0.7), and AVE coefficient values greater than 0, 5 (>0.5), therefore all variables are suitable for use in research.

Inner Model (Full Model PLS)

The Inner Model is an overall model that states the causal relationship between the dimensions or variables studied. The structural model of the relationship between research variables can be seen in the following picture:
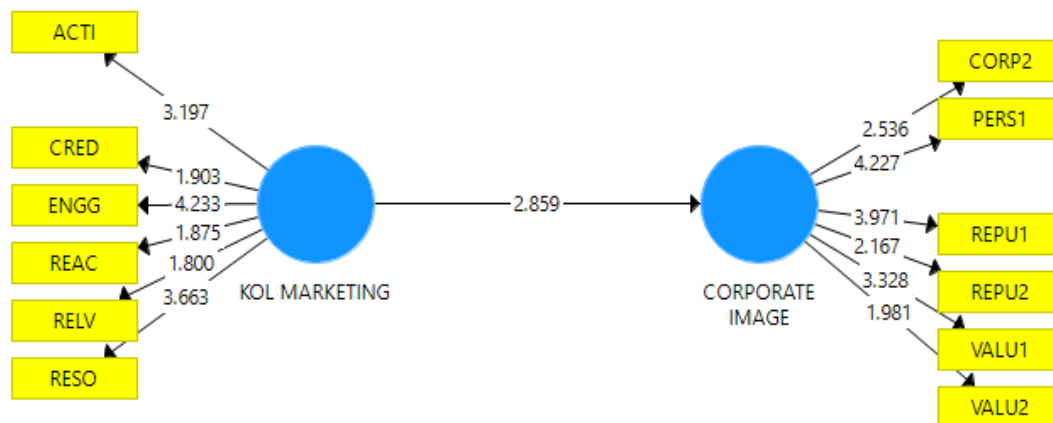
Figure 4Inner Model

In the picture above, it can be seen that there is a positive influence on all research variables if tested directly using PLS, but to see the influence between variables more clearly, you can see the following table:

Table 4Direct Effect Between Research Variables (Direct Effect, Rsquare and F Square)

Influence Between Variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Square
KOL Marketing -> Corporate Image	0.537	0.557	0.173	3.103	0.002	0.289	0.280	0.406

The influence between KOL Marketing has a significant and positive effect on Corporate Image

The first hypothesis test is to test the significant influence of KOL Marketing on Corporate Image. From Table 3, it can be seen that there is a positive and significant influence of the KOL Marketing variable on Corporate Image of 0.002 with a P value of 0.002 (<0.05).

Based on the tests that have been carried out, the results show that hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported. So in this research, KOL Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Corporate Image. This means that the image of the destination (especially the Rawa Bento tourist attraction) is able to attract tourists to visit. A good destination image will be a strength for a destination to get visits from tourists. The Rawa Bento tourist attraction, which has become popular and busy with visitors even before it officially opened, is proof that by launching the latest "waterfront city" concept in Kerinci, it has become the embodiment of the destination's own image. So the image of the destination is very important to maintain and continue to improve, so that tourist destinations are able to encourage interest in visiting tourists.

The results of this research are the same as the results of research conducted by Setyo Putra (2015) entitled "The Influence of Company Image on Visiting Interest and Visiting Decisions (Survey of Visitors to the PT. Selecta Recreation Park, Batu City, East Java)" which uses

corporate image theory which can be adopted for destination image, the results show that company image has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest. Suwarduki et al. (2016) in their research entitled "The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Destination Image and Its Impact on Interest and Decisions to Visit (Survey of Active Followers of Indtravel Instagram Accounts Who Have Visited Tourist Destinations in Indonesia)" also found the same results that destination image has a direct influence. significant impact on interest in visiting. So the results of this research can strengthen and develop the results of previous research. Where previous research can also be a basis for strengthening the results of this research.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Marketing in the tertiary environment can influence the institution's brand image, increase attractiveness for prospective students, and influence new student admission decisions and problem solving approaches that can be used to implement KOL Marketing in tertiary institutions effectively, namely by continuing continuously affiliated with certain institutions or products to promote and build reputation.

SUGGESTION

It is recommended that the management of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics be able to utilize Key Opinion Leader (KOL) Marketing in various social media, such as increasing collaboration with influencers who have many Gen Z and millennial followers so that social media visits will have a higher impact on the College of Science. Economics Sakti Alam Kerinci with the hope of increasing the number of students and trust in the community towards the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics.

It is recommended to the management of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics to improve and pay more attention to the credibility or level of trust held by the audience, because the Key Opinion Leader of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics is still categorized as sufficient or standard and can be improved further, while the Relevance dimension , Reach, Resonance, Activity and Engagement which refer to the extent to which the KOL and content shared are in line with people's interests and needs also need to be improved. Relevant KOLs have greater influence because their messages are more accepted and applied by the audience, with a wide reach they are able to spread messages to a larger and more diverse audience. participate in discussions, and establish two-way communication with the community in the form of likes, comments, shares, or other forms of interaction that show community interest and attention.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the research that has been carried out, several implications were found. For the management of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics, this research can be used as a source of information with the aim of maximizing the marketing of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics on social media and improving the image of the campus. The results of the research show that the existence of Key Opinion Leader Marketing can be an exchange of information between the general public to exchange experiences and share information with each other via social media about the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics. If the public publishes what they have felt, it will be an advantage. for campuses such as, posting photos, videos, etc. on their social media. When there are people who don't know about the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics or have never visited, they can search on the internet or from

other people's social media, so they can see the visualization of the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics which is exposed by other people on social media. . Because the visualization is unique and able to attract attention, people will continue to dig up more detailed information through comments and conversations between social media users in posts related to the tourist destination. If tourists who have visited have a good experience, then they will give a positive response and response.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Researchers realize that there are still many shortcomings in this research. Researchers hope that in the next research they will be able to further study and study the scope of research, not just limited to people who live at the Sakti Alam Kerinci College of Economics, so that they can broaden the scope of research to the national level so as to obtain research results that can be generalized. Future research can add other variables that can influence campus image.

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