

The Influence of Brand Image, Service Quality and Word of Mouth on Students' Decision in Choosing Tuition Classes

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Abstract

The research set out to analyze the impact of brand image, service quality, and word of mouth on Class 12 students' course selection at *Bimbingan Tes Alumni* (BTA) in Palembang. Employing a quantitative survey approach, the study included 152 class 12 students enrolled at the branch. The findings revealed that service quality and word of mouth significantly influenced students' course decisions. Notably, superior service quality heightened student satisfaction and loyalty, while word of mouth substantially shaped student choices. Conversely, brand image did not emerge as a significant factor in course selection. These results indicate that BTA in Palembang should prioritize enhancing service quality to foster positive word of mouth and attract new students. Although brand image had less impact, maintaining a strong brand image remains integral to a comprehensive marketing strategy.

Keyword: Service Quality; Word of Mouth; Brand Image; Student Decision; Course

Introduction

In today's aggressively competitive educational landscape, the academic success of grade 12 students holds significant weight as it determines their eligibility for graduation at State Universities in Indonesia. Given the importance of achieving high scores, students often find themselves in need of extra study hours to cover *ujian tulis berbasis komputer* (UTBK/computer-based written exam) material that is not included in their regular curriculum. This is where study guidance, or "*Bimbel*", plays a crucial role. *Bimbel* serves as a valuable form of non-formal education, offering targeted support to students by reinforcing their understanding of the material and enhancing their overall learning outcomes. Non-formal education, as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 article 1 paragraph 2 concerning the National Education System, provides a

structured pathway that complements formal education and aims to improve, replace, and enhance the learning experience.

One of the top tuition classes in Palembang, according to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2023, is *Bimbingan Tes Alumni* (BTA) 70. This recognition is further reinforced by Detikcom's 2024 data, which lists BTA 70 as one of the top 7 recommended tutoring centers for entry into public universities in Palembang. Researchers have taken a keen interest in BTA 70 due to its meticulous incorporation of the eight elements of the marketing mix, as delineated in the book "*Marketing Management Global Edition*" by Kotler & Keller (2016).

The intricate interplay and correlation between these eight elements of the marketing mix and their impact on brand image, service quality, and word of mouth

were thoroughly explored as integral components of a comprehensive marketing strategy. It was discerned that the marketing mix a company adopts and executes holds substantial sway over how the brand is perceived by consumers, their evaluation of service quality, and the frequency of positive word of mouth about the brand.

Notably, specific elements in the marketing mix can directly shape brand image; for instance, high-quality products/services and competitive pricing can bolster a positive brand image. Furthermore, the quality of service extended to consumers, also encompassed within the marketing mix, can significantly contribute to the establishment and upholding of a brand's reputation. Satisfied consumers are more inclined to endorse the brand to others based on their favorable experiences with the brand and its service.

Theoretical Framework

In a study conducted by Sipayung and Rustam (2022), it was concluded that brand image plays a significant role in influencing decision-making. The research highlighted that a strong brand image can lead to an increase in trust and preference. However, contrasting results were found in a study by Faneliana (2023), indicating that while brand image holds importance, other factors such as recommendations from friends significantly influence decision-making.

This suggests that in some cases, brand image may not have a notable impact on decision-making, with cost and location playing a more influential role in consumers' choices. As a result, the differing findings across various regions emphasize the necessity for further analysis to comprehend the factors at play in students' decision-making processes.

Sipayung and Rustam's (2022) research findings highlight the critical influence of quality service on students' choice of tutoring institutions in Yogyakarta. Their study emphasizes that attributes such as responsiveness, reliability, and empathy significantly impact students' decisions. The research reveals that students are more inclined to select tutoring services that offer

prompt and satisfactory support. Additionally, the study underscores the positive correlation between service quality and students' decisions, emphasizing the importance of the professionalism and approachability of teaching staff.

Furthermore, Purnawan and Suarmanayasa's (2021) research reinforces the significance of superior service, including administrative support and well-equipped learning facilities, in students' selection of tutoring services. While other factors also play a role, these studies consistently emphasize the crucial impact of service quality on students' decision-making.

On the other hand, Hidayat et al. (2023) found that word of mouth significantly influences decision-making. The study demonstrated that recommendations from friends and family increase confidence in product or service quality. Another study by Maknunah et al. (2022) supported this finding, showing that positive word of mouth significantly increases interest. Additionally, Wahyudi and Aswan's research (2023) also indicated that positive word of mouth primarily determines consumer choices.

Although other factors also play a role, word of mouth consistently proves to be an important factor in influencing decisions. These three factors, specifically brand image, service quality, and word of mouth, are believed to influence purchasing decisions.

Several studies have been conducted to determine factors influencing consumer decision-making. For instance, research by Oktavia (2019) and Atan (2021) analyzed the influence of brand image, service quality, and word of mouth on students' decision to choose the Jarimatika course and demonstrated that collectively, brand image, quality service, and word of mouth exert significant influence on students' decisions. Furthermore, Putri et al. (2015) stated that overall service quality, word of mouth, and brand image exert significant influence on the decision to use JNE's Semarang branch.

Material and Methodology

The research was carried out at BTA 70, which was located on R. Sukamto street number 28, area 8 Ilir, Ilir Timur II District, Palembang City, South Sumatra. The research method used was quantitative research. Correlational approach through surveys. The operationalization of the variables in the research described the variables regarding Brand Image (variable X1), Service Quality (variable X2), and Word of Mouth (variable X3). To obtain data, data collection techniques were carried out by means of literature study and distributing questionnaires.

The population in the study was 245 grade 12 students who took tutoring at BTA 70 PTC, and the sample size required using the Slovin formula for a population of 245 with an error rate of 5% was 152 people.

The technique was used to collect data by distributing a last of questions with

predetermined answers in writing to respondents. Questionnaires were used in the research as a tool to measure respondents' answers to the instruments that have been provided, requiring an instrument measurement scale, a Likert scale was used to measure each variable.

The data analysis techniques used were descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics include validity tests, reliability tests, classical assumption tests, simultaneous tests, determinant coefficient tests, and partial tests.

Result and Discussion

The normality test aimed to ensure that the residuals resulting from the difference between actual Y and predicted Y were normally distributed, because one of the requirements in a parametric test was that the data has normally distributed.

Table 1. Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Questionnaire	.070	152	.066	.985	152	.108

The Normality Test of the questionnaire on the influence of brand image, service quality and word of mouth on students' decision in choosing course in table

1. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the P-value result was 0.066 because the P-value was higher than 0.05, so the data showed a normal distribution.

Table 2. Multicollinearity Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	9.559	1.447		6.606	.000		
Brand Image	.031	.078	.038	.399	.690	.623	1.606
Service Quality	.199	.077	.248	2.595	.010	.613	1.630
Words of Mouth	.244	.075	.251	3.236	.001	.933	1.072

Table 2 above showed that the Tolerance value for Brand Image (X1) was 0.623 which was greater than 0.10 and the VIF value for Brand Image (X1) was 1.606 which was smaller than 10.00 so there was no multicollinearity. Then, the Tolerance value for Service Quality (X2) was 0.613

which was greater than 0.10 and the VIF value for Service Quality (X2) was 1.630 which was smaller than 10.00, so multicollinearity does not occur. Apart from that, the result of the Tolerance value for Words of Mouth (X3) was 0.933 which was greater than 0.10 and the VIF value was

1.072 which was smaller than 10.00, so multicollinearity did not occur. So it can be

concluded that there was no multicollinearity between variables.

Table 3. Heteroscedacity Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.893E-15	1.447		.000	1.000
Brand Image	.000	.078	.000	.000	1.000
Service Quality	.000	.077	.000	.000	1.000
Words of Mouth	.000	.075	.000	.000	1.000

Based on Table 3, the parameter coefficient values for Brand Image, Service Quality, Words of Mouth on student assessments have sig. 1,000 which was greater than 0.05, then the regression model

does not contain heteroscedasticity, where a good regression model was a regression that does not have heterogeneity and multicollinearity so that it can be used in multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4. Multiple regression

Mode	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.415 a	.172	.155	1.811	.172	10.235	3	148	.000

The results of multiple regression showed that the significant value (F-value) was 0.000 because the significant value (sig.F= 0.000) was lower than 0.05, H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted therefore there

was a significant relationship between Brand Image, Service Quality, and Word of Mouth regarding students' decision in choosing course.

Table 5. F Test (Simultaneous)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	100.755	3	33.585	10.235	.000 ^b
	Residual	485.639	148	3.281		
	Total	586.395	151			

Table 5 showed that the sig. 0.000 < 0.05, then according to the base of decision making in the F test it can be concluded that the hypothesis was accepted, so there was a relationship between the variables Brand Image, service quality and word of mouth simultaneously on student decision. Then,

the F count result was 10.235 (f-count) which was greater than 2.08 (f-table), then Ha was accepted and Ho was rejected, which means that there was a simultaneous influence between several independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table 6. T-Test (Partially)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	9.559	1.447		6.606	.000
Brand Image	.031	.078	.038	.399	.690
Service Quality	.199	.077	.248	2.595	.010
Words of Mouth	.244	.075	.251	3.236	.001

Based on table 6 above, the calculated t-value showed that the Service Quality variable was $2,595 > t$ table (1,645), which means that partially (individually) there was an influence on student decision. Apart from that, the Words of Mouth variable was $3,236 > t$ table (1,645), which states that partially (individually) there was an influence on student decision. Meanwhile, for the Brand

Image variable it was $0.399 < t$ table (1.645), meaning that it was partially (individually) not significant, which means there was no strong influence on students' decision. However, in regression and the F test, Brand Image has an influence on student decision. The following was an image of the t-test curve for the brand image variable.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination Test (R2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.415 ^a	.172	.155	1.811	.172	10.235	3	148	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Words of Mouth, Brand Image, Service quality

b. Dependent Variable: Students' decision

Table 7 showed that the result of R Square (0.172) from variable X (Brand Image, Service Quality and Word of Mouth) was 0.172, then variable Student. There was no partial influence of Brand Image on students' decision in choosing BTA 70 Palembang. The calculated T-value for the Brand Image variable was 0.399, smaller than the T-table (1.645) with a contribution of 3.8%. These results were consistent with research by Faneliana (2023) which also found that Brand Image did not influence students' decision.

Data from BTA 70 revealed that some students thought BTA stood for Read and Write Al-Quran, indicating a lack of brand recognition. Although the indicators for brand salience (86.35%), brand performance (80.26%), and brand judgment (79.11%) were considered good, the was not enough to influence students' decision. The results of the questionnaire showed that other factors were more dominant in influencing students'

decision, indicating that although brand awareness, performance and assessment were important, they were not strong enough without the support of other factors that were more relevant to students' needs.

There was a partial influence of Service Quality on students' decisions in choosing Alumni Test Guidance (BTA) 70 Palembang, with a T-count value of 2,595 which was greater than the T-table (1,645) and a contribution of 24.8%. Research by Tjiptono (2014) also supports this result, it showed that service quality influences purchasing decisions with T-count (5.995) above T-table (1.688). According to Purnawan and Suarmanayasa (2021) good service quality improves marketing because consumers tend to spread positive stories. BTA HR noted that participants chose BTA 70 because of its professional counselor services. These results were supported by the five dimensions of service quality from Tjiptono (2014): Tangibles, Reliability,

Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. The results of the questionnaire showed that reliability (78.21%) and assurance (84.83%) were considered good, indicating that students appreciate the reliability and confidence in the abilities of BTA 70 teachers. The high quality of service influences students' decision in choosing test guidance.

There was a partial influence of Word of Mouth on students' decisions in choosing Alumni Test Guidance (BTA) 70 Palembang, with a T-count value of 3,236 which was greater than the T-table (1,645) and a contribution of 25.1%. Of the three variables (Brand Image, Service Quality, and Word of Mouth), Word of Mouth has the highest influence on student decision. Word of Mouth was considered more trustworthy because it involves personal conversation that reveals consumer experiences (Hidayat *et al.*, 2023) and (Maknunah, *et al.*, 2022).

Wahyudi and Aswan (2023) research also showed that Word of Mouth has a significant influence on students' decision in choosing tutoring. Many students know BTA from their friends or cousins. The results of the questionnaire showed that the *Be Interesting* (87.17%) and *Make it Easy* (90.46%) indicators were considered very good, *Earn Trust* and *Respect* (74.01%) were good, and *Make People Happy* (69.74%) were quite good. indicating there was room for improvement in student satisfaction. In conclusion, Word of Mouth functions as an important reference and powerful promotional medium because it involves personal speech that was considered more trustworthy by consumers.

The coefficient of determination R Square of the three variables while 82.8% was influenced by other unstudied factors. According to Putri *et al.*, (2015), Oktavia (2019) and Atan (2021) other factors that influence decision making included past experience, cognitive bias, age and individual differences, belief in personal relevance, and escalation of commitment towards service or product providers.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it

can be concluded that non-formal education was really needed for grade 12 students before entering public universities or the official service they dream of, but competition between tutoring schools to achieve certain student targets requires a good promotion mix to attract student interest which will help the formation of brand image, service quality, and word of mouth towards students. The research has found that there was an influence of the Service Quality and Words of Mouth variables on students' decision in choosing BTA 70 PTC Palembang, but there was no significant influence of the Brand Image variable on students' decision in choosing BTA 70 PTC Palembang.

The research was an important base for BTA 70 to increase its attractiveness and attract more students. By improving service quality, utilizing the power of Word of Mouth, and developing the right branding strategy, Test Guidance can achieve sustainable success amidst intense competition. Based on the conclusions of the research that has been conducted, the following were several suggestions that can be implemented to improve students' decision in choosing BTA 70 PTC Palembang.

Improving Service Quality, namely through Staff and Tutor training: Invest in regular training for staff and tutors so that they were always up-to-date with the latest teaching methods and have good communication skills. Continuous Analysis and Development, namely through satisfaction surveys: conduct regular satisfaction surveys to measure student satisfaction with the services provided and use the feedback for continuous improvement. Strengthening the Brand Image, namely student testimonials: collect and publish positive testimonials from students and parents who have experienced the benefits of BTA 70. These testimonials can be used in promotional materials and websites. The results of the research can be continued in further research, either in evaluation or research into the factors that influence it.

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