

The Impact of Educational Quality on Word-of-Mouth about Universitas Pancasila: The Mediating Role of Institutional Image among Senior High School Students in Depok City, West Java

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Educational Quality, Institutional Image, Word-of-Mouth, Higher Education.</p>	<p>This study examines the impact of educational quality on word-of-mouth (WOM) about Universitas Pancasila, with institutional image serving as a mediating variable among senior high school students in Depok City, West Java. Using a quantitative explanatory approach and data collected from 150 respondents, the study employed Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) for analysis. The results reveal that educational quality significantly influences institutional image and WOM, while institutional image also exerts a significant positive effect on WOM. Furthermore, institutional image mediates the relationship between educational quality and WOM, indicating that a strong image enhances the effect of perceived educational quality on students' willingness to share positive recommendations. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining high educational standards and a credible institutional image as key strategies to foster voluntary advocacy and strengthen university competitiveness within Indonesia's higher education landscape.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a strategic role in developing superior and competitive human resources in the global era. Universities are not merely institutions for knowledge transfer, but also entities that build reputation and public trust through academic quality and institutional image. As competition among Indonesian universities intensifies, efforts to strengthen brand awareness and maintain educational quality have become key success factors in attracting prospective students (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Universities with a strong image and good reputation are more likely to gain public trust and generate a positive domino effect through word-of-mouth recommendations.

Universitas Pancasila, as one of the leading private universities in South Jakarta, is currently facing significant challenges in strengthening its brand position among prospective

students, particularly in the surrounding areas such as Depok City. A survey by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2023) revealed that only around 30% of high school students in Depok are familiar with Universitas Pancasila—far behind Universitas Indonesia and Universitas Pakuan, which are recognized by more than 60% of respondents. This indicates that promotional efforts have not been optimal in building brand recall among high school students, the main target group for new student recruitment. In an increasingly competitive higher education landscape, this challenge serves as an important signal for the university to enhance its brand communication, academic reputation, and public relations strategies.

According to Durianto et al. (2017), brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand within a particular category. In the context of universities, this awareness becomes a fundamental basis for establishing a positive institutional image in the public's mind. Batra et al. (2021) emphasized that the higher the brand awareness of an educational institution, the greater the level of public trust and preference for that institution. In other words, universities with high visibility among students are more likely to be recommended voluntarily through informal communication such as word-of-mouth (WOM).

Beyond brand awareness, educational quality also plays a central role in shaping a positive institutional image. Educational quality is not only reflected in curriculum design and teaching staff but also in learning facilities, the effectiveness of academic services, and the institution's ability to adapt to industry needs (Mulyasa, 2020; Simamora et al., 2021). Andriani and Kurniawan (2022) found that high educational quality enhances student satisfaction, which subsequently encourages students to provide positive recommendations to potential enrollees. Thus, educational quality becomes a major source of long-term reputation.

However, in practice, the influence of educational quality on WOM is not always consistent across contexts. Harahapa et al. (2018) discovered that although WOM is an effective communication channel, not all recommendations significantly influence university choice decisions. Their findings highlight that other factors, such as institutional image and reputation, also determine the effectiveness of WOM in shaping prospective students' decisions. This suggests that academic excellence alone is insufficient without a positive public perception of the university.

Institutional image serves as a bridge between educational quality and WOM. Image reflects how the public perceives a university's credibility, integrity, and reputation. Hutasoit et al. (2020) explained that a positive institutional image is formed through consistent experiences, interactions, and perceptions between the university and its stakeholders. Similarly, Lestari et al. (2021) stated that a strong institutional image fosters student loyalty and pride, motivating them to recommend their university to others. Within this framework, institutional image functions as a relevant mediating variable that links educational quality with WOM.

Previous studies by Gedalia and Subagio (2015) and Maysaroh (2022) demonstrated that the synergy between service quality and brand image contributes significantly to customer loyalty and positive WOM. Nevertheless, most of these studies focused on business

or general service contexts rather than the higher education sector. In Indonesia, research simultaneously examining the influence of educational quality and brand awareness on WOM through institutional image remains scarce—particularly those involving high school students who are in the stage of determining their academic future. Yet, this segment represents a strategic market that requires distinct approaches compared to active university students.

Empirical findings in the field of university marketing also reveal varying results. For example, Sri Rahayu Hijrah Hati et al. (2016) found that university image significantly mediates the relationship between educational quality and WOM at Universitas Indonesia. Meanwhile, Harahapa et al. (2018) at the Faculty of Economics, UISU, reported that WOM has no significant impact without a strong institutional reputation. These differences indicate an empirical gap that warrants further exploration of the mediating role of institutional image within private university contexts in Indonesia.

In addition, most studies on educational marketing employ samples of active university students from major metropolitan institutions, while studies involving high school students in buffer zones such as Depok remain limited. This highlights a research gap regarding the perceptions of prospective students toward university image and quality. From a strategic perspective, high school students in such areas are potential university applicants with considerable peer influence and social impact.

In the context of Universitas Pancasila, understanding how educational quality and brand awareness interact with institutional image to generate WOM is essential. If the university's image is effectively mediated through academic experience and positive perception, WOM can serve as a natural, sustainable, and credible promotional tool—more persuasive than commercial advertising. This model has been widely adopted by world-class universities that rely on their students and alumni as indirect promotional agents.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of educational quality on word-of-mouth about Universitas Pancasila, with institutional image serving as a mediating variable among high school students in Depok City. Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the literature on reputation-based and image-driven educational marketing strategies. Practically, its findings are expected to assist Universitas Pancasila in strengthening its brand communication strategies, improving educational quality, and building a stronger and more sustainable institutional image among prospective students.

In a broader perspective, this study also holds strategic significance for private higher education institutions in Indonesia as they face the rapidly changing global competitive landscape. As universities are increasingly evaluated not only by their academic quality but also by public perception and social endorsement, understanding the interplay between quality, image, and WOM becomes crucial for sustainable reputation management (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1996). Accordingly, this research aims not only to contribute theoretically but also to provide concrete recommendations for developing more effective, human-centered, and adaptive promotional strategies aligned with the aspirations of today's young generation.

METHODS

This study employs an explanatory quantitative approach aimed at empirically examining causal relationships among independent, mediating, and dependent variables using numerical data. This approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to test formulated hypotheses through an objective, systematic, and measurable statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). The main focus of this research is to analyze the effect of educational quality on word-of-mouth, with institutional image as the mediating variable among senior high school (SMA) students in Depok City, West Java. The research model is designed to provide an empirical overview of how positive recommendations toward a university are formed through perceptions of educational quality and institutional image.

The study population comprises all senior high school students in Depok City who are in grades XI and XII. This group was selected because, both psychologically and academically, they are at the stage of considering university choices after graduation. According to data from the West Java Provincial Education Office (2023), the total population of SMA students in the area exceeds 13,000 individuals. Due to time and resource limitations, the sampling process employed a purposive sampling technique—selecting respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria included students who were familiar with at least one university in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek) and were willing to voluntarily complete the research questionnaire.

The total sample size was set at 200 respondents, following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2014), who suggested that an ideal sample size in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) should be five to ten times the number of indicators used in the study. With 30 indicators, the chosen sample size is considered sufficient to produce stable and reliable model estimations. The study utilized primary data collected through closed-ended questionnaires distributed to respondents. Data collection was conducted using a hybrid method, a combination of online distribution via Google Forms and offline surveys administered directly at schools across Depok City. This approach was adopted to reach a wider range of respondents while ensuring data accuracy through direct verification. In addition, secondary data such as educational statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), Universitas Pancasila's promotional documents, and previous research findings were used as supporting references for the theoretical discussion.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, in which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The educational quality variable was measured based on students' perceptions of educational excellence, encompassing dimensions such as teaching quality and methods, curriculum relevance, learning facilities, academic services, and academic reputation. These indicators were adapted from concepts proposed by Mulyasa (2020) and Simamora et al. (2021). Meanwhile, the institutional image variable referred to students' perceptions of Universitas Pancasila's reputation and credibility. The indicators included the university's academic reputation, public trust, professionalism of lecturers and staff, institutional values, and symbolic attractiveness, adapted from the studies

of Hutasoit et al. (2020) and Lestari et al. (2021). The word-of-mouth variable represented students' tendencies to provide positive recommendations about the university to others, based on dimensions of interpersonal communication developed by Prabowo and Anwar (2022).

Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the aid of SmartPLS 4.0 software. This method was chosen for its capability to test complex causal models, even with relatively small sample sizes or when data do not follow a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis was conducted in two main stages: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The measurement model was used to assess the validity and reliability of indicators, while the structural model examined the relationships among research variables, including direct, indirect, and total effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The study involved 150 senior high school students in Depok City as respondents, representing a relevant demographic for analyzing word-of-mouth behavior in the context of higher education marketing. Of the total participants, 55 students (36.7%) were male and 95 students (63.3%) were female, showing a predominance of female respondents, which reflects the broader trend of higher female participation in university-related surveys. In terms of age, most respondents were between 18 and 20 years old (72%), followed by those aged 21–22 years (26.7%), with a small proportion under 17 years (1.3%). This age distribution highlights a group of late adolescents and young adults who are in the active stage of considering university choices, making them an appropriate population for this research.

Descriptive results reveal that Word of Mouth (WOM) had the highest mean score (34.92), indicating that respondents showed a strong inclination to share positive information about Universitas Pancasila. Meanwhile, Brand Awareness recorded the lowest mean (26.58), though still at a moderate positive level, suggesting room for improvement in recognition among potential students. The mean scores for Educational Quality (27.71) and Institutional Image (28.08) indicate generally favorable perceptions of both variables. Consistency between mean, median, and mode values demonstrates stability in responses, while the relatively higher standard deviation for WOM (6.56) shows greater variability in students' communication behavior. In contrast, Educational Quality had the lowest dispersion (SD = 4.17), reflecting a more homogeneous perception.

Results

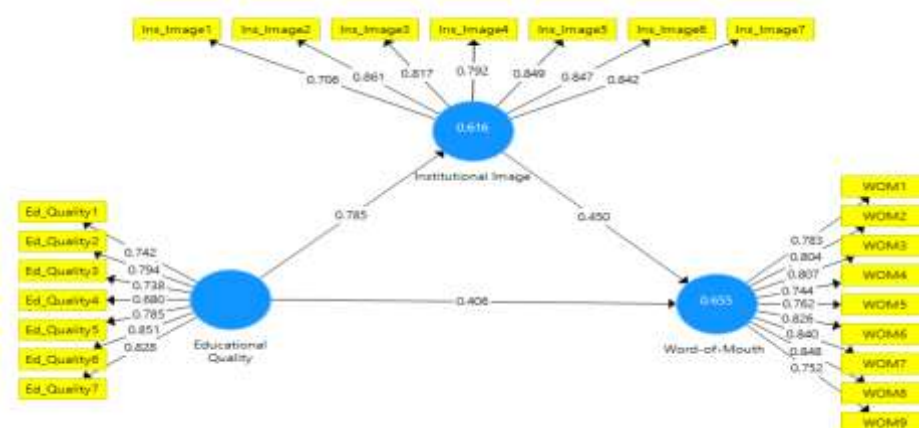


Figure 1. Algorithm Calculate with SmartPLS

Figure 1 illustrates the structural model estimation using SmartPLS 4.0, which displays the relationships among the three main constructs, Educational Quality, Institutional Image, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM). The model shows the standardized path coefficients (outer and inner loadings) obtained from the algorithm calculation phase, indicating the strength and direction of relationships between indicators and latent variables.

All measurement indicators for each construct exhibit outer loading values above 0.70, suggesting satisfactory convergent validity as they meet the threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2021). For the Educational Quality construct, factor loadings range from 0.680 to 0.851, indicating that all seven indicators contribute significantly to explaining the construct. Similarly, the Institutional Image indicators have loadings between 0.706 and 0.861, confirming strong representation of respondents' perceptions of institutional credibility and reputation. Meanwhile, the Word-of-Mouth construct shows loadings between 0.720 and 0.848, which demonstrates a consistent measurement of respondents' tendencies to engage in positive communication about the university.

Table 1. Outer Loadings

Outer Loadings	Educational Quality	Institutional Image	Word-of-Mouth
Ed_Quality1	0,742		
Ed_Quality2	0,794		
Ed_Quality3	0,738		
Ed_Quality4	0,680		
Ed_Quality5	0,785		
Ed_Quality6	0,851		
Ed_Quality7	0,828		
Ins_Image1		0,706	
Ins_Image2		0,861	

Ins_Image3	0,817	
Ins_Image4	0,792	
Ins_Image5	0,849	
Ins_Image6	0,847	
Ins_Image7	0,842	
WOM1		0,783
WOM2		0,804
WOM3		0,807
WOM4		0,744
WOM5		0,762
WOM6		0,826
WOM7		0,840
WOM8		0,848
WOM9		0,752

The results of the outer loading analysis presented in Table 1 demonstrate that all indicators used in this study meet the reliability and validity requirements for construct measurement. Each indicator displays a loading value above the threshold of 0.70, confirming strong convergent validity as suggested by Hair et al. (2021). For the Educational Quality construct, the loadings range from 0.680 to 0.851, indicating that all seven indicators effectively represent the students' perceptions of teaching quality, curriculum relevance, and learning facilities. The Institutional Image construct exhibits loadings between 0.706 and 0.861, showing that all indicators consistently capture respondents' views regarding the university's reputation, credibility, and professionalism. Meanwhile, the Word-of-Mouth construct records loadings from 0.744 to 0.848, reflecting that all nine items accurately measure the extent of respondents' willingness to share positive recommendations about the university.

Table 2. Cross Loadings

Cross Loadings	Educational Quality	Institutional Image	Word-of-Mouth
Ed_Quality1	0,742	0,623	0,553
Ed_Quality2	0,794	0,642	0,625
Ed_Quality3	0,738	0,582	0,551
Ed_Quality4	0,680	0,414	0,503
Ed_Quality5	0,785	0,666	0,601
Ed_Quality6	0,851	0,691	0,654
Ed_Quality7	0,828	0,602	0,625
Ins_Image1	0,570	0,706	0,548
Ins_Image2	0,661	0,861	0,637
Ins_Image3	0,659	0,817	0,622

Ins_Image4	0,683	0,792	0,598
Ins_Image5	0,618	0,849	0,636
Ins_Image6	0,610	0,847	0,683
Ins_Image7	0,686	0,842	0,671
WOM1	0,566	0,622	0,783
WOM2	0,591	0,579	0,804
WOM3	0,633	0,641	0,807
WOM4	0,587	0,555	0,744
WOM5	0,619	0,650	0,762
WOM6	0,678	0,665	0,826
WOM7	0,590	0,621	0,840
WOM8	0,580	0,586	0,848
WOM9	0,592	0,581	0,752

The results of the cross-loading analysis presented in Table 2 confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model. Each indicator demonstrates a higher loading value on its corresponding construct compared to other constructs, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Hair et al., 2021). The indicators of Educational Quality show the highest correlations with their own construct, ranging from 0.680 to 0.851, while their correlations with Institutional Image and Word-of-Mouth remain lower, confirming that each indicator uniquely measures the intended latent variable. Similarly, the Institutional Image indicators have loadings between 0.706 and 0.861 on their construct, significantly exceeding their correlations with Educational Quality and Word-of-Mouth. The Word-of-Mouth indicators also show strong loadings ranging from 0.744 to 0.848, higher than their correlations with other constructs. These results collectively demonstrate that all items distinctly represent their respective constructs, indicating that the model possesses strong discriminant validity and ensuring the constructs are empirically distinct from one another.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Educational Quality	0,889	0,895	0,913	0,602
Institutional Image	0,917	0,919	0,934	0,669
Word-of-Mouth	0,928	0,929	0,940	0,635

The construct reliability and validity results in Table 3 demonstrate that all measurement constructs meet the recommended thresholds, confirming the model's internal consistency and convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.70, ranging from 0.889 to 0.928, indicating high internal reliability. Similarly, the rho_A coefficients, which

range from 0.895 to 0.929, further reinforce the stability and reliability of the measurement model.

The Composite Reliability (CR) values are also well above the minimum threshold of 0.70, with Educational Quality at 0.913, Institutional Image at 0.934, and Word-of-Mouth at 0.940, signifying strong construct reliability. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are greater than 0.50 for all constructs—0.602 for Educational Quality, 0.669 for Institutional Image, and 0.635 for Word-of-Mouth—indicating that more than 60% of the variance in each indicator is explained by its corresponding latent construct. Collectively, these results confirm that all constructs in the model exhibit excellent reliability and convergent validity, meeting the standards suggested by Hair et al. (2021) for structural equation modeling using PLS.

Table 4. R Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Institutional Image	0,616	0,614
Word-of-Mouth	0,655	0,651

The coefficient of determination results presented in Table 4 indicate that the model possesses substantial explanatory power. The R^2 value for Institutional Image is 0.616, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.614, suggesting that 61.6% of the variance in Institutional Image can be explained by Educational Quality. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for Word-of-Mouth is 0.655, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.651, meaning that 65.5% of the variance in Word-of-Mouth is jointly explained by Educational Quality and Institutional Image. According to Chin (1998) and Hair et al. (2021), R^2 values between 0.50 and 0.75 indicate a moderate to substantial level of explanatory strength in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Therefore, these results demonstrate that the model effectively captures the influence of Educational Quality and Institutional Image on Word-of-Mouth behavior, confirming its robustness and predictive accuracy.

Table 5. F Square

	Educational Quality	Institutional Image	Word-of-Mouth
Educational Quality		1,606	0,184
Institutional Image			0,226
Word-of-Mouth			

The effect size (f^2) analysis presented in Table 5 reveals the relative influence of each construct within the structural model. The results indicate that educational quality exerts a very strong effect on institutional image, with an f^2 value of 1.606, signifying that improvements in perceived teaching quality and academic standards substantially enhance the university's overall reputation. Meanwhile, educational quality shows a moderate effect on word-of-mouth behavior ($f^2 = 0.184$), suggesting that students' positive perceptions of learning experiences moderately encourage them to share favorable opinions about the university. Furthermore, institutional image demonstrates a moderate effect on word-of-

mouth ($f^2 = 0.226$), confirming that a stronger and more credible image increases students' willingness to recommend the institution to others. These results collectively affirm that institutional image functions as a mediating factor, translating educational quality into active and positive advocacy among prospective students.

Table 6. Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Educational Quality -> Institutional Image	0,785	0,779	0,048	16,242	0,000
Educational Quality -> Word-of-Mouth	0,406	0,400	0,134	3,030	0,003
Institutional Image -> Word-of-Mouth	0,450	0,455	0,119	3,770	0,000

The hypothesis testing results presented in Table 6 show that all proposed relationships in the structural model are statistically significant. The influence of educational quality on institutional image yields a path coefficient of 0.785, with a t-statistic value of 16.242 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and significant positive effect. This finding suggests that better perceived educational quality significantly enhances the institutional image of Universitas Pancasila. Furthermore, the effect of educational quality on word-of-mouth produces a path coefficient of 0.406, a t-statistic of 3.030, and a p-value of 0.003, confirming a significant positive influence. This implies that students who perceive higher educational quality are more likely to engage in positive communication and recommendations about the university. Lastly, the institutional image to word-of-mouth relationship demonstrates a path coefficient of 0.450, with a t-statistic of 3.770 and a p-value of 0.000, also indicating a significant positive relationship. This means that a stronger and more credible institutional image motivates students to share favorable opinions and recommendations about Universitas Pancasila.

These results confirm that all three hypotheses are supported, showing that educational quality not only directly influences word-of-mouth behavior but also indirectly strengthens it through the mediating role of institutional image. This finding underscores the importance of maintaining high educational standards and a positive institutional reputation in fostering voluntary advocacy among students—an essential component of sustainable university marketing and brand development.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence supporting the significant influence of educational quality on both institutional image and word-of-mouth (WOM) among senior high school students in Depok City. The results indicate that students' positive perceptions of the university's educational quality, encompassing teaching competence,

curriculum relevance, learning facilities, and academic services, play a decisive role in shaping their perception of the institution's overall image. The high path coefficient between educational quality and institutional image ($\beta = 0.785$, $p = 0.000$) confirms that a superior academic experience leads to a stronger institutional reputation. This finding is consistent with Mulyasa (2020), who emphasized that the perceived excellence of the educational process is a key determinant of institutional credibility and attractiveness. Similarly, Simamora et al. (2021) found that consistent academic quality builds long-term student trust, which in turn strengthens institutional reputation and competitive advantage.

The results also reveal that educational quality positively influences word-of-mouth communication ($\beta = 0.406$, $p = 0.003$). This suggests that when students perceive the educational process as effective and beneficial, they are more likely to voluntarily share positive experiences and recommend the university to others. This finding aligns with Andriani and Kurniawan (2022), who demonstrated that educational satisfaction and perceived quality encourage students to become active advocates of their universities. Moreover, Prabowo and Anwar (2022) highlighted that interpersonal communication among students is a powerful promotional channel, often more trusted than formal advertising, as it reflects genuine experiences. Thus, the present study reinforces the notion that enhancing the quality of teaching and learning not only satisfies students academically but also cultivates emotional engagement that translates into advocacy behavior.

Another important finding of this research is the significant relationship between institutional image and word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.450$, $p = 0.000$). This confirms that a strong and credible image motivates students to engage in positive communication about the university. According to Hutasoit et al. (2020), institutional image represents the perceived integrity and reliability of an educational institution, and this perception substantially influences students' loyalty and willingness to recommend the university. Likewise, Lestari et al. (2021) emphasized that a positive institutional image fosters a sense of pride and emotional attachment, leading to spontaneous and sustained word-of-mouth advocacy. The current findings are also consistent with Gedalia and Subagio (2015) and Maysaroh (2022), who found that institutional image mediates the relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty, demonstrating that reputation plays a bridging role between satisfaction and advocacy in both business and educational contexts.

The mediating role of institutional image further strengthens the theoretical implications of this study. The results indicate that educational quality not only exerts a direct effect on students' willingness to share positive information but also indirectly influences this behavior through its impact on institutional image. This supports the signaling theory (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003), which suggests that perceived quality acts as a signal that shapes public perception of an institution's credibility and reputation. When educational quality signals are strong, such as competent lecturers, modern facilities, and transparent academic processes, they enhance institutional image, which in turn stimulates positive WOM. In the context of higher education marketing, this mechanism highlights how intangible attributes like trust

and reputation function as strategic assets that drive organic promotion and public engagement.

These results also contribute to the literature on higher education marketing by confirming and extending previous empirical findings. Sri Rahayu Hijrah Hati and Sari (2016) demonstrated that university image significantly mediates the relationship between service quality and WOM at Universitas Indonesia, a finding that resonates with the present study. Meanwhile, Harahap et al. (2018) found that WOM was not significant without a strong institutional reputation, emphasizing that reputation amplifies the persuasive power of student recommendations. The current study, however, extends these insights to a new context, senior high school students in a suburban area, demonstrating that even before enrollment, perceptions of quality and image already shape communication behaviors about universities. This provides a valuable contribution to understanding pre-admission marketing strategies in Indonesian higher education. From a managerial perspective, these findings underline the importance for universities, especially private institutions such as Universitas Pancasila, to invest in academic quality enhancement and image management as integrated strategies for long-term sustainability. High educational quality creates a foundation for trust, while a strong institutional image converts that trust into reputation and student advocacy. As Kotler and Keller (2016) argue, positive word-of-mouth is one of the most effective and credible marketing tools in the education sector because it emerges organically from stakeholder satisfaction. Therefore, maintaining consistent educational excellence, improving service responsiveness, and strengthening communication transparency should be strategic priorities to sustain positive perceptions and encourage voluntary promotion among prospective students.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that educational quality significantly enhances institutional image and encourages word-of-mouth communication among prospective students. When the learning process is perceived as effective, supported by competent teaching, relevant curricula, and adequate facilities, students develop a stronger sense of trust and admiration toward the university. This favorable perception strengthens the institution's image and, in turn, stimulates students to voluntarily share positive experiences and recommendations. The findings also confirm that institutional image functions as an important mediating factor, transforming academic excellence into credible advocacy behavior. In other words, educational quality not only contributes to internal satisfaction but also fosters external communication that promotes the university organically. These outcomes emphasize the strategic importance of maintaining consistent educational standards and managing institutional reputation as an integrated approach to building long-term competitiveness. For higher education institutions, particularly private universities, prioritizing quality improvement, transparent academic management, and continuous communication with stakeholders is essential to sustain a positive image and stimulate word-of-mouth promotion, which collectively enhance institutional growth and public trust.

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