

THE ROLES OF MARKETING MIX, BRAND IMAGE, AND BRAND AWARENESS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Background: The increasing number of senior high schools in Indonesia has created competition in the education sector, where institutions must continuously improve to attract prospective students.

Purpose: The objective of this study is to analyze how variables from the marketing mix, brand image, and brand awareness influence junior high school students' interest in selecting a high school.

Design/methodology/approach: This study was conducted from January to September 2025 in Bandung City, West Java. A quantitative approach was used with descriptive analysis and Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) using SmartPLS software. The marketing mix variables consisted of price (tuition fees and scholarship programs), product (curriculum and alumni), place (school accessibility and environment), promotion (advertising and reviews), physical evidence (school facilities and infrastructures), people (teachers and staff competence), and process (learning and counseling services). Brand image was measured through recognition, reputation, and affinity indicators. Choosing intention was measured through transactional, referential, preferential, and exploratory intention indicators, while brand awareness was analyzed through descriptive analysis. The data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 7 junior high schools, which gathered 371 junior high school students using purposive and convenience sampling.

Findings/Result: The result of this study shows that physical evidence, place, product, and promotion have a significant influence on brand image, and brand image has a positive significant influence on students' intention in choosing a high school, while brand awareness shows that more exposure towards a school could influence students' choosing intention.

Conclusion: Physical evidence, promotion, product, and place significantly enhance brand image, which becomes the main key of students' choosing intention. While brand awareness shows a positive but relatively weak influence on students' choosing intention, improving brand awareness remains essential to ensure schools are included in students' consideration sets.

Originality/value (State of the art): This study is original in connecting the extended marketing mix to brand image, brand image to students' choosing intention, and brand awareness to students' choosing intention using a comprehensive descriptive and PLS-SEM approach, offering a novel perspective on how brand image and brand awareness shape school selection.

Keywords: brand awareness, brand image, choosing intention, high school, marketing mix, students' interest.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of senior high schools (SMA) in Indonesia has created a dynamic educational environment in which institutions must continuously enhance their ability to attract prospective students. While the number of private high schools continues to grow each year, the number of students who enroll remains relatively fluctuating, with some even seeing fewer students enrolled each year. This imbalance intensified the competition in the education sector, where institutions must improve the quality of their management so they can implement professional and efficient standards in developing effective marketing strategies (Syukur, 2021). The rise in the number of educational institutions directly influences how schools design their marketing efforts to gain students' attention by improving the quality of educational services provided (Burton et al. 2022). As expectations from students and parents continue to grow, schools are required to strengthen their strategies, from communication strategies to institutional value propositions, to remain competitive. In this context, analyzing students' perceptions of schools provides valuable insights into how early decision-making intentions are shaped. Pedditzi et al. (2023) emphasize that early adolescence, age 13–14, is a phase where adolescents are starting to make major decisions regarding their education, including choosing a high school. At this age, adolescents are learning problem-solving and decision-making abilities, where students' perceptions of an educational institution continue to significantly affect their choices about schools. This educational stage aims to provide students with the basic knowledge needed for higher education (Krisbiyanto & Nadhifah, 2022). Therefore, choosing a school is a vital first step for students who plan to continue their studies.

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), the consumer decision-making process consists of five main stages, with the first stage being the recognition of need and followed by information search and evaluation of alternatives. In the context of education, students recognize their learning-related needs through exposure to various school attributes. During the information search stage, several marketing mix variables, such as promotion (publicity and advertising), product (curriculum and facilities), and school location, could serve as important considerations in choosing a school. In addition to promotional activities, brand awareness

plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of schools, as the information communicated by schools helps prospective students develop early impressions (Burton et al. 2022). Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize or recall a brand and associate it with a specific product (Aaker, 2009). A clear and well-known brand can create substantial trust among consumers, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchasing decisions. The establishment of brand awareness serves as a foundational component in the brand's promotional effort, where consumers usually prefer to engage with recognizable names that could convey quality and credibility (Ganjar et al. 2023). During the evaluation stage, students begin to build their first interests and preferences, focusing on schools that they believe best meet their needs (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

This study is motivated by the need to understand the influence and significance of marketing mix variables, brand image, and brand awareness towards a junior high school student's intention to choose a high school, especially during the time when new private schools are opening each year, and schools are increasing their promotions. Previous studies showed that a school's brand image is a crucial aspect that influences students' choices (Setiyadi, 2019; Habiburrahman, 2023). A positive school image boosts its competitiveness and impacts how students view the institution's capabilities. A school's reputation can considerably affect students' decisions about which school to attend (Nugroho, 2024). Through promotional efforts, raising brand awareness is one of the variables that could positively influence a student's choosing intention (Evanita et al 2016). where schools with higher awareness and are well known tend to be chosen by students. Despite the findings from the previous studies regarding the aspects of marketing and branding in education, research focusing on the combined influence of the marketing mix, brand awareness, and brand image on high school selection, especially from the perspective of junior high school students in Indonesia, remains limited. Most existing studies primarily examine higher education contexts and parents as the decision makers for the students, leaving a gap in understanding how younger students process marketing and how these perceptions drive their school selection intentions.

Addressing these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of the marketing mix, brand awareness, and brand image on junior high school students' intentions

to select a senior high school. The findings of this study are expected to offer practical strategic insights for educational institutions in developing more effective marketing approaches and strengthening their brand positioning to attract prospective students.

The competitive environment has especially intensified in Bandung City, which has one of the highest numbers of senior high schools in West Java Province. During the 2025/2026 academic year, Bandung City consists of 150 senior high schools, including 28 public institutions and 122 private institutions, suggesting that over 80% of senior high schools in the city are privately managed. The high number of private schools in the city leads to a highly saturated educational market, offering prospective students a wide variety of options. Therefore, schools are required to strategically differentiate themselves by emphasizing their presence within students' consideration sets. This situation emphasizes the increasing significance of marketing and branding strategies in shaping kids' school selection behavior.

This study portrays students' intention to select a senior high school as the primary outcome of interest. The framework defines the marketing mix as a set of controllable strategic tools implemented by schools to shape students' perceptions. Marketing strategies based on the marketing mix will shape a favorable brand image that attracts parents' and students' interest (Ad'jen et al. 2024). Brand image serves as a central construct that represents students' overall evaluation and impression of a school, converting marketing efforts into significant perceptions.

Alongside the indirect approach through brand image, the framework of this study includes brand awareness as an independent factor that directly affects students' intention to choose. In a highly competitive educational environment, awareness determines a school's recognition and memory during the selection process. Limited awareness of the brand will likely hinder schools from being included in students' consideration sets, regardless of their marketing initiatives or perceived quality. Brand awareness falls under the initial screening phase of decision-making, whereas brand image applies to the evaluation phase that results in preference determination. Overall, these models offer a comprehensive overview of the progression of students from brand awareness to intention. This study considers brand awareness as an initial cognitive state

influencing students' consideration of a school, rather than as an indicator for assessing school quality; it is evaluated independently from the SEM-PLS model.

By using a complementary problem-solving method through integrating SEM-PLS analysis with a descriptive assessment of brand awareness, the combined use of these approaches provides a more thorough comprehension of the progression from initial awareness to perception formation and eventual intention selection among students.

In a competitive educational environment, this study aims to analyze how junior high school students' intentions to choose a senior high school are influenced by marketing mix variables and brand image, and how schools could be taken into consideration through brand awareness. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the influence of marketing mix variables on the brand image of senior high schools.
2. To examine the influence of brand image on students' intention to choose a senior high school.
3. To analyze students' brand awareness as an initial cognitive state that determines whether a school is recognized and considered during the school selection process.
4. To provide managerial implications for senior high schools in determining which marketing mix strategies can strengthen brand image and how brand awareness can support students in their school selection process.

This structured approach provides practical and theoretically supported insights for schools in competitive educational environments.

METHODS

The data consists of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was acquired using online questionnaires sent to 7 private junior high schools in Bandung City, namely SMP Alfa Centauri, SMP Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, SMP Darul Hikam, SMP Edu Global, SMP PGRI-1, SMP PGRI-2, and SMP Pribadi Bandung. The questionnaires were then distributed through the academic advisors of each school, gathering 371 9th-grade students as respondents. The questionnaires were tailored to analyze consumer behavior, particularly among 9th-grade students, because students at this level are in the final stage of junior high school and are actively

considering their options for continuing to senior high school. Secondary data were acquired from literature reviews across several sources, including scientific publications, books, and educational institution profiles related to the research.

The variables analyzed in this study are marketing mix, brand image, brand awareness, and students' choosing intention. The marketing mix variables consist of product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, people, and process. Brand image reflects students' perceptions and impressions of a school, while brand awareness reflects students' ability to recognize and recall a school when they are considering their educational options. The dependent variable in this study is students' choosing intention to enroll in a senior high school. Each variable was measured using several indicators adapted from previous related studies on educational services and adjusted based on the preliminary interviews conducted with the students regarding their considerations in choosing a high school. All indicators were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The defining indicators of each variable are presented in Table 1.

This research used a descriptive quantitative approach by evaluating the data gathered through an online questionnaire distributed by the academic coordinator of the participating schools to the students. This research was conducted in January 2025-September 2025 in Bandung, West Java. The sampling techniques used in this research were purposive sampling and convenience sampling; both techniques were part of non-probability sampling. The first step implemented was purposive sampling, which was carried out based on the availability of the schools, and the second step was convenience sampling, where the 9th-grade students agreed to fill out the online questionnaire (Sumarwan et al. 2011). The number of respondents in this study was determined by the "rule of thumb" rule. According to Hair et al. (2022), five to ten respondents are required for each parameter estimated in the SEM model. For this research, there are 24 indicators listed in the conceptual model, which means the required number of respondents would be 120 to 240. Measurement will use a Likert scale to measure a person's perception, attitude, or opinion (Pranatawijaya et al. 2019).

Table 1. Variables and indicators of marketing mix, brand image, and choosing intention for SEM-PLS analysis

Variables	Dimension	Indicators	Label
Marketing Mix (X1)	Price	Supporting financial programs	BP1
		Affordable tuition fees	BP2
	Product	Curriculum aligned with students' needs	BP3
		Reputable alumni	BP4
	Place	Strategic school location	BP5
		Safe school environment	BP6
	Promotion	Positive school reviews	BP7
		Easily accessible informations	BP8
	People	Professional teachers	BP9
		Helpful administrative staff	BP10
	Process	University preparation programs	BP11
		Extracurricular programs	BP12
	Physical Evidence	Attractive school buildings	BP13
		Adequate learning facilities	BP14
Brand Image (Y1)	Recognition	School known for good quality	CM1
	Reputation	Strong academic and non-academic achievements	CM2
	Affinity	School fits students' interests	CM3
Choosing Intention (Y2)	Transactional	Interest in enrolling in the school	MP1
	Referential	Willingness to recommend the school	MP2
	Preferential	Preference for the school	MP3
	Exploratory	Comparing schools before deciding	MP4

This study used descriptive analysis and Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to analyze the relationships among the latent variables in the model, namely the seven variables of marketing mix, brand image, and students' choosing intention. This approach was chosen because it is effective for running an analysis with multiple complex latent variables simultaneously.

The literature and previous studies support the hypothesis that marketing mix variables, brand image, and brand awareness each have a significant influence on choosing intention. Marketing mix represents a set of tools used by organizations and companies to receive their desired response from their target market (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). Daud (2021) emphasized that all marketing mix elements must function cohesively as a unified chain to strengthen organizational competitiveness. Nugroho (2024) found that the marketing mix has a significant influence on brand image, and Laksamana (2021) found that variables such as product, price, and promotion have a significant influence on brand image.

There are several empirical studies that support the relationship between brand image and choice intention. Consumers with favorable impressions towards a brand are more likely to make purchase decisions (Amiarno, 2022). In the educational context, brand image plays an essential role in shaping a student's preference toward a school. Habiburrahman (2023) found that a school's image has a significant influence on a junior high school student's choosing intention.

Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recognize a brand and associate it with a specific product (Aaker, 2009). The level of brand awareness can be measured through asking consumers to mention brands of products that they are familiar with. Without brand awareness around a product or service, marketing strategies would be hard to arrange and implement because consumers tend to choose products or services with a well-known brand compared to a lesser-known brand (Nafaraisya et al. 2024). High brand awareness reduces uncertainty, increases familiarity, and builds trust, especially in contexts where decisions carry long-term implications, such as education. Sukma (2015) and Evanita et al. (2016) found that through constant promotions and ads which builds awareness towards a school, brand awareness has a significant influence in a student's choosing intention. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study are written:

- H1: Price significantly influences a school's brand image.
- H2: Product significantly influences a school's brand image.
- H3: Location significantly influences a school's brand image.
- H4: Promotion significantly influences the school's brand image.
- H5: Physical evidence significantly influences a school's brand image.
- H6: People significantly influence a school's brand image.
- H7: Process significantly influences the school's brand image.
- H8: Brand image significantly influences a student's choosing intention.
- H9: Brand awareness influences a student's choosing intention.

The Framework 1 shows that the rising number of public and private senior high schools has intensified competition in educational marketing. In response, educational institutions utilize marketing mix strategies to develop a good impression of the brand, thus influencing students' decisions to select a certain high school. The brand image represents students' assessments and perceptions of a school influenced by its marketing strategies. Brand awareness is specifically defined as a determinant of a school's awareness and consideration by students prior to any assessment. These links form the foundation for management implications that assist schools in developing more successful marketing strategies.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographic Characteristics

This study gathered data from 371 final year junior high school students, all of whom enrolled in private schools in 7 different schools in Bandung City, namely: SMP Alfa Centauri, SMP Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyyah, SMP Darul Hikam, SMP Edu Global, SMP PGRI-1, SMP PGRI-2, and SMP Pribadi Bandung. The respondents' ages primarily belong to the age range of 13–16, with 58,5% of them in the age of 14, representing students in their final year in junior high school who are actively preparing for their transition to senior high school. This age group aligns with the target demographic of this study, as students at this age and stage generally begin

assessing their options in choosing schools, which aligns with their plans for their academic path.

The respondents came from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, which reflects the variety of household circumstances that are common to private school students. This diversity enhances the representation of factors that could influence their choice behavior. All respondents completed the online questionnaire distributed through their respective school's academic advisors to ensure the gathered data represents a genuine perspective from the students within the educational environment.

The uniformity in the participating schools, where the type of school is a private school, provides a clear comprehension of how educational marketing variables function within similar institutional settings. The diversity of family backgrounds of the respondents supports the validity of the students' perceptions towards marketing mix variables, brand image, brand awareness, and their choice intentions. Overall, the gathered demographic composition of this study is consistent with the targeted group of students who are actively assessing their options for senior high schools,

therefore making them suitable for further analysis in this study.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The variables analyzed in this study include seven marketing mix variables: product, price, location, promotion, physical evidence, process, and people. Furthermore, the brand image aspects analyzed in this study include brand awareness along with brand recognition, reputation, and affinity. The latent variable of this study is choosing intention with transactional, referential, preferential, and exploratory indicators. The first evaluation conducted in SEM-PLS analysis is the measurement model, also often called the outer model. This evaluation was conducted to measure the validity and reliability between the indicators and latent variables and ensure that all variables met the standards before proceeding to structural analysis (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). The measurement model was analyzed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and collinearity diagnostics, following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2022).

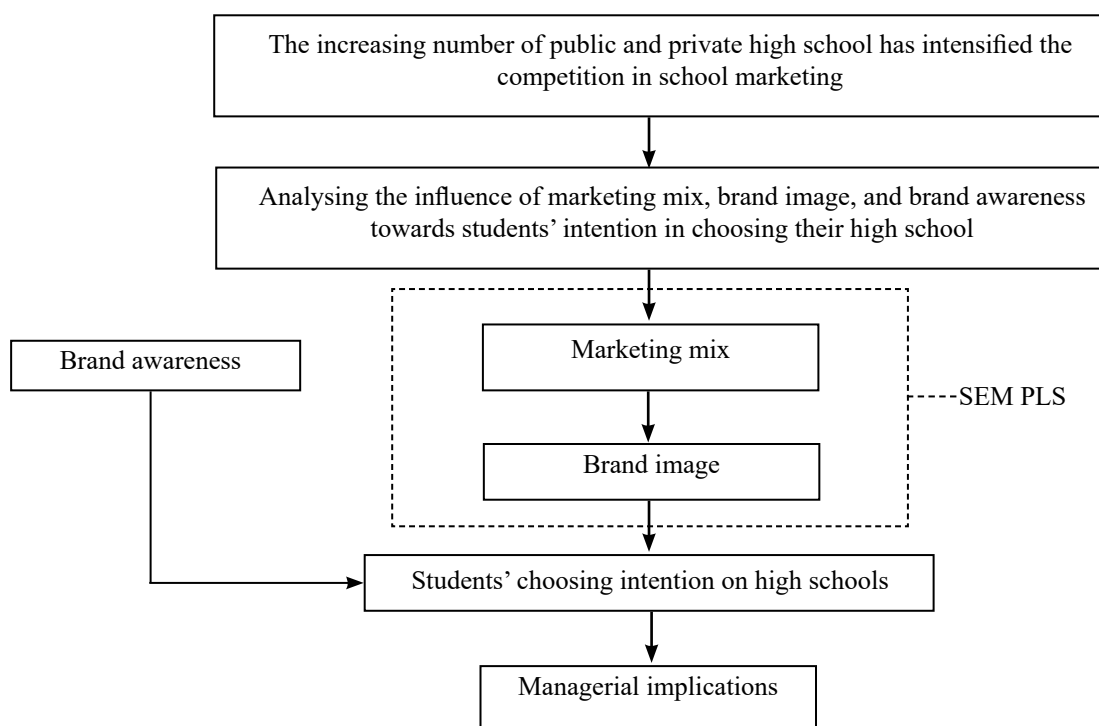


Figure 1. Research framework of marketing mix, brand image, and choosing intention

The analysis of indicator reliability shows that almost all indicators exhibit outer loadings above the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the items strongly represent their respective constructs. Indicators of Physical Evidence, Promotion, Product, People, Process, Location, Brand Image, and Choosing Intention (MP1=0.798; MP4 = 0.746) show strong performance. Although a small number of indicators, such as MP2 (0.678) and MP3 (0.621) in choosing intention fall slightly below 0.70, they are still considered because the values are still more than 0,5 and the variables meet AVE and composite reliability criteria, making them acceptable within PLS-SEM. The diagram of the Outer Model of Marketing Mix, Brand Image, and Choosing Intention is shown in Figure 2.

In internal consistency reliability tests, however, Cronbach’s alpha values show some variables falling slightly below the conventional threshold of 0.70, such as Price, Location, Product, and Promotion. However,

Hair et al. (2022) emphasize that composite reliability is the more appropriate reliability measure for PLS-SEM. In this study, all constructs show composite reliability values above 0,70, ranging between 0,80 and 0,90, indicating strong internal consistency. The composite reliability values also fall within acceptable ranges for exploratory and behavioral research contexts, hence strengthening the variables’ reliability.

Convergent validity is shown through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs surpassing the recommended 0.50 threshold. Physical Evidence (0.820), Process (0.811), Promotion (0.744), Location (0.684), Product (0.782), Brand Image (0.616), and Choosing Intention (0.514) show substantial shared variance among their indicators, confirming that the indicators effectively converge to measure each latent variable. The Convergent validity and ICR of Marketing Mix, Brand Image, and Choosing are shown in Table 2.

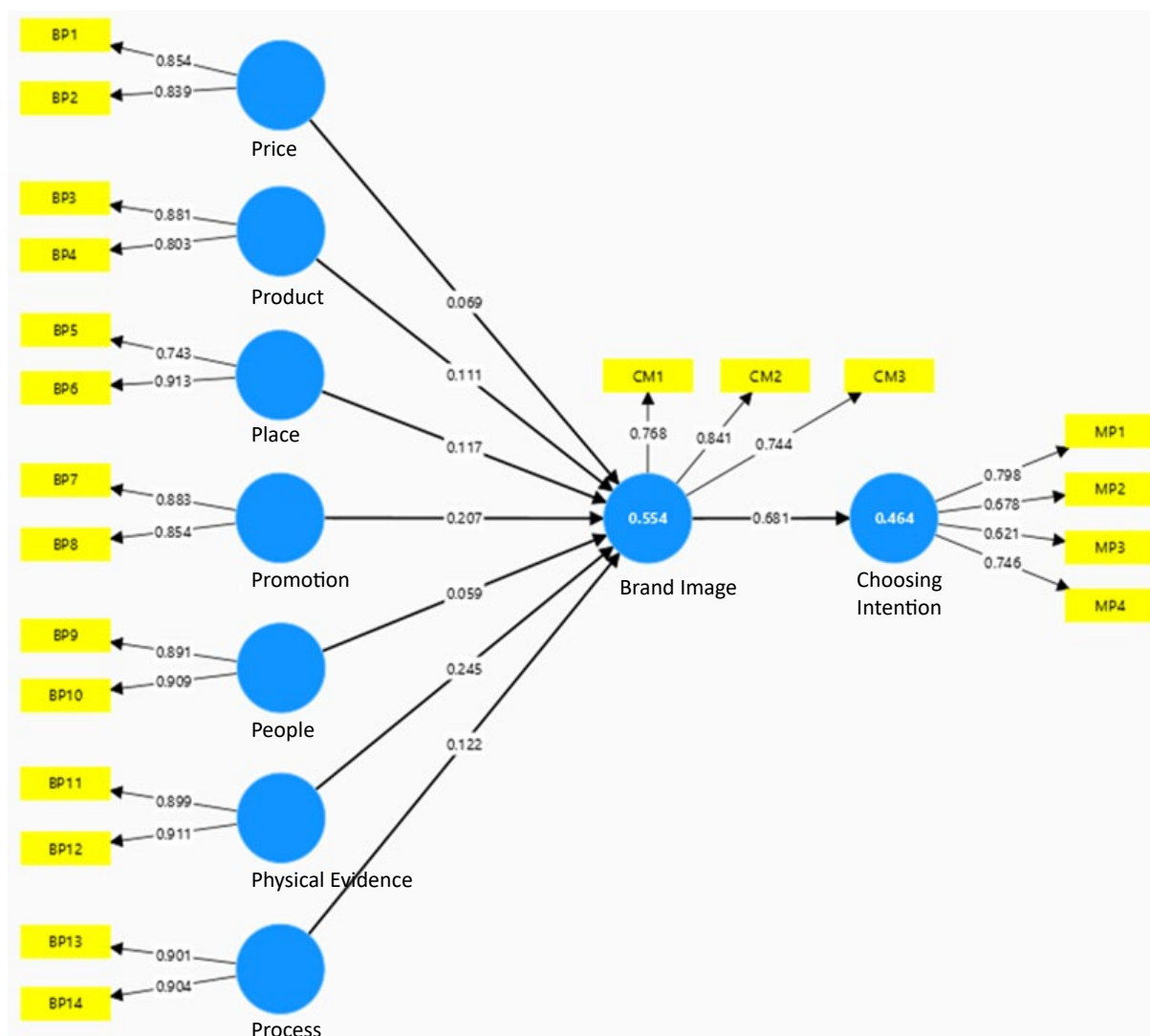


Figure 2. Outer loadings of of marketing mix, brand image, and choosing intention

Table 2. Convergent validity and ICR of marketing mix, brand image, and choosing intention

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (Rho_A)	Composite Reliability (Rho_C)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Physical Evidence	0.779	0.781	0.900	0.819
Brand Image	0.689	0.702	0.828	0.617
Price	0.604	0.605	0.835	0.716
Place	0.577	0.671	0.817	0.693
Choosing Intention	0.681	0.706	0.805	0.510
People	0.766	0.770	0.895	0.810
Product	0.596	0.617	0.830	0.710
Promotion	0.674	0.679	0.860	0.754
Process	0.772	0.772	0.898	0.814

Discriminant validity is analyzed through cross-loadings and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. All indicators load highest on their respective variables, demonstrating clean cross-loading patterns. Furthermore, the square roots of the AVE values exceed the inter-construct correlations, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct, with variables such as Physical Evidence ($\sqrt{AVE} = 0.905$), Promotion (0.868), and Process (0.902) holding the highest criterion. Additionally, collinearity diagnostics also support the adequacy of the model. All VIF values range between 1.19 and 1.69, far below the critical value of 5.0, indicating the absence of multicollinearity among indicators. This suggests that each indicator contributes uniquely to its associated variable.

Overall, the result of the measurement model shows that the variables have satisfactory reliability and validity. Despite the few variables with slightly low Cronbach's alpha values, the high values from composite reliability and high AVE indicate that the measurement model is confirmed to be statistically sound. Therefore, all variables and indicators are appropriate to be further analyzed in the structural model.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Structural model assessment was conducted to analyze the relationships between the marketing mix variables, brand image, and choosing intention. The analysis followed the sequence recommended by Hair et al. (2022), which includes path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), specific & total indirect effects, predictive relevance (Q^2), and PLS Predict. The Path coefficient and f^2 values of Marketing Mix, Brand Image, and Choosing are shown in Table 3.

The result shows that several marketing mix variables, such as physical evidence has a positive and significant effect, indicating that the school facilities and physical appearance strongly shape the perception of a school. Followed by promotion, which indicates that a school that is actively promoting through reliable sources and has good reviews also enhances the school's image. Product and place also contribute significantly, despite at the smaller degree, indicating that the academic system, accessibility, and the safety of the school's environment also play an important role in shaping the reputation of a school. Price, people, and process did not show a significant influence on brand image, with process only showing borderline significance, it indicates that tuition fees, staff-related aspects, and service offered by the school do not represent the key roles in enhancing a school's brand image. Based on this analysis, the structural model suggests that brand image serves as a highly significant variable within the model. The value of brand image towards choosing intention ($\beta = 0.681$; $t = 20.451$; $p < 0.001$) indicates that students' perceptions of the school's reputation are the key in shaping their decision to choose a particular school. The coefficient of determination implies that the marketing mix variables support a moderate-to-strong proportion of variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.554$), and choosing intention shows a moderate value of 0.464. These values confirm that the marketing mix collectively explained more than half of the variance in brand image, which drives students' behavior in the context of choosing intention. These findings suggest that marketing mix strategies indirectly influence students' choosing behavior through the formation of a favorable brand image.

Table 3. Path coefficient and f^2 values of Marketing Mix, Brand Image, and Choosing Intention

	Path coefficients	f^2
Physical Evidence to Brand Image	0.245	0.058
Brand Image to Choosing Intention	0.681	0.866
Price to Brand Image	0.069	0.007
Place to Brand Image	0.117	0.016
People to Brand Image	0.059	0.003
Product to Brand Image	0.111	0.014
Promotion to Brand Image	0.207	0.044
Process to Brand Image	0.122	0.013

The effect size (f^2) analysis further strengthens the importance of brand image with a large influence on choosing intention ($f^2 = 0.866$). Meanwhile, the values of the marketing mix variables on brand image remain relatively small. The mediation analysis shows that brand image holds an important role in mediating the influence of marketing mix variables on choosing intention. Physical evidence, place, product, and promotion show a relatively significant influence on choosing intention through brand image, which indicates that these variables influence a student's perception of a school's reputation.

Predictive relevance analysis using Q^2 shows that brand image ($Q^2 = 0.325$) and choosing intention ($Q^2 = 0.229$) possess strong predictive relevance. The positive Q^2 values indicate that the model has good predictive capability.

Overall, the structural model of this study confirms that a school's brand image is the main influence of choosing intention, with selected marketing mix variables such as physical evidence, promotion, product, and place contributed in building that reputation. The findings highlight that improving tangible facilities, communication and promotional strategies, offering academic programs, accessible location and safe environment hold more importance to be enhanced to shape a better reputation towards prospective students.

Brand Awareness and Choosing Intention

This study analyzed how familiar junior high school students are with the senior high schools available around them as their future educational path. Budiono et al. (2002) conducted a study to measure the concept of brand awareness through a questionnaire instrument by asking the respondents to list three brands of mosquito repellent that they remember the most during a purchase. In this study, the responses were gathered through a questionnaire asking the students to list three public

senior high schools and three private high schools they would consider attending. This method would make students present the top-of-mind schools and brand recall based on their interests.

Top of Mind Public Senior High Schools

The analysis shows that SMAN 3 Bandung is the school most frequently mentioned by respondents as their first choice. A total of 24.53% of respondents listed SMAN 3 Bandung as the school that first came to their mind, indicating its strong presence in students' awareness. This finding indicates that SMAN 3 Bandung has the highest level of brand awareness and occupies the top-of-mind position among junior high school students. In comparison, several other schools also demonstrated notable recall rates, although their levels of recognition were considerably lower than that of the leading school. Below SMAN 3 Bandung, there are other schools that also received relatively high mention rates, although not as dominant as the top school. SMAN 8 Bandung was noted by 10.51% of respondents as the first school they recalled, followed by SMAN 20 Bandung with 8.09%. In addition, 16.98% of respondents did not provide an answer regarding their preferred high school. Meanwhile, 39.89% of the mentions came from the other category, which includes at least 24 different schools with non-dominant mention frequencies. The graph of the Top of Mind of Public Senior High Schools' Brand Awareness is shown in Figure 3.

Brand Recall Public Senior High Schools

The second-choice responses reflect the level of brand recall among junior high school students. The data shows that SMAN 5 Bandung has the strongest brand recall, with 14.82% of respondents selecting it as their second preferred school. This is followed by SMAN 1 Bandung 10.51% and SMAN 20 Bandung 9.70%, indicating that these schools remain present in students' memories

even if they are not their top choice. A relatively large proportion of respondents (25.07%) did not provide a second choice, suggesting limited awareness beyond their primary preference. Meanwhile, the “other schools” category accounts for 64.96%, reflecting a broad but diffuse distribution of brand recall across 24 different schools. Overall, the findings indicate that SMAN 5 Bandung demonstrates the strongest brand recall, with SMAN 1 Bandung and SMAN 20 Bandung following as notable alternatives in students’ secondary preferences. The graph of Brand Recall of Public Senior High Schools’ Brand Awareness is shown in Figure 4.

Top of Mind Private Senior High Schools

The analysis of top-of-mind brand awareness for private senior high schools shows that SMAS Alfa Centauri occupies the strongest position, with 39.08% of respondents listing it as the first private school that comes to mind. This indicates a high level of brand

prominence and strong recall among final year junior high school students. The second most mentioned school is SMAS PGII-1 with 9.70%, followed by SMAS Taruna Bakti at 5.93%, suggesting that these schools maintain notable but significantly lower top-of-mind visibility compared to the leading school. A total of 5.39% of respondents did not provide an answer, indicating a small proportion of students who do not have a clear first preference for private schools. Meanwhile, the “other schools” category accounted for 39.89%, reflecting mentions across 32 different private schools, though none individually approach the level of prominence held by SMAS Alfa Centauri. Overall, the findings show that SMAS Alfa Centauri demonstrates the strongest top-of-mind awareness among private senior high schools, with other schools appearing in student preferences but with substantially lower levels of initial recall. The graph of Top of Mind of Private Senior High Schools’ Brand Awareness is shown in Figure 5.

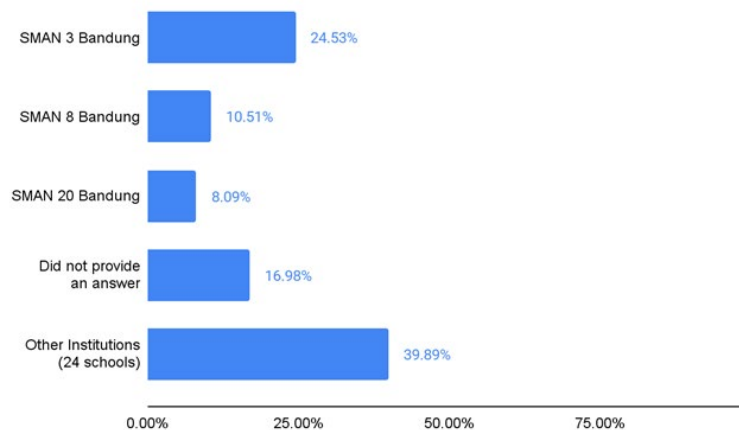


Figure 3. Top of mind of public senior high schools’ brand awareness

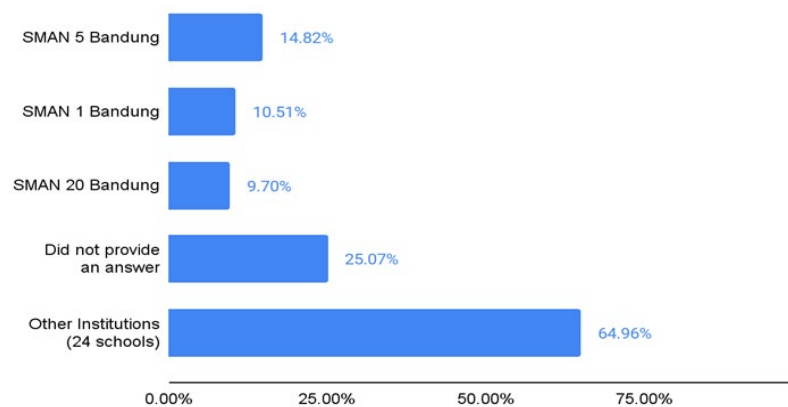


Figure 4. Brand recall of public senior high schools’ brand awareness

Brand Recall Private Senior High School

The brand recall analysis for private senior high schools reflects the schools that remain recognizable to students beyond their top-of-mind choices. Based on the data, SMAS Taruna Bakti demonstrates the strongest brand recall, with 11.32% of respondents listing it as their second-choice private school. This is followed by SMAS Alfa Centauri at 9.97%, indicating that the school maintains strong memorability even after the initial preference stage. SMAS PGII-1 records a recall level of 6.74%, demonstrating moderate visibility among students. A considerable portion of respondents (32.61%) did not provide any second

choice, suggesting that a significant number of students may have limited recognition of alternative private school options beyond their primary preference. Meanwhile, the other school's category with a quite considerable size of 39.35%, representing dispersed mentions across 32 different private schools, although none show a dominant recall position. Overall, the findings indicate that SMAS Taruna Bakti holds the highest brand recall among private senior high schools, with SMAS Alfa Centauri and SMAS PGII-1 also maintaining meaningful recognition in the minds of final year junior high school students. The graph of Brand Recall Private Senior High Schools shown in Figure 6.

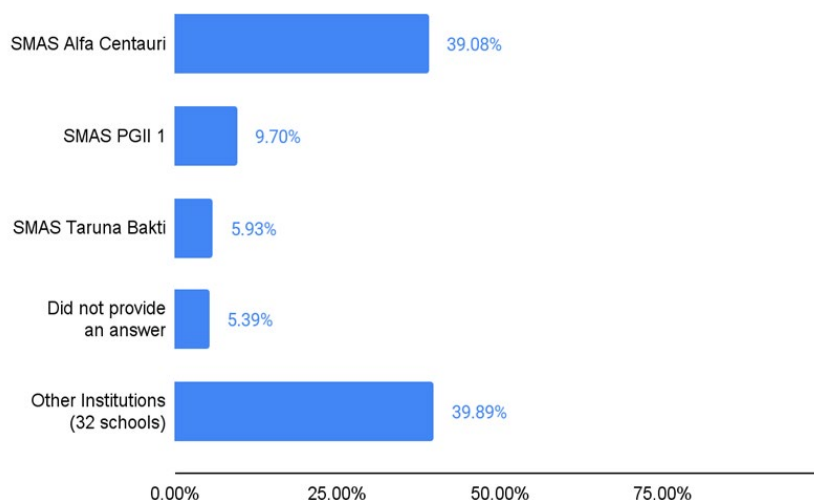


Figure 5. Top of mind of private senior high schools' brand awareness

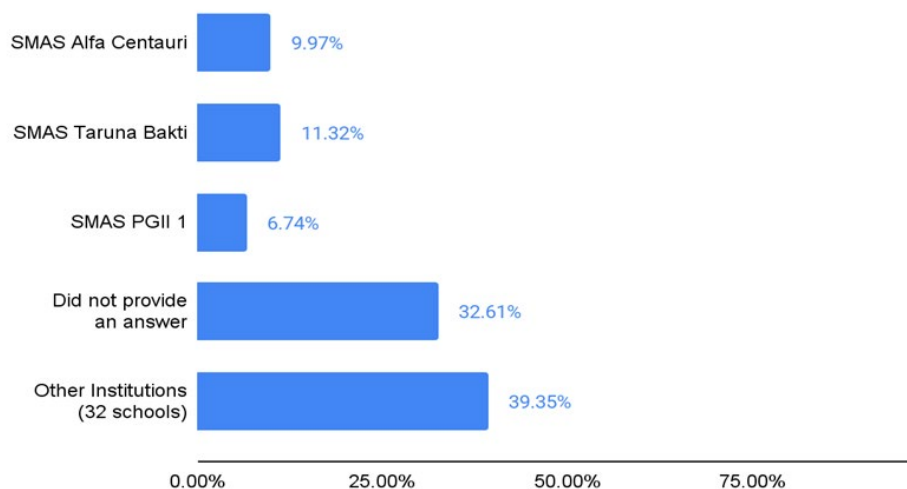


Figure 6. Brand recall of private senior high schools brand awareness

Managerial Implications

The findings in this study provide several managerial implications for educational institutions, in this case, senior high schools, in managing and arranging strategies to attract prospective students. First, schools need to strengthen the marketing mix elements which significantly shape a positive brand image of schools, particularly physical evidence, promotion, product, and place. Schools should establish clear communication regarding their school programs, facilities, and academic achievements through digital platforms and site promotions that students can easily access. Second, promotional strategies should focus on increasing brand visibility and familiarity through students' activities, such as education expos and contents which resonate with students' preferences, that highlight the unique traits of the school. Third, schools need to enhance the quality and presentation of their facilities to attract the attention of prospective students. Open house programs and virtual tours of the school can help build a positive image of the school. Fourth, the relatively low brand awareness result found in some schools in this study indicates that many of them may not be widely recognized as being considered by the students. To increase the brand awareness of the schools, consistent branding and promotions are needed. Further monitoring on a regular basis is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing efforts. By implementing these strategies, schools can strengthen their competitiveness and enhance the students' intention to choose the schools as their next path in education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study analyzed the influence of the marketing mix variables on brand image, brand image's influence on choosing intention, and brand awareness' influence on choosing intention among final year junior high school students who are transitioning into prospective senior high school students. The findings show that physical evidence, promotion, product, and place have a significant influence on brand image, which aligns with Nugroho (2024) while price, people, and process do not show a significant influence on brand image. The findings align with Setiyadi (2019) and Krisbiyanto & Nadhifah (2022), where brand image was found to be

the strongest influence on choosing intention, which indicates that students' decisions are shaped by their perceptions of a school's reputation.

The result of the study of brand awareness for public and private senior high schools shows that for public schools, although several well-known institutions (SMAN 5 Bandung, SMAN 20 Bandung) achieved moderate recognition, no school surpassed 12% in brand recall, and more than 34% of respondents provided no answer, suggesting limited engagement or the students' low exposure towards public high school knowledge. For private schools, SMAS Alfa Centauri shows the strongest presence across metrics, yet its recognition score remains below 10%. Other private schools, such as Taruna Bakti and PGII 1, consistently appear but with relatively low percentages. However, private schools demonstrate even higher non-response rates, indicating weaker brand awareness compared to public schools. Duc & Vu (2024) emphasize that brand awareness is crucial for attracting students, indicating that institutions with higher brand awareness tend to be the first in students' minds when making decisions regarding their educational paths. Hakala et al. (2012) suggest that higher brand awareness levels enhance top-of-mind and brand recall, leading to a greater likelihood of preference and eventual decision-making in favor of more well-known brands.

However, the overall level of brand awareness across schools remains low, as shown by the high proportion of non-responses and the wide spread of "other schools" with small percentages. This suggests that many institutions have not yet established a strong brand presence in the minds of junior high school students. As a result, the influence of brand awareness on school choice is present but not strong, because few schools have succeeded in building a clear and memorable identity. In summary, higher brand awareness could increase the likelihood of being chosen by students, but lower brand awareness in most schools limits the strength of this relationship in real-life practice.

Recommendations

This study suggests that educational institutions, especially senior high schools to improve their promotions through multiple platforms that resonate with prospective students to gain more brand awareness of their schools. Improvements are suggested to be focused in facilities such as buildings, tools to support

learning activities and ensure the safety of the school environment as it could support students' confidence in the school's suitability. Brand image as an important variable of the model suggests that schools continuously build a good reputation within society and align institutional practices with communicated values. In addition, schools are encouraged to actively promote their academic and non-academic achievements in which their students participated in. Highlighting these achievements through various platforms can strengthen the school's brand image and increase students' awareness of the school to support long-term enrollment success.

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