

The Influence of University Image on Students' Decisions to Choose Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak

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Abstract

Higher education plays a strategic role in shaping individual competitiveness and national development. In an increasingly competitive educational environment, a university's image becomes a crucial factor influencing students' decisions when choosing a higher education institution. Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak, as a private university with strong accreditation and achievements, faces ongoing competition that requires maintaining and strengthening a positive institutional image. This study employed a causal associative quantitative approach to examine the influence of university image on students' decisions. The population consisted of all active students of Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak from the 2021–2023 cohorts, with a total population of 4,346 students. Samples were selected using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling and determined through the Slovin formula. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using validity and reliability tests, simple linear regression, correlation coefficient, and coefficient of determination (R^2). The findings show that all research instruments were valid and reliable. Simple linear regression analysis indicated a positive and significant effect of university image on student decision-making, supported by a significance value below 0.05. The correlation coefficient of 0.768 demonstrated a strong relationship, while the R^2 value of 0.590 indicated that university image explained 59% of the variation in student decisions. The study concludes that university image has a strong, positive, and significant influence on students' decisions to choose Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak, highlighting the importance of institutional image in higher education competitiveness.

Keywords: University Image, Student Decision, Higher Education, Private University, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in determining an individual's future and influencing the development of a nation's society (Attahakul, 2025; Shavkidinova et al., 2023). As a crucial first step in one's life journey, education has a significant impact on personal development, career, and future success. Based on Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Indonesia has established a legal framework that governs the education system as a whole (Helda, 2022; Kosim et al., 2023). This law establishes the basic principles of education, including the rights and obligations of every citizen to receive a quality, equitable, and discrimination-free education. Furthermore, this law also emphasizes that education is the primary means for achieving progress.

According to Sukmayadi & Yahya (2020) and Hidayat et al., 2025, the Indonesian education system is divided into four main levels, reflecting the developmental stages and educational levels of society. These levels include early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. In the modern era of change and global competition, higher education is crucial. It serves as a gateway to success and career advancement, where individuals can acquire the knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges of an increasingly complex workplace. According to Arifin (2023) and Maulida e al. (2024,): "Higher education is a valuable investment for the future of individuals, their families, and the economic growth of a country."

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, Article 1, paragraph 2, defines higher education as the level of education after secondary education, encompassing diploma, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional and specialist programs offered by higher education institutions, grounded in Indonesian culture. Higher education encompasses various institutions, such as universities and academies, where students can earn bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees (Adelman et al., 2014; Altbach, 2007; Baum et al., 2013). Furthermore, Law Number 12 of 2012 also regulates various aspects related to higher education, including the government's role in its development, the higher education accreditation system, curriculum, research, and financial management.

Higher education institutions, as educational institutions, are required to provide quality academic services to attract prospective students (Joseph et al., 2005). One factor influencing students' decisions in choosing a higher education institution is the institution's image. A higher education institution's image reflects its reputation, academic quality, facilities, teaching staff, and achievements (Wong et al., 2014; Masserini et al., 2014). A university's image plays a crucial role in attracting prospective students. In an era of globalization and increasingly fierce competition, universities are required to maintain a positive image to compete in attracting prospective students.

Increasing competition among universities challenges each institution to project a positive image in the public eye (Dill, 2001; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). Prospective students will be particularly attracted to campuses with a positive image. Public perception is shaped by a university's positive image, which can influence prospective students' decisions to choose a particular campus for their studies. A prospective student's decision to pursue their studies at a desired institution is a decision that requires careful consideration and consideration of the circumstances (Moogan et al., 1999). Universities are currently viewed as potential business opportunities. In fact, a university's image is crucial for prospective students to pursue their studies. A good university image reflects the quality of the institution's offerings.

As one of the private universities in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak continues to strive to improve the quality of its education and its image. However, competition between universities, both public and private, is increasingly fierce. Therefore, the image of Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak is a crucial factor in attracting prospective students to choose this university as a place to continue their education. Amidst intense competition in the educational world, especially at the private university level, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak is one of the private universities in Pontianak, West Kalimantan.

Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak offers 16 study programs, each of which has received excellent accreditation. Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak boasts excellent and adequate infrastructure, including comfortable classrooms, a computer lab, a mosque, a hall,

a library, a cafeteria, and ample parking. From 2012 to 2016, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak was consecutively recognized as a Healthy Private University Institution by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education (Kemenristekdikti). Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak has also successfully received awards in student exchange programs between private and foreign universities. It also received an award from the Kopertis Region XI as the private university with the most research, community service, and Student Creativity Programs (PKM) in West Kalimantan.

During its 33 years of existence, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak has received several awards from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia. These awards are the result of several programs participated in by the University, such as the Independent Campus program organized by the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, which includes: campus teaching activities, Independent Student Exchange (PMM), and independent entrepreneurship. After receiving several awards, Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak was named the best private university in West Kalimantan.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the image of Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak influences students' decisions in choosing the university. The results are expected to contribute to the university's strategy for improving its image to attract more prospective students and increase its competitiveness with other universities. To support this research, the researcher will present some relevant data regarding the influence of university image on students' decisions to choose Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak.

Methods

This study uses a causal associative approach, which aims to determine the causal relationship and influence between two or more variables. This type of research was chosen because it is appropriate for examining the relationship between variables that have a causal relationship. As stated by Sugiyono, associative research focuses on the influence or relationship between variables. The study began by examining the relationships systematically to obtain an empirical picture of the effects. The population in this study was all students at Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak, as the concept of a population refers to all objects with certain characteristics determined by the researcher. The sample was determined using the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique because the population is not homogeneous and has clear strata: students from the classes of 2021, 2022, and 2023. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane or Slovin formula, which is used when the population size is known, with a total active student population of 4,346 students over the past three years. Data collection in this study used a questionnaire as the primary instrument. The data used consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through the distribution of written questionnaires, both online and offline, related to the research object. Questionnaires were chosen because they are able to systematically collect information regarding respondents' perceptions, knowledge, and experiences. Meanwhile, secondary data was used as supporting data obtained from related institutions, namely the Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak, and the Higher Education Database (PDDIKTI). The use of secondary data aims to strengthen and complement the primary data to make the research results more comprehensive and accurate.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study used simple linear regression, which is based on a functional or causal relationship between one independent variable and one dependent variable. This method was used to determine the close relationship between university image as the independent variable and student decision-making as the dependent variable, and to measure the extent of the independent variable's influence on the dependent variable. The simple linear regression model is expressed in the equation $Y = a + bX$, where Y represents student decision-making, X represents university image, a is a constant, and b is the regression coefficient that describes the magnitude of the change in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable. Through this analysis, researchers can obtain a quantitative picture of the direction and extent of the influence between the two variables. In addition to regression analysis, this study also used the coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis to measure the regression model's ability to explain variation in the dependent variable based on the independent variable. The coefficient of determination is calculated from the square of the correlation coefficient, then multiplied by 100 percent, to obtain the percentage contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable. A coefficient of determination value close to zero indicates a weak influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable, while a value close to one indicates a stronger influence. Thus, this analysis provides an understanding of the extent to which university image is able to explain student decisions in the context of this research.

Results and Discussion

Instrument Testing

Validity Testing

Below is a table showing the validity test of the questions in the questionnaire for the Higher Education Image variable (X), as follows:

Table 1. Instrument Validity Test for the Higher Education Image Variable (X)

No	Question	R Count	R Table	Description
1	X1	0,642	0,198	Valid
2	X2	0,701	0,198	Valid
3	X3	0,588	0,198	Valid
4	X4	0,673	0,198	Valid
5	X5	0,615	0,198	Valid
6	X6	0,724	0,198	Valid
7	X7	0,689	0,198	Valid
8	X8	0,654	0,198	Valid

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2025

From the data in Table 4.5 above, it can be concluded that all questions in the questionnaire for the Higher Education Image variable (X) are valid because the calculated R value is greater than the table R value. The following is a display of Table 4.6 of the validity test based on the Student Decision variable:

Table 2. Instrument Validity Test for the Student Decision Variable (Y)

No	Question	R Count	R Table	Description
1	Y1	0,621	0,198	Valid
2	Y2	0,684	0,198	Valid

3	Y3	0,703	0,198	Valid
4	Y4	0,592	0,198	Valid
5	Y5	0,716	0,198	Valid
6	Y6	0,665	0,198	Valid
7	Y7	0,638	0,198	Valid
8	Y8	0,604	0,198	Valid
9	Y9	0,721	0,198	Valid
10	Y10	0,697	0,198	Valid
11	Y11	0,734	0,198	Valid

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

From the data in the table above, it can be concluded that all questions in the questionnaire are valid and suitable for use as research instruments.

Reliability Test

Below are the results of the instrument reliability test for the Higher Education Image (X) and Student Decision (Y) variables, as follows:

Table 3. Reliability Test

No	Variabel	Cronbach Alpha	N of Item
1	University Image (X)	0,812	8
2	Student Decision (Y)	0,845	11

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

From the information in the table above, it can be concluded that the Cronchbach alpha value for the Higher Education Image variable (X) is 0.812, and for the Student Decision variable (Y), the Cronchbach alpha value is 0.845. Therefore, it can be concluded that the questionnaire is reliable, as the Cronchbach alpha value is greater than 0.60.

Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Below is a table showing the results of the simple linear regression analysis:

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

No	Variable	Regression Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	T Count	Significance
1	Constant (a)	6,214	1,532	4,056	0,000
2	University Image (X)	0,684	0,078	8,769	0,000

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

Regression Coefficient of Higher Education Image (b)

The regression coefficient of Higher Education Image (b) of 0.684 indicates that each increase in higher education image will increase student decision-making by 0.684. A positive coefficient indicates that higher education image has a positive influence on student decision-making.

t-Score

As shown in the table, the calculated t-score is obtained from calculating the coefficient of higher education image (b) with a standard error value. The results indicate that the t-score

yields a large number, indicating a very strong influence of higher education image, resulting in significant results. Here are the calculation results:

$$t = 0.684 \div 0.078 = 8.769$$

Significance

From the table above, we can conclude that the t-test results yield a significance value of $P < 0.05$, which is the same as the value in the table, namely 0.000 or $P < 0.001$. Therefore, university image significantly influences student decisions. From the above information, we can conclude that university image positively influences students' decisions in choosing Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak. This is determined by the stronger the university image, the stronger the student's decision to choose Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak.

Correlation Coefficient (R) Test

To determine the results of the correlation coefficient (R) test for the Higher Education Image (X) and Student Decision (Y) variables, see the table below:

Table 5. Correlation Coefficient (R) Test

No	Variable	Image of college (X)	Student Decision (Y)
1	University Image (X)	1,000	0.768
2	Student Decision (Y)	0,768	1,000

Source: Data processed by researchers, 2025

From the data above, we can conclude that the correlation coefficient (r) between the Higher Education Image variable and the Student Decision variable is 0.768. This value falls within the 0.60-0.799 range, indicating that the relationship between the two variables is strong and has a positive effect.

Coefficient of Determination (R²) Analysis

To see the results of the coefficient of determination (R²) analysis of the Higher Education Image (X) and Student Decision (Y) variables, see the following table:

Table 6. Coefficient of Determination (R²) Analysis

Model	R	R Square (R ²)	Adjusted R Square	Standar Error Of The Estimate
1	0,768	0,590	0,586	2,114

Source: Data processed by researcher, 2025

The table above shows an R-square value of 0.590. This indicates that the University Image variable has a significant influence on the dependent variable, namely Student Decision. This clearly indicates that University Image has a significant contribution to the Student Decision variable in choosing Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak.

Conclusion

The characteristics of respondents in this study based on the study program that most respondents are from the management study program, namely 13 people, then the characteristics of respondents based on the most age are 20-21 years old with a total of 44 people, while the characteristics of respondents based on gender reached 55 people with female gender, and the characteristics of respondents based on the most class were from the class of 2023, reaching 32 people. The research instrument used in this study was declared

very valid and reliable because the results of the validity test showed that all questions in the questionnaire in the Higher Education Image variable and the Student Decision variable had a sharp correlation value and provided a correlation result greater than the r table value, while the results of the reliability test showed a cronchbach alpha value of > 0.60 , so that the questionnaire in this study was considered reliable and consistent to use. The results of the simple linear regression analysis showed that Higher Education Image had a significant and positive influence on Student Decisions, this was proven by the results of the t test which showed a significance value of $P < 0.05$, so that the research hypothesis was accepted. The results of the correlation coefficient analysis (R) showed a value of 0.768 which stated that there was a strong and positive relationship between the image of the university and student decisions in choosing Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak. The results of the determination coefficient analysis (R^2) gave a result of 0.590 which showed that 59% of the variation in student decisions resulted from the influence of the image of the university, this proved that the image of the university had a very significant influence on student decisions. Overall, it can be concluded that the image of the university has a very significant influence and has a very important influence in influencing student decisions in choosing Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak.

Suggestion

For Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak, the author recommends that Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak continue to improve and maintain its image, particularly in terms of academic quality, campus facilities, reputation, and excellent student service. This recommendation is made to safeguard the university's reputation and maintain the positive image already established around Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak, thereby further enhancing its reputation. For management and educational administrators. The management and educational administrators are expected to use the results of this study as evaluation material and considerations in policymaking, particularly regarding marketing strategies and improving service quality. Continuous image improvement is expected to strengthen public trust and increase competitiveness with other universities. For prospective students, the author hopes that prospective students will consider the image of their university as a crucial consideration when choosing a university, while also considering the alignment between their academic needs, interests, and educational goals. The author hopes that future researchers will add other variables not yet examined in this study, such as tuition fees, campus location, promotions, parental influence, and social factors. The researcher also hopes that future researchers will use a qualitative approach to obtain more comprehensive results.

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